

REVIEWS

John Garrett, *To Live Among the Stars: Christian Origins in Oceania*. World Council of Churches in association with the Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, Geneva and Suva, 1982. Pp.412, maps, illustrations, bibliography, index.

John Garrett has undertaken the Herculean task of telling the story of the process of Christianization in the Pacific, from its earliest beginnings with Catholic Spain's exploration of the Marianas in 1521 to the twentieth-century development of a regional identity, all in a single volume of thirteen chapters. Very wisely he has limited himself to accounts of those churches within the Pacific Conference of Churches; to do otherwise would have been quite unmanageable. Perhaps he may be encouraged to consider another volume covering the rest of the Christian missions and other religious sects in the Pacific as a challenging project for the next few years.

A chronology of events that happened in the various mission fields in the Pacific during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries could not have been too difficult to compile. But a critical analysis of the reasons underlying both the successes and failures of the various attempts to convert the Pacific islanders was an extremely complex and difficult task, because of the vastness of the region geographically and the diversity of its peoples. Throughout this book, Garrett has incisively demonstrated how local cultures helped to shape the development of Christian churches throughout the Pacific, giving them their distinctive local flavor. Another contributing factor, namely the diverse backgrounds of the various missions and missionaries, is also critically discussed. This required a high degree of scholarship, patience, industry, and sympathetic understanding, and the author does not disappoint us. *To Live Among the Stars* is not merely scholarly, it is readable and written with obvious sympathy and understanding. But no attempt is made to whitewash or glamorize those who brought the Gospel from overseas, and due acknowledgment is given to the role played by Pacific islands missionaries; both their failures and successes are well documented.

Inevitably, of course, a work of this scope has to be selective and cannot treat every topic in its full complexity. However, since mass conversion and mission training institutions have been well covered in other

areas of the Pacific, some discussion of other subjects should have been included: for example, the mass conversion of the Maoris of New Zealand to Christianity after extremely stiff resistance for more than a decade and a half; and the success of the famous Te Aute College in producing outstanding Maori scholars, politicians, and community leaders. Considering also the importance of the Roman Catholic Mission in Papua New Guinea, it is regrettable that Garrett concentrates only on the Papuan mission and neglects the Catholic work in the New Guinea islands and mainland. Although the role of politics in local conflicts involving missionaries has been well treated in many areas of the Pacific, it is not given sufficient attention in other regions. In Tonga, for example, Garrett perpetuates the myth started by Peter Dillon (and later made widely known by Basil Thomson's *Diversions of a Prime Minister*) that the wars in Tonga in 1837, 1840, and 1852, were provoked by missionaries—particularly by the chairman, the Rev. John Thomas. According to Dillon's account, Tāufa'āhau, the hero of these wars, was Thomas's pawn (76), and Tāufa'āhau and the Christian soldiers "had engaged in indiscriminate vengeance under orders" (77) presumably from Thomas. This somewhat superficial discussion of the situation neglects to mention that the so-called missionary wars were a continuation of the political struggle for power that had begun in Tonga long before the arrival of the Wesleyan missionaries. The acceptance of one of Dillon's charges at face value is also regrettable since Dillon had a personal grudge against the missionaries, was extremely biased and untruthful, and was determined to destroy John Thomas and the mission. His later efforts to encourage the establishment of a Roman Catholic mission in Tonga were a continuation of his malicious efforts in this respect.

The above criticisms are of a very minor nature and do not in any way detract from the overall merits of the book. In addition, I am presenting here the following factual and typographical errors for consideration in the publication of a second edition: Ma'afu had already established himself in the Lau Group in 1848 (114) and not after the Battle of Kaba in 1855 (80). *Lotu Tonga* was introduced to Samoa in 1828 and not in 1832 (122). Tonga has only one constitution—promulgated in 1875 (274)—not two. The so-called first Constitution of 1862 (273) is only a code of laws. The first President, not Chairman (275) of the reunited church, the Free Wesleyan Church of Tonga, was a Tongan, Setaleki Manu, and not Page. The United Church in Papua New Guinea was established in 1968 and not 1962 (303).

Each mission has produced its own history from time to time. After World War II, anthropologists and professional historians, particularly

missionary historians such as Professor C. W. Forman, Professor A. R. Tippett, and Dr. A. H. Wood, began to produce more objective studies of the Christian missions in the Pacific. This trend has been enhanced considerably by the works of scholars from the Department of Pacific and Southeast Asian History, Australian National University, Canberra, concentrating either on a particular island region or on a single missionary society. Most of these scholars have been supervised by the distinguished Pacific mission scholar Dr. Neil Gunson, and most of these academic studies, including Gunson's own scholarly works, have been published.

What was needed was a broader overview bringing some of this research together in a single study. John Garrett's book fulfills this need and will undoubtedly become the major textbook of the history of Christianity in the Pacific for many years to come. The inclusion of local maps, a most comprehensive bibliography, and an extensive index enhances the value of the volume as a textbook. The publishers must also be congratulated for producing the book for a price that is within the reach of students in the Pacific. *To Live Among the Stars* will be an invaluable addition to the library of anyone with interest in the Pacific or the history of Christian missions.

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