

Chapter Seven

'White Man's Burden', 'White Man's Privilege': Christian humanism and racial determinism in Oceania, 1890-1930

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The contribution of Protestant Pacific missionary correspondents, including Robert Henry Codrington (1830-1922) and George Brown (1835-1917), to the development of anglophone social evolutionary theories during the latter half of the nineteenth century is well documented by scholars.¹ The theorists Henry Maine (1822-1888), John Lubbock (1834-1913), John McLennan (1827-1881), Lewis Henry Morgan (1818-1881), and Edward Burnett Tylor (1832-1917) were writing in the metropolises and were thus reliant for their data on firsthand accounts of exotic people produced by others. These theorists attempted in various ways to systematize the assumption — longstanding and sometimes explicit as in the writings of the eighteenth-century Scottish stadial theorists — that human beings progress through a universal sequence of stages from primitive to civilized. To comprehend the origins of modern civilized society, one had to look to the 'primitive' societies of the contemporary present. The presupposition, variously identified as 'classical evolutionism' or 'social evolutionism', that the non-European world provided theorists with a living museum of the history of present-day Western society was well entrenched by the middle of the nineteenth century. As Stocking neatly put it:

Contemporaneity in space was therefore converted into succession in time by re-arranging the cultural forms coexisting in the Victorian present along an axis of assumed structural or ideational archaism — from the simple to the complex, or from that which human reason showed was manifestly primitive to that which habitual association established as obviously civilized (1987:173).

The equation of the European past with the primitive present and the consequent establishment of developmental rules appealed to the legal minds of Maine and McLennan. But it was also a profoundly progressivist notion containing the

implicit assumption that Europeans had climbed furthest up the universal ladder of social progress.

The growing attractiveness of a social evolutionist understanding of human difference was influenced but not determined by Darwinism. Maine's 1861 treatise on the development of legal structures, *Ancient Law*, used Old Testament and Roman history to surmise that law had originated with status-based patriarchal authority and moved towards a contractual state only in recent times.² This was not a universal approach amongst evolutionary theorists: McLennan, in his work on the development of marriage, attempted to explain the institution of marriage 'in naturalistic developmental terms' rather than using Biblical evidence (Stocking 1987:167). But all saw contemporary Western Christian (male) society as the zenith of human achievement and saw the increasing complexity of religious concepts and practice as fundamentally linked to changes in other elements of society. In working out their theoretical models, the early anglophone anthropologists drew heavily for ethnographic evidence on the writings of missionaries, especially those stationed in Oceania. Oceanic missionaries contributed to learned anthropological journals and their expertise was acknowledged by Tylor, Sir James Frazer (1854-1941), Maine, and Morgan.

Armchair anthropology and missionary ethnography

Missionary collaboration with metropolitan theorists was welcomed at least in part because of the increased interest in religious belief and practice emanating from the studies in language and religion of Friedrich Max Müller (1823-1900), as well as in marriage patterns or forms of legal authority, as indicators of evolutionary status.³ Tylor, continuing such investigations, corresponded with missionaries in Oceania and assisted in publishing their ethnographic descriptions of indigenous religions in such periodicals as the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (later *Man*). He did so despite the tendency of missionaries to dispute theoretical generalizations in order to assert the uniqueness and value of the communities they knew and lived amongst. At least in principle, missionary arguments and ethnography were always underpinned by the assumption that all human beings were capable of progress towards a 'higher state' since all were valuable in God's sight.⁴ They took seriously St. Paul's dictum that 'there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all' (Colossians 3:11).⁵ Those working in Melanesia also had a particular desire to prevent 'their' people from being placed near the bottom ranks of any theoretical model. Helen Gardner (2006:114-20, 127) has documented the unease of the Methodist George Brown, writing from experience in Samoa and New Britain, with the widely held distinction drawn between Polynesians and Melanesians. Brown's disagreement with Frazer over totemism demonstrated the 'tension' between Brown's acknowledgement of 'the logic of social evolutionist theory'

and his simultaneous resolve 'to temper the implications of its findings'. This subversive impulse came from his 'Christian insistence on human similitude' but also from a deep and close familiarity with the people amongst whom he had long lived. Broad generalizations satisfied few of the missionary ethnographers who had personal knowledge of counter-examples. In his academic writings, the Anglican missionary Codrington (1881:313) disputed Tylor's contention that the belief in souls originated in speculation about the meaning of dreams, for his personal experience amongst the Banks Islanders (of what is now north Vanuatu) was that no such link was made. Codrington (1889:310) complicated any easy relationship between forbidden foods and totems, suggesting that many taboos were of a recent origin and somewhat ad hoc in nature. Although direct and prolonged contact with Islanders led to writing which emphasized local specificity, potentially subverting universalist developmental models, such empirically-based ethnographic work by missionaries remained acceptable in metropolitan scientific circles.

John Barker (1996:111) has suggested that the collaboration with metropolitan theorists also changed missionary attitudes with their scientific work 'mark[ing] a notable instance of the "capture" of missionary ethnography by a professionalizing anthropology, based on the discourse of the natural sciences'. Yet he also noted that this scientific turn was complemented by a 'gradually liberalizing mood in the missionary movement as a whole', with a complex interaction between different perspectives. The collaboration with metropolitan theorists strengthened a tendency, which had been apparent in some considerably earlier missionary writings such as those of the Methodist Thomas Williams (1815-1891) on Fiji, to see traditional religion in systematic terms rather than just as a collection of abhorrent practices. In his representation of a Fijian religious system (1858), Williams began to valorize it in powerful, positive terms (Herbert 1991; Weir 1998), thus anticipating the social evolutionary view that all people had some form of religion which marked a definable stage in human religious and social development. By around 1890, the view was widely held both by theorists and by many of their missionary collaborators that early religions should be 'respected for their place in preparing humankind for higher religions' (Gunson 1994:303). This opinion was especially strong amongst Anglicans but John Henry Holmes (1866-1943) of the London Missionary Society (LMS), who worked with members of the 1898 Cambridge anthropological expedition to Torres Straits and with other anthropologists, expressed similar attitudes. In his own writings, partly under the influence of the leader of the Torres Straits expedition, Alfred Haddon (1855-1940), Holmes moved from a position of revulsion at the religious practices of the Elema of the Papuan Gulf to a sensitivity to the importance of their traditional beliefs, in particular in the lives of older people (Reid 1978).

The naturalness of race and the challenge of experience

However, between 1900 and the 1920s, in the context of the institutionalization of a fieldwork-based professional ethnography, this publicly acknowledged symbiosis between missionary informant in the field and metropolitan theorist gradually broke down. While the Anglican priests Charles Elliot Fox (1878-1974) and Walter George Ivens (1871-1940), as well as the LMS missionaries William James Viritahitemauvai Saville (1873-1948) and Holmes, continued to publish in anthropological journals until the 1930s, scientific contributions from anglophone missionaries declined though they remained acknowledged experts in the linguistic field. Before and during this period, missionary activity in Oceania was in transition from the exuberance of the era of early conversions to the routine work of educating and guiding converts — less glamorous and more frustrating than pioneer work. Some of the perceived faults in converts, seen originally as manifestations of heathenism, persisted. Missionaries began to question whether such faults were also the result of 'inferiority' or 'backwardness'. In times of frustration, they tended to endorse what had long been a widespread popular sentiment — that supposed 'backwardness' and 'inferiority' were inherently *physical* qualities, deemed either immutable or capable of change only in the very long term, rather than attributes of the presence or absence of heathenism. Such distinctions were often couched in terms of the varying levels of progress achieved by different 'races'.

A belief in the existence of separate, physically discrete races was held by many writers, secular and religious, over most of the period under discussion. Indeed, the term race was embedded in contemporary discourses, its meaning ranging from a generally benign descriptor of physical human appearance to a highly value-laden and proscriptive demarcator of unbridgeable human difference. Missionaries tended to use race in something approaching the former sense. This paper investigates some of the nuances in their understanding of human difference. Such beliefs were rooted in their Christianity and yet partook of widely-held ideas originating in contemporary scientific or legal circles.

Racialist assumptions informed the gloomy evolutionism which saw the Methodist John Burton (1875-1970) equate long-Christian Fijians with 'adolescents' who are 'proverbially difficult to manage' and 'make unreasonable demands on patience and resource' (1926:3). His colleague William Bennett (1914:475-6) found teaching Fijians 'a slow and tedious process' and complained of a 'half-knowledge ... ready to beget a loud-mouthed boasting'. Yet Bennett held such views in tension with his confidence that 'a native Church indigenous to the soil, withal so strong and stable in Christian character that it can stand of itself', was being developed. Another Methodist, John Francis Goldie (1870-1954), referred to the people of Roviana in the western Solomon Islands as having recently been 'Stone Age savages' (1927:4). But earlier he also described his

weekly class, listing each man by name (1914:574-6): one was 'a living epistle, a monument of God's power to save'; another was Goldie's constant and valued assistant. Goldie and Bennett knew and respected individual Islanders. Evolutionist language, normalized in popular discourse, slipped into their writing and yet was tempered by personal experience of individual Islanders which moderated any racial generalizations and confirmed their underlying Christian belief in human similitude. Just as missionary anthropologists tended to subvert the developmentalist paradigm by insisting on the discrete nature of their subjects and resisted their placement within a rigid theoretical framework, so many of the writers in the Methodist centenary volume (1914), edited by James Colwell (1860-1930), emphasized the skills, the positive attributes, and the great progress achieved by the people with whom they worked. The celebratory nature of the volume accentuated this tendency: these 'darkness-to-light' stories, rooted within the great narrative tradition of Christian progress, generally eschewed evolutionary language. Any overt or tacit acceptance of social evolutionism based on biological or racial presuppositions remained interwoven with descriptions of particular societies and individuals with unique value and potentiality in the sight of God. The trajectory envisaged for them was a rather different developmental path, from 'heathen darkness' to the 'light' of Christianity, through which they could realize their human potential in this life and have salvation in the next.

The concurrent acceptance within missionary and church circles of varying, even antithetical, discourses about human beings can be seen in two 'Study Circle books' on the Pacific Islands: John Burton's *The Call of the Pacific* (1912) and Frank Paton's *The Kingdom of the Pacific* (1913).⁶ Both were designed to instruct Protestant congregations in Britain and Australia about missionary endeavours in the Pacific Islands and to foster their financial and moral support or, as Burton (1912:1) put it, 'to set forth ... the great needs which still clamour from the Isles of the Seas'. Yet there are some distinct differences between the two books, unremarked at the time in reviews or advertisements — which may show how common it was for apparently divergent discourses and vocabulary to be used in tandem. Burton's work incorporated more strident social evolutionist language and concepts than was usual in missionary texts. He ranked Islanders according to well-established stereotypes. Of Fijians, he commented:

The people are of a lower grade than the Tongans, Samoans, Tahitians, and Maoris. They have not nearly the same intellectual development, and their civilization is of a coarser order. They are, in turn, superior to the Western peoples of New Hebrides, New Britain, and New Guinea. The race gives evidences of greater capability than has had opportunity to realise itself. There seems a sort of 'arrested development' (1912:92-3).

Burton's relative lack of confidence in the abilities of Islanders and his readiness to use normalized evolutionist judgements about them must be seen against his personal experience. He had served as a missionary in the Pacific region for ten years but worked mostly with indentured Indians in the Rewa area of Viti Levu in Fiji, though he was involved in industrial training schemes for Fijian boys. What he lacked was any personal knowledge of Fijian village communities and his limited familiarity with the Fijian chiefly system left him unimpressed.⁷ In writing *The Call of the Pacific*, Burton relied on the accounts of secular writers and other missionaries; this lent a degree of detachment and a somewhat theoretical air to his writing. The personal did not complicate his theoretical hierarchies.

By contrast, Frank Paton (1870-1938) had lifelong experience of Islanders. Born and brought up on his father's mission station in the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu), he returned there after education in Australia and Europe as a missionary in his own right for several years. His personal appreciation of certain Islanders was such that he ended his earlier book about his years on Tanna with the words (1903:311): 'We may travel far afield in the providence of God, but we shall never meet with nobler or more Christlike men than Lomai and his brave fellow teachers. They are heroes, every one of them, God's Heroes'. Any ranking of Islanders, such as Burton's which put New Hebrideans near the bottom of an evolutionary hierarchy, offended Paton's childhood experiences and most that had come after it.

Accordingly, *The Kingdom in the Pacific*, though published only a year after Burton's book, used different language and arguments. Paton (1913:2-3) did not hesitate to expound on the 'evils' of the pre-Christian Pacific Islands, cannibalism, war, and widow-strangling, and like most other missionary commentators saw this 'depravity' as induced by the thralldom of pagan religion. But the relatively unsophisticated lifeways of Pacific Islanders were attributed to geographic isolation rather than an inherent lack of ability. He employed a discourse of Christian humanism which was universalist in its assumption of human value, emphasized economic and geographic explanations for differing levels of human development, and stressed European responsibility for aiding human progress in the Pacific region. Burton (1912:299), while regarding independent indigenous churches as the ultimate aim of missionary endeavour, believed that 'these newly-won people require the greatest care in treatment ... we must not force their growth'. Paton (1913:76) envisaged the development of indigenous churches with a 'strong native ministry, composed of men and women who are filled with faith' as a closer reality.

Internationalism and its enemies

Paton's resistance to theoretical racial hierarchy, based on personal experience particularly in Melanesia, was not new — Codrington and many other

humanitarians had written in a similar vein. Where Paton marked new ground was in the degree of his conviction about metropolitan responsibility for the welfare of Pacific Islanders, not just in converting them to Christianity but in ensuring justice, education, and a place for them in a rapidly changing world. Paton (1913:142-3) consciously introduced a new international discourse of Christian humanism into the Pacific missionary world: he cited the discussions of the World Missionary Conference held in Edinburgh in 1910, a worldwide ecumenical gathering incorporating most of the mainline English-speaking Protestant missions, as the authority for his opinions.⁸ This gathering, attended by metropolitan mission administrators, serving (white) missionaries, and also by some indigenous African and Asian church leaders, was seen by many missionaries as their first opportunity to consider their own work in an international context. As Charles Fry Rich (1872-1949), an LMS missionary from Papua, put it (Anon. 1910:148): 'We climbed high enough to behold the need of a whole world for a whole gospel of redemption, carried to it by a whole Church'. The conference discussed, amongst other things, the role of the churches in education, the growth of the indigenous priesthood and independent churches, and 'the growing desire of Eastern peoples to realize themselves, to work out their particular national life, and not to be cast into Western moulds', an aspiration which was regarded with 'strong sympathy' (Anon. 1910:146).

Influenced by such internationalist rhetoric, Paton's appeal to European obligation was couched in wide terms. To an unusual degree, the prime villain was European influence in general. While his father John G. Paton, a veteran missionary in the New Hebrides, had denounced labour traders and beachcombers at length and with vigour (Weir 2003:95-142), Frank Paton cast doubt on the whole colonial enterprise. After enumerating the evils of alcohol, guns, and labour-recruitment, he concluded that they were not outweighed by the benefits of settled government or new opportunities. He asked:

Can we look back upon the record of our impact upon the black man without a blush of shame? We have done them much good, but more evil ... If it is true that we who are strong ought to bear the burden of the weak, then we have a terrible past to atone for, and a great work before us which we have hardly begun to touch as yet. Surely this is a national duty, the white man's burden and the white man's privilege (1913:35).

This passage includes allusions to two texts which became particularly popular in internationalist missionary discourse through the 1920s: 'we who are strong ought to bear the burden of the weak' comes from Paul's letter to the Romans 15:1; 'the white man's burden' derives, of course, from Rudyard Kipling's poem of the same title (1899).⁹ Thus the secular and religious responsibilities of strong

and powerful nations were linked, as educators and protectors of native peoples, as beneficent colonial administrators, and also as evangelists.

Ideas such as Paton's gained new urgency in response to the stridently determinist racist rhetoric emanating immediately after World War I from American secular writers such as Madison Grant (1865-1937) and Lothrop Stoddard (1883-1950). Grant (1921, 1920) and Stoddard (1920, 1922) began writing during the War but their works had greatest impact in the 1920s when they were reprinted, translated, and widely disseminated. They warned of an impending global race war as the 'natural' superiority of the European races was challenged by recent internal civil war (which was how they represented World War I) and by resistance from other races. Colonized people would fight to be free of domination, claimed Stoddard. Africa, important as 'the natural source of Europe's tropical raw materials and foodstuffs', and Latin America could not possibly 'stand alone'; strong European rule was essential (Stoddard 1920:89, 103).

The basis of their arguments lay in biological determinism. Grant (1920:xix) claimed that the 'great lesson of race is the immutability of somatological or bodily characteristics, with which is closely associated the immutability of psychic disposition and impulses'. He invoked Weismann's work on cellular structure and his theory of 'germ plasm' to decry the 'fatuous belief in the power of environment' which he saw as an idea stemming from 'loose thinkers and sentimentalists' (Grant 1921:15-16). Several other scientific tendencies around the turn of the century also reinvigorated a popular view of heredity based on biological determinism. Galton's statistical modelling and the rediscovery of Mendelian genetics provided a mechanism for Darwinian natural selection (Shipman 1994:113-16).¹⁰ These developments, along with the 1904 foundation of the Eugenics Record Office in the US and Charles Davenport's studies of eugenics conducted at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory, gave a certain credibility to the demands of Grant and Stoddard for 'world-eugenics' to avoid the mixing of races and to encourage the 'highest' to reproduce.¹¹ Since the laws of nature determined that biology and heredity were everything, Grant and Stoddard claimed, then direct rule by those of 'worth and merit' should be the norm, thus undermining democracy. Only amongst the most advanced of the Europeans, the 'Nordics',¹² should it even be considered. Biological determinists could attack democracy and socialism on racial grounds and discount them as sentimental.

In Australia, Christian writers concerned with inter-racial issues believed that such doctrines had to be confronted. John Burton's acceptance of something approaching a biologically-determined evolutionism and his use of evolutionist language in describing Fijians, evident in *The Call of the Pacific*, must be seen alongside the campaign he waged from around 1909 against the indenture of Indians in the Fiji sugar-fields (Weir 2003:163-83). Burton (1909:15-16) raised

the ire of colonial officials by describing plantation accommodation where 'coolies are herded together like so many penned cattle amid the most insanitary conditions and indescribable filth' and in concluding that 'the difference between this state and slavery is merely in the name and the term of years'. This humanitarian concern was coupled with respect for the Hindu religious and philosophic system, especially as expressed by the more learned members of the community. Accounts of his dialogues with Hindu leader Totaram Sanadhya present two intelligent men, each determined not to be converted by the other, enjoying a stimulating debate about life, death and everything in between.¹³ Burton (1903:8) also described encounters with other Hindu religious leaders. He was prepared to pray and worship with Hindus, even if he found the music 'weird'. But this respect for Indian culture and religion was contrasted with his ambivalence about Fijian customs which he essentialized and framed with evolutionist assumptions. Fijians had practical skills, Indians intellectual ones.

John Burton's position moved closer to that of Paton after the First World War — during which he served as a YMCA chaplain in London — and the peace settlement. His writing developed greater emphasis on obligation and showed less use of evolutionist language. Influencing this shift was Burton's increased involvement in the International Missionary Council, growing friendship with Frank Paton, and further academic studies in philosophy at the University of Melbourne.¹⁴ His increasing personal knowledge and appreciation of individual Fijian missionaries and other Islanders through his visits to Papua and New Britain as General Secretary of the Australian Methodist Missionary Society in the 1920s appear to have changed his thinking further. On these visits he saw Fijian teachers and ministers working effectively: the earlier disdain bred mostly of ignorance was replaced by respect for individuals (Burton 1926).

The degree to which the discourse of humanitarian obligation complemented Burton's earlier evolutionist assumptions becomes clear in his reactions to the vociferous biological evolutionism emanating from the United States. In his review of Stoddard's pro-eugenics tract *The Revolt against Civilization*, Burton (1922:11) advanced ethical and spiritual claims to counter the determinism of biology, notwithstanding his own earlier recourse to biological images: 'Biology deals only with a fraction of life; its fingers are too clumsy and its methods too coarse to deal with the soul of man'. The individual could be changed purposefully by wise men under the guidance of God. Christian commentators saw the violence and appeal to force implicit in the writings of Stoddard and Grant as dangerous and immoral. The very stridency of the new recourse to biological determinism forced critics to modify, if not entirely reject, their own much milder use of such arguments. In another review, Burton (1924:1) described Stoddard's later book *The Rising Tide of Color* as 'striking but shallow'; it tried 'to foment feeling against other races' and in doing so was 'unchristian'.

The 'sacred trust of civilization' in New Guinea

This shifting emphasis and its accompanying discourse were exemplified in the debates within Australia on the League of Nations mandate over New Guinea. Many Christians accepted the ideals inherent in the League of Nations as a mechanism that would maintain peace and ensure the past war could never be repeated. This vision, most notably connected with the United States President Woodrow Wilson (1856-1924), aimed to 'vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world as against selfish and autocratic power' through councils of collective security which would intervene to prevent quarrels escalating.¹⁵ Wilson, the son of a Presbyterian minister, was profoundly motivated by Christian belief and ethics which underpinned his public life. He believed in a covenant between God and human beings within which human beings had the responsibility to strive to give the world structure and order (Mulder 1978:269-77). The Covenant of the League of Nations, with its provision for regular conferences, marked the culmination of that vision — but the failure of the United States to ratify the covenant or take part in conference deliberations undermined the whole system. Grant's (1920:xxx) demand that the 'Nordic' race 'discard altruism' and the 'vain phantom of internationalism', which he believed to be both unscientific and potentially dangerous, resonated with the views of more conservative American politicians. Subsequent judgement on the League of Nations has been harsh but the major powers systematically deprived it of any ability to be effective, mostly by absenting themselves. Yet in Australia and the Pacific Islands, the League of Nations Covenant did have a particular importance, perhaps validating the comment by Norman Davies (1996:950) that the League 'played a major role in the management of minor issues, and a negligible role in the management of major ones'. For under the terms of Article 22 of the Covenant, Australia gained a mandate over the former German New Guinea. While Wilsonian principles generally disapproved of colonialism and supported self-government for smaller states, it was recognized that some peoples were 'not yet able to stand by themselves under the strenuous conditions of the modern world'. In such cases their 'well-being and development ... form[ed] a sacred trust of civilization', a duty which, in the case of New Guinea, devolved to Australia.¹⁶

But if Christians accepted the responsibility inherent in such a mandate, much popular and government opinion disagreed with them. In May 1921, the military government of the former German New Guinea was replaced by a civilian administration under the terms of the League of Nations mandate. Exactly what this mandate meant was the source of considerable tension within Australia. Prime Minister William Morris Hughes (1862-1952) saw control of New Guinea as a strategic matter, ensuring that 'the great rampart of islands stretching around the north-east of Australia' would, as he had demanded at Versailles, be 'held

by us or by some Power in whom we have absolute confidence'. For Hughes, possession of New Guinea formed a sizeable part of the reparations due to Australia (Hudson 1980:27-30).¹⁷ He rejected Wilsonian idealism and regarded the adoption of the Fourteen Points as 'an error — of judgement if you like'.¹⁸ That was in public. His language in private was much less temperate and his hostility to Wilson unrelenting.¹⁹ Others agreed with him in seeing New Guinea's importance in terms of what it might offer to Australia and not vice versa. The majority (Attlee Hunt and Walter H. Lucas) of the commissioners considering the form of administration for the mandated territory stated that 'the best and most humane principles' should govern the treatment only if this was 'consistent with the promotion of industrial enterprises tending to the benefit of the whole community', which included a large number of returned soldiers to be settled on the ex-German plantations. The 'evolution of the native' would consist in his moving 'from being a mere chattel of an employer to becoming an asset of the State'. The 'sacred trust of civilization' demanded by the mandate could be fulfilled by abolishing flogging.²⁰

An alternative view was put by Hubert Murray (1861-1940), the chair but also the minority voice on the Commission. Murray had been Administrator of the Australian colony of Papua since 1906; his mode of government, though subject to both contemporary and modern criticism, was widely seen as taking into serious account the interests and concerns of the indigenous people and he regarded his administration as the obvious model for the newly mandated territory of New Guinea. The demands of Article 22 could not be satisfied if the development of the country was 'solely in the interests of the European settler' and if the 'natural duty of the native' was perceived to be 'to assist the European with his labour'.²¹ Hence he advocated maintaining expropriated German plantations as a Government-owned business 'in the public interest'.²² But Murray's vision did not prevail, and the majority report was accepted.

However, there were also strands of public opinion which supported Murray's view that the mandate was a 'sacred trust', expressed by people who, as far as they could, monitored the administration of the mandated territory. In May 1921, the month that the Australians assumed the mandate administration of New Guinea, the Methodist *Missionary Review* carried a remarkable image, apparently designed as a poster (Figure 18). The creator of the image is not named but it was probably Burton who was actively involved with the *Missionary Review* in 1921 and formally took over as editor in May 1922. Entitled 'Our Two Mandates', the poster juxtaposes state and Christian responsibilities. The left side carries two texts: the quotation from Article 22 of the League Charter concerning the 'sacred trust' and the first stanza of Kipling's poem 'The White Man's Burden' invoke the responsibilities of the Commonwealth. Balancing these on the right are the same citation from Paul's letter to the Romans earlier used

by Paton and part of the missionary hymn by Bishop Heber of Calcutta, 'From Greenland's icy mountains', marking the responsibilities of the Australian churches. The dominant stress is on obligation, both secular and religious, with the implicit assumption that they were complementary. There is no distinction on the map between the mandated territory and Papua; the obligations are assumed to apply to both. Interestingly, the Melanesian figure is not, as in many appeals, that of a child or young woman but an adult male with traditional facial markings and body ornamentation. This could be read as conveying the depth of the need and the difficulty of the endeavour; certainly it is no mere sentimental appeal.

Yet alongside the language of duty and obligation and the reference to modern secular political realities, indeed, immediately below the words of the Covenant of the League of Nations, recourse is had to the ongoing language of social evolution: 'the Brown Pacific' needs the 'help and guidance of a higher race'. The word 'paternalism', with its inherent tensions, sums up this attitude — in both its more usual negative sense and in its appeal to fatherly care. This is made explicit in a lecture Burton gave in 1921 in which he compared humanity to a family with older, stronger members and also young, weak, 'less-equipped and undeveloped members'.

The true objective, if the family is to be perfect in all its relations, is to bring [the weak] into such a position where they might rightfully claim, without danger to themselves or others, the fullest privileges and the highest powers. 'Self-determination' is only latently theirs; and processes of education and training must be devised in order that they may come to full stature, and thus be able to discharge their responsibilities.

This is only possible when the stronger members are prepared to aid, to the utmost of their powers, the weaker and less advantaged members (1921:3).²³

To perform this task was the reason, and the only reason, why Australia had been granted the mandate over New Guinea. In a striking conjunction of social evolutionism and humanist insight, Burton represented New Guineans as simultaneously 'inferior races' but with 'undeveloped' potential:

The Mandate is over undeveloped races. They have some measure of skill and capacity; but it is the skill of the stone age; the capacity of an untutored savage. We are asking them to perform a stupendous feat. We are proposing to them that in one gigantic leap they spring from the Stone Age, where we found them yesterday, to the Steel Age, where we are today. Consider what mental and social adjustment is required in such a movement! We have only to think back over a modern period in our own history, to provide ourselves with an illustration of the

difficulties connected with such a change ... What patient help and gracious chivalry then ought we not to extend to these inferior races who are asked to make adjustments far more profound than those we have attempted in our superior life (1921:5).

Figure 18: Anon., 'Our Two Mandates'.²⁴

OUR TWO MANDATES

1. The COMMONWEALTH
"To those Colonies . . . which are inhabited by peoples not yet able to stand by themselves . . . there should be applied the principle that **THE WELL-BEING AND DEVELOPMENT** of such peoples form a sacred trust of civilization."
—THE COVENANT OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS.

2. The CHRISTIAN CHURCH
"We then that are strong, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves For even Christ pleased not Himself."
—THE MISSIONARY APOSTLE.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY

1,000,000 PEOPLE
NEED THE HELP
AND GUIDANCE
OF A
HIGHER RACE

THE BROWN PACIFIC
Appeals
TO
White Australia

**OUR MISSIONS SEEK THE MATERIAL,
MORAL, SOCIAL AND SPIRITUAL
WELFARE OF THESE PEOPLE.**

Take up the White Man's Burden—
Send forth the best ye breed—
Go, bind your sons to exile,
To serve your Captives' need.

Can we whose souls are Lighted
With Wisdom from on High,
Can we to men benighted
The Lamp of Life deny?

Poster. JAF 266.7MIS. Canberra: National Library of Australia.

The poster and the lecture, with their blend of evolutionism and the discourse of philanthropic/humanitarian obligation, epitomize the support for a vision of the League of Nations which existed both within the churches and outside. An active League of Nations Union in Melbourne aimed to educate citizens 'to equip themselves to discharge their responsibilities for a National undertaking' (Eggleston 1928: frontispiece). In seminars and 'round tables' about the mandate for New Guinea addressed by both church and secular figures, the desire was expressed to administer New Guinea with greater humanity than had been achieved with Aboriginal people. The League of Nations was seen as the model. Within church circles, enthusiasm was not confined to the Methodists and the claims made for the League of Nations could be effusive. The editor of the Anglican *A.B.M. Review* saw the Covenant's 'great principles of international brotherhood, co-operation and responsibility' as 'fundamentally Christian principles' and their adoption as 'due to Christian missionary work'.²⁵ W.N. Lawrence, an LMS missionary writing from Papua, believed that the formation of the League was 'a step towards the realization of the brotherhood of man and the Kingdom of God on the earth' (*Chronicle*, March 1919:41). The Australian Student Christian Movement backed the League of Nations as 'an institution whose principles were entirely in harmony with Christian ethics', welcomed the New Guinea Mandate, and urged members to use their influence 'to encourage the Federal Government in carrying out the high ideals of Article xxii of the Covenant'. International topics, including the White Australia Policy and policy towards the mandated territories, should be studied by student groups.²⁶

In New Guinea, any interference by 'do-gooder anthropologists, missionaries, or presumed agents of the League of Nations' was resented by the new Administration and by European settlers (Nelson 1998). This did not stop continued surveillance by interested Christian and secular parties over the administration of the mandate. In 1928, Burton castigated the military ethos of the administration for 'hasty and dogmatic' decision-making, over-use of the indenture system which took men away from their villages, inadequate attention to preventative health measures, and an unsuitable (that is, too literary) education system; his essay (1928) was published in an academic political science study. Concern about the mandate and issues surrounding its administration meant that Australian Christian voices were now taking part in international debates. The issues of justice, social concern, and international relations which had been discussed within a limited milieu at the 1910 World Missionary Conference were now at the international centre stage and Australians, as citizens of a mandated power, had become major players.

Christianity and the race problem

People like Burton who were trying to promote an alternative to biological determinism welcomed the publication in 1924 of J.H. Oldham's *Christianity and*

the Race Problem. In December of that year, Burton (1824), as editor of the *Methodist Missionary Review*, devoted his editorial to an extended review of this work, noting that it was only one of many on the subject, for 'books on the problems of race are pouring forth from the press at an astonishing rate, and the popular magazines are printing numbers of articles dealing with the "menace" of the coloured peoples'. Joseph Houldsworth Oldham (1874-1969) had been a missionary in India in the 1890s who became organizing secretary for the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference and then the editor of the *International Review of Missions*, a journal instigated at the Edinburgh Conference. He was never ordained but brought a more secular internationalist outlook to missionary affairs. His book, rather than talking of 'menace' or of 'fan[ning] the flames of race hatred and jealousy', advocated that Europeans 'cultivate the friendly spirit, help the backward peoples and build up the City of God on this fair earth', an aim of which Burton approved (1924:1-2). The book was widely recommended in missionary circles in Australia and Europe.²⁷

Here was a cogently argued rebuttal of the 'scientific' racism of Stoddard and Grant. While he did not entirely eschew evolutionary language, Oldham's treatise is a sophisticated attempt to develop an alternative Christian analysis of racial relations by attacking the determinism of Stoddard and Grant, both of whom are cited, on scientific, economic, and ethical grounds. Where Stoddard saw biological race as the determining factor, Oldham's explanation for what he took as differential development incorporated history, culture, and geographic circumstance. This essentially environmentalist argument, which saw race (though he preferred the word 'peoples') as a sociological rather than a biological concept, recognized a potential for progressivist change and development and reasserted the principle of the psychic unity of mankind.²⁸ Oldham (1924:52-3) even questioned the dominance of the idea of natural selection, suggesting that the Lamarckian theory of transmission of acquired characteristics had not been disproved. With this assumption, he emphasized education and argued that social and economic gaps could thus be bridged (1924:76, 164).²⁹ But communities of blood or culture should not override the importance of the individual, each of whom was important with a 'uniqueness and value' in the sight of God. With this emphasis on the individual, Oldham (1924:82) undercut statistics which purport to show differential racial intelligence and mental characteristics. Using material from Franz Boas (1858-1942) — and thus tapping into the developing anthropological critique of social evolutionism (Stocking 1968:202-33) — he observed that racial 'averages' say nothing about individual capability.

The other counter to Stoddard was to accentuate another non-genetic factor, the economic causes behind racial tension. Oldham (1924:136-7, 172, 229) pointed out that the objection to Asian immigration to the United States and Australia was really a fear of undercutting wages. He noted that unequal access to economic

opportunity based on race militated against the growth of real friendship which he saw as the answer to racial tension. For 'the fundamental issues in racial relations are not ethnological or biological but ethical'. Such analysis rested on the older assumption of psychic unity (1924:80): 'The differences between men ... are differences within a unity. Underlying all differences of race there exists a common humanity'. When exploitation and injustice were ended, the hostility would be taken out of the issue. Oldham saw difference as a good thing, part of God's great variety. But only the growth of true respect and economic equity would counter the growth of hostility. In a synthesis of Oldham's views as they applied to the Pacific regional situation, the Australian lawyer Kenneth Bailey (1924:18, 8) questioned the morality of the White Australia policy if the land of northern Australia was not developed economically and he acknowledged widespread exploitation of non-European labourers throughout the British Empire.³⁰

Conclusion

Buoyed by Christian idealism, Oldham and his admirers in Australia and the Pacific region saw no reason why difference should lead to hostility. Rather than countering scientific determinism on its own terms, Oldham, Paton, and Burton opposed it on ethical grounds, based in the Christian belief in the essential unity of humankind. Although their writing did not move away entirely from notions of racial hierarchy, it reframed them in the language of obligation. While arguments based on moral and humanitarian grounds were explicitly denounced by biological determinists, missionary writers drawing on them were able to appeal to a new authority — that of the League of Nations and a new internationalism. This had considerable resonance in Australia as the new mandate over New Guinea triggered reflection within and beyond missionary circles. Attempting to engage a secular as well as a religiously committed audience, missionaries and other humanitarians employed the discourse of international relations and the associated new science of economics to further their constant message of Christian humanism as the principle which should guide relations with the Pacific Islands and with Pacific Islanders.

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Notes

¹ Barker 1996; Douglas 2001; Gardner 2006 and Chapter Six, this volume; Gunson 1994; Stocking 1996.

² Kuper 1988:17-34; Stocking 1987:121-8.

³ See Chapter Six (Gardner), this volume.

⁴ But see Chapter Six (Gardner), this volume, for instances of senior clergymen in the Australian colonies who, frustrated in their efforts to evangelize Aboriginal people, had henceforth denied their capacity for religion.

⁵ Biblical citations are from the King James Version of 1611, the version most commonly used by anglophone Protestants in the period under discussion.

⁶ The Study Circle movement, important in the 1910s and 1920s in Protestant churches in Britain and Australia, was part of increased lay involvement. Small groups studied books about missionary activity, aiming to 'understand the wholeness of Christ's mission and claim, and the wholeness of man's need and duty' (*Chronicle*, January 1912:21).

⁷ See Burton 1910:190, 229-36 for his detailed opinions on the chiefly system.

⁸ Burton (1912:298, 302) also briefly referred to the Edinburgh conference but it was much less of a focus for his book. Edinburgh was the first of several international missionary conferences attended by both the leaders of metropolitan missionary societies and indigenous church leaders. These conferences were the forerunners of the World Council of Churches.

⁹ An identical juxtaposition of these two texts is found in Burton, *Fiji of Today* (1910:173), a book steeped in evolutionist judgments — which may again indicate how common it was for missionaries (and others) simultaneously to hold varying discourses in tension.

¹⁰ Mendelian theory was not fully developed until the work of R.A. Fisher (1890-1962) and J.B.S. Haldane (1892-1964) on population genetics in the late 1920s but by around 1920 the basic outlines were clear. Haldane himself had grave reservations about the way such science was used by policy makers, describing eugenics as 'largely the product of a class struggle based on the desire of the governing class to prove their innate superiority' (Greenslade 1994:254-5).

¹¹ Bowler 1984:286-96; Higham 1955:152-3; Shipman 1994:111-28.

¹² The division of Europeans into three 'races' — 'Nordics', 'Alpines', and 'Mediterraneans' — originated with William Z. Ripley (1867-1941) in 1899 in an attempt to maintain a distinction between old and new immigrants to the United States. Both Grant and Stoddard then adopted it (Higham 1955:154).

¹³ Accounts of these discussions exist written by both Burton and Totaram Sanadhya: see Burton 1910:323; Sanadhya 1991:73-79; Lal and Yadav 1995:99-111.

¹⁴ These factors comprise Burton's own explanation for his changing understandings over these years (n.d.:89-102). The International Missionary Conferences were the successors to the 1910 World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh; Burton attended the 1921 meeting in the USA.

¹⁵ Woodrow Wilson, Speech to the United States Senate, 2 April 1917, cited by Knock (1992:121). In this speech Wilson promulgated his Fourteen Points which became the basis of the League of Nations Covenant.

¹⁶ The text of the League of Nations Covenant is reprinted by Hudson (1980:208-14).

¹⁷ For further discussion of Australian policy and official attitudes towards the mandated territory, see Nelson 1998.

¹⁸ W.M. Hughes, Speech to the House of Representatives, 10 September 1919, Commonwealth of Australia 1919:12173, 12167. On Hughes's attitude to the Peace Conference, see also Offer 1989:371-6.

¹⁹ See, e.g., Hudson 1980:21-4.

²⁰ Report by Majority of Commissioners, 29, in Royal Commission on Late German New Guinea 1920.

²¹ Report by Chairman, 55, in Royal Commission on Late German New Guinea 1920.

²² Report by Chairman, 68-9, in Royal Commission on Late German New Guinea 1920.

²³ This lecture was delivered in the Melbourne Town Hall on 21 July 1921 under the auspices of the Victoria Branch of the League of Nations Union but was published by the Australian Student Christian Movement — another example of secular and religious linkage.

²⁴ *Missionary Review*, May 1821:7. The population figure of one million given in the image was the estimated population of both territories in 1921; Australians did not know of the existence of the large populations of the highlands region until the 1930s.

²⁵ *A.B.M. Review*, September 1920:104. The editor added that the Covenant had only twice been surpassed — by the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount — and twice equalled — by the Magna Carta and the Constitution of the United States of America.

²⁶ Report of the Commission to Consider the World Student Christian Federation International Findings, 14 May 1923, in Australian Student Christian Movement 1895-1997: Box 65, Item 3/5. The same report noted the view of the commission that the White Australia Policy could only be justified if 'Australia were to be used to the full by citizens of British stock and traditions'. If such a population did not completely occupy the continent, then other groups should be admitted; anything else was a 'dog-in-the-manger attitude'.

²⁷ Reviews and recommendations appeared in *Missionary Review*, September 1924:18-19; December 1924:1; *A.B.M. Review*, August 1925:9; *Chronicle*, August 1924:190.

²⁸ Belief in the psychic unity of mankind derives from the Pauline assumptions already discussed of the equality of all human beings before God, particularly as developed by Evangelicals such as James Cowles Prichard in *Researches into the Physical History of Mankind* (1836-47). See Weir 2003:28-33 and Chapter Six (Gardner), this volume.

²⁹ Oldham had a life-long interest in education, both in India and Africa. A member of the British Government's Advisory Committee on Native Education in Tropical Africa, he wrote definitive policy statements on African education together with Lord Lugard.

³⁰ Bailey did not acknowledge that he was developing Oldham's ideas in spite of virtually verbatim citation from his book.