

Chapter 9

Boniface and Bede in the Pacific: Exploring Anamorphic Comparisons between the Hiberno-Saxon Missions and the Anglican Melanesian Mission¹

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Portal to the Pacific

VISITORS to the Cathedral Church of St Peter at Exeter may not know it, but as they proceed along the nave, going deeper and deeper into this forest-like space, they are approaching an opening – a passageway between the Wessex of Kings Ine and Æthelheard and the southwest Pacific island of Nukapu in the days of Chiefs Moto and Taula. This trans-global and trans-temporal portal stands on the north side of the nave and is known as the Martyrs' Pulpit. To casual tourists, it shows no signs of being a link between two hemispheres; it is well disguised as a fine example of Victorian Gothic Revival. But a few facts about the relations that went into the making of this object cause it to appear differently. It is the visual epitome of a grand comparison, a network of associations that, in the mid nineteenth century, opened mutually generating channels of communication between Northern Europe and the Pacific.

¹ An earlier version of this chapter was given as the opening keynote lecture at the 2017 meeting of the International Society of Anglo-Saxonists (now known as the International Society for the Study of Early Medieval England) at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. I thank the society's board – and especially the conference organizer, Karen Jolly – for inviting me to address the meeting. As a visitant from anthropology to the field of early medieval studies, I am grateful for the warm collegiality with which I was received and the responses my keynote elicited. I acknowledge Uluwehi Hopkins's welcome to me and the other participants as we visited her ancestral places on the island of Oahu. This chapter has benefitted from engaged discussions with Krista Ovist, Sharon Rowley, Haruko 'Hal' Momma, Kathleen Davis, Jane Hawkes, Alex Golub, several anonymous reviewers, and the editors of this volume, Karen Jolly and Britton Brooks. I am also grateful to the Rt Revd James Mason, former Bishop of Hanuato'o, and his family who shared their decolonizing Solomon Islands perspectives on so-called 'reverse mission' when my wife and I were guests of his family, at Plympton, Devon, in 2007 – a research visit funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (Grant No: RES-000-23-1170). This chapter is made freely available under the OA licence [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

Designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott, the Martyrs' Pulpit was erected in 1877. It is decorated with images of six men honoured by Christians as having died for the sake of the gospel (Fig. 9.1). Three corner niches depict biblical martyrs: St John the Baptist, St Stephen, and St Paul. Three lateral reliefs portray scenes in the lives of three British martyrs. On one side, St Alban prays as the executioner raises his sword. On the opposite side, St Boniface sails from Britain to preach on the Continent, where he will die at the hands of the Frisians in 754. But the front of the pulpit bears the main tableau (Fig. 9.2). Here, by European reckoning, it is 20 September 1871 on Nukapu, a small island roughly fourteen hundred miles northeast of Australia. In a composition evocative of the descent from the cross, three Nukapuans lower the body of Bishop John Coleridge Patteson, wrapped in a palm leaf mat, into a canoe. Soon, crew from the mission vessel – the *Southern Cross*, represented in the distance under sail – will send the ship's boat to collect their murdered leader.

Clearly, this object is staging many simultaneous comparisons, not only among the six martyrs depicted but also pointing back to Christ and encompassing all martyrs, past and future; carved around the base of the reliefs are the words of the *Te Deum*, '[t]he noble army of martyrs praise Thee'. Two figures, nevertheless, stand out: Bishop Patteson and St Boniface. Patteson is salient because his death occasioned the making of the pulpit and he is thus the driving figure behind the associations that compose its iconography. But, among those associations, his links with Boniface are strongest. Like Alban, both men were British martyrs, but both furthermore became bishops while engaged in mission work, and – as emphasized by the presence of a ship in each of their tableaux – both sailed overseas and died abroad. More than any aesthetic detail on the pulpit itself, however, the pulpit's location is what marks these figures as the primary terms of comparison. As elaborated below, both Boniface and Patteson are closely tied to Exeter.

Boniface – originally known as Winfrith – lived in the late seventh and early eighth centuries.² Popular tradition identifies Crediton, near Exeter, as his birthplace. According to his earliest biographer, St Willibald, he entered a monastery at Exeter in his youth and was educated there by Abbot Wulfhard. Inspired by the work of St Willibrord, who was then a missionary in what are now the Low Countries, Winfrith joined him around 716. After initial setbacks, he travelled to Rome, where Pope Gregory II renamed him Boniface and made him a bishop, sending him beyond the Low Countries into Germania.

² For a review of Bonifatian scholarship, including editions and translations of primary and secondary sources, see J.-H. Clay, *In the Shadow of Death: Saint Boniface and the Conversion of Hesse, 721–54* (Turnhout, 2010), pp. 19–31.



Figure 9.1 The Martyrs' Pulpit, Exeter Cathedral, by George Gilbert Scott, installed 1877 (Andrew Dickson White Architectural Photograph Collection, #15-5-3090. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library), public domain.

John Coleridge Patteson was born in London in 1827, but had family connections to Devonshire.³ His mother, Francis Duke Coleridge, was a niece of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and sent her son to be educated, like the poet, at The King's School, Ottery St Mary, east of Exeter. Later, the family relocated to Devonshire, and after attending Eton and Oxford, Patteson returned to the area to take up his first positions in the Church

³ On Patteson, see C. M. Yonge, *Life of John Coleridge Patteson: Missionary Bishop of the Melanesian Islands*, 2 vols (London, 1874).



Figure 9.2 The Martyrs' Pulpit, Exeter Cathedral, detail depicting the death of Bishop John Coleridge Patteson (Andrew Dickson White Architectural Photograph Collection, #15-5-3090. Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Cornell University Library), public domain.

of England. It was in Exeter Cathedral, therefore, that he was ordained, first to the diaconate in 1853, and then to the priesthood in 1854. Inspired by the work being done in New Zealand by George Augustus Selwyn, the first bishop appointed through the Colonial Bishops Fund in 1841, Patteson left England in 1855 to serve as Selwyn's chaplain. Selwyn's missionary see initially comprised not only New Zealand but also other parts of Polynesia and much of Melanesia. As this was too much territory to cover, Selwyn soon ceded interest in the greater part of Polynesia beyond New Zealand to other missionary organizations. But even this reduced area, which still included parts of present-day Solomon Islands and northern Vanuatu, proved unwieldy, necessitating a further split. Almost from the beginning, Selwyn's New Zealand-based outreach to these island groups had been referred to as 'the Melanesian Mission'. In 1861 this term became synonymous with a new missionary see, and Patteson became its first bishop, consecrated with the title 'Missionary Bishop among the Western Islands of the Pacific Ocean'. This new see stretched from the central Solomon Islands to the Banks and Torres Islands and into the northern New Hebrides (now part of Vanuatu), with the Santa Cruz and Reef Islands – where Nukapu lies – situated in between.⁴

These perceived parallels between the lives of Boniface and Patteson form the core comparison around which the Martyrs' Pulpit was built. As they inhere in the pulpit today, these parallels are not hidden, but neither are they self-evident; it takes a certain historically informed perspective to bring them into view. This, I suggest, gives the pulpit a kind of anamorphic quality. In Western art, the classic example of an anamorphic image is *The Ambassadors* by Hans Holbein the Younger, completed in 1533.⁵ When viewing this painting head-on, one sees an unidentifiable object in the centre foreground. If, however, when passing the canvas on one's left, one glances back from an acute angle, this object appears as a skull, a *memento mori*. In the case of the Martyrs' Pulpit, what appears in the moment of anamorphic shift in perspective is a co-constituting link, an ongoing relationship through which North Atlantic pasts shape Pacific histories, and vice-versa.

⁴ R. M. Ross, 'Evolution of the Melanesian Bishopric', *New Zealand Journal of History* 16, no. 2 (1982), 122–45. The classic general work on the early Anglican mission in this region is D. Hilliard, *God's Gentlemen: A History of the Melanesian Mission, 1849–1942* (St Lucia, Queensland, 1978).

⁵ See <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/hans-holbein-the-younger-the-ambassadors>.

Anamorphic Comparison

For several decades, scholars in the social sciences and humanities have been wary of comparison for reasons the Martyrs' Pulpit seems to justify. As my analysis of the anamorphic dynamics of the pulpit suggests, comparisons construct – even invent – rather than discover the terms they compare. They privilege fortuitous similarities to the neglect of dissimilarities and follow chains of endless association without isolating anything useful. This potential for comparison to become a never-ending quest after perpetually transforming and elusive objects of study reveals that there are no autonomously given and fixed categories or units from which to begin comparing. And, without such categories and units, comparisons, it seems, can yield no generalizations, no constants in relation to variables. Comparisons are subjectively – rather than objectively – generated and, as such, are more art than science.⁶

This is not to mention yet another problem the Martyrs' Pulpit makes obvious: comparisons often construct their terms in ways that cooperate with projects of domination and erasure. The pulpit was part of what historian Steven S. Maughan describes as '[t]he saccharine furor that surrounded Patteson's death'.⁷ A narrative quickly arose according to which the attack on Patteson was the result of violent plantation labour recruitment practices in the southwest Pacific during the 1860s and 70s. At that time, these practices included the kidnapping of Islanders, and it was widely believed that Patteson was targeted in retaliation for the abduction of five Nukapuans.⁸ The response, both within the mission and in Britain, was to cast Patteson as the victim more of the labour recruiters than of the Nukapuans, leading to the reform of recruitment practices but also to the promotion of paternalistic imperialism in the western Pacific. Ironically, this 'furor' of moral outrage on behalf of Pacific Islanders produced a monument that all but overlooks the death of another man now recognized by the Anglican Church of Melanesia as its first Solomon Islands martyr. Also fatally wounded on the day Patteson died was Stephen Taroaniara, a young Solomon Islander from the area now known as Arosi on the island of Makira (formerly San Cristoval), who had accepted baptism and confirmation from Patteson in the late 1860s.⁹ An inscription on the

⁶ See, for example, the chapters in *Practicing Comparison: Logics, Relations, Collaborations*, ed. J. Deville, M. Guggenheim, and Z. Hrdličková (Manchester, 2016). For anthropologists, a watershed intervention on comparison has been M. Strathern, *Partial Connections* (Oxford, 2004).

⁷ S. S. Maughan, *Mighty England Do Good: Culture, Faith, Empire, and World in the Foreign Missions of the Church of England, 1850–1915* (Cambridge, 2014), p. 131.

⁸ But see T. Kolshus and E. Hovdhaugen, 'Reassessing the Death of Bishop John Coleridge Patteson', *Journal of Pacific History* 45 (2010), 331–55.

⁹ Arosi has been my base for field research in Solomon Islands on and off since

pulpit simultaneously preserves and obscures his memory with a passing reference to 'two fellow-workers for our Lord' who died in connection with the attack on Patteson.¹⁰

A number of theorists today are trying to address the problems posed by comparison, working against them by working with them. This move requires inhabiting a methodological perspective in which entities and relations are two ways of seeing the same complexities. Here I am thinking especially of the work of anthropologists such as Roy Wagner and Marilyn Strathern – both of whom are Oceanists – but also that of Bruno Latour, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Matei Candea, Martin Holbraad, Morten Axel Pedersen, and Marisol de la Cadena among others.¹¹ These scholars have contributed to the development of post-Cartesian methodological premises that strive to obviate subject/object dualism and locate all entities and relations within a flat ontology of complex nonlinear causality.¹²

Comparison, it should be noted, has been the chief means as well as an end served by these developments. The shift in anthropological thinking away from Cartesian epistemology and towards relations as the fluid composands of everything has proceeded via multiple cross-fertilizing comparisons between indigenous non-Western ways of being and knowing and recent trends in Western philosophy, especially invocations of the Deleuzian concepts of multiplicity, flux, and open-ended becoming-other.¹³ Accordingly, the methodological relationism now informing new agendas for comparative practices in academia is itself a relational phenomenon, co-composed by scholars in Western-rooted disciplines and their diverse non-Western interlocutors.¹⁴ Ethnographic engagement with

1992. I am grateful to the many Arosi with whom I have lived who have drawn me into the history of the Melanesian Mission as their history and taught me to appreciate the many ways in which they, and their forebears, have transformatively reproduced Anglican Christianity. On Taroaniara, see 'Stephen Taroaniara, The First Communicant Martyr', *Southern Cross Log* (Auckland, 15 August 1898), pp. 1–5.

¹⁰ The other fellow-worker was Revd Joseph Atkin, a New Zealander of settler descent.

¹¹ See, for example, 'Comparative Relativism', ed. C. B. Jensen, M. A. Pedersen, and B. R. Winthereik, special issue of *Common Knowledge* 17 (2011).

¹² For a more detailed explication of this post-Cartesian or nondualist ontology, see M. W. Scott, 'To be a Wonder: Anthropology, Cosmology, and Alterity', in *Framing Cosmologies: The Anthropology of Worlds*, ed. A. Abramson and M. Holbraad (Manchester, 2014), pp. 31–54.

¹³ See, for example, E. Viveiros de Castro, 'Intensive Filiation and Demonic Alliance', in *Deleuzian Intersections: Science, Technology, Anthropology*, ed. C. Bruun and K. Rødje (Oxford, 2010), pp. 219–53. In anthropology, as in other disciplines, Deleuze's most influential work has been G. Deleuze and F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. B. Massumi (London, 2004).

¹⁴ In anthropology, this process of co-composition has occurred primarily between ethnographers and the diversely situated indigenous people, outside

indigenous people, particularly those of Melanesia, Amazonia, and the circumpolar north, has translated, transformed, and enfolded non-Western perspectives within these agendas.¹⁵ Are these agendas therefore sites of ongoing Western imperialism, reproduced as academic appropriation of indigenous knowledge, or are they sites of academic decolonization, understood as self-abeyant openness to radical reconfiguration by alterity?¹⁶ Perhaps, in a relationally composed world, the patient reception and active appropriation of alterity can never be wholly separated. In any case, indigenous perspectives have influenced – flowed into – current academic approaches to comparison in ways that have challenged the premises of Cartesian essentialism. These indigenous perspectives differ significantly from one another; yet, they have all been found to differ similarly from Cartesianism: they all take it for granted that a thing can be itself and something else at the same time.

One particularly clear formulation of the premises of methodological relationism is Latour's tripartite principle of 'irreduction': 'Nothing can be reduced to anything else, nothing can be deduced from anything else, everything may be allied to everything else'.¹⁷ The only given, in other words, is irreducible complexity at every scale. Importantly, moreover, this irreducible complexity is not the same complexity at every scale. Everything may entail partial connections to everything else, but no two things are ever identical. There is no underlying identity of being – no monism – that should cause us to wonder at difference; neither is there any radical pluralism that should cause us to wonder at similarity. Difference and similarity are no longer problems to be accounted for; they are simply the texture of complexity. Donna Haraway has put it this way: 'one is too few, but two are too many'.¹⁸ And, drawing widely on

academia, who have hosted them for periods of long-term field research. That said, a number of Pacific Islander academics have responded, both constructively and critically, to this ongoing theorization of non-Cartesian ontologies. See, for example, A. Moutu, *Names are Thicker Than Blood: Kinship and Ownership Amongst the Iatmul* (Oxford, 2013).

¹⁵ For a critique of such translations and transformations as distorting abstractions of 'indigenous place-thought and agency', see V. Watts, 'Indigenous Place-Thought and Agency Amongst Humans and Non-Humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European World Tour!)', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society* 2 (2013), 20–34.

¹⁶ On the under-recognition of North American indigenous scholars and their unacknowledged contribution to the 'ontological turn' in anthropology, see Z. Todd, 'An Indigenous Feminist's Take On The Ontological Turn: "Ontology" is Just Another Word for Colonialism', *Journal of Historical Sociology* 29 (2016), 4–22.

¹⁷ B. Latour, *The Pasteurization of France*, trans. Alan Sheridan and John Law (London, 1988), p. 163.

¹⁸ D. J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York, 1991), p. 177.

Melanesianist ethnography, Strathern characterizes this turn to complexity as 'a post-plural perception of the world'.¹⁹

According to this methodological vision of complex nonlinear causality, things perpetually decompose into relations, and relations perpetually aggregate into things. Every kind of thing – a pulpit, St Boniface, an island, the concept of martyrdom, a Christian mission, an experience of divine grace – is composed of and inheres in shifting compositional relations, some with greater and some with lesser coherence and stability over time. Everything is a trajectory that persists *as* and *through* relations with others. Relations are indispensable to continuity and are, in fact, constitutive of continuity as discontinuity – as intersection with other equally discontinuous continuities. To persist as any kind of entity, therefore, is to associate, to make connections, to relate, to compare.²⁰ It is to be continually sustained by being anamorphically remade – now in one way, now in another – through conjunction with others.²¹

But if comparison is everywhere, if it is what everything does to survive, how can it survive as a deliberate critical strategy? Latour's principle of irreduction means not only that anything can be compared to anything but also that anything can anamorphically transform anything. The recognition of irreducible complexity lets us accept, rather than struggle to overcome, the fact that comparison is onto-generative, that it brings new realities into being by transformatively reproducing their previous configurations. But it also highlights what makes comparison such a powerful political tool. Comparison can be used to sustain one thing at the expense of another, to cause one thing to appear in rich detail while causing others to appear diminished or even to disappear completely. The challenge, therefore, is to choose comparisons carefully and stage them well, enabling the things we compare to cause each other to appear in mutually revealing, augmenting, and sustaining ways. This does not mean muting the capacity of the things we compare to evaluate one another critically; it means striving to render the critical processes of anamorphic comparison reciprocal and mutually beneficial. We cannot opt out of comparison; we can only choose better or worse comparisons. To borrow a phrase from philosopher Isabelle Stengers, we can "'slow down" reasoning' about comparison; we can hesitate before making any comparative leap and

¹⁹ Strathern, *Partial Connections*, p. xvi.

²⁰ B. Latour, *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns*, trans. Catherine Porter (London, 2013), pp. 27–46.

²¹ In the present volume, Hawkes's chapter offers powerful examples of this anamorphic dynamic. Hawkes juxtaposes objects from early medieval England and Island Melanesia in ways that enable all to appear partially connected by a non-representational impulse to manifest the dazzling animacy of complexity itself.

question ourselves: What are we trying to cause to appear here and why?²² At the same time, by pausing in this way, we may learn to attend less to the comparisons that occur to us and more to the comparisons that have occurred to the people we study – whether they be Victorian missionaries, the inhabitants of Bede’s England, Pacific Islanders, or any other others. We may, in other words, learn to decolonize our comparative practices by making them more other-oriented: more other-instigated, other-guided, and other-disclosing.

Two recommendations for research have emerged from these ways of rethinking comparison. First, rather than stage comparisons that deploy naturalized entities, categories, or even processes, we should study the comparisons of *others*, analysing what these comparisons generate, how they do it, and why. Second, we should compare such comparisons. Instantly, the problem of preconceived units of comparison seems to vanish. Comparison itself appears as the perfect universal relative: everything – human and non-human alike – does it in some way, but it remains an infinitely variable constant.

My aim in this chapter is to develop both of these recommendations. I have already initiated the first kind of exercise through my discussion of the comparison between Boniface and Patteson condensed in the Martyrs’ Pulpit. This pulpit was only one expression, however, of a broader comparison between missions to and from Britain in the early medieval period and those of the later Anglican Melanesian Mission – a comparison that antedated Patteson’s death and flourished well into the twentieth century. Accordingly, I will continue my study of this comparison, which I will refer to as the ‘island-missions-comparison’, showing how each mission came to serve as a prototype for the other. This will segue into the second kind of exercise, a comparison of comparisons. Selecting from each of these two mission contexts an example of a historically documented comparison, I will bring these comparisons together and allow them to comment on each other. This will lead me back to Exeter Cathedral, to which Anglicans from the Pacific now make regular visits in the context of UK tours they refer to as ‘missions’. In conclusion, I reflect on what the perspectives of these Pacific missionaries may teach us about how to compare well.

The Island-Missions-Comparison

In 1888 Leonard Robin, a young Englishman living in Auckland, joined the Melanesian Mission. After working as a lay teacher in the Torres Islands, he went to England to study for ordination at St Aidan’s College,

²² I. Stengers, ‘A Cosmopolitical Proposal’, in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, ed. B. Latour and P. Weibel (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 994–1003, at 994.

Birkenhead. When he returned to the Torres Islands, he oversaw the building of two churches: St Aidan's on Loh and St Cuthbert's on Tegua.²³ Robin's translocation of the names of these two saints from the North Atlantic to the Pacific was part of a long-running comparison between the island missions to and from early medieval Britain, which peaked between the sixth and eighth centuries, and the island missions to and from New Zealand, which began with George Augustus Selwyn in 1841. This comparison contributed greatly to the co-generation of at least two things: High Church interpretations of the Hiberno-Saxon missions and the Melanesian Mission as a form of High Church Anglicanism in the Pacific.

While touring his new missionary diocese in the Pacific, Selwyn wrote these words to a friend in 1849:

It has been the concurrent feeling of many wise and pious men, and even of Gibbon, that New Zealand would become the Britain of the Southern hemisphere. Setting aside all other points of similarity involved in the prediction, I fix my thoughts steadily upon one, and pray for God's grace to make my diocese the great missionary centre of the Southern Ocean.²⁴

The 'concurrent feeling' to which Selwyn referred consisted in a pro-colonial discourse that cast New Zealand as a twin-like antipodean Britain in which British history might be recapitulated, only better this time. Sidelining much of that discourse, Selwyn envisioned recapitulating one specific aspect of British history, namely its history as a great mission centre. Subsequent developments indicate that the history he had in mind was that of the Hiberno-Saxon missions of Iona and Lindisfarne.²⁵

Informed by these precedents, Selwyn developed a quasi-monastic and scholastic missionary method that became the hallmark of the Melanesian Mission. In the beginning, the base of the Melanesian Mission was always a school that was also a predominantly masculine community. Working from this base, European missionaries recruited youths from throughout the missionary see, brought them back to the school for periods of catechism and practical education, and then returned them to their villages in the hope that they would become evangelists to their home islands. Although the main school was relocated several times, and smaller regional schools were added, this system remained stable for over half a century.

Patteson points to Selwyn as the architect of this system, but he himself may have initiated the tradition of explicitly likening the mission's

²³ C. E. Fox, *Lord of the Southern Isles: Being the Story of the Anglican Mission in Melanesia 1849–1949* (London, 1958), p. 147.

²⁴ Selwyn to 'a friend', Anaiteum, New Hebrides, 12 August 1849, quoted in H. W. Tucker, *Memoir of the Life and Episcopate of George Augustus Selwyn, D.D.*, 2 vols (London 1879), vol. 1, pp. 286–7.

²⁵ Cf. Hilliard, *Gentlemen*, p. 9.

pedagogical methods and communities to those of the Hiberno-Saxon missions. An account of mission activities in the mid 1860s, probably written by Patteson, describes the mission's second main school – St Andrew's College at Kohimarama (near Auckland) – in the following terms:

A feature of the Melanesian Mission [...] was the establishment of the Mission School at Kohimarama, as not merely a place of moral and religious instruction, but also as a thoroughly efficient industrial institution [...] Those who have read that most interesting book, Mr. Maclear's *History of Christian Missions in the Middle Ages*, will see how the same difficulty was met in the conversion of the Teutonic tribes ... Wilfrid and Boniface, Eligius and Columba, had their industrial institutions in their monasteries, to which they brought their converts for a temporary sojourn wherein to acquire some ideas of the practical working out of the principles of Christianity.²⁶

When the mission relocated its main school to Norfolk Island, the comparison moved with it and grew. Between 1867 and 1919, the school on Norfolk Island – known as St Barnabas' College – became the mission's Iona, Northumbria, Lindisfarne, Utrecht, and Fulda, all rolled into one. As the college was preparing to open, the first headmaster, Robert Henry Codrington, wrote a letter to his aunt in which he compared the mission community at Norfolk Island to 'those ancient monasteries in the N[orth] of England or in Germany you may read of where there is a good deal of education going on side by side of labour, and two kinds of education viz. the Christian civilizing of savages & the learning of divinity by advanced students'.²⁷

Over time, the romance of this island-missions-comparison generalized to other islands identified with mission schools. The island of Gela (or Nggela) in the central Solomons became the site of St Luke's School, which was intended to be 'a junior Norfolk Island of the Solomons'.²⁸ Having visited Gela in the mid 1890s, early on in his tenure as Bishop of Melanesia, Cecil Wilson wrote of it:

It was a strange thing to have a Christian island in the midst of others which were virulently heathen. I pictured it sending out its missionaries to the darker lands as Britain and Ireland used to send their Aidans and Columbas and Bonifaces to Picts and Scots and English and Germans in old days.²⁹

At the same time that these Anglican missionaries were causing their schools and methods to appear through anamorphic analogy with those

²⁶ *The Island Mission* (London, 1869), p. 239.

²⁷ Codrington to his aunt, Norfolk Island, August 1867, quoted in A. K. Davidson, 'The Legacy of Robert Henry Codrington', *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 27 (2003), 171–6, at 172.

²⁸ Hilliard, *Gentlemen*, p. 131.

²⁹ C. Wilson, *The Wake of the Southern Cross* (London, 1932), p. 167.

of the Hiberno-Saxon missionaries, Anglican scholars and popular writers were doing the inverse.

William Bright, Regius Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Oxford, elucidated the missionary practices of St Aidan by comparing them to those of Selwyn and Pateson. In his reworking of the details of Bede's passages on Aidan, published in 1878, he wrote:

[Aidan] obtained fellow-workers from his old country, whose spirit was as his spirit: he formed a school of English boys, twelve in number, who were trained up in holy ways under his own eye, that they might in due time preach to their own countrymen.³⁰

A footnote to this sentence observes: 'It is needless to refer to the practice of Bishops Selwyn and Pateson'.³¹

By bringing Selwyn and Pateson to bear on his representations of Aidan, Bright renders the island-missions-comparison a fully dynamical network of communications between the two antipodes. Through this network, accounts of the two missions reduce and supplement each other, causing the Hiberno-Saxon missions to appear anamorphically in light of the Melanesian Mission as much as the other way around.

This exchange of nuances was not isolated. Drawing on Bright, the antiquarian Alfred C. Fryer invoked the names of Selwyn and Pateson to vivify his non-academic retelling of the life of Aidan, published in 1902.³² Elizabeth Rundel Charles, a Victorian novelist and inspirational writer, worked the comparison from both directions. When narrating the life of Boniface, she compared him to Pateson and, when narrating the life of Pateson, she compared him to Boniface, thus achieving with words what the Martyrs' Pulpit accomplishes with images.³³

This network of associations may have contributed, moreover, to the more theologically significant anamorphic appearance of so-called 'missionary bishops' in the age of Bede.

In the nineteenth century, missionary work in colonial holdings stimulated debates in the Church of England over the role of the episcopacy in church growth. High Church and Anglo-Catholic leaders argued for a model according to which a missionary bishop was one whose consecration to a new see could and should precede evangelization in newly accessible territories. Evangelical leaders argued for a model according to which a missionary bishop was one whose consecration to a new see should crown the establishment of an already well-advanced Christian

³⁰ W. Bright, *Chapters of Early English Church History* (Oxford, 1878), p. 140.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 140, n. 7.

³² A. C. Fryer, *Aidan: The Apostle of England* (London, 1902), p. 36.

³³ E. R. Charles, *Three Martyrs of the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1885), pp. 295, 324–5, 341–2, 378; *idem*, *Early Christian Missions of Ireland, Scotland, and England* (London, 1893), pp. 314–15, 334.

community.³⁴ As Maughan suggests, however, after the passing of the Colonial Bishops Act of 1841, in practice, the High Church model prevailed and effectively co-opted the term ‘missionary bishop’. It was in this milieu that Selwyn, the first to be appointed under this act, and his protégé Patteson became icons of the missionary bishop as heroic ‘vanguard [...] of church extension’.³⁵

This debate, which began to heat up in the 1830s, raises a question. Anglo-Catholics had long been romanticizing the Hiberno-Saxon missionary saints as the bearers of a pure apostolic tradition. Yet I find no advocates of the High Church model of the ‘missionary bishop’ – *prior* to the appointment of Selwyn – citing these medieval figures as precedents in support of their position. Neither do I find the term ‘missionary bishop’ attached to these figures in earlier scholarship. What I do find are diverse examples of religious and scholarly writings, from the decades *following* the appointment of Selwyn, in which not only Aidan and Boniface but also Cedd, Wilfrid, Willibrord, Augustine of Kent, Paulinus, and many lesser known figures as well, are all designated ‘missionary bishops’.³⁶ So readily does this label seem to have become affixed to these figures, in fact, that when Selwyn died in 1878, his long-time friend and fellow bishop, Edward Harold Browne, pronounced him ‘the greatest English missionary bishop since St Boniface’.³⁷ Given the anamorphic perspective afforded by the island-missions-comparison, might it also be true that St Boniface was the greatest English ‘missionary bishop’ since Selwyn?

Comparing Comparisons

‘Everything may be allied to everything else’, according to Latour.³⁸ Nevertheless, fortuitously similar complexities are likely to be composed of smaller-scale complexities that are likewise similar and therefore readily allied.³⁹ Because the island-missions-comparison brought together two fortuitously similar complexities, associating them into a larger

³⁴ T. Yates, ‘The Idea of a “Missionary Bishop” in the Spread of the Anglican Communion in the Nineteenth Century’, *Journal of Anglican Studies* 2 (2004), 52–61.

³⁵ Maughan, *Mighty England*, p. 69. See also Ross, ‘Evolution’.

³⁶ Bright, *Chapters*, pp. 94, 138, 375; Charles, *Three Martyrs*, pp. 295, 390; J. B. Lightfoot, *Leaders in the Northern Church* (London, 1890), pp. 13, 63; G. F. Maclear, *A History of Christian Missions during the Middle Ages* (London, 1863), pp. 110, 130.

³⁷ G. W. Kitchin, *Edward Harold Browne, D.D.* (London, 1895), p. 27.

³⁸ Latour, *Pasteurization of France*, p. 163.

³⁹ Compare the comparative strategies in M. Sahlins, *Apologies to Thucydides: Understanding History as Culture and Vice Versa* (Chicago, 2004) and M. W. Scott, ‘The Matter of Makira: Colonialism, Competition, and the Production of

compound complexity, it remains a likely site of similar smaller-scale complexities, including similar comparisons. The island-missions-comparison is thus a rich source of material for the comparison of comparisons, the second methodological recommendation I have derived from the work of theorists who approach comparison with a presumption of irreducible complexity.

As an exploration of this recommendation, I proceed now to compare two comparisons: one, evident in the Melanesian Mission sources, between a Solomon Islander named Ini Kopuria and St Francis of Assisi, and a second, implicit in Bede's *Historia*, between and the poet Cædmon and a wealth of biblical antecedents. Thus juxtaposed, these comparisons begin, I suggest, to cause something to appear that may be generalizable beyond these mission contexts. This comparison of comparisons not only brings Kopuria and Cædmon into relief as figures who successfully innovated vernacular forms of Christianity that reproduced it differently; it reveals that they did so *by means of comparison*. What comes into view anamorphically is how the signs of divine grace favourable for such innovations are generated through collaborative acts of comparison.

Ini Kopuria was born around 1900 near Maravovo, a village on the island of Guadalcanal, where the Melanesian Mission had a station. Sometime between 1907 and 1909, he, along with his parents and brothers, was baptized by a recently arrived English priest named Frank Bollen. Bollen, a graduate of St Boniface Missionary College at Warminster, gave Kopuria the Christian name of Ini, after the West Saxon king noted for his law code.⁴⁰

This naming constitutes a comparison in its own right. By likening themselves to the Hiberno-Saxon missionaries, the Europeans in the Melanesian Mission were implicitly – and in this case, explicitly – likening their Pacific Islands proselytes to converted barbarians.⁴¹ Inevitably, the island-missions-comparison tended to maintain Pacific Islanders in this subordinate position. Even as they came to compose an increasingly

Gendered Peoples in Contemporary Solomon Islands and Medieval Britain', *History and Anthropology* 23, no. 1 (2012), 115–48.

⁴⁰ J. M. Steward, *The Brothers* (Auckland, 1928), p. 1. Why Bollen chose this name is an open question. Bollen's background is not well documented and, although St Boniface College was located within what had been Ine's Wessex domain, it is not known whether Bollen had special connections to this area. There is no evidence of hereditary chiefship in northwest Guadalcanal, and none of the sources contemporary with Kopuria indicates that, already at the time of his baptism, he was expected to become a leader.

⁴¹ Another baptism that occasioned expression of this implicit comparison was that of Chief Soga of Santa Isabel (Solomon Islands). In the mission's report for 1889, Soga's conversion was noted with the following commentary: 'it is hoped [...] that by God's grace [...] Soga may hereafter become a second Ethelbert to his people'. Quoted in Hilliard, *Gentlemen*, p. 88.

indigenized clergy, Islanders remained the recipients of an exogenous tradition.

With the help of a second comparison, however, Kopuria came to occupy a dual position, situated both as receptive convert and inspired instigator of Christian growth. The available sources do not tell us who first drew this second comparison. What they suggest is that, in dialogue with European mentors in the Melanesian Mission, Kopuria occasioned his own repositioning via references to St Francis of Assisi, a figure of Christian innovation. This later comparison with Francis did not cancel out the implications of the earlier comparison with Ine; the associations invoked by these two comparisons became allied. And it was this alliance of contrasting associations, I suggest, that enabled Kopuria to become recognized as the founder of the Melanesian Brotherhood, a religious order now renowned within the global Anglican Communion and described by Atkin Zaku, a former principal of Bishop Patteson Theological College on Guadalcanal, as 'one of the best examples of a Melanesian agent embedded in the Catholic faith but clothed in Melanesian form'.⁴²

The fullest expression of the Ini-Francis-comparison is Margaret Lycett's booklet, *Brothers*. Published just ten years after the founding of the Brotherhood in 1925, this piece of inspirational writing crystallized the already emergent Franciscan character of Kopuria and the Brotherhood. 'In many respects,' Lycett writes, 'the Brotherhood reminds one of the Franciscan movement of thirteenth century Europe. Like that, it began with the great change which dedication to God makes in the life of one man, followed by the gathering round him of a group of men similarly bound.'⁴³ This observation is then elaborated by a sequence of parallels between the activities of the early Franciscans and those of the Brothers. A brief biography of Kopuria follows, filled with implicit allusions to the life of Francis. Lycett describes Kopuria's education at St Barnabas' College on Norfolk Island as indicative of a 'privileged position' and portrays him as an at once pious, popular, and directionless youth 'who could not settle'.⁴⁴ His brief career in the Native Armed Constabulary, she hints, is analogous to Francis' abortive military ventures. Then, like Francis, he suffered the crisis of an illness.

This last element in Kopuria's life has been central to the Ini-Francis-comparison, marking Kopuria as a figure who, like Francis, underwent

⁴² A. Zaku, 'The Roles of Melanesians in the Development of the Church in Melanesia 1925-1975' (Unpub. Ph.D. diss., Australian Catholic University, 2013), p. 94.

⁴³ M. Lycett, *Brothers: The Story of the Native Brotherhood of Melanesia* (London, 1935), pp. 7-8. Compare B. Macdonald-Milne, *The True Way of Service: The Pacific Story of the Melanesian Brotherhood, 1925-2000* (Leicester, 2003), pp. 34, 38 n. 12.

⁴⁴ Lycett, *Brothers*, pp. 9, 12.

a process of self-examination involving visions and/or the hearing of a voice. By all accounts, during a prolonged hospital stay, Kopuria engaged in intense retrospection and resolved to dedicate himself to God. After recovering, he wrote a letter to the incumbent Bishop of Melanesia, John Manwaring Steward, expressing this intention. This letter – one of the few surviving sources in Kopuria’s voice – was written in the language of the island of Mota (in present-day Vanuatu), an Austronesian language used as a lingua franca in the mission schools between the mid 1860s and early 1930s.⁴⁵ In it Kopuria states: ‘in my pain and sickness God has shewn me that I should see clearly that it is not (my duty to live) as a Policeman, but to declare the Kingdom of God among the heathen. He made me remember, “Your life is Mine, and God can do as He wishes with His own”.’⁴⁶ Although Kopuria makes no explicit reference in this letter to any visionary experience, the mission priest Charles Elliot Fox later reported: ‘Afterwards he told me that during that illness our Lord appeared to him and told him he was not doing the work he was meant for.’⁴⁷ In the text quoted below, Steward’s representation of what Kopuria said to him is more equivocal; nevertheless, subsequent authorities have stated indicatively that Kopuria ‘heard a voice’ or ‘had a vision’.⁴⁸

Steward, who died in 1937, left an undated account of the origin of the Brotherhood among his posthumously published papers. The following excerpt reveals, I suggest, the uncertain nature of Kopuria’s experience, to himself as well as others, and the process through which he and Steward came to recognize it as providential:

As he lay in bed, thinking, it seemed to him that he had not made much of a success of life ...

It occurred to him to think how he had obtained ... schooling ... Who had paid for his food; his clothes, his teaching, his games, all those years ...?

And he seemed almost to hear a voice saying, ‘I gave you all this, what have you given Me, in return?’ ...

As soon as he came out of the hospital, he came to me and told me his story. We had a long talk and decided that the best thing would be for him to come with me, on the [mission ship the] *Southern Cross* and see if, among his friends and contemporaries at Norfolk Island, there were any of the

⁴⁵ As well as Mota, Kopuria would have spoken one or more of the local languages of northwest Guadalcanal. It is likely that, having served in the Native Armed Constabulary, he also spoke Solomon Islands Pijin.

⁴⁶ Ini Kopuria to Bishop John Manwaring Steward, n.d., ed. and trans. in J. M. Steward, *The Brothers* (Auckland, 1928), p. 2. It is not clear whether Kopuria wrote this letter before or after his conversations with Arthur Hopkins about monasticism (see discussion of Hopkins below).

⁴⁷ C. E. Fox, *The Melanesian Brotherhood* (Oxford, n.d.), p. 6.

⁴⁸ See, for example, A. R. Tippett, *Solomon Islands Christianity* (London, 1967), p. 50; D. Whiteman, *Melanesians and Missionaries* (Pasadena, CA, 1983), p. 194; Zaku, ‘Roles of Melanesians’, at 96.

same mind as himself. He found five others, and together we returned to my home ... to discuss the matter thoroughly.

After much discussion, we determined to found a Brotherhood of young men, all of whom should promise to remain unmarried, to receive no payment, and to go wherever the head of the Brotherhood, who was always to be the Bishop, should decide to send them.⁴⁹

It seems clear that the matrix of the Ini-Francis-comparison lies here, in this interval of extended deliberation. It is impossible to know who first made the connection between Francis and Kopuria and their respective brotherhoods. Steward had long hoped to start a religious order for priests, both Islander and European, who would establish a monastery on the island of Malaita and evangelize by Christian example among unconverted populations there.⁵⁰ The idea of a new order was thus already on Steward's mind when Kopuria approached him. Kopuria's sense of vocation 'to declare the Kingdom of God among the heathen' afforded the opportunity to rethink this idea in terms of a lay mission. Evidence that, very early on, Francis and his followers became key points of reference in this process comes from a document, written by Steward and published in 1926, announcing the consecration of the first seven Brothers in May of that year. In this document, Steward describes a 'dream' he and Kopuria and their six recruits had come to share for the Brotherhood, a dream in which they seemed 'to see the little flowers of S. Francis blossoming in the desert places of the Islands'.⁵¹

In preparation for this consecration, Steward, Kopuria, and the other future Brothers drew up a list of rules. More than any other feature of the Brotherhood, these rules have given the order a felicitously medial identity, enabling it to emerge as an institution celebrated by Europeans and Melanesians alike as 'inspired by classical Christian models yet profoundly rooted in the life and culture of the islands'.⁵² The rules of the Brotherhood have been described as 'similar in essentials to the Franciscan' rule, but they were first written in the Mota language and gave the order its Mota name, *Ira Retatasiu*, the Company of Brothers.⁵³ They mandate the threefold vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience, but they prescribe

⁴⁹ J. Steward, *John Steward's Memoirs: Papers Written by the Late Bishop Steward of Melanesia*, ed. M. R. Newbolt (Chester, 1939), pp. 111–12.

⁵⁰ C. E. Fox, 'Ini Kopuria', *Southern Cross Log* (Sydney, 1 June 1946), pp. 21–4, at pp. 21–2.

⁵¹ J. M. Steward, 'The Brothers', *Southern Cross Log* (London, 1 October 1926), pp. 8–12, at p. 12.

⁵² R. Williams, 'Preface', in *In Search of the Lost: The Death and Life of Seven Peacemakers of the Melanesian Mission* by R. A. Carter (Norwich, 2006), p. vii; cf. Zaku, 'Roles of Melanesians', 94.

⁵³ M. R. Newbolt, 'John Manwaring Steward', in Steward, *Memoirs*, pp. 5–22, at p. 17; for the original rules of the Melanesian Brotherhood in Mota, see Melanesian Mission, *Ra Retatasiu ta Melanesia* (Hautabu, British Solomon Islands, 1927).

short-term renewable rather than life-long periods of commitment as the norm, a move widely credited with making the religious life tenable for Pacific Islanders. They place the order under direct episcopal authority, but leave the Brothers otherwise self-governed, organized into a minimal hierarchy of Islanders elected by and overseeing other Islanders. The founding purpose of the Brotherhood, as stated in the very first rule, is 'to preach Jesus among the Heathen'.⁵⁴ To this end, rule ten bids the Brothers go out 'two by two', following Christ's instructions to his disciples in the New Testament.⁵⁵ In practice, therefore, these rules have made the Brotherhood an evangelical outreach to Islanders, by Islanders, carried out in Islander terms. Owing to reports of their abilities to heal the sick and combat malevolent forces, for example, the Brothers have acquired a reputation as the bearers of the efficacious power many Pacific Islanders call *mana*.⁵⁶ Arguably, there is little uniquely Franciscan in any of this, yet emphasizing once again the association with Francis, Zaku sums up the pivotal position of the Brotherhood in these terms: 'Though many of its rules of life were imported from external religious communities such as the community of St Francis of Assisi, much of it was also locally adapted.'⁵⁷

This transformative reproduction of Christianity in Melanesia has been facilitated, in other words, by ongoing processes of Franciscanization first set in motion with Kopuria. Franciscanization helped mediate Kopuria's transition from Christian newborn to mature bearer – and *enhancer* – of Christian tradition to others. By becoming associated with Francis, a figure temporally and geographically distinct from the island-missions-comparison, Kopuria became integrated within global Christianity as a site of new growth that differently, yet consistently, unfolded from the old.

At the same time, however, he remained Ini. He remained within the fold of the European-initiated mission whose goal it had always been to incubate this very transition. The Ini-Francis-comparison has tended, in fact, to obscure the ways in which the Brotherhood also stands in continuity with the Hiberno-Saxon monastic missions that first inspired Selwyn and Patteson. In part, this continuity is a function of the island-missions-comparison itself as broadly constitutive of the context that gave rise to the Brotherhood, but there is also evidence that Kopuria was influenced by Hiberno-Saxon models.

Several sources indicate that another mission priest and teacher, Arthur Innes Hopkins, helped to steer Kopuria's vocation toward the religious life. In a tribute published soon after Kopuria's death in 1945, Fox wrote:

⁵⁴ Steward, 'The Brothers', p. 9. This source contains a full English translation of the original rules.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁵⁶ R. A. Carter, *In Search of the Lost: The Death and Life of Seven Peacemakers of the Melanesian Mission* (Norwich, 2006), pp. 22–7.

⁵⁷ Zaku, 'Roles of Melanesians', at 99.

After this [i.e., Kopuria's illness] Ini went for a time to Marovovo [sic] College with A. I. Hopkins ... Hopkins told me they had long talks about monastic orders and brotherhoods in the early church. Without doubt it was those talks with Hopkins that brought Ini to the decisions as to what he should do, and he went to John Steward now Bishop, and always his spiritual father, and proposed the founding of a native brotherhood.⁵⁸

According to Hopkins himself, his interactions with Kopuria appear to have included formal lessons about the Hiberno-Saxon missions to the Continent.

In some of my Church history lessons I dwelt upon the topic of those early monks to whom Germany, for example, owe [sic] the founding of Christianity, especially those who came from England to the wild tribes in the bush in Germany. I explained the threefold vow of poverty, chastity and obedience under which they worked. One boy, a remarkably able one sensitive to any new things and keen to try it listened eagerly. He went to Bishop Steward and asked him if it would not be possible for him and some of his fellows to do the same in heathen Melanesia.⁵⁹

Fox too may have been responsible for bringing precedents from the Hiberno-Saxon missions to Kopuria's attention. While serving as District Priest on the island of Makira, Fox had formed the St Aidan's Brotherhood, a small band of 'bush brothers' sent out two by two on foot with minimal provisions to evangelize the upland villages.⁶⁰ Fox asserts that, although Kopuria was not involved in this project, he attended the school at Pamua near the brothers' headquarters and knew their leader, Ellison Kokou, who was also from the Maravovo area. Certainly, the original methods of the Melanesian Brotherhood were virtually identical to those of this earlier short-lived band (c. 1916–c. 1921), and the methods of the 'bush brothers' clearly emulated not only those of the Apostles but also of St Aidan as described by Bede.⁶¹ Fox, who did not hesitate in his various writings to position his experiment with monasticism on Makira as a

⁵⁸ Fox, 'Ini Kopuria', p. 21.

⁵⁹ A. I. Hopkins, 'The "Brothers"', *Southern Cross Log* (Sydney, 1 July 1940), p. 20. Hilliard reads Hopkins's recollections as pertaining to Kopuria's earlier school days on Norfolk Island. See Hilliard, *Gentlemen*, p. 227; but compare Steward, 'The Brothers', p. 3.

⁶⁰ C. E. Fox, 'The San Cristoval District in 1917', *Southern Cross Log* (Auckland, 1 June 1918), pp. 3–4. This brotherhood may have acquired more than one name, but its earliest participants referred to themselves in Mota as '*ira S. Aidan*', the Company of St Aidan. See W. Warite and S. Warumu, 'San Cristoval', *O Sala Ususur* (September 1918), pp. 17–18, at 17; but see also Macdonald-Milne, *True Way*, pp. 31, 38 n. 7.

⁶¹ Bede, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, V.5, trans. B. Colgrave, R. A. B. Mynors, and J. M. Wallace-Hadrill, *The Ecclesiastical History of the English People; The Greater Chronicle; Bede's Letter to Egbert*, ed. J. McClure and R. Collins (Oxford, 2008), pp. 116–18.

prototype for Kopuria's order, joined the latter in 1932. This move, as he liked to point out, made the Melanesian Brotherhood the site of a rare political reversal within the Melanesian Mission: it meant that he, a white man, lived under the authority of Ini Kopuria and later under other Melanesian Head Brothers.⁶²

Something happened here, something traditionally known as 'divine intervention'. But it was not an *unmediated* bolt from the blue. Even if Kopuria did experience a voice or vision, such experiences neither occur nor acquire authority in a vacuum. It took not only the right figure from a remote antecedent tradition – St Francis of Assisi – but also a set of proximate human helpers, themselves hopeful and expectant, to guide Kopuria's sense of vocation by making that figure present for him. It took conspiracy as much as inspiration, in other words, to compose and interpret the signs of divine grace.

Readers of Bede's *Historia* may already discern the many details that an anamorphic comparison between the Ini-Francis-comparison and comparisons intrinsic to the Cædmon story can cause to appear. In Bede's account, Cædmon, the humble keeper of cattle, has a dream in which he is called by name and commanded to sing. 'I cannot sing,' he replies. 'Nevertheless you must sing to me,' his dream visitant insists.⁶³ In the dream, Cædmon is then spontaneously able to sing, and upon waking remembers and *adds more* to the dream verses – which, as Bede notes, he composes in his own vernacular, 'English'. He then willingly subjects himself to examination by religious authorities, who test his new poetic gift and decide that it is truly God-given. His chief mentor, the abbess of the monastery at Whitby, persuades him to join her community, where she and others would instruct him in sacred history. Bede tells us that the result was this:

He learned all he could by listening to them and then, memorizing it and ruminating over it, like some clean animal chewing the cud, he turned it into the most melodious verse: and it sounded so sweet as he recited it that his teachers became in turn his audience.⁶⁴

Sharon M. Rowley has analysed the Cædmon episode for what it reveals about what miracles signify for Bede. She argues that, for Bede, '[m]iracles connect the specific history of England to the universal history of the Roman Church and Christian eternity. But England also contributes

⁶² C. E. Fox, *Kakamora* (London, 1962), pp. 67–70. Fox, in fact, came to assert a Melanesian identity, see M. W. Scott, 'How the Missionary got his *Mana*: Charles Elliot Fox and the Power of Name-Exchange in Solomon Islands', *Oceania* 91, no. 1 (2021), 106–27.

⁶³ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, IV.24, p. 215.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

to universal history as it becomes a part of it.⁶⁵ In many ways, the analysis I will offer here underscores this insight, but does so by approaching Bede's account somewhat differently. Rather than compare the Cædmon episode to other miracle accounts in Bede's *Historia*, I will compare a set of comparisons internal to that episode to the comparisons I have shown to be operative in the founding of the Melanesian Brotherhood.

The anamorphic comparison of comparisons I stage here is between the overt Ini-Francis-comparison I have just discussed and the more subtle comparisons, implicit in Bede's telling of Cædmon's dream, between Cædmon himself and a plurality of biblical figures. Peter S. Hawkins has identified these latter comparisons exactly:

[W]hat is this but a version of Moses stammering before [God] about being 'slow of speech and of tongue'? Or Isaiah claiming unclean lips, and Jeremiah his youth and inexperience, as sufficient reason for saying no to God's call? Or the terrified disciples provoking Jesus to tell them not to take thought for what they would say in public [...] Bede presents him [Cædmon] as a type that runs throughout the Old Testament and the New.⁶⁶

Having unpacked these comparisons from the dream, Hawkins goes on to crystallize what they achieve. 'What we see here,' he continues,

is the power of the Bible to incorporate other stories into its larger and ongoing narrative [...] What is more, if Bede's Caedmon gains by being incorporated into the context of Scripture, so too does he enrich it by his personal reenactment of it, by re-presenting its typology in his own time and place.⁶⁷

I would rephrase this slightly: by being incorporated into the context of existing Christian tradition, Cædmon is empowered to enrich that tradition by re-voicing it, in his own language, for his own time and place. The comparison between Cædmon and a variety of biblical figures does for Cædmon what the Ini-Francis-comparison does for Kopuria. Being compared to sacred figures, distant from but also pre-linked to their immediate conversion contexts, gives these men the authority to reproduce Christianity as a discontinuous continuity. It can even weaken political asymmetries by generating inversions, turning pupil into teacher and teacher into pupil.

Beyond these parallel socio-political processes, however, what this anamorphic comparison of comparisons brings into view is how the signs of grace are skilfully welcomed into being by those who await them.

⁶⁵ S. M. Rowley, 'Reassessing Exegetical Interpretations of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*', *Literature and Theology*, 17 (2003), 227–43, at 230.

⁶⁶ P. S. Hawkins, *The Language of Grace: Flannery O'Connor, Walker Percy, and Iris Murdoch* (New York, 2004), p. 7.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

Something traditionally described as ‘divine intervention’ happened with Cædmon too. When juxtaposed with the sources for what happened with Kopuria, therefore, Cædmon’s experience begins to appear differently than when approached through Bede’s text alone. Daniel Paul O’Donnell has argued that ‘in as much as he [Bede] does not claim to have been an eyewitness to Cædmon’s career or inspiration, there is no point attempting to sift his account for clues as to what “really” went on’.⁶⁸ But the virtue of anamorphic comparison is that it mitigates the need for sifting by causing otherwise unobtrusive details to surface. Set beside Bede’s account of Cædmon, the careful collaborative composing of Ini Kopuria as a latter-day St Francis highlights the likelihood that it likewise took deliberate consensual cultivation – and time – to make Cædmon’s prophecy-like gift germinate overnight. It happened in conversation. ‘After much discussion’, as Bishop Steward put it, it was decided that Kopuria’s vocation was to found a missionary brotherhood much like that of St Francis. The comparison was essential to the discovery of grace. So also, Bede tells us, after much discussion – among the abbess and the learned men *and* Cædmon – ‘it seemed clear to all of them that the Lord had granted him heavenly grace’.⁶⁹

O’Donnell makes no mention of the many biblical comparisons condensed in Bede’s summary of Cædmon’s dream, and he contends that neither Bede nor the figures of religious authority in this story are especially interested in how the cowherd acquired his remarkable abilities.⁷⁰ Yet, set beside the Ini-Francis-comparison, these biblical comparisons come to the fore, and the content of a lost dialogue becomes partially audible in the words, ‘[h]e was then bidden to describe his dream in the presence of a number of the more learned men and also to recite his song so that they might all examine him and decide upon the nature and origin of the gift of which he spoke’.⁷¹ Almost certainly, comparisons with the call narratives of biblical figures were part of this examination and were crucial to its positive verdict, perhaps even to the point of shaping subsequent narrations of Cædmon’s dream. This is not to say, cynically, that grace happens by committee; it happens by collusive desire for it to happen – by questioning, recollecting, selectively forgetting, *and by the suggesting of comparisons*. Even to first-hand observers and participants, one suspects, the elicitation of grace retains an unreconstructible and irreducible complexity.

⁶⁸ D. P. O’Donnell, *Cædmon’s Hymn: A Multimedia Study, Archive and Edition* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 28.

⁶⁹ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, IV.24, p. 216.

⁷⁰ O’Donnell, *Cædmon’s Hymn*, pp. 1–8.

⁷¹ Bede, *Ecclesiastical History*, IV.24, p. 216.

Decolonizing Missions, Decolonizing Comparisons

One of my objectives in this chapter has been to tell a little-known story, the story of how medieval monks and kings from islands in the North Atlantic travelled to islands in the southwest Pacific via the imaginations of Victorian Anglican missionaries. In telling this story, I have also made it a pretext for exploring two strategies for the renewal of comparison: the strategy of analysing the comparisons of others and the strategy of comparing such comparisons.

Taking it for granted that comparisons reconfigure and redefine the terms they compare – a phenomenon I have described as the anamorphic power of comparison – these strategies attempt to shift agency in the making of comparisons away from the academic researcher, focusing instead on the agencies and anamorphic processes discernible in comparisons made by others. These strategies are designed, in other words, to decolonize comparisons – to decentre the culturally particular categories that often motivate academic comparisons, to cede the pursuit of anamorphic agendas in the making of comparisons to others, and to interrogate the who, what, where, and why of those agendas. The goal is to make comparison a unit as much as a mode of analysis; or, more accurately, to recognize that every unit of analysis is composed by and of comparisons, making every comparison already a comparison of comparisons. With these aims in view, I have shown how the island-missions-comparison transformed a variety of early medieval missionaries to and from Britain into ‘missionary bishops’ and caused the schools established by the Melanesian Mission to appear as the Ionas, Lindisfarnes, and Fuldas of the Pacific. And I have suggested, through my comparison of the comparisons that caused Ini Kopuria and the poet Cædmon to appear as divinely inspired Christian innovators, that comparison in this mode may yet yield general knowledge. If two separate comparisons have caused the same kind of phenomenon to appear – such as an event recognized as a sign of divine grace – then the comparison of those comparisons may reveal something about the ontology of that phenomenon, something about its compositional make-up and the kinds of comparisons that bring it into being.

But the story of the long reach of figures such as Aidan, Boniface, and Bede in the Pacific is not yet finished. It continues to unfold as the Anglican Church of Melanesia (ACoM), an independent province within global Anglicanism, sends self-identified and recognized ‘missionaries’ to the rest of the world. Religious orders, especially the Melanesian Brotherhood, have been central to this agenda and have brought the trajectory of Anglican missions full circle, from the Pacific back to Britain. Since the founding of the Brotherhood, three other Anglican communities

have come to or developed in ACoM: the Society of St Francis, the Sisters of the Church, and the Sisters of Melanesia. For over two decades now, teams of Melanesian Brothers, along with representatives of these other orders, have been visiting the United Kingdom, offering a ministry of renewal to Anglican congregations and other host organizations.⁷² I end my narration, therefore, with this most recent chapter in the story, which opens a unique aperture of analytical access onto Pacific Islander perspectives on the myriad comparisons these UK missions impose upon and afford their participants.

To call oneself or be regarded as a Christian 'missionary' is to become situated in a complex web of associations with past missionaries and missions, going back to the Apostles. Inevitably, to answer to the description 'missionary' is to appear as the supposed bearer of a spiritual advantage vis-à-vis others who are presumed to need but lack it. Since the height of European colonialism, especially, 'missionary' has implied a paradigm of hierarchical relations between empowered emissaries of God and their benighted would-be converts. This paradigm can generalize even to missionaries whose forbears accepted Christianity under European colonial regimes. When cast as agents of 'reverse mission', missionaries from postcolonial churches can appear merely to invert and reproduce the asymmetry, chauvinism, and will to power ascribed to many mission projects of the colonial past.⁷³

Faced with these associations, many missionaries, including the Melanesian Brothers and other ACoM religious orders who come to the UK, deploy *additional* counter-comparisons to decolonize their missions. They strive to temper the hierarchy of spiritual 'haves' versus 'have-nots' that can dominate images of mission by associating their work with alternative terms and practices that convey equality and reciprocity. Thus, rather than presume to compare himself and his companions to Patteson, one Melanesian Brother on a UK mission in 2005 explained that the purpose of the mission was to show the 'fruits' of Patteson's labours.⁷⁴ With this trope he caused a balanced image of mission to appear: the 'fruits' of a past mission can never be unidirectional; they are always medial between a parent tree and new growth. To this same end, a novice Brother in this 2005 contingent represented the mission as a kind of gift exchange. 'It was your ancestors who brought us the gospel of peace,' he told parishioners at a host church, 'and now we have returned to thank you.'⁷⁵

⁷² R. Catto, 'Reverse Mission: From the Global South to Mainline Churches', in *Church Growth in Britain: 1980 to the Present*, ed. D. Goodhew (Farnham, 2012), pp. 91–103, at 93; Carter, *Search of the Lost*, pp. 211–34.

⁷³ Catto, 'Reverse Mission'.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 94.

⁷⁵ Carter, *Search of the Lost*, p. 218.

Another means by which these Pacific proselytizers decolonize what it means to be missionaries is by engaging in activities that position them also as pilgrims. Co-organized with UK-based facilitators, ACoM missions to Britain are multi-city tours through which missionary teams bring liturgical drama, music and dance, education, and fellowship to churches, schools, and prisons. But those involved, both visitors and facilitators, also co-compose these tours as pilgrimages through which Pacific Islanders bring the gospel back to the holy sites associated with their spiritual grandfathers.⁷⁶ Prominent on the itinerary, therefore, is Exeter Diocese where mission delegates connect with the tangible traces of the life of Patteson: his childhood home at Feniton Court, the Patteson Cross in Ottery St Mary, the church at Alington where he served his first curacy, and Exeter Cathedral where the Martyrs' Pulpit stands ready to become the centrepiece of group photos. Another regular destination is the tomb of Selwyn at Lichfield Cathedral. Some missionaries from Melanesia have even made the crossing to Lindisfarne.⁷⁷

By looking and acting like pilgrims, these missionaries also make missionaries look and act like people sent to be inspired as much as to inspire. This comparison-rich practice anamorphically configures missionaries as people on a journey of spiritual renewal through encounter with others, past and present. Like the tropes of fruit and gift exchange, the act of pilgrimage asserts symmetry, continuity, and coevalness among these missionaries, their predecessors, and the recipients of their efforts. These Islanders thus work to negotiate mutually conditioning comparisons and counter-comparisons that not only cause them to appear as missionaries but also modulate how missionaries appear to others.

This brief study of how Pacific Islanders use comparisons to decolonize missions speaks as well to the problem of how to decolonize comparisons. The study highlights the ubiquity and complexity of comparison. No comparison is an isolate; all comparisons are dialogic, responsive to and working together with other intersecting comparisons to shape the way things appear. We need, therefore, to learn to recognize and attend to these dynamics when analysing the comparisons of others. But the study furthermore compels us to acknowledge that, if an act as simple as describing

⁷⁶ On Patteson as a 'grandfather', see the chapter by Solomon Islander B. Wate, 'Bishop Patteson Relics, Solomon Islands', in *Trophies, Relics and Curios? Missionary Heritage from Africa and the Pacific*, ed. K. Jacobs, C. Knowles, and C. Wingfield (Leiden, 2015), pp. 111–13.

⁷⁷ Macdonald-Milne, *True Way*, p. 314. Karen Jolly's account, in the present volume, of another group of people who have brought Pacific perspectives to Britain in the twenty-first century presents a marked contrast. Unlike the ACoM missionaries, those University of Hawai'i students about whom Jolly writes who identify with Hawaiian or other Pacific Islands heritages seem to view early medieval and present-day English objects and places as 'other' and as belonging to others.

someone as a missionary entangles that person in a web of associations, then we can never limit ourselves to analysing the comparisons of others. We cannot not compare. When staging our own comparisons, therefore, we need to let others (including non-human others) revise, re-nuance, or reject the anamorphic implications of the comparisons in which we situate them. The Pacific perspectives glimpsed through the missionary endeavours of the heirs to the island-missions-comparison appear to urge this wisdom: to compare well is to give others the last word, action, or relation that situates them and causes them to appear otherwise through counter-comparisons of their own.