

opinions. His refusal to have a correction inserted in the press of his (misreported) remarks at the St Patrick's night concert and his subsequent stinging rebuke to Auckland Mayor James Gunson fuelled a popular outcry which influenced the government to proceed against him. I doubt very much whether Liston ever 'clearly advocated complete independence for Ireland' (p.151). Reid deals most sensitively with the older Liston, 'a man fighting yesterday's battles, and failing to connect with a generation whose priestly formation was very different from his own' (p.287).

The book contains an excellent range of photographs, though some are very poorly reproduced. A few minor corrections: the age at which students could enter the Irish College Rome was 16 years (p.42); Rome rather than the New Zealand bishops was reluctant to ignore the wishes of the diocesan clergy in the choice of Bishop Verdon's successor, especially given their selection of a regular rather than a secular candidate (p.82); Bishop Cleary's brother, Christopher, lived at Bagenalstown, County Carlow, Ireland (p.171); the drive for state aid for Catholic schools launched in 1956 by the Holy Name Society was conducted under the slogan 'Hear the Case' (p.259).

RORY SWEETMAN

University of Otago

Gathering for God: George Brown in Oceania. By Helen Bethea Gardner. Otago University Press, Dunedin, 2006. 204 pp. NZ price: \$39.95. ISBN 1-877372-18-8.

THIS IS NO NARROWLY CONCEIVED 'MISSION HISTORY' book. Although its focus is on a single person, the adventurous and resourceful George Brown, its scope extends far beyond his missionary career or the history of the mission he worked in. Readers will come away much better informed about Brown and his career in Methodist missions, but the book makes a major contribution to the broader concerns of Pacific history.

George Brown was a missionary in Samoa from 1860 to 1874 and led the first Methodist mission to New Britain in 1875. From 1887 until his retirement in 1908 he held the important appointment of General Secretary of the Australasian Methodist Overseas Mission, based in Sydney, and was responsible for the mission's activities in Samoa, Fiji, Tonga, the Solomon Islands and New Guinea. In these years of mission progress and imperial expansion, Brown travelled widely and exerted a significant influence in Methodist mission affairs, political developments in the South Pacific and the growing field of Oceanic anthropology. His wide-ranging activities as missionary, mission administrator, 'politically engaged' participant in Pacific affairs and amateur scientist/ethnologist/photographer/collector played a significant part in the fast-moving story of European contact with the Pacific, especially the western region. Helen Gardner's book is a contemporary 'revisiting' of Brown's life and his role in Pacific history.

Gardner is a New Zealander, holding a doctorate from La Trobe University. One of the strengths of *Gathering for God* is the author's self-awareness of where she is situated in this age of cultural relativism and widespread suspicion of Christianity and of missionaries, including their supposed role in imperialism. She acknowledges that she came to the study with a 'residual disdain for missionaries' and a dismissive view of Pacific Christianity. Her book could not therefore be at all hagiographical, as C.B. Fletcher's biography *The Black Knight of the Pacific* (published in 1944) tended to be. Instead, it emerges as part of the new willingness of anthropologists and historians to recognize the complexities of the relationship between mission and empire and to reach a deeper understanding, as she puts it, of 'the attraction and impact of Christianity in the Pacific Islands'. Writing from outside the field of mission history, she nevertheless distances herself from modern popular and academic misrepresentations of missionaries and Oceanic churches.

Although *Gathering for God* is structured around Brown's engagement with the developing anthropology of his time, it nonetheless presents a comprehensive view of his life and work. It is not a 'traditional biography', but employs his life story as a means of exploring the role of Christian missions in the political and scientific history of the Pacific. Gardner has a lively interest in context, and takes care to explain almost everything she encounters in the life of her subject. Her study of Brown's career is therefore not at all quarantined from Pacific history beyond the missions.

There is no shortage of sources for the study of George Brown. The wide range of available material includes not only his voluminous correspondence and published writings but also his archive of photographs (held in Australia) and his large collection of artifacts. More than 30 of the photographs are reproduced in the book, along with informative captions. Appropriately, Gardner is highly conscious of the textual dimension, and refers often to the differing content and form of the various 'texts' she has located and analyzed. She has judiciously used the work of other scholars, though she makes no reference to the incisive viewpoints in John Garrett's books and articles, or to an evaluative article published in 1998 by Charles Forman.

Every chapter is a careful and informative study of aspects of Brown's career. The story of his early life in England and New Zealand is enhanced by a critical analysis of the relevant sections of his published autobiography. There is a chapter on his 14 years in Samoa, including the problems posed by rivalries between the missions and by warfare among the Samoans. The following chapter describes the early years of the pioneering New Britain mission, and a whole chapter is devoted to the controversial incident (in 1878) when mission personnel were attacked by local people and Brown organized a retaliatory raid on their villages. A study is made of his long years of active participation, as the Sydney-based chief executive of the mission, in the vigorous contemporary discussions of the political future of the western Pacific. 'Theology and Anthropology' is the title of a chapter that explores missionary anthropology in the late nineteenth century, and Brown's involvement in it. There is a little on his role in Tongan church affairs in the 1880s, but the book leaves aside his part in the founding of new missions to the New Guinea Islands (1891) and the western Solomon Islands (1902) and his intervention in Fiji Methodist matters in the first decade of the new century.

Gardner's most original contribution is in the chapter entitled 'Gifts, Curios and Souls'. Here she details the history and cultural context of Brown's indefatigable collecting of natural history specimens and cultural objects. Many of his artifacts were given to friends and museums, while more than 3000 items were retained in his personal collection (most of which is now held by the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka, Japan). The focus in this chapter is on the relationships underlying Brown's acquisition of this material, and the author provides a thoughtful study of gift giving and exchange in the traditional and Christian contexts of Samoa and the Bismarck Archipelago. She very usefully investigates the economic dimension of the mission's activities and their acceptance into these societies ('the sale of the faith').

Readers of Gardner's book will learn much about the way the Methodist mission operated in Polynesia and Melanesia, but this is incidental, since missionary aims and methods are not the main subject of her enquiry. The internal history of Pacific Islands Christianity is not the main focus either, although there are valuable insights into such things as the economic element, as mentioned above, and the participation of Samoan Christians in the warfare of the 1860s. Much more remains to be written about the embedding of the new religion in the societies and cultures of Oceania, but this study sheds considerable light on the contexts in which religious change took place.

RAEBURN LANGE