

impossible to make full entries for many of the collections of papers I have looked at—literally hundreds of names would be involved.

Finally, it is to be hoped that all the institutions and individuals holding records open to the public will contribute to the *Register* and that the editors receive all assistance possible to continue their work. Only if they do, can the *Register* be the really worthwhile aid to research that is needed.

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*Mesengers of Grace: Evangelical missionaries in the South Seas 1797-1860.* By Niel Gunson. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1978. 437pp. Aust. price: \$25.

*God's Gentlemen: A history of the Melanesian Mission 1849-1942.* By David Hilliard. University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1979. 342pp. Aust. price: \$14.95.

BOTH these books, in different ways, make major contributions to Pacific history. Mastery of sources, ability to ask new questions of well-known material, and clarity of argument mean that both authors shed fresh light on the form which Pacific Island Christianity has taken. Both rightly scrutinise not only the missionaries and the policies of missionary societies, but also the needs and patterns of island societies, in order to assess how Christianity was accepted and how it changed Pacific patterns of life and thought. Their successful use of difficult and scattered sources underlines the need for similar studies on other missions and missionaries.

Gunson's appendices and bibliographies made his book a valuable reference tool. So many have benefited from reading his doctoral thesis, or from his supervision and generous advice, that the originality of his research has become dulled by familiarity. His study of missionaries and their environment as a clue to their work in the Pacific is a forceful reminder of the power even of subcultures to shape personality though he does not explore the reasons why some missionaries adapted so well to Pacific cultures. Hilliard uses the same method, but not in the same detail, so that the ethos which shaped 'God's gentlemen' is not illuminated with the same clarity as the evangelicalism of the London and Wesleyan Missionary societies. For example, it would have been interesting to know why C.E. Fox so dramatically identified himself with Melanesians. Was being a New Zealander a partial explanation?

Neither Gunson nor Hilliard attempts to ignore the flaws in the missionaries they discuss. The result is a satisfying credibility about their analyses, where the reader can assess the impact of devotion, greatness, mediocrity, stupidity and pettiness. Considering the limitations imposed by cultural barriers in both missionary and islander minds, the reader is constantly struck by the extent of change. More attention could have been paid to the effect of island societies and mores on the missionaries. Hilliard hints at major change in W.G. Fallowes of the

Melanesian Mission (pp.281-5), but most missionaries are described in a way which suggests that their Christianity was only slightly affected by the communities in which they lived and worked.

The reasons for cultural and religious change are complex. Gunson regrets that 'the new civilization had to be an artificial one instead of one based on the tradition of native life' (p.269). The problem for the historian, which Gunson does not wholly clarify, would be to know which traditions could provide such foundations, when there were such major changes throughout Pacific societies as a result of European trade contact, negative controls such as colonial powers ending head-hunting, as well as deliberate change introduced by missionaries. Pacific Islanders were often more resilient than missionaries (or historians) have recognized. Some of the most valuable parts of Gunson's book deal with the chiefly churches (pp.314ff) and missionary disillusion at their failure to recreate Pacific Christianity in their own image. Even in the religious revivals of Tonga and Tutuila, Gunson shows very successfully that missionary leadership interacted with traditional religious behaviour and points out how well such activities suited a church which was co-terminous with community (p.236).

Even when missionaries and colonial administrators adopted a conscious policy of accommodation and gradual change, as far as possible on Melanesian terms, instead of the frontal assault which characterized many L.M.S. and Wesleyan missionaries, the long-term results described by Hilliard do not seem to have been significantly different. Melanesian Mission staff made decisions which were distinctly culture-bound, even blimpish, with the result that the churches which gradually emerged were rather more Anglican, than purely Catholic and Melanesian as G.A. Selwyn and J.C. Patterson had hoped (p.294).

Hilliard carefully relates changing theological and missiological perspectives in the Church of England to Melanesian Mission policies, though more emphasis could have been given to Selwyn's theology. The problems created by the peculiar constitutional and financial bases of the mission and its distinctly autocratic leadership are skilfully explored. Many opportunities for growth were missed, such as the failure to build on the return of labourers from Queensland. The development of an indigenous clergy with real responsibility was slower than in other missions working in Melanesia, but developments like the Melanesian Brotherhood showed that much was being absorbed, even if the results often surprised and disappointed the missionaries (pp.154ff, 270).

There are useful analyses of church growth in particular islands. Hilliard shows how disappointed expectations could lead to schism (p.285) and contribute to post-war 'Marching Rule' (pp.280ff), just as Gunson explores how the Mamaia and Siovili movements developed in Tahiti and Samoa, as attempts to integrate the new religion into local patterns on indigenous rather than missionary terms. Further exploration of that theme will depend on histories of island churches.

Students of Pacific history will need both books. Each demonstrates the value of relating material in mission archives to a widely-conceived historical setting and opens up many new perspectives for further research.

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