

Of Missionaries and Mariners: Marists, Milanese and the Vicariate of Melanesia, 1845-1859.

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When Jesus Christ, as reported by Matthew, Mark and Luke, issued the Great Commission by which he enjoined his disciples to teach the Word of Divine Truth to people of all nations he did not presume to offer them any supernatural, or even preternatural, assistance in making straight their way of so doing.² There was no concomitant infusion of accurate travel instructions, no fleet of fiery chariots laid on to provide safe and reliable transport and no corps of angelic security guards with flaming swords, ready to provide personal protection against hostile indigenes. Thus it is that the story of pioneering missionary endeavours, of those who ‘at His bidding speed/And post o’er land and ocean without rest’, is most clearly to be read as a story of faith and fortitude, but commonly also as one that involves geographical and ethnographic exploration; and as one in which expedience prescribes dependence on the material and the mundane. That is, it demands ‘making friends with the mammon of iniquity’.³ Indeed, the last factor even shaped in a particular way the seminal missionary journeys of St Paul. He spread the Gospel along established communication routes, especially Roman roads.⁴ Similarly, though with a big shift in time and place, there is in all of this rich precedent for the contingencies that marked the early Marist-led Catholic ventures into what initially was formally designated

¹ This paper was prepared for the symposia held at Wellington and Auckland (17 and 25 April 2009, respectively) in conjunction with the launch of Charles Girard SM (ed.), *Lettres reçues d’Océanie..., 1836-1854*, 10 vols, Rome, 2009. Translations from French sources are by the present author. In the references below letters are cited according to their archival location, where they were examined; where they are re-produced in the Girard volumes this is indicated with volume and page numbers, eg. G[irard] 3:121. Letters seen only in Girard are similarly cited. A decisively influential supporter of the Girard project was Fr. John Jago SM, Superior-General of the Society of Mary (1985-1993).

² Matt.28:19; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47. Incidentally, the convergence of these references neatly illustrates the ‘synoptic’ character of those three Gospels. Note: with its emphasis on shipping, this paper may also serve as an addendum to Deryck Scarr, *A History of the Pacific Islands: passages through tropical time*, London, 2001.

³ John Milton, sonnet ‘*On His Blindness*’; Luke 16:9.

⁴ Justin Taylor SM, *St Paul’s Missionfield: the World of Acts 13-28*, in *Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association*, vol. 21 (1998) 9-24.

as the Vicariate Apostolic of Western Oceania. Conversely, the religious narrative may also illuminate the various secular ones with which it is entangled. This, for example, is abundantly demonstrated in Charles Girard's monumental edition of Marist missionary correspondence. Published in 2009, it is the most substantial work of its kind to appear since Beaglehole's *Cook Journals* (1955-1967). Among much else of mundane as well as of spiritual interest, these letters help put flesh on the skeletal fact-bones of numerous vessel departures and arrivals 'to/from the South Sea Islands', as reported in the daily shipping news.⁵

Departing from France, Bishop J-B-F Pompallier took the first party of Marists destined for the western moiety of the Great Ocean into the Pacific via Cape Horn in 1837. Passengers on a three-masted schooner named the *Delphine*, they came first to Valparaiso in Chile (where, incidentally, France had established a naval station in 1824). Set up to protect French political and economic interests in the Pacific, that station also became helpful for French missionaries, especially during the interlude of restored monarchy: Bourbon (Louis XVIII, Charles X) 1814-30, then Orleans (Louis-Philippe) 1830-48.⁶ Pompallier's hope was to proceed from Valparaiso to Tonga or New Zealand, 'to commence my spiritual work'. But after two months of waiting in vain for a vessel going that way he changed his plan. Accordingly, in August he and his party, in company with Bishop Etienne Rouchouze of Eastern Oceania, took passage aboard the American merchant schooner *Europa*, bound for Hawai'i, via Gambier and Tahiti. From Hawai'i, on the basis of information received at Valparaiso, Pompallier believed that it would be easier for him to reach Ponape/Pohnpei (or Ascension Island), and at least make a start there, Pohnpei also being within his jurisdiction.⁷ At Tahiti, however, his plans changed again. During the *Europa's* two weeks stay there he managed to charter the locally-built schooner *Raiatea* from a trader named Jacques Moerenhout, and so be free to venture on a tour of the southern islands of his domain. Thus it was that, travelling via Tonga, Wallis and Futuna, Rotuma, and Sydney,

⁵ Girard, *Lettres*; Hugh Laracy, *Girard Joins Beaglehole: a note on some new source material*, in *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 116:4 (2007) 383-384.

⁶ Jean-Paul Faivre, *L'expansion française dans le Pacifique de 1800 à 1842*, Paris, 1953, p.315-18; Colin Newbury, *Tahiti Nui: change and survival in French Polynesia, 1767-1945*, Honolulu, 1980, p. 92-5, 112-3.

⁷ The spelling 'Pohnpei' was officially adopted in 1984. David Hanlon, *Upon a Atone Altar: a history of Pohnpei to 1890*, Hawai'i, 1988, p.229, note 5.

on 10 January 1838 he eventually came to New Zealand. And there he decided to make his base.⁸ Given the extent of his jurisdiction, transport was an acute problem. Not only was travel slow, time-consuming and ridden with uncertainties but even with his own ship it would be very expensive, and the consequent strain on finances could exacerbate or lead to difficulties among the missionaries themselves. This proved to be the case with the *Sancta Maria*, formerly the American whaler *Atlas*, which Pompallier bought in 1840 and sold in 1843.⁹ Less fortunate, though, was Bishop Rouchouze who was drowned with twenty-four of his missionaries when his new brig the *Marie-Joseph* foundered *en route* from France to Hawai'i in 1843.¹⁰ Meanwhile, for practical administrative reasons as well as for internal 'political' ones, adjustments were under way within Pompallier's vicariate. In 1842 the Vicariate Apostolic of Central Oceania was erected, in effect confining Pompallier to New Zealand. That same year (on 23 May), while Pompallier was returning from Futuna following the killing there of Peter Chanel, his pro-vicar Jean-Baptiste Epalle had set out for Valparaiso *en route* to Lyon. His purpose was to inform Jean-Claude Colin, the Superior-General of the Marists, about the problems afflicting the New Zealand mission.¹¹

The main immediate outcome of Epalle's expedition was the formal removal from Pompallier's jurisdiction of the remaining northern part of the original vicariate of Western Oceania. This was done by the creation on 16 May 1844 of the two new vicariates of Melanesia (160°-125°W; 0°-12°S; consisting of New Guinea and the Solomon Islands) and of Micronesia (180°-125°E; 13°N-0°; focussed on Pohnpei¹², but dipping below the equator in the southeast to include the southern

⁸ Jean Baptiste François Pompallier, *Early History of the Catholic Church in Oceania*, Auckland, 1888, p.13-17; Ralph M Wiltgen, *The Founding of the Roman Catholic Church in Oceania, 1825 to 1850*, Canberra, 1979, p. 132-41.151-223.

⁹ Epalle to Colin, 19 Jan. 1842, and Pompallier to Association de la Propagation de la Foi, 6 Nov. 1842, G2:21, 395; Pompallier, *Early History*, p.68; E. R. Simmons, *Pompallier, Prince of Bishops*, Auckland, 1984, p. 52.108; [Peter McKeefry], *Fishers of Men*, Auckland, 1938, p.99-100, photograph p.120.

¹⁰ Wiltgen (1978), p. 311-14.

¹¹ *Ibid.* p. 224-66; Kevin J. Roach, 'Colin and the New Zealand Mission, 1838-1848', D. Historiae Ecclesiasticae thesis, Pontificia Universitas Gregoriana, Rome, 1963, p.184-204. 261.386; Hugh Laracy, *Saint-Making: the case of Pierre Chanel of Futuna*, in *New Zealand Journal of History*, 34:1 (April 2000) 145-61.

¹² L.J. Raucaz, *In the Savage South Solomons: the story of a mission*, Dublin, 1928, p. 30.

Gilberts). On 21 July Epalle was consecrated bishop (titular of Sion) for Melanesia, but with provisional responsibility also for Micronesia.¹³ Six months later, accompanied by a staff of thirteen, and resentful at having been overcharged by a shipping agent named Filby, he set sail from London for Sydney in the 550 ton barque *Bussorah Merchant*.¹⁴ They arrived on 22 June 1845.

At that point the questions arose 'Where next' and 'How'? Already, however, some efforts to smooth their path were under way. Responding to the increasing scale of Marist operations in the south-west Pacific, Colin had already arranged that a Procure or supply base (with transit accommodation) for his missionaries be set up in Sydney, the commercial hub of the region, in April 1845.¹⁵ Looming as a further source of assistance was the Société Française de l'Océanie (hereinafter SFO), support for which had been effectively harnessed by another Marist, one Guillaume Douarre, newly appointed as coadjutor to Bishop Pierre Bataillon of Central Oceania, but with responsibility for New Caledonia.¹⁶ This body, legally constituted at the port of Le Havre [de Grâce], at the mouth of the Seine, on 20 June 1845, was a trading concern which was intended to tailor its operations so as also to help Catholic missionaries in their work.¹⁷ Its vessels of most interest for the present story are its flagship, the 312-ton barque *Arche d'Alliance*, and the 74-ton brig *Anonyme*.

Meanwhile, in Sydney, Epalle was frustrated to have two and a half months taken up by discussions with Pompallier over New Zealand

¹³ Wiltgen, *The Founding*, p. 284-310; Epalle to Propagation de la Foi, 22 Jan. 1845, Archivio Padri Maristi [APM], Rome, OMM 411, G3:332.

¹⁴ Dubreul to Epalle, 11 Nov. 1844; Epalle to Poupinel, 12 Jan. 1845; Epalle to Colin, 31 Jan., 2 May 1845 APM OMM 411.

¹⁵ John Hosie, 'The French Mission; an Australian base for the Marists in the Pacific to 1874', MA thesis, Macquarie University, 1971; John Hosie, *Challenge: the Marists in colonial. Australia*, Sydney, 1987, p. 31-6; Stanley W. Hosie, *Anonymous Apostle: John Claude Colin, Marist*, New York, 1967, p. 181-4.

¹⁶ Douarre was consecrated bishop (titular of Amata) at Lyon on 18 October 1842. He had trouble finding transport to the Pacific, but eventually left from Toulon on a naval vessel, the *Uranie*, on 3 May 1843, reaching New Caledonia on another such, the *Bucephale*, on 20 Dec. 1843. New Caledonia became an independent vicariate (including New Hebrides) on 27 June 1847; New Hebrides became a separate prefecture in 1901, then a vicariate in 1904.

¹⁷ Patrick O'Reilly, *La Société de l'Océanie' (1844-1854)*, in *Revue d'Histoire des Missions*, VII (Juin 1930) 227-63; Un Père Mariste [Gabriel Mayet], *Auguste Marceau*, Paris, [1895], p. 217-23.

matters.¹⁸ However, his travel questions were also being answered, thanks to contacts between the Procure (particularly of Jean-Louis Rocher) and local shipping operators through the agency of Didier Numa Joubert. This latter was a French merchant and ship-owner who had come to the Pacific in 1837.¹⁹ He provided access to whaling captains, who constituted a notably informative source of advice. For ships out of Sydney had been hunting whales from as early as 1791. Although the industry was slow to develop, it began to grow rapidly from the mid-1820s, concentrating on the 'Northern Ground' off north-eastern Australia. By 1831 there were 'fifty or sixty' vessels operating from Sydney, and this number was augmented by numerous foreign vessels. And conveniently, from 1832, they were collectively directed to the newly established whaling station at Mosman Bay on the northern shore of the harbour.²⁰

One of his informants, Captain George Blaxland, owner of the *Merope*, strongly advised Epalle to visit the port of Makira Bay on the island of San Cristobal, at the southern end of his Melanesia vicariate. Blaxland had been there several times.²¹ He reported that the people were friendly and that once (in 1841?) he had brought several young men back to Sydney for three years. There they had worked as watermen, ferrying people around the harbour. On being returned home they had asked him to obtain missionaries for them, and also horses. Blaxland passed this request on to the Church of England bishop, George Broughton. But the latter had declined because of the danger of malaria, leaving it to his New Zealand counterpart, George Augustus

¹⁸ Epalle to Colin, 22 Oct 1845, APM OMM 411, G3:628.

¹⁹ Hosie, *Challenge*, p. 34.82.

²⁰ W. J. Dakin, *Whalemen Adventurers: the story of whaling in Australian waters and other southern seas related thereto, from the days of sails to modern times*, Sydney, 1963, 94-6; Harry Morton, *The Whale's Wake*, Dunedin, 1982, p.146-7; Max Colwell, *Whaling Around Australia*, Adelaide, 1969, p.30; Gavin Souter, *Mosman: a history*, Melbourne, 1994, p. 38-57.

²¹ Rocher to Colin, 4 Dec. 1845, G3:731. Identified voyages of *Merope* (Blaxland) are Sept. 1840 - 19 Nov. 1841 and 14 July 1842 - 27 Feb. 1843, and of *Merope* (Hogg) 26 March 1843 - July 1845. Information regarding these shipping movements is drawn from Sydney newspapers and from A.G.E. Jones, *Ships Employed in the South Seas Trade, 1773-1861* (parts I and II) and *Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen Transcripts of Registers of Shipping, 1787-1862*, Canberra, 1986. Blaxland had also commanded other whalers: *Lord Rodney* (1832-36), *William* (1835-36). Information from Mark Howard, 10 Oct. 2009.

Selwyn, to initiate a mission to Melanesia in 1849.²² For his part Epalle was rather more interested than Broughton, since for him Makira was at least already *en route*. His plans, however, were flexible, if not inchoate. Eventually he hoped to establish four major posts, one in the Solomons, one in New Britain, one in New Ireland and one at the western end of New Guinea (which had been visited by Dumont d'Urville in 1824 and 1827). Immediately, though, he aimed to investigate Thousand Ship's Bay in the south of Santa Isabel in the Solomons, an area that already had the allure of historic Catholic connections thanks to sixteenth-century Spanish explorers. More recently, the bay had been charted in 1838 by Dumont d'Urville, the first European to see it in 270 years. It was subsequently described in Domeny de Rienzi's *Océanie* (ed.1842), a copy of which Epalle had with him, and which has been characterised as 'the most widely distributed synthesis of what passed for European knowledge of the Pacific in the mid-nineteenth century'. After that Epalle intended dropping two missionaries (Joseph Thomassin and Claude Jacquet) at Pohnpei; but broadly his objective (endorsed by his confrères and by Bishop Polding of Sydney) was 'New Guinea'.²³

To these ends, though with the misgivings of various well-wishers, on 23 October 1845 Epalle and his party - together with a menagerie of livestock, and an extensive library - sailed from Sydney for the 'South Sea Islands', via New Caledonia, aboard the 140 ton schooner *Marian Watson*.²⁴ The vessel was to be at Epalle's disposal at a cost of £110 per month. That was a discounted rate from the usual £1 per ton because the

²² Hugh Laracy, *Selwyn in Pacific Perspective*, in Warren E. Limbrick (ed.), *Bishop Selwyn in New Zealand, 1841-68*, Auckland, 1983, 121-135.

²³ Rocher to Colin, 4 Dec. 1845, G3:731; Chaurain to Colin, 2 March 1846, G4:196; Colin Jack-Hinton, *The Search for the Islands of Solomon, 1567-1838*, Oxford, 1969, p.54. 343. [Susan Shortridge, ed.], *Paradise Possessed: the Rex Nan Kivell collection*, Canberra, 1998, p.62. Helen Rosenman (ed.), J-S-C. Dumont D'Urville, *Two Voyages to the South Seas*, Melbourne, 1987, vol.2, 372. In 1568 Hernan Gallego had observed that the bay 'could hold a thousand vessels'. Other editions of *Océanie* were published in translations in 1836, 1843, 1862 and 1872.

²⁴ In addition to the works cited below, there are others that also recount the Vicariate of Melanesia story: Antoine Monfat, *Dix années en Mélanésie etude historique et religieuse*, Lyon, 1891; Hugh Laracy, *Marists and Melanesians: a history of Catholic missions in the Solomon Islands* Canberra, 1976, and Colin and Melanesia, in Alois Greiler (ed.), *Catholic Beginnings in Oceania: Marist missionary perspectives*, Adelaide, 2009, 87-103; Claire O'Brien, *A Greater Than Solomon Here: a story of Catholic Church in Solomon Islands*, Honiara, 1995.

owner had himself long been desirous of going to the islands of Epalle's vicariate.²⁵ Notable in itself, this departure of the *Marian Watson* also finds meaning within a wider context. For it inaugurated a sequence of twenty-five voyages bearing in some way on, and providing information about, the Catholic venture into 'Melanesia'. Nineteen of them were arranged as part of the mission and six (including two punitive expeditions) occurred independently. Collectively, these voyages also help make that apostolic enterprise a significant and richly recorded, if hitherto underappreciated, element of other but cognate histories. Indeed, the overall operation that begot them, episodic and quintessentially *ad hoc* as it was, has a discrete significance as being the first concerted and sustained effort by Europeans to settle in that region. That is, despite being irregular and uncoordinated, and despite historiographical neglect, the voyages constitute a noteworthy component of the chronicle of Australia's early outreach into her Pacific frontier and, conversely, also that of the local people's portentously growing familiarity with Europeans.²⁶

The *Marian Watson* reached San Cristobal on 2 December but Epalle, preferring somewhere more central, did not inspect Makira. Instead, he had a cursory look at the adjacent anchorage of Marau Bay (not to be confused with Marau Sound on Guadalcanal), which he named St. Jean-Baptiste, and then pushed on to Santa Isabel. And there disaster struck. On 16 December, careless of local political tensions, he was attacked and fatally wounded by axe blows to the head. Three days later he was buried on the islet of San Jorge, so named by Mendana at the beginning of Catholic contact with the Solomons, of which Epalle was appreciatively aware, in 1568. Consequently, the survivors then fell back to Makira, which they named Port Sainte-Marie.²⁷ There they were well received and found a number of people who were well acquainted with the world beyond, including the three who had been with Blaxland, as well as a man named Loukou, a former seaman, and who had

²⁵ Rocher to Colin, 4 Dec. 1845, G3:731; French consul at Sydney (Faramond), 'Rapport', 30 April 1846, Correspondence Commerciale, Sydney, Archives de la Ministère Étrangères, Paris.

²⁶ Roger C. Thompson, *Australian Imperialism in the Pacific: the expansionist era, 1820-1920*, Melbourne, 1980, pp.9-11. John M. R. Young, *Australia's Pacific Frontier: economic and cultural expansion into the Pacific, 1795-1885*, Melbourne, 1967, p.7.

²⁷ L. M. Raucaz, *In the Savage South Solomons: the story of a mission*, Lyon, 1928, p.32.40.

acquired a taste for brandy. But there were also intimations of danger.²⁸ One of the Marists, Xavier Montrouzier, was wounded by a man named Orimanu in retaliation for a sexual assault perpetrated by a sailor; and, less contingently, malaria was not to be avoided. After the *Marian Watson* left Makira for Sydney, carrying news of Epalle's 'murder' it dropped Montrouzier at New Caledonia to recuperate.²⁹ Soon afterwards the Central Oceania mission vessel, *Clara* visited Makira, in July 1846. Though Bishop Douarre found eight of his nine confrères to be sick, he and they concurred in deeming that 'the natives had become amicably disposed'.³⁰ Such faith-sustained optimism was still feasible in February 1847 when, fifteen months after leaving Le Havre, Jean-Georges Collomb, Epalles's successor-elect, arrived at Makira aboard the *Arche d'Alliance* with the now recovered Montrouzier.³¹ Concerned more for the well-being of his colleagues than for their security, Collomb then left a week later, accompanied by the worn-out Leopold Verguet (an accomplished artist), to seek Episcopal consecration, first in Sydney and eventually in New Zealand. Six months later, returning in the *Anonyme* of the SFO, via New Caledonia, where he had experienced the destruction of the mission at the hands of the Kanaks, Collomb found a comparably desolate state of affairs at Makira. Twenty-four year old Cyprien Crey had died of fever, and three other Marists had been killed by inland villagers whilst searching for a more salubrious location.³²

Accordingly, on the strength of information he had picked up in Sydney, Collomb decided to shift his site of operation from Makira to the putatively more hospitable island of Woodlark (or Murua), nearer New Guinea.³³ Thus it was that a succession of visitors soon found

²⁸ Montrouzier to his parents, 30 Jan. 1846, G4:115; Chaurain to Colin 2 March 1846, GG3:196. Wiltgen, *The Founding*, p. 342.

²⁹ *Sydney Morning Herald (SMH)*, 24 April 1846.

³⁰ Léopold Verguet, *Histoire de la première mission catholique au Vicariat de Mélanésie*, Carcassone 1854, p.163; Raucaz, *Solomons*, p.42; *SMH*, 12 Sept.1846.

³¹ Hugh M. Laracy, *Xavier Montrouzier: a missionary in Melanesia*, in J. W. Davidson and Deryck Scarr (eds), *Pacific Islands Portraits*, Canberra, 1970, 127-146.

³² Verguet, *Mélanésie*, p.202-10, 227-34, 238-48, 265-86. For Verguet, see Jean-Pierre Piniés, *L'arpenteur des nostalgies, Leopold Verguet (1817-1914)*, Paris, 2004; Collomb to Colin, 21 Aug. 1847, APM OMM 411, G5 :440.

³³ Anon., *Pontife et Victime: Monseigneur Collomb de la Société de Marie*, Lyon, 1934, p.42-70; Lillian G. Keys, *Philip Viard, Bishop of Wellington*, Christchurch, 1968, p.60-1. Collomb left Sydney in the *Spec* 9 May 1847, was consecrated by

Makira abandoned. These were, in order: *i.* in January 1848, Rocher, the procurator, aboard the *Arche d'Alliance*, who retrieved three letters from Collomb, but was prevented by storm from reaching Woodlark;³⁴ *ii.* on 10/11 February, the *Vanguard*, a sandal-wooder possibly en route to China from the New Hebrides, and whose captain acquired many of the books left behind by the Marists;³⁵ *iii.* from 15-17 February, probably in response to an appeal from Montrouzier for a show of force, the 30-gun French corvette *Ariane*. On the latter visit Captain Dutailis learned from an Irishman called Bill, who had probably been left behind by the *Vanguard*, of the fate of the mission. Dutailis, too, retrieved some abandoned books, and after inspecting the ruins then sent an armed party ashore to take reprisals on behalf of his compatriots. In the course of these a young officer named Jean de Kersabiec was speared to death. Dutailis then set sail for Woodlark, but he, too, was turned back by contrary winds. Next, he was in Sydney for three weeks, 30 March-18 April, but the punitive action was not reported in the press;³⁶ *iv.* finally, in December 1854 came Captain Denham of HMS *Herald*. In the course of a hydrographic survey of the harbour, Denham received from a chief named Lisitadō a letter written by Dutailis about the

Bishop Viard at Kororareka on 23 May, and reached New Caledonia in the *Spec* on 26 May.

³⁴ Villien to Colin, 14 March 1848, APM OSM 208, G6:3. Rocher was with the *Arche d'Alliance* on its mission tour from 17 May 1847 to 9 March 1848.

³⁵ The *Vanguard* left Sydney on 2 Dec. 1847, and returned on 10 August 1848. Dorothy Shineberg, *They Came for Sandalwood: a study of the sandalwood trade in the south-west Pacific, 1830-1865*, Melbourne, 1967 [p. 229].

³⁶ 'Extrait du Rapport de M. DUTAILLIS, capitaine de frégate, commandant la corvette l'Ariane, inséré dans la Revue coloniale, mars et avril 1849, page 161', *L'Arche d'Alliance: bulletin de la Société de l'Océanie*, 12, p.316-21. Léonce Jore, *L'Océan Pacifique au temps de la Restauration et de la Monarchie de Juillet (1815-1848)*, Paris, 1959, II, p.176. Montrouzier had 'asked this not to revenge the death of Bishop Epalle, but to intimidate the savages a little and to teach them that the missionary is not abandoned by his compatriots'. Collomb to Colin, 2 Aug. 1848, APM Collomb personal file. Villien to Colin, 2 April 1848, APM OSM 208, G6:688; Yardin to Rocher, 4 March 1853, APM OP 458.2. Collomb himself also sent letters via the *Brillante* in August 1847 to Consul Faramond in Sydney, Governor Lavaud in Tahiti and Admiral Tromelin in Valparaiso. For various other French punitive operations, see Caroline Cambridge and Peter Tremewan, *L'Affaire Jean Bart*, Christchurch, 1998, pp.105-109.

bloody events of 1847 and 1848. He also saw there the bones of the missionaries' dead cattle.³⁷

During his spell in Sydney, 6 March to 9 May, Collomb had had an opportunity to consider his tactics. Shortly before leaving he reported to Colin that 'Marceau [of the *Arche d'Alliance*] and Joubert have spent two days seeking information about Melanesia'. Consequently, on first-hand authority, they recommended the island of Woodlark (lat. 9°S, long. 152°E) in the Coral Sea, near the Trobriands.³⁸ It was first charted by Capt. R. L. Hunter of the English whale ship *Marshall Bennett* in September 1836, but Hunter acknowledged that it had already been discovered by Capt. George Grimes of the *Woodlark*, whom he met there two months later and who had previously made three other whaling voyages in those waters, and who had since retired in Sydney.³⁹ Grimes's favourable view of that island was endorsed by that of two other informants who had been there more recently: Capt. Kyle of the *Bright Planet* and the *Scamander*,⁴⁰ and Richard Elliot of the *Proteus*.⁴¹ And probably there were still others. In 1851 the *Shipping Gazette* noted that 'whaling ships are in the habit of frequenting the north side of Woodlark Island for wood and fresh provisions'.⁴² Promising as such reports might be, the missionaries were destined again to run into trouble there, and they were not the first visitors to do so. In 1841 all

³⁷ Andrew David, *The Voyage of HMS Herald to Australia and the South-west Pacific 1852-1861 under the command of Captain Henry Mangles Denham*, Melbourne, 1995, p. 123-5.

³⁸ Collomb to Colin, 6 May 1847, G5:281.

³⁹ *The Nautical Magazine and Naval Chronicle*, 7 (1840), p.465-67. Some relevant dates for Grimes' Sydney departures and arrivals; source *Shipping Gazette* and *Sydney Morning Herald*: 9 July 1829-24 Sept. 1830, 23 Dec. 1830-16 April 1832, 10 March 1834-21 May 1835. His ascertainable *Woodlark* voyages are: ?1826- 11 June 1827; 9 July 1829 -24 Sept. 1830; 23 Dec. 1830- 16 April 1832; 21 July 1832-14 Nov. 1833, 10 March 1834- 21 May 1835; 18 Sept. 1835- 29 June 1837; 14 Nov. 1837 - 15 April 1838; 11 July 1838 - 6 Dec. 1838; 11 Dec 1838 - 10 June 1840. In a 1845 voyage (10 June-18 Nov.) the *Woodlark* (Capt. Smith) visited Treasury/Mono in the Solomons. Note: Grimes's *Woodlark* is not to be confused with a London-based vessel (Capt. Hardy) of the same name, Honore Forster (ed.), *The Cruise of the 'Gipsey': the journal of John Wilson, surgeon on a whaling voyage to the Pacific Ocean, 1839-1843*, Fairfield, Wash., 1991, p.58, 321.

⁴⁰ Dates, sources as for references 19 and 37 above: 2 March 1843- 3 March 1844, 20 March 1844-25 Feb. 1845, 19 June 1845-19 March 1847.

⁴¹ Dates, sources as for references 19 and 37 above: 3 April 1845-1 Feb. 1846, 17 Feb. 1846 - 1 Feb. 1847.

⁴² *The Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List*, 9 Aug. 1851, p.231.

but one of a party of twelve survivors from the Sydney whaler *Mary*, which had been wrecked in the Laughlan group, were killed at neighbouring Woodlark⁴³ (And in 1854 the same fate befell a boatload of survivors from the wreck of the Peruvian labour recruiting vessel *Grimanzee*, which had been wrecked further to the south, near Bampton Reef).⁴⁴ However, the sanguinary precedent, of which Collomb had heard, seems not to have bothered the missionaries. Thus it was that the *Anonyme* brought them to the reef-strewn south-east coast of Woodlark and, on 15 September 1847, into the harbour of Guasopa.⁴⁵ Nor did it disturb their beginnings.

The natives [reported Jean-Pierre Frémont] met us in great number, bringing us provisions and inviting us to go among them [and one of them named Pako, who had been to Sydney and spoke some English]. We tried to make him understand that we wished to go and live among them. He seemed content and offered to lead us everywhere and in fact has rendered us very great services. The following day, and the day after we visited them and the fruit of our visits was to convince us that we were not able to hope to find a better place to make an establishment. The natives themselves hurried to make us a temporary house. The 27th we began to land our baggage and from that day we have slept on shore in the house which the natives had made for us. During that time the ship's carpenter helped by a few sailors was working to build us a more solid house of wood, and we are now like great lords in a fine house of planks. This house is a prodigy to the eyes of the natives. They do not fear to undertake long trips to see it.⁴⁶

⁴³ R. Gerard Ward (ed.), *American Activities in the Central Pacific*, Ridgewood, N.J., 1966, vol. 4, p.8-10, 'Laughlan'; Mark Howard, 'The strange ordeal of William Valentine', *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, 15:3 (June 1993) 156-66; Honore Forster (ed.), *The Cruise of the 'Gipsey'*, p. 261: Montrouzier to Seon, 18 Jan. 1849, G6:352; Trapenard to a friend, 8 June 1849, G6:483; Montrouzier to Colin, 7 Aug. 1851: the originals of these letters are all in APM OSM 208.

⁴⁴ *Shipping Gazette*, 5 and 19 March 1855; *Argus*, 8 March 1855; *SMH*, 20 April 1855. I am grateful to Mark Howard and Rhys Richards for help with locating these references.

⁴⁵ Wiltgen, *The Founding*, p. 476. Capt. Raballan of the *Anonyme* is the informant cited for south Woodlark in Alexander G. Findlay, *A Directory for the Navigation of the Pacific Ocean*, London, 1863, p.26.

⁴⁶ Frémont to Favier, 20 Dec. 1847, APM OSM 208, G5:555. See also (incl. for Pako) Montrouzier to his parents, 25 April 1848, 24 Jan. 1849, G5:368, to Seon, 18 Jan. 1849, G5:352. The originals of these letters are all in APM OSM 208.

The missionaries soon realised that the people were more interested in them for material than for spiritual reasons, and so patiently concentrated on studying the language. But malaria debilitated them. A passing whale ship, the *George Champlin*, that reached Sydney on 6 March 1848 reported that they were all sick from it. Nevertheless, Br. Gennade professed that they ‘received their trials with fortitude’.⁴⁷

Even so, the hope of finding a more congenial and better provisioned site and a more responsive audience, combined with the enduring lure of New Guinea, did not fade. So it was that when the *Anonyme* (replacing the *Arche d’Alliance* which had been damaged attempting the same trip in February) again arrived from Sydney, on 25 April 1848, Collomb decided to open a second station on the island of Umboi. This was in the straits between New Guinea and New Britain, and had been placed on the charts and named Rooke by the English pirate William Dampier in 1700.⁴⁸ But to no avail. When the schooner *Mary Ann*, hired by the Procure to bring reinforcements and supplies, arrived at Woodlark a year later on 29 April 1849, Montrouzier went on with it to Rooke. There he found that Collomb and Villien (who had come on the *Anonyme*) were dead (16 July and 13 November 1848, respectively) and that the two others were in a bad way. The people had been resistant to their approaches, and malaria was prevalent. (The cause of the disease at that time was poorly understood, although quinine was known to have an ameliorative effect.⁴⁹) Hence, the Marists regrouped at Woodlark; but strains within the community led several of them to shift to the village of Uaman on the north coast, a site from which an English ‘beachcomber’ took advantage of the presence of the *Mary Ann* to escape.⁵⁰ As for the Marists, they had to rely on faith rather than fortune to sustain them. Even so, within six weeks of his arriving on the *Mary Ann* Pierre Trapenard was moved to comment ruefully about the

⁴⁷ Villien to Colin, 14 March 1848, APM OSM 208, G6:3; *SMH* 7 March 1848. Gennade to [Francois], 10 December 1847, Archivio Fratelli Maristi, Rome.

⁴⁸ Rocher to Colin, 2 Nov. 1848, APM OP 458, G6:302; Villein to Colin, 14 March 1848, G6:3; Montrouzier to Seon, 18 Jan. 1849, G6:352. The originals of the last two letters are in APM OSM 208.

⁴⁹ In 1847 Dr Montargy of the *Arche d’Alliance* administered quinine to the Marists. Montrouzier to Henry, 19 July 1847, APM Montrouzier, personal file, G5:371; Frémont to Favier, 20 December 1847, APM OSM 208, G5:555.

⁵⁰ Montrouzier to his family, 24 Jan. 1849, APM OSM 208, G6:368; Montrouzier to Colin, 14 May-22 June 1849, G6:446; *Shipping Gazette*, 10 March 1849, 26 January 1850.

‘exaggerated, coloured and over-optimistic letters written by missionaries which appeared in the *Annales de la propagation de la foi*, the journal of the mission’s funding agency.⁵¹ In December 1849 the whaler *Woodlark* that had called at its namesake island reported that all the missionaries seemed ill and weak, and were having no success with the islanders.⁵² In August 1850 the Uamon residents returned to Guasopa. And, of more widespread concern, there was disenchantment with the SFO over the cost of hiring the *Anonyme*. In any case, that company, which would be forced to fold in 1854, was itself feeling a financial pinch.⁵³

Looking through the list of ships chartered by Rocher of the Procure to serve the Pacific missions, one is struck by the predominance from 1850 of vessels associated with Joubert and Murphy. That firm operated the vessels that made eight of the eleven trips to Woodlark (and Rooke) on account of the mission between 1850 and 1856. Seven of these trips (one of them by the *Jessie* which was attacked at Treasury/Mono Island in June 1852) were made under the command of Capt. John Dalmagne. He was a former master of the 50-ton Huahine-built schooner *Clara*, which Bataillon and Douarre had bought in 1846 and which was lost in Samoa in 1850.⁵⁴ That vessel was replaced by the *l’Etoile de Matin*, formerly named *Titania*.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, the missionaries at Woodlark had not despaired, even though a sentiment was developing among the islanders, observing their poor circumstances, that they were folk of little account and had been rejected by their own people. To counter this disdain Frémont and Montrouzier decided to send some young men to Sydney for them to see what lay behind the sorry specimens they were observing. ‘Everyone agrees’, wrote Frémont, ‘that this is the only means which we can take to dissipate their foolish and gross pride’.⁵⁶ Accordingly, after Dalmagne arrived in the *Bride* in June 1851 Montrouzier joined him for the return trip with eight companions,

⁵¹ Trapenard to a friend, 8 June 1849, APM OSM 208, G6:483.

⁵² Rocher to Colin, 15 Dec. 1849, APM OP 458, G6:772; *Shipping Gazette*, 15 December 1849.

⁵³ Rocher to Poupinel, 2 July 1848, G6:140; Rocher to Colin, 22 Nov. 1849, G6:616, originals in APM OP 458; Montrouzier to Colin, 18 Aug. 1848, 14 May 1849, G6:446, originals in APM OSM 208. O’Reilly, *La Société*, p. 257-61.

⁵⁴ Hosie, ‘The French Mission’, Appendix Two; Dezest to Poupinel, 4 June 1850, G7:267; *SMH*, 11 Apr. 1846; *Shipping Gazette*, 31 August 1852.

⁵⁵ Rocher to Colin, 8 Aug. 1851, APM OSM 458, G8:259.

⁵⁶ Frémont to Colin, 22 June 1851, APM OSM 208, G8:161.

hoping that ‘this attempt ...could work a revolution in the ideas of our savages if God bless it’. *En route* they narrowly avoided a premature disaster at the eastward-lying Laughlans, where the captain wished to look for any remains of the *Mary*. The people there planned to attack the *Bride*, but one of the Woodlark boys learned of their scheme and gave a timely warning.

That night [wrote Montrouzier] we kept watch. At daybreak we raised the anchor and when our poor people came not to attack us with open force, but to make us go ashore, and so separate us and cut our throats, I told them that we knew of their black designs. I added that we were leaving them, not out of fear, seeing we had rifles and even cannon, but only for fear of being forced to defend ourselves and to spill [their] blood. Blessed be to God who protects his envoys so visibly. Blessed be Mary who watches so well over us.⁵⁷

Nine years before, at the age of twenty-two, and eighteen months before his ordination to the priesthood, Montrouzier had dreamed of apostolic heroism. He had aspired:⁵⁸

“...to flee across the seas to go to teach savages and infidels to love Jesus and Mary. ...The future I imagine for myself is so fine and so consoling. To suffer 30 or 40 years or, rather, to be for some moments the object of the cruelty of barbarous peoples and after that to be able to say, ‘I’m going to heaven and I am leading thousands of souls there and my blood is going to be the seed of a host of Christians’”

In 1851 he may still have been prepared to devote his life to his cause, but he was not going to throw it away.

After the *Bride* arrived in Sydney on 3 August it seemed that the Marist’s tactics did have the hoped-for divine approval. They were designed, Rocher told Colin:⁵⁹

“...to prove tangibly that the people of Woodlark were not the world’s first people and that the missionaries had not come into their island in order to get something to eat. Today, then, we walked these natives through the streets of Sydney. You could not have prevented yourself from laughing,

⁵⁷ Montrouzier to Colin, 21 June-7 Aug. 1851, APM OSM 208, G8:156. Six youths left Woodlark with Montrouzier and one of them ‘deserted’ at the Laughlans, but three others from there joined the party. Montrouzier to his parents, 25 July, 1851, APM Montrouzier Corres. (personal), G8:233.

⁵⁸ Montrouzier to his brother Gabriel, 5 Dec. 1842, APM Montrouzier Corres. (personal).

⁵⁹ Rocher to Colin, 8 Aug. 1851, APM OSM 208, G8:259.

my very reverend father, at seeing their astonishment. There was so much to see that they complained of not having enough eyes to take in everything. Nothing was more extraordinary for them than the houses which moved (the carriages). But that which put them in ecstasy were the shops of the butcher and the iron merchant; how they exclaimed, and their 'brass' fell from them. They now declare that the people of Woodlark are ignorant folk... While showing his natives the curiosities of the town Fr. Montrouzier is also going to instruct them, in the hope that on returning to their own country they will be able to enlighten their relatives and encourage them to receive the benefit of the Faith."

The tactic seemed to work. After two weeks the boys left for home, again with Dalmagne in the *Bride*; but without Montrouzier. They were reportedly keen 'to build Sydney at Murua'. On arrival their stories sparked an incipient conversion movement, but it did not last. For most of the population diseases introduced through contact with outsiders soon subverted any inclination to shift their religious allegiance from their traditional spirits (*munukuans*) to the missionaries' Jehovah.⁶⁰ Hostilities, though, had not revived when late in 1851 Colin, administering at an distance and not knowing of the latest developments on Woodlark, surrendered the Vicariate of Melanesia to the newly-founded Milan Institute for Foreign Missions. Things were still promising when the Italians arrived at Woodlark on 8 September 1852, with Dalmagne in Joubert's *Jeune Lucie*. Three of the remaining Marists even stayed on with them, and helped in an attempt to re-open the post on Rooke.⁶¹ In December 1853, however, Dalmagne delivered the Marist remnant to Sydney. Four months later the *Jeune Lucie* brought Giovanni Mazzucconi to join them there, to restore his health. It also brought a relic of the unfortunate *Grimanzee*.⁶²

Mazzucconi's arrival was to be the prelude to another tragedy, one which illustrates the problems and dangers faced by those who were forced to rely on sporadic ship visits as a communication mechanism. For on 18 August 1855 he departed from Sydney in the *Gazelle*, a vessel chartered by Rocher, to return to his colleagues on Woodlark. Just five days later Joubert's *Phantom*, which had left Sydney on 19 December 1854 captained by Dalmagne, came into port with the

⁶⁰ Laracy, *Montrouzier*, p.138.

⁶¹ Trapenard to Colin, 23 Jan. 1853, APM OSM 208, G9:26.

⁶² *SMH* 20 April 1855.

remaining Italians. They were hoping to recover their strength and to save the expense of needless ship visits. They had abandoned Rooke on 10 May and had then left Woodlark on 10 July.⁶³ Conceivably, the vessels could recently have passed within sight of each other, but fortune seems consistently to have been looking the other way. When, eight months later and the *Gazelle* had not reappeared at Sydney, Timoleone Raimondi set out in the procure-chartered *Favourite* to investigate. He returned with sad news on 13 June 1856. Coming to Woodlark, he found that in early/mid-September the *Gazelle* had run aground on the reefs. Moreover, he was informed by Puarer, one of the boys who had gone to Sydney with Montrouzier and who was probably the one who had saved the *Bride* at the Laughlans, and who later joined the expedition to Rooke, that it had been plundered and that everyone aboard it had been killed.⁶⁴ As Rocher relays Puarer's story, the *Gazelle* had missed the entrance to the port, and so had enticingly advertised its vulnerability:

“Immediately a certain number of natives arrived, and to hide the evil plan that had been prepared they took care to carry neither spears nor shields but had hidden axes in their belts. The captain, seeing his ship on the reef was beside himself. He tried to prevent the natives from coming aboard, but while he was repelling them on one side others climbed up the opposite side. [Avicoar], the strongest among them, and also the most ferocious, from whence Europeans nicknamed him ‘the Wolf’, went up to the Father, touched his hand and expressed his pleasure at seeing him again; then, he remained at the Father’s side until saw that enough of his companions [led by Tanar] were on the ship to accomplish his wicked scheme. As soon as they were numerous enough the savage ‘Wolf’ drew his axe from his belt and with a single blow, made the Father’s head roll on the deck of the ship. At the same time the captain and the sailors met the same fate. Having become masters of the ship the natives then pillaged it completely.”

Indeed, it seems that when the *Favourite* came into view there was plan to capture it, too, but Capt. A. Barrack, who had been mate of the

⁶³ Reina to Association for the Propagation of the Faith, 3 Sept., 1855; Reina to Marinoni, 3 Sept., 1855, Archivio Istituto Missioni Estere (Rome), Vol. XI, ‘Missioni di Oceania’.

⁶⁴ *SMH* 14 June 1856. See also, Nicholas Maestrini, *Mazzucconi of Woodlark: biography of Blessed John Mazzucconi, priest and martyr of the P.I.M.E. missionaries*, Hong Kong, 1983.

visiting *Supply* in 1853, had stymied that by anchoring beyond the reef, outside the port entrance.⁶⁵

For his own part, though, Puarer, felt linked to the missionaries and asked Raimondi to take him away with him when they retreated on 14 May, not only from Woodlark but from what was historically the third attempt by Europeans to settle in New Guinea.⁶⁶ Thus it was that on 16 August 1856 Puarer of Woodlark left Sydney with the Milanese aboard the *Granite City*, bound for Manila. There on 27 December 1856 he became the first identifiable baptised Catholic of the Vicariate of Melanesia; and, indeed, the first identifiable baptised Christian of any denomination in what would in 1975 become the sovereign nation of Papua New Guinea. Following desultory spells of apostolic endeavour in Manila, Labuan (north Borneo) and Dorei Bay (west New Guinea), in May 1858 Puarer moved with his companions to Hong Kong, which Britain had annexed in January 1841, and of which Timoleone Raimondi was consecrated the first bishop on 22 November 1874.⁶⁷ For his part, though, Puarer had not settled into life in Hong Kong; there was little work that he was equipped to do and for distraction he took to selling items of his own property, and of others', to sailors in the street in order to obtain some money. The superior, Paolo Reina therefore sent him back to Sydney, reporting that: 'We cannot keep him here because it is too easy to steal inside the house. And in the city it is too easy to get into trouble.' Puarer duly reached Sydney in the *Northern Light*, one of the freight/passenger schooners regularly servicing that burgeoning run, on 23 February 1859. From there on 10 April, still allied to his missionary mentors, he sailed with Bataillon aboard Joubert's *Phantom* (Capt. Dalmagne) for Central Oceania. And at that point his name vanishes from the historical record – at least for the moment.⁶⁸

Meanwhile, there had been a further notable incident sparked by the Vicariate of Melanesia operation. On 27 July 1858, HMS *Iris*, under the command of Capt. William Loring, who the next year would become the first commodore of the newly independent Australia Station of the

⁶⁵ Rocher to Poupinel, 20 June 1856, APM, OP 458. Ralph M. Wiltgen, *The Founding of the Roman Catholic Church in Melanesia and Micronesia, 1850-1875*, Eugene, Or., 2008, p.249.

⁶⁶ Gavin Souter, *New Guinea: the last unknown*, Sydney, 1973, pp.20-23.

⁶⁷ Wiltgen, 2008, p.518

⁶⁸ The fullest account of Puarer is given in Wiltgen, 2008, pp. 248-51, 339-40, 391, 403. The *Northern Light* departed Manila on 25 October 1858. *SMH* 24 Feb., 12 April 1859.

Royal Navy, carried out a punitive expedition at Woodlark.⁶⁹ ‘The landing party... burnt villages, canoes, and other property of the Guasup tribe, as a punishment for the murder of the *Gazelle*, in 1855’.⁷⁰

The experience of the missionaries in the Vicariate of Melanesia may be further understood in the light of difficulties encountered by their brethren in the southern islands of the region. On 21 December 1843 Bishop Guillaume Douarre, coadjutor to Bishop Bataillon of the Vicariate of Central Oceania, landed with a party of Marists at New Caledonia. That effort lasted until 22 August 1847 when, leaving behind two looted and burned mission stations and a martyred confrère, Br Blaise Marmoiton, the survivors were evacuated to Sydney, thanks to the fortuitous arrival of a patrolling French warship, the Valparaiso-based *Brillante*.⁷¹ Their departure was an ‘*Au Revoir*’, not an ‘*Adieu*’, but the return was circuitous, and would involve further difficulties. The first tentative step in that direction was a landing at Aneityum, the southernmost of the New Hebrides group, an area frequented by sandalwood traders. This lasted from 14 May 1848 to 23 February 1850, when malaria drove the last two members of the party to join other of their confrères who had settled nearer New Caledonia on the non-malarial Ile de Pins on 8 August 1848. That venture endured and from there the Marists returned on 23 May 1851 to the Grande Terre, where their security was finally secured in 1853 by French political annexation, and by attendant military and shipping services. Meanwhile, in 1851 in the hope of finding an inherently congenial locality Douarre, whose jurisdiction had been made independent of Bataillon’s in 1847, had approved an attempt to evangelise Tikopia (12°S, 168°E). That is a Polynesian ‘outlier’ with affinities to Tonga, situated to the south-east of the Solomons group, to which it was later politically yoked and with which it came to national independence in 1978. On 12 December, en

⁶⁹ From 1829 Royal Navy vessels of the East Indies Station, which was based first on Ceylon and later at Hong Kong, cruised regularly through the western Pacific. In 1848 the Australian Division of that Station was set up, and in May 1859 it became the separate Australia Station. John Bach, *The Australia Station: a history of the Royal Navy in the south West Pacific, 1821-1913*, Sydney, 1986, p.18; Jane Samson, *Imperial Benevolence: making British authority in the Pacific Islands*, Honolulu, 1998, p.113-4.

⁷⁰ *SMH*, 7 Sept. 1858.

⁷¹ Georges Delbos, *The Catholic Church in New Caledonia: a century and a half of history*, Suva, 2000, p.72-74; Colin Newbury, *Tahiti Nui: change and survival in French Polynesia, 1767-1945*, Honolulu, 1980, p.112-113.

route from Sydney to Shanghai,⁷² the *Arche d'Alliance* landed two Marists on Tikopia. On 29 June 1852 the *Etoile du Matin* (ex-Sydney 25 May), which Douarre co-owned with Bataillon, sailed for there from New Caledonia, bringing supplies and a third missionary.⁷³ When the ship had not returned by the end of the year great fears were held for its safety. Accordingly, through Joubert, Rocher hired the trader *Chieftain* to take Xavier Montrouzier to investigate the matter.⁷⁴ Reaching Tikopia on 27 February 1853 he found no sign of the three Marists, and was told -persuasively- by the islanders that they had become ill with fever and had departed on another (un-named) vessel about two months previous. That story, which was also accepted by Capt. Verney, appeared to be endorsed by reports of wreckage recently found in neighbouring waters, leading to suggestions that the *Etoile du Matin* and the 'other' vessel had foundered at sea or had run aground on Astrolabe Reef, an outcrop in the aptly named Coral Sea, north of the Ile de Pins; and that the missionaries had gone down with their ship.⁷⁵ Such easily became the orthodox version.⁷⁶ Indeed, it endured intact until 2007, when the findings (in 2001) of a Tikopian oral traditions researcher, Ken Tufinga, were published. These established more persuasively than hitherto that the islanders had in fact killed the missionaries at a place called Temeni, and had buried them at Kamali.⁷⁷ The fate of the *Etoile du Matin*, though, remains an enduring mystery of the sea.

Despite the difficulties recounted in the above chronicle of apostolic endeavours, Catholic interest in the Vicariate of Melanesia continued. In 1881 members of the English congregation of Mill Hill Missionaries set out for New Guinea, but remained at Labuan in Borneo.⁷⁸

⁷² *Shipping Gazette and Sydney General Trade List*, 8 Nov 1851.

⁷³ *Shipping Gazette*, 8, 29 May 1852; Delbos, *New Caledonia*, p. 94.

⁷⁴ *Shipping Gazette*, 8, 23 January, 26 February 1853.

⁷⁵ *Shipping Gazette*, 2 April 1853; Montrouzier to Gabriel, 13 Jan. 1887, APM personal file.

⁷⁶ Hugh M. Laracy, *The First Mission to Tikopia*, in *Journal of Pacific History* 4 (1969) 105-109; Georges Delbos, *L'Eglise Catholique au Vanuatu: un siècle et demi d'histoire (1849-1999)*, Suva 2001, p.78-80; Delbos, *New Caledonia*, p.87. 94; O'Brien, *A Greater Than Solomon Here*, p.77-81; Adrian Smith, 'Will We Ever Know? The missing Marists of Tikopia', in *Marist Messenger* 73:8 (Oct. 2002) 41-45.

⁷⁷ Julian Treadaway, *Dancing, Dying, Crawling, Crying: stories of continuity and change in the Polynesian community of Tikopia*, Suva, 2007, p. 26-29.

⁷⁸ Wiltgen, *Melanesia*, p.543-45.

Meanwhile, portentous events were developing off the eastern end of New Guinea. In October 1880 the abbè René-Marie Lannuzel had arrived at Bougainville's (1768) Port Praslin in southern New Ireland in company with the ill-fated colonising expedition of the Marquis de Rays, who designated the anchorage Port Breton). Then, in 1881 the domain entrusted to Epalle in 1845 was assigned to another French congregation, the *Missionnaires du Sacré-Coeur*, the first of whose agents landed at neighbouring New Britain on 28 September 1882.⁷⁹ By that time, too, not only was commercial traffic increasing in local waters (Burns Philp began a regular service from Sydney to Papua via the Solomons in 1896),⁸⁰ but missions of other denominations were being established (the Methodists were on New Britain in 1875), and imperial political presences were looming (Germany and Britain claimed portions of eastern New Guinea and the Solomons for themselves between 1884 and 1886). Thus, it was that when Marists again entered the Solomons in 1898 circumstances were markedly different from what they had been for their predecessors: the process of subdividing the former Vicariate of Melanesia was already well under way, expatriates were less isolated, supplies and assistance were more available and security was more assured. Still, there was at least one feature of their work that they shared with the trail-blazers: their operations were still conspicuously dependent – if less precariously so – on shipping services. This was, of course, also true of missions of all denominations throughout the Pacific, and that fact has generated a considerable corpus of literature on the topic.⁸¹ Indeed, it seems neither

⁷⁹ Daniel Raphalen, *L'Odyssée de Port-Breton : le rêve océanien du Marquis de Rays*, Rennes, 2006, p. 59; André Dupeyrat, *Papouasie: histoire de la mission (1885-1935)*, Paris, 1935, p. 36-50.

⁸⁰ Subsidised by the Australian government in 1902. Judith A. Bennett, *Wealth of the Solomons: a history of a Pacific archipelago, 1800-1978*, Honolulu, 1987, p. 130.

⁸¹ Some examples: C.E. Fox, *Lord of the Southern Isles: being the story of the Anglican mission in Melanesia, 1849-1949*, London, 1958, Chap. 19, 'Ships of the Mission', p.255-262; Niel Gunson, *John Williams and his Ship: the bourgeois aspirations of a missionary family*, in D.P. Crook (ed.), *Questioning the Past: a selection of papers in history and government*, Brisbane, 1972, 73-95; Gunson, *Messengers of Grace; evangelical missionaries in the South Seas, 1797-1860*, Melbourne, 1978, p. 434 index 'Ships'; Hugh Laracy, *Marists as Mariners: the Solomon Islands story*, in *International Journal of Maritime History* 3:1 (1991) 59-80; Dennis Steley, 'Melanesia – 1917-1971: mission flagship', in *Australian Record* 87:13 (March 29, 1982), p.1.8-9. Ernest G. Krause, *The History of*

irrelevant nor impious to reflect that had Christ been referring to evangelistic activity in Marco Polo's 'Great Ocean' he would have enjoined his apostles to become not only 'fishers of men',⁸² but also 'sailors of ships'. Perforce, they were to work that out for themselves. As Pompallier himself noted about buying the *Atlas* in 1840:⁸³

"Here in Oceania it is impossible to travel from one archipelago to another without a vessel. Heresy has several, and it was necessary that the Vicar Apostolic should have at least one. It is more necessary here than was their barque to the Apostles, and to Jesus Christ, their Divine Master and ours, for journeys on the lakes of Judea."

Seventh-Day Adventist Navigation in the South Pacific from 1917 to the early 1950s, in Arthur J. Ferch (ed.), *Journey of Hope: Seventh-Day Adventist history in the South Pacific, 1919-1950*, Wahroonga, NSW, 1991, 109-127.

⁸² Matt. 4:18.

⁸³ Pompallier, *Early History*, p.68; also quoted in [McKeefry], *Fishers*, p.99-100.