

*Marist Brothers and Maori: 1838–1988*. By Edward Clisby. Marist Publications, Auckland, 2001. 284 pp. NZ price: \$100.00. Available from the publishers: 18 Budock Road, Hillsborough, Auckland.

‘GOOD WINE NEEDS NO BUSH’, so it is said. ‘Yeah, right’, comes an ironic counter from the popular beer advertisement, for is that not being presumptuous? In any case should not credit be given wherever it is due, and merit always be affirmed publicly? Hence a reviewer, even a tardy one, has a duty to broadcast the quality and availability of Clisby’s book on the Maori dimension of his congregation’s work in New Zealand.

The enormous contribution of the Marist Brothers of the Schools (FMS) to Catholic education, and thereby to the growth of the Church and of its place in New Zealand society, is deservedly well known. The name Marist reverberates through the realms of pedagogy and of sport. Less well known is the story of the Brothers’ work among Maori people, yet it was this apostolate that first brought them from France to New Zealand. Now, with a solidly researched narrative, Edward Clisby FMS has filled that gap in a scholarly but readable way. His is a fine achievement, one that through its very objectivity honours its subject and does credit to those whose names bedew its pages.

In their first phase of operation, 13 Marist Brothers came to New Zealand between 1838 and 1842. The last of them, Br Basile, died at Meeanee in 1898. Members of a congregation organized by St Marcellin Champagnat for the purpose of teaching, they were intended to be catechists, helping the priests of the Society of Mary (a distinct but related congregation) to instruct the Maori. Instead, they tended to be employed more in serving the temporal needs of the mission, thus having their role confused with that of the lay-brothers of the Society of Mary.

This aroused a measure of disquiet among them; but it did not impede their readiness to participate as variously as they could in the cause for which they had left home. As the field of mission operations spread southwards from Hokianga and the Bay of Islands the Brothers moved too. They experienced, and described in their letters (a freshly broached historical source), life in the front line of European settlement. Br Emery survived the Maori attack on Kororaraka in 1845, but Br Euloge was killed by Hauhau near Wanganui in 1864.

The second phase of the Brothers’ Maori involvement stemmed from the new — and English-speaking — wave of them who came to operate schools of their own. Beginning in Wellington in 1876 and in Auckland in 1885, these were not missionary establishments but were designed to educate boys (mainly Irish) within the urban Catholic mainstream. A number of Maori boys, though, did attend them, including some who later distinguished themselves. One such was Sir James Henare, a Sacred Heart College old boy who commanded the Maori Battalion.

Meanwhile, in 1886 the Maori mission work in the Auckland diocese had been entrusted to the Mill Hill Fathers. To that end in 1928 they established a catechist and rural training school at Northcote. For the Brothers, phase three of *their* Maori work began in 1946, when they took command of the place and operated it as a normal secondary school. Re-branded St Peter’s Maori College (since 1972 Hato Petera) it remained under them until 1984, when a lay principal was appointed. In a subsequent development, a number of Brothers, following their predecessors who had worked with Bishop Pompallier, returned as missionaries to rural North Auckland. In so doing they also supplied a fitting conclusion for a sesquicentennial record of an undertaking that has for too long lain in historical obscurity.

Besides, this is a story that casts an explanatory beam well beyond its immediate focus. It is also to be comprehended within the larger contexts of Maori–European contact and of the national education system. The publishers are to be commended for adding a fresh

thread to the increasingly rich and intricate pattern that adorns the literary cloak of New Zealand history.

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*The Accidental Missionary. Tales of Elekana.* By Michael Goldsmith and Doug Munro. Macmillan Brown Centre for Pacific Studies, University of Canterbury, Christchurch, 2002. 142 pp. NZ price: \$24.95. ISBN 1-877175-33-1.

ELEKANA was the Apostle of Tuvalu. In this small Pacific nation, in which allegiance to Christianity is practically universal, he is still honoured today as the one who first brought the new religion (in 1861). Not a European but a Cook Islander, not sent by a missionary society but arriving in Tuvalu after an epic drift voyage, not ordained or trained but merely a lay office-holder in the church of his native Manihiki, Elekana challenges the pattern often assumed to be normal in the history of Pacific evangelization. The agency of Pacific Islanders in religious change since the first contact of Oceanic peoples with Europeans is in fact enormously important, though historians have often ignored it. Part of the reason for this is the difficulty of documenting indigenous activity from sources largely created by Europeans for their own purposes. In this book our knowledge of a significant early Pacific Christian is considerably extended, probably as far as we can reasonably expect.

The two authors of this study are experienced and authoritative scholars, well known for their previous writings in Tuvaluan history. Here they are assembling and extending the published and unpublished work on Elekana they have been doing for many years. Careful and detailed research in mission archives and assiduous searching in newspaper files and obscure publications have been combined with oral evidence from Tuvalu itself to produce a very rich compilation of historical and biographical information. The 'accidental missionary' who is the subject of the book eventually left his flock of converts for formal training in Samoa, was officially appointed to a Tuvalu mission post and later removed from it, travelled to Australia for participation in a mission publicity tour and then lived out his remaining days back home in the northern Cook Islands. His last appearance in the historical record came many years later when he asked to be sent to Papua as a replacement for his missionary son, who had been killed there. As well as delineating an interesting Pacific life-history and revealing less public aspects of the London Missionary Society's ways of operating, the book sheds light on the dynamics of conversion and religious and cultural development in a Polynesian setting.

*The Accidental Missionary*, however, is more than just the last word in Elekana studies. It is a vehicle for what the authors present as 'a series of reflections on the limits of history and biography'. By identifying the provenance of the various oral and written versions of the Elekana story, and by reproducing and closely analysing the texts themselves, Goldsmith and Munro have opened many doorways to better understanding of how Pacific history is known. They demonstrate how historically important 'stories' emerge from a variety of sources that were originally created for diverse purposes both by the various actors in the events and by subsequent interpreters. Beyond the substantive Elekana material, the authors' reflections are a valuable contribution to discussions of the problems of representing the Pacific past.

Clearly written and well presented (although lacking illustrations), the book has a good index and is largely free of mistakes (but I did notice 'Tauraka' several times for Elekana's son Tauraki, the missionary killed in Papua).

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