

fair. It should be read with Clive Moore's recently released *Happy Isles in Crisis: the historical causes for a failing state in the Solomon Islands, 1998–2004*, which leans slightly in the opposite direction, with fuller explanations of the Malaita perspective.

Finally, written from afar, the book does not entirely capture the devastation, fear and sadness the whole crisis brought to many families and individuals in the Solomons, still experienced today, a weakness shared by the current political positions of some Solomon Islanders who sat out the crisis overseas in Australia or Fiji. But with its balanced fairness and clear analysis, this is an important contribution to healing and to the development of mature political leadership in the Solomon Islands.

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Dissolving Dream: The Improbable Story of the First Baptist Maori Mission. By R.F. Keam. Published by the author, 2004. 236 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 0-47600-421-7.

MISSIONARY HISTORY IN NEW ZEALAND remains a surprisingly underwritten field. With the notable exception of studies relating to the Anglican Williams family (some of those generated by interest in the Treaty of Waitangi), there has been limited critical attention to these pioneers in cultural encounter. Judith Binney's early work on Kendall and Yate and Anne Salmond's broader studies are obvious exceptions and J.M.R. Owen's recent study of Richard Taylor is welcome. Physicist Ron Keam, renowned for his work on geothermal areas, has gathered a remarkable body of material on one of the more obscure missionary ventures. Baptists in New Zealand do not have the missionary history of Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists and Mormons. They typically found their own way to the colony and gradually gathered in largely Pakeha churches. The exception was a brief work at Te Wairoa near Rotorua, a location made famous not by the mission, but by its devastation in the Tarawera eruption of 1886. Indeed, it is through this link that Keam's study was generated. In 1988 he published an award-winning study of the eruption itself.

This volume has a different focus but is just as exhaustive. Keam traces the stories of those who shaped the Te Wairoa mission. First among these were William and Anstis Snow, an American couple who came to New Zealand in 1880 for the sake of William's health. Like many others they visited the famous Pink and White Terraces, encountering and observing Maori life along the way. William Snow was a social activist from a family associated with the movement to abolish slavery. Disturbed at what he saw as exploitation of Maori by liquor merchants he began a temperance campaign, helped found the Maori language newspaper *Te Korimako* and sought the establishment of a settled Christian mission in the area. Eventually sponsorship was offered by the Auckland Baptist Tabernacle and its new minister, Thomas Spurgeon. A graduate from Spurgeon's famous father's college in London, Alfred Fairbrother, was appointed missionary and the work began in 1882. Snow died early in 1883, soon after leaving New Zealand. His wife, Anstis, returned to New Zealand for a visit in 1884. The mission was making little progress. Fairbrother, who had no significant prior contact with Maori, appears not to have worked sympathetically with the local population. The situation was made worse by criticism of Fairbrother by a fellow worker, Clara Haszard. Keam argues that Haszard resented the relationship which developed between Fairbrother and Anstis Snow and which culminated in their marriage in May 1885. In the meantime, the Auckland Baptist Tabernacle was becoming disillusioned with progress at the mission. It ceased its sponsorship in December 1885. By the time the settlement at Te Wairoa was overwhelmed

on 10 June 1886, the Fairbrothers had already signaled their intention to leave for the United States.

The Baptist mission at Te Wairoa thus lasted less than four years, without particular success. Its history and its broader significance are slight. This is implicitly recognized by Keam. The work of the mission itself takes up only a third of *Dissolving Dream*. The bulk of the book is biographical, first of the Snow family, with two chapters giving account of the American background. There are long extracts from William's record of travels in New Zealand. Attention then turns to Fairbrother and Anstis Snow, whose lives are traced until their deaths in the 1930s. These biographical details are a key strength of the book, providing a sympathetic picture of missionary motivation which is often lacking in modern studies. The text is engaging, organized and comprehensive. We are left feeling that we know pretty well all there is now to know of these individuals. Most of the illustrations have not appeared in print before. Self-published, the book is well presented, and supported by a glossary, a guide to participants, full references and a detailed index.

For all these qualities the question remains as to whether such an extensive study is necessary for this relatively minor venture, which was led by people whose lives only briefly involved New Zealand. For students of Baptist and local history the work is clearly valuable, opening up new sources and filling gaps in hitherto sketchy accounts. Insights into the contributions of the Auckland minister Thomas Spurgeon are especially useful. Spurgeon's unquestioned impact on late colonial religious life in New Zealand is yet to be fully explored. Also uncovered is the extent and origin of the Snow family's financial backing of ventures in New Zealand. American influence in colonial New Zealand is another area requiring further study. Yet, though detailed and in places original, the book does not integrate its findings with wider historiography. There is little engagement with broader currents of Maori, Christian and New Zealand history in the 1880s.

Perhaps that is an unfair expectation. The telling of small stories has its own logic. Ron Keam has successfully recovered a short missionary episode. Many others, bigger than this one, would benefit from similar careful treatment. A critical mass of such studies might then provide the raw material for broader attention to the role of Christian missions in cultural engagement in Aotearoa New Zealand.

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The House: New Zealand's House of Representatives 1854–2004. By John E. Martin. Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, 2004. 390pp. NZ price: \$59.95. ISBN 0-86469-463-6.

WALK ALONG LAMBTON QUAY, turn left at the end and there it is: the world's ninth oldest national Parliament, meeting-place of one of its oldest democracies. The awkward, worker-unfriendly Beehive housing the Executive sits alongside the much more elegant Parliament and Library, both beautifully restored in the early 1990s. Right there, in the middle of the capital's shopping district. It is even accessible through a nondescript building on the Quay itself. Could there be a better symbol of an 'intimate democracy'?

Ninth oldest national parliament? Really? It first met in May 1854, authorized by an Act of the Westminster Parliament passed the previous year. Thus, in 2004, it celebrated its 150th anniversary; and to mark that, Parliament commissioned an official history, prepared by Dr John Martin. It is an elegant, big-format work, well written with plenty of photographs and those marvellous cartoons without which good political histories