

governmental extravagance must have been stunned to have found itself pushed by the zeal and impetuosity of Spender into what looked likely to be an expensive international undertaking.

It is no comfort to a New Zealander of almost any persuasion to see how negative the New Zealand attitude to either aid or security issues was at this time. That was not true in earlier years nor was it to be true later. But in 1950-51, Australia made all the running and for this Spender himself seems to have been substantially responsible.

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The Catholic Church in Australia. A Short History, 1788-1967. By Patrick O'Farrell. Nelson, Sydney, 1968. x, 294 pp. Plates, maps, bibliography, index. Australian price: \$1.75 (paper).

WRITING the Catholic history of Australia is becoming an appreciable academic industry. Although much still remains to be done the scholarly tradition established by Cardinal Moran, Dom Birt and Eris O'Brien has been richly developed by the works on various facets of the topic that have appeared over the past dozen years. The appearance of Professor O'Farrell's contribution — which also includes two large volumes of documents — is, therefore, most timely. As a general and up-to-date survey of a large subject it meets a real need, while in being extensively based on archival sources it enjoys a freshness and monographic solidity rarely found in 'short history'.

It is also topical. Appearing at a time when dissent from authoritarianism is widespread within the church and when the exponents of established authority are embarrassed by demands to adapt to social pressures, it sets present discontents in a perspective that prompts the useful reflection 'was it ever otherwise?' O'Farrell has no doubt of the church's basic supernatural orientation. But he recognises that it is nonetheless irremovably involved in the affairs of men. Thus, while suggesting that its growth in Australia may represent 'one of the greater feats of modern Catholicism' (page x), he is undeterred from presenting its story mainly as a series of undisguised and occasionally sordid conflicts. Within Australian Catholicism the outstanding issue was the many-faceted Irish-English one of the nineteenth century which set laity against clergy and divided the clergy themselves. It was aptly symbolised by the refusal of the Archbishop of Sydney, Cardinal Patrick Moran, to pay for the return to Australia of the remains of his English Benedictine predecessor, Roger Vaughan, who died in 1883 while on a visit to England to recruit nuns.

It is, however, in regard to the Church's relations with its environment that O'Farrell stresses the conflict theme most strongly — perhaps too strongly. Beginning with its introduction as the proscribed faith of Irish convicts Australian Catholicism has undoubtedly had to contend with much bigotry from both Protestants and secularists and from those loyalists who resented its adherents' support of Irish Home Rule. Yet, while O'Farrell (in noting the existence of Catholic bigotry also, and in emphasising Catholic efforts to make the grade socially and economically in Australia) recognises that there are other sides to the question of hostility and alienation, it may be doubted whether he makes enough of them. For example, his discussion of the Catholic repudiation of state secular education consists largely of a

description of episcopal denunciations of the system but this is not balanced by an assessment of their applicability to the actual Australian situation. Consequently, the crucial fact that the independent Catholic school system was founded, in part, at least, on false premises is given insufficient weight. At base the movement for secular education was not 'overwhelmingly anti-Catholic' (p. 113), but stemmed from the development of the democratic state and found general support as a means of obtaining educational equality and efficiency. But the bishops disregarded this, and together with it the telling liberal arguments they had invoked earlier in the century in pressing their claims to religious equality. Rather, adopting denigration as their stock-in-trade they fought the education cause in terms of the European situation (where it was part of a serious challenge to the church) and condemned secular schools as weapons in a worldwide effort by freemasons to subvert Catholicism and assumed that they would be 'seedplots of future immorality, infidelity and lawlessness' (p. 126).

Not surprisingly, such an assumption was complemented by a 'strong conviction of self holiness' (see O'Farrell's valuable essay 'Protest without Anarchy: the Church in Australian History', *Bulletin of Christian Affairs*, 5 June 1970). The effect of this conjunction has been, we are told, to confirm the Church's sense of estrangement and to reduce its capacity to give Australian society the Christian leavening it allegedly needed — and to which it, although undeserving, was presumably entitled. The result may be seen in the rapid degeneration to a narrow, Communist-obsessed movement of the determined post-World War II effort to provide that leavening. Yet the total picture is not quite as black as that failure suggests: there is, and long has been, after all, the unobtrusive charitable work of the nursing orders and of the St Vincent de Paul Society, although O'Farrell does not mention it.

In the context this is a misleading omission. It may, however, be excused, like the inadequate treatment of the laity in this book, by the difficulty of dealing with a vast and complex subject in a small compass. Less excusable on that score is an occasional carelessness with facts. For instance (p. 90), Polding did not bring five Italian Passionists to Australia in 1843. He brought four, one French and three Italian; a fifth Passionist, the Italian Peter Magganotto, did not arrive until 1848. Yet to finish on a sour note would be a grave disservice to a book which is informative and stimulating, which discusses questions relevant to New Zealand and elsewhere as well as to Australia and whose readability is enhanced by fast-moving prose and crisp pen portraits.

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Pacific Islands Portraits. Edited by J. W. Davidson and Deryck Scarr. A. H. and A. W. Reed, Wellington, 1970. xi, 346 pp. N.Z. price: \$6.50.

THIS is an interesting and informative collection of individual and group biographical or quasi-biographical studies. The period chosen — virtually the nineteenth century, though the last two essays close in the twentieth — was one of great, indeed revolutionary, change in the Pacific Islands. 'Changes,' says Professor Davidson, in his introduction, 'have been far more radical than any that could have been comprehended in the period of