

the nineteenth-century migration process, drawing together the concrete detail of individual experience and the big picture of the world-wide Irish diaspora. There is a significant audience for this information but I doubt that many will find their way to it here. This may seem an unfair criticism of an academic history but it is surely ironic that in 'recovering' an historical identity 'confiscated' by mainstream historiography, the fruits of that work are locked away in the specialist language of the academic.

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God's Farthest Outpost: A History of Catholics in New Zealand. By Michael King. Penguin, Auckland, 1997. 208 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 0-140-26719-0.

COMMISSIONED a long time ago, this work was supposed to fill the gap of the one major denomination in New Zealand without any solid historical account of its development right through to the modern era. Somewhere along the line the commission evidently changed, and the result is a stylish and popular book rather than a contribution to learning. Michael King has written better works in the past, but he has not lost his flair.

Characterized by a light but enjoyable text and fine photographs, the book seems designed to evoke images and memories more than to analyse. This is evident from the 'Memoir', which serves as a preface, describing King's experiences of Catholicism, which obviously came to an end about the time of the Vatican reforms. The young Michael King knew a great deal about the tone of religion, its moral exhortations, its liturgy, its treatment of childhood fears and joys. But not much about it interests him now, so he virtually neglects the profound changes in the church in the post-Vatican period.

The acknowledgements of *God's Farthest Outpost* explain a great deal. Originally commissioned by Catholic publishers and then taken over by Penguin, its scale and character seem to have been curtailed by a publisher which wanted a book which would sell — this perhaps explains the lurid cover — and an author who had taken a very long time, and yet faced 'circumstances' which 'did not permit extensive research from primary resources'. Consequently, heavy dependence on Ernie Simmons's work and on Michael O'Meehan for the Christchurch diocese mark this book, which is, as the author explains, 'an extended and illustrated essay: one person's overview of the New Zealand Catholic community drawn largely from secondary sources'. The best parts, at least for the academic, are therefore those parts when King draws on and develops his own previous work on Maori Catholicism.

Still there is much to appreciate in the brief but lively pen portraits of bishops, and a few others besides. King has had good mentors and they have guarded him from serious errors. Moreover, although this is not a text which draws one into intense reflection, its phrases could well be the starting point for further research. The book's two central chapters, 'A French Church?' and 'An Irish Church' offer one such starting point. The unexplained question mark in the first title suggests that King is not altogether sure of his description, and it raises the question, which his text acknowledges, that the French never had the field to themselves as they established Catholic Maori missions. The case for

seeing Catholicism as an Irish church is much stronger, but the lack of analysis of what this meant in community life is surprising. One longs for more than anecdotal accounts of personalities, for more understanding of the relative roles of religious communities and the laity, for some financial accounting for the church and its varied tasks, for more than the casual descriptions of the Grail and the Catholic Youth Movement.

King writes an enjoyable text, and the photographs are a magnificent evocation, with something of the flavour of church life clearly conveyed in them. But one is left wondering whether the church would have been better served with a work like the 1990 history of the Presbyterian Church, in which a team of historians provided a text which was not just evocative but also insightful, informed, and the product of careful research. I feel the opportunity may not come again.

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Farewell Colonialism: The New Zealand International Exhibition Christchurch, 1906-07. Edited by John Mansfield Thomson. The Dunmore Press, Palmerston North, 1998. 175 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 0-86469-318-4.

FAREWELL COLONIALISM is a curious title for a collection of essays that examine an international exhibition that was fundamentally colonial, especially since the highlights of the book are the essays that go some way towards examining the culture of colonialism. International exhibitions are events that encompass a vision and a taxonomy of the world as perceived by its organizing body. Yet this collection of papers from a Stout Centre conference, with several additional contributions, lacks an introductory essay. It sorely needs one. Instead, John Mansfield Thomson devotes the first chapter to the 1851 Crystal Palace exhibition. While this exhibition was important for many of the precedents it established, perhaps more useful would have been a survey of New Zealand's participation at international exhibitions through the nineteenth century, not just in Britain, but in France, the United States, the Australian colonies and elsewhere. If we are to see such examples of 'Exhibiting Ourselves' as evidence of the construction of a national, or at least a Pakeha, identity, then we must consider the changing role of both the natural environment and of Maori people, culture and material objects in these re-presentations, not only to ourselves but to the world. These were by no means static performances on an unchanging international stage.

Interest in international exhibitions is growing, and while there is some mention here of the work of Greenhalgh, Rydell and Benedict, there is little indication that the Christchurch exhibition was part of something much larger. For example, there is no reference to recent work on colonial collecting and display by Annie E. Coombes and others. Given the length of time from the original conference to the publication of this book, Ben Dibley's analysis of the Christchurch exhibition might have been a worthy, if rather late, addition.¹

¹ Ben Dibley, 'Telling Times: Narrating Nation at the New Zealand International Exhibition 1906-7', *Sites*, 34, Autumn 1997, pp.1-18.