Between 1874 and 1914, 327 European missionaries lived and worked in Papua. They belonged to four missions: the London Missionary Society (LMS), the Sacred Heart Mission (SHM), the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (AWMMS), and the Anglican Mission. For the first decade of that period the LMS, first into the field, worked in a land free of control by any foreign government. During that time they were the main agents of European culture, as well as Christianity, in the country. After Britain declared a protectorate in 1884, the missionaries shared the former role, and to some extent the latter, with a small force of government officers. But throughout the period to the First World War, the number of European missionaries in the colony was comparable to that of government officers.¹ In 1889 the head of the Sacred Heart Mission boasted that at the headquarters of his mission alone—Yule Island—there were more Europeans than at the administrative center of Port Moresby.²

Moreover, by their pattern of settlement—at mission stations scattered along the coast, among the islands, and to a lesser extent inland, rather than at centralized district stations—and by the priority they gave to learning the languages of the people among whom they settled, the missionaries were generally in a stronger position to exert sustained influence on the Papuans than were the government officers.³ Conflict between the two groups sprang frequently from the jealousy of the officials at the missionaries’ influence.

The only other Europeans to have much influence on Papuan life and culture during this period were the few traders and miners who had chosen to live with Papuan women. But their influence, though undoubtedly more intimate, was also more circumscribed and less disruptive, since, unlike the missionaries, miners and traders did not come with the avowed intent of changing the lives of the Papuans.
David Knowles has observed that history, when it touches men, "touches them at a moment of significance, whether they are great in themselves, or . . . stand in great places, or like the men of 1914 are matched with great issues." Whether or not the men and women who came to Papua as missionaries were great in themselves, it is clear that history touched them at a moment of significance, when traditional Papuan societies were experiencing for the first time, a sustained and powerful onslaught from an alien culture and an alien religion. Because of their central role in this process, if for no other reason, the missionaries must be seen as crucial actors in the colonial history of Papua.

What sort of influence the missionaries exerted in Papua, as elsewhere, depended on what kinds of people they were. As well as bringing a new religion, they brought a vast amount of cultural and intellectual baggage that was determined by their backgrounds, both secular and religious, their personalities, and the era in which they came.

In the modern historiography of the Pacific, missionaries have been accorded a prominent place, as a sampling of recent publications shows. Even general histories have recognized their significance as one of the earliest and most influential agents of change throughout the Pacific. Douglas Oliver’s classic general study5 charted the arrival of the pioneer missionaries and their dispersal through the Pacific and briefly contrasted some aspects of their style of work and their reception. A more recent general history by K. R. Howe6 extended Oliver’s work. Benefiting from his own insights and those of his colleagues who, over the last three decades, have rejected the imperial view of Pacific history in favor of an island-based interpretation, Howe gave greater play to the active role of the Islanders in responding to the missionaries and their message. He presented a persuasive comparative analysis of the relative success of missionaries in different parts of the Pacific, demonstrating the significance of local factors such as the presence or absence of an indigenous elite, chiefly patronage, institutionalized religion, a centralized society, and a general openness to strangers in explaining the influence of the missionaries in Hawaii, Tahiti, Fiji, Tonga, and the Loyalty Islands, as compared with Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, or even Samoa, where Christianity was readily accepted but rapidly assimilated into traditional forms.

Recent regional studies have also scrutinized the part played by missionaries in the postcontact history of particular islands or archipelagoes. Hezel’s study of the Caroline and Marshall islands7 traced missionary activity in that area from the first ill-fated attempts of the Jesuits to reach Palau at the beginning of the eighteenth century through the settlement of workers of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) on Pohnpei and Kosrae and their eventual
expansion, by 1880, through eastern Micronesia. He documented their struggles against “heathen customs” such as kava drinking, hostile chiefs, established religion, and rival European interests. Macdonald, in his study of Kiribati and Tuvalu, traced “the impact of foreigners and foreign influences,” including Protestant and Catholic missionaries, and explored the reasons for the failure of the ABCFM workers in the northern Gilberts in contrast to the rapid success of the LMS, and later of the Sacred Heart missionaries, in the southern Gilberts and the Ellice Islands.

Dening described the advance and retreat of the envoys of various mission societies, both Protestant and Catholic, who made their way onto the islands and beaches of the Marquesas. He analyzed the difficulty they faced in transferring a religion without a sustaining cultural system and showed the confrontation of ideas as the intruders crossed the cultural boundary of the beach into the new island world. Gilson, in his study of the Cook Islands, considered the factors making for the remarkably early success of the LMS missionaries in the southern islands compared with other parts of the Pacific.

The most thorough scholarly appraisals of mission activity in the Pacific are probably to be found in recent studies of particular missions. Unlike the early triumphalist accounts of missionary successes written by apologists to encourage supporters, these, in varying degrees, are sympathetic but dispassionate accounts of the foundations of various missions, their growth and development, and, generally, indigenous responses to them. Gunson provided a definitive study of the evangelical missionaries, the “messengers of grace” who arrived in the South Seas between 1797 and 1860. He placed them firmly in their socioeco- nomic and religious context, assessed their motivations, analyzed their preconceptions and assumptions, and then followed them into the field, observing their reactions to the peoples among whom they labored as well as their perceptions of their successes and failures. A more comprehensive but less analytical study of missionary activity in Oceania is that of John Garrett. In a lucid chronological narrative he traced the courses of the various bodies, Protestant and Catholic, now represented by the Pacific Conference of Churches, from their origins to their emergence as a series of distinct churches.

Latukefu provided a case study of a theme that recurs in the works of Gunson and Garrett and other studies of missionary interaction with chiefly societies—the role of missionaries in local political activity. He traced and critically evaluated the part played by the Wesleyan missionaries in the development and adoption of the constitutional monarchy in Tonga.

Wiltgen’s study of the founding of the Roman Catholic church in
Oceania is a detailed scholarly narrative that identified the main actors in the drama of missionary expansion as it unfolded in the Pacific. His presentation of the metropolitan church that sent the missionaries is solid and sure, but his evocation of the island world that received them is more shadowy. Laracy, in his study of one particular group of Roman Catholic missionaries, the Marists in Melanesia, focused on “the relationship between forces of indigenous and exotic origin.” While Wiltgen’s study presented this interaction mostly from an exotic viewpoint, Laracy described the encounter more from the side of the missionized Solomon Islanders, with a thorough analysis of precontact society and an assessment of the impact of the intruders on the Melanesians and their culture.

Two recent studies have described the endeavors of the Anglicans in Melanesia: Hilliard presented the gentlemen of the New Zealand-based Melanesian Mission, at work in northern Vanuatu, the Santa Cruz group, and the Solomon Islands; Wetherell looked at Australian-based missionaries, generally of humbler rank, in Papua New Guinea. Both followed the course of these Anglican missions from their precarious foundations to their metamorphoses by the 1940s into indigenous churches, albeit still largely controlled by expatriates. Each paid some attention to the personnel of their respective missions, their social origins, their religious formation, and their responses to the cultures that confronted them.

All these studies, and numerous other books and articles, have contributed richly to our understanding of mission activity in the Pacific. But most of them chose not to make the missionaries, either as individuals or as a social group, the primary focus of their analyses. The general histories have been concerned mainly with the shifting patterns in interactions in the Pacific, with charting the intrusion of various foreigners, and with the adaptations made by both sides after the impact of contact. Painting on such a broad canvas they could not delineate in any detail the protagonists of the contact situation. Regional studies too, generally committed to a decolonized view of Pacific history, have tended to focus on indigenous responses, active as well as passive, to the intrusion of missionaries and other foreigners. Modern studies of missionary organizations in the Pacific have, in varying degrees, examined the personnel of the mission or missions under consideration, but their interest has generally been subordinate to their dominant theme—the establishment and growth of these institutions. The missionaries themselves—their objectives and aspirations, their ideals, convictions, and opinions, their actions and responses—are rarely the central concern of such studies.

Other types of historical work can also shed light on the missionaries.
Biographers, or the best of them (for example, Gavan Daws\textsuperscript{18}), can offer profound understanding of particular individuals, but is beyond their scope to suggest the extent to which the individual is representative of the group. Standard histories of missionary societies, such as Lovett,\textsuperscript{19} Goodall,\textsuperscript{20} or Findlay and Holdsworth,\textsuperscript{21} are helpful in explaining the context within which the missionaries worked, but their sweep is too broad and their aims too diverse for them to be able to give more than a passing glance at them as individuals or as a group.

Anthropologists studying culture contact have lamented this neglect. Kenelm Burridge wrote of Australian history: "We know quite a lot about aborigines in the contact situation, but we know very little about the missionaries and others involved in the same situation."\textsuperscript{22} T. O. Beidelman, having surveyed the literature of missionary activity in Africa, concluded:

Unfortunately none of these works conveys much about the ordinary activities and organizations of these missionaries at the grass roots, still less about their social backgrounds, beliefs and day to day problems, economic attitudes or patriotism. . . . Nowhere do we gain any idea of how any particular station was run or what a day at a mission station was like. There is no description of the career of any rank and file missionary. In general the historical studies of missionaries represent a rather dull form of scissors and paste history.\textsuperscript{23}

Sharing Beidelman's conviction as to the necessity of knowing who the missionaries were in order to understand their role in colonial history, I have attempted to write a group biography of the 327 missionaries who came to Papua before 1914. I have investigated their ethnic origins, their socioeconomic background, and their intellectual and religious experience in the belief that these inevitably influenced their behavior and their responses to the environment in which they found themselves. I have then looked at the missionaries in the field, exploring their way of life, their style of work, their interaction with their contemporaries, both Papuan and European, and their personal responses to the mission situation. My concern is not so much with their achievements as with their objectives and aspirations, their perceptions of the situation, and their reactions to it.

Popular stereotypes of the nineteenth-century missionary flourish. The Australian poet, James McAuley, analyzed some of the images of the missionary entrenched in common folklore.\textsuperscript{24} The first is of the missionary who, at great personal cost, rescues heathens from the darkness of superstition, converts them, cures them, teaches them, and trains them to "wash and dress with propriety." This is the image that has been represented by missionary society propaganda and promulgated by the
sermons and Sunday schools that are a half-remembered part of many
cildhoods. The second stereotype, that of the missionary as champion
of indigenous rights against those who threaten them, is derived largely
from the writings of the missionaries themselves and reinforced by other
mission literature. The third and perhaps most prevalent image of the
nineteenth-century missionary is that of a “narrow-minded killjoy” who
introduced a sense of sin into South Sea Island paradises, destroying
native dances, festivals, and arts, and who was more intent on imposing
lower-middle-class Victorian prudery than promoting the more gener-
ous virtues. This image, inspired by the eighteenth-century romantic
ideal of the “noble savage,” draws on modern popular literature to por-
tray the ignoble invader of paradise. Louis Becke, James Michener, and
Somerset Maugham are among the writers who have perpetuated this
image. Maugham’s caustic portrait of the haunted, repressed Mr.
Davidson in “Rain” is a fine example. “You see,” Maugham had David-
son explain to a fellow passenger in the Pacific,

they were so naturally depraved that they couldn’t be brought to see their
wickedness. We had to make sins out of what they thought were natural
actions. We had to make it a sin, not only to commit adultery and to lie
and to thieve, but to expose their bodies, and to dance and not come to
Church. I made it a sin for a girl to show her bosom and for a man not to
wear trousers. 25

Music hall parodies, cartoons, and review skits seized joyfully on this
stereotype, of which Noel Coward’s irreverent portrait of “Uncle
Harry” presented a mirror-image. This portrayal of the missionary has
also become popular with writers of new nationalist histories, in reac-
tion against the Eurocentric interpretations of colonial history with
their narratives of great men and noble exploits.

The fourth image identified by McAuley, that of the missionary as
one of the “sinister trio of capitalist imperialism” in league with the
trader and the official, is one that has long been popular with political
radicals. It found pungent expression in the Bulletin, which was, in the
late nineteenth-century, of the “firm opinion that missionaries in the
Pacific were merely one aspect of European exploitation.” 26 “The Pious
Pirate Hoists his Flag” (Figure 1) is regarded as a “typical May cartoon”
by Margaret Mahood, who described it as showing “a black-clad mis-
sonary hoisting his skull-and-crossbones flag amid a group of cringing
natives and rejoicing missioners in front of the New Hebrides Mission
which is hung with posters advertising Coconut Oil and Religion and
Greed and Gospel.” 27 Later Bulletin cartoons elaborated the same
theme.

The fifth and sixth stereotypes described by McAuley—the mission-
ary as bigot and fanatic who will not let people worship God in their own way, and the missionary as underminer of traditional society—are closely related to the fourth stereotype and share the same roots in romantic literature. They have also been perpetuated, unwittingly or intentionally, by some anthropologists, especially the exponents of
structural-functionalism, who have seen no further than the disruptive effects of the missionary on traditional religion and culture.28

Popular stereotypes presuppose that there was one identifiable creature—the nineteenth-century missionary. In this book I have attempted to measure these stereotypes against reality as it existed in Papua between 1874 and 1914, and to bring to life the missionaries as they existed in that time and place. But because differences in background, personality, and experience produced a great diversity of ideas and attitudes, and hence of behavior, it was also necessary to investigate the differences between the missionaries as well as the characteristics they shared. In Kitson Clark's useful phrase, I seek to present the men and women who were "the units covered by . . . large generalizations."29

The limits of this study must be stressed. The most apparent is that it is a study of culture contact that focuses solely on the missionaries and not on the host peoples. In restricting myself thus, I am not trying to perpetuate the ethnocentric heresy that Europeans were the actors in the contact situation and Papuans merely the passive reactors. For the story to be complete the other, and arguably the more important, side must be told. Papuan scholars are already recording and analyzing the wide range of their people's responses to the intrusion of the missionaries and other foreigners.30 I hope that my work will complement theirs. H. A. C. Cairns defended studies of culture contact from a single perspective: "British attitudes and responses had a logic of their own. They were derived from a fairly consistent climate of opinion which conditioned and moulded their perceptions and reactions."31 It is possible to identify, though more tentatively, common European attitudes and responses. To describe and interpret them, as they were manifested in the missionaries, is a limited but justifiable aim.

This study is not a mission history. All of the missions in Papua have their own official or informal histories.32 Information about the growth and development of the missions has been given only when it casts light on the missionaries, who are the subject of this work. Moreover, the hundreds of Polynesians and Melanesians who gave heroic service in the mission fields of Papua are not treated here. Both their premissionary experience and their roles in Papua were so different from those of the European missionaries that theirs too is a separate story.

My study is limited in time and place. I did not look at the missionaries of German New Guinea, which was, for the period under consideration, a totally separate and different colony. Nor did I make more than passing reference to missionaries in other parts of the world. It is a case-study of missionaries in one particular area. Within Papua, I looked only at the missionaries who arrived in the period before 1914, described by one writer as the "golden age of missions."33 The First
World War was no watershed in Papuan history as was the Second World War, but as far as the missions were concerned it cut off or curtailed recruitment for several years. Those who came to the mission field after the Great War were men and women who came from a different world.

A group biography, besides sharing the problems common to a single biography, has problems peculiar to itself. The first is to define the group to be studied. Writers of large-scale prosopographical studies limit the scope of their research by selecting a random sample of the category to be investigated. In a study of a small group, as in this work, it is possible to include all the individuals who make up the group. But where records are incomplete, as in this case, it is necessary to proceed in the fashion of the first prosopographers, the classical historians, by noting down a name whenever it occurred in the sources and gradually building up a file about the individual, in order even to identify the complete group.

Writers of small-scale collective biographies have generally studied groups that have been elites in their own societies: politicians, scientists, intellectuals, or high-status socioeconomic groups. For such people, biographical data and often extensive personal records are generally available. Such was not the case with the missionaries who worked in Papua, most of whom were not, in the eyes of the world, eminent people. For some, the only known noteworthy action they took in their lives was to leave their homes to work in the mission field for a few years, or perhaps only a few months. Such people left little mark on their own societies, and when mission records themselves are incomplete, it is difficult to uncover even such basic information as will allow the retrieval of the birth, death, and marriage certificates that are an essential part of the skeleton of a group biography.

But if there are few surviving records for many of the missionaries, for some there is an overwhelming amount. For instance, there are twenty-eight large boxes of the papers of the LMS missionary Ben Butcher in the National Library of Australia. Such unevenness of evidence presents obvious problems of generalization. It is tempting to rely heavily on the statement of those whose lives are well documented. But in the absence of comparative material, it is impossible to tell whether they form a genuinely random sample. Indeed, the fact that such a wealth of material about them exists suggests that they were an articulate and atypical minority.

This is a crucial but not insurmountable problem of group biography. Lacking the sociologist's option of questionnaire and interview, the group biographer must, and can, use the sources that are available,
uneven as they are. Although the material that survives cannot be assumed to be representative, and is often clearly not, accidents of history do lead to the preservation of the papers of carpenters, missionary sisters, and others low in the mission hierarchy, as well as of the elite. Furthermore, if the elite are overrepresented in the sources, they were generally the opinion makers and the most influential actors in the field, and for that reason it is useful to understand their thoughts and actions as fully as possible. These can be presented without making false generalizations about the thoughts and actions of the missionaries as a group. More generally, much reading of the sources fosters an intuitive feeling for what are typical or atypical responses. This can be a dangerous exercise and one must embark on it mindful of Kitson Clark's advice: "Do not guess, try to count," but at the same time consoled by his approval of "guesses informed by much general reading and . . . shaped by much brooding on the matter in hand," provided they are presented as such.

The apparently homogeneous group is in fact composed of a series of discrete or sometimes overlapping subgroups. The group cannot be characterized until the subgroups are identified and analyzed. In this study, Catholics, Protestants, liberals, Evangelicals, lay, ordained, men, women, professionals, artisans, missionaries of the seventies, the nineties, and 1914 all have to be differentiated. Final definition of the group must take account of, and yet transcend, the variables produced by the diversity of subgroups.

The central issue in the methodology of collective biography is not, however, that of group and subgroup, but rather of group and individual. Striking a balance between the individuals and the group is an integral problem of prosopography, and one that is solved variously by different practitioners. At one extreme, for prosopographers of the "mass" school with large computerized samples, the individual is essentially a statistical unit, and the end product more a Weberian ideal type than a group composed of actual people. At the other extreme, among practitioners of the "elitist" school studying smaller and more socially eminent groups, the emphasis is on the individuals who make up the group and the end product a group portrait pieced together from individual case studies. Such studies generally have less statistical underpinning, but the individuals emerge from them with distinctive and recognizable features. The present study, from inclination as well as necessity, approximates more closely to the second type. I have tried, however, to bridge the gap by using what modest statistics are available and by presenting ideal types as well as individual portraits.

Concentrating on the individuals who make up the group introduces further difficulties into a collective biography. The group biographer, like the biographer of the individual, recognizes the importance of
“peeling the skins of the onion” in an effort to understand the subjects at their innermost levels of being. Issues such as parent-child relationships, childhood experiences, the processes of socialization or, in Erikson’s words, the “framework of social influences and traditional institutions,” which mold perceptions and develop the beliefs and attitudes that define the adult, are as important in understanding the individuals who constitute a group as in understanding the individual per se. Yet peeling 327 onions is a task of a different order from peeling 1. It is inevitable that one’s knowledge and understanding will remain more superficial, especially when the evidence is not easily accessible. Moreover, it is necessary at times to resist being drawn too far down some of the tantalizing byways of individual personality which, while rich material for the individual biographer, shed little light on the group. Study of the group requires detailed charting of its external contours, its institutional framework, and its relation to the larger society. This, because of limitations of time and space, must be achieved, to some extent, at the expense of exploration of the inner workings of the individuals.

To focus on the individuals in a group biography raises also the problem that much of what makes up a person cannot be quantified. While it is possible to tabulate and draw statistical conclusions from such data as ethnicity, occupational and marital status, morality, and even, with caution, class origin, it is not so easy to do so for ideas, prejudices, passions, beliefs, ideologies, ideals, and principles. Even when evidence of such a nature is available, it must not only be tested, as in all biography, for irony, flippancy, insincerity, special pleading, or other such motivations, but it must also be placed in the context of the characteristic mode of speech—especially the rhetoric—of the subgroup to which the individual belongs. Distinguishing the various “tones of voice” of a number of subjects is a difficult task and, despite rigorous testing through content analysis, what can be derived is only a subjective interpretation of the attitudes behind the words.

While recent critiques of prosopography have been helpful in providing a conceptual framework for this work, it is not presented as a prosopographical study. My main concern was not to identify and correlate a few significant variables among the background characteristics of the group. The model on which this work is based is, rather, the biography. It is a loosely chronological study from birth to death of 327 men and women who constituted an identifiable group. Although I have tried to identify the sociopsychological ties that bound the group, I have also tried to present them as individuals in all their diversity. The result is a group portrait.