

A brief history of the Maori Church

For at least the first four decades of the Nineteenth Century, the Church in New Zealand was a Maori Church. In fact, the Maori Church, formed by the mission to the Maori People of the Church Missionary Society, was the only Church of England presence until the bishopric of New Zealand was offered to George Augustus Selwyn in 1841, and the first attempts were made to provide for mission and ministry to European settlers. Before Selwyn departed from England to take up his appointment, the Parent Committee of the C.M.S. offered him some assistance but reminded him that the Missionaries were not at liberty to minister to the Europeans — their mission was to the Maori. Thus did a tension first become evident which remains 170 years later — how to provide for both Maori and settler in the one Church.

In 1807 Samuel Marsden persuaded the fledgling Church Missionary Society to undertake a mission to the Maori people. Initial delays meant that this work commenced with the Maori group resident for trading purposes in Sydney, New South Wales. There is some evidence to suggest that the first Maori church building was in fact erected at this time on the banks of the Parramatta River in Sydney.

One of the founders of the Church Missionary Society was Henry Venn. His enlightened philosophy of missionary activity contained principles which have become known as the Three-Self Movement, and have significance in the origins of the Maori Church. These can be described thus:

Self-determination: The autonomy of the Church in its new environment.

Self-Propagation: The priority of self-development — indigenous ministry and indigenous evangelisation.

Self-Support: A structure of physical support governed by the forms of enterprise found within the local culture.

In practice, however, the motives of the first three lay missionaries put in place by Marsden, seem far removed from the noble principles which Venn was formulating.

Kendall, Hall and King were poorly equipped for the task they faced, but shared a determination to save the souls of the heathen and to replace their culture. The civilising of the natives, it was thought, would eventually lead to their Christianisation. (1)

The Voyage of the "Active" from Sydney to the Bay of Islands in 1814, bearing Marsden, Hall, King and Kendall, accompanied by ten Maori persons led by Ruatara, Hongi and Korokoro, was not without incident. Ruatara had been induced by Marsden to assist the introduction of the missionary group to New Zealand. In mid-Tasman Ruatara's misgivings almost caused the ship to be turned back to Sydney. He openly stated his regret at having agreed to encourage missionary settlement, because of his belief that settlement would destroy the influence of the chiefs. His desire to bring to his people the new methods of agriculture learnt in Sydney was the deciding factor.

In 1822 the arrival of Henry Williams saw the work of establishing the Maori Church take a positive step forward. The earliest missionaries had laboured for a decade without one positive act of commitment by a Maori to the Christian faith. Suddenly the tide began to turn and a number of Maori communities requested the presence and teaching of a missionary, or took it upon themselves to spread the faith by their own means. A great deal of activity took place — teaching, the cultivation of crops, building translation into the Maori language of biblical and liturgical material, and printing. Eventually a number of Maori churches were built, and examples abound of Maori lay evangelists and catechists taking a lead in the propagation of the faith.

Thus on the arrival of the Bishop in 1842 the Maori Church was well established and cared for by a number of missionaries, some of whom had by this time secured for themselves the trust and respect of the people amongst whom they lived and worked. Selwyn impressed with his ability to preach in the Maori language immediately upon his arrival, but he was never to enjoy the same mutual trust and respect in the Maori world as did Marsden and the Williams' brothers. After ten years, Selwyn's struggles with the C.M.S. and the difficulties experienced in his relationships with the missionary clergy led him to see that "it was harder than he thought to plant the seeds of a new religion in the hearts of the Maori and harder still to unite settler and Maori in a single church . . ." (2). He turned his attention to matters of church governance, the division of his diocese and the writing of the Constitution. From this point on the division between the Maori Church and the Settler Church was to become even more evident.

Formulation and acceptance of a written Constitution was hailed as evidence of growth and maturity in the New Zealand Church, but it was by its very nature a document of



Frederick Augustus Bennett.

the Settler Church. By 1857, the year it was signed, some 43 years had passed since Marsden had established the Maori Church, yet not one Maori signature is attached to the Constitution. In fact, the missionary clergy felt that the interests of the Maori Church were best safeguarded by the C.M.S. and thus the provisions of the Constitution were not at first intended to include the Maori Church. In his Presidential Address to the first General Synod in 1859, Selwyn expressed 'some doubts of the future stability of the Native Church' and asked Synod to consider 'the best mode of drawing our Native brethren into closer bonds of Christian fellowship with ourselves'. That same question, phrased in a variety of ways, was to reappear time and again in both diocesan and General Synods. Selwyn also voiced his concern that it might 'be found impossible to carry on a double government for the Colonial and Missionary Church.'

Stresses and strains in the life of the nation were felt also in the Maori Church. The Land Wars of the 1860s placed immense strain on the faith and loyalty of the Maori People to a Church which "told us to close our eyes and bow our

heads in prayer, and when we lifted up our heads and opened our eyes, our land had disappeared . . ."(3)

The division of the Settler Church into dioceses which bore no relation at all to traditional tribal boundaries, and the gradual dissolution of the authority of the missionary clergy over the Maori Church led to the wish to place the care of the Maori Church under a Maori Bishop. In 1876, the Rev. E.C. Stuart (later Bishop Stuart) in reporting to the C.M.S. in England on the condition of the Maori Church, stated that at a meeting at Tolaga Bay the question had been asked as to why the Maori Church should not have a Maori Bishop. The example was cited of Bishop Samuel Crowther, ordained in 1843, and consecrated as the first Negro Anglican Bishop in 1864.

In 1877 The Rev. T.S. Grace recorded that a conference had been held on this matter, but it had been decided that no suitable Maori clergyman was available for such a ministry. Grace forwarded to the C.M.S. a copy of a letter which had appeared in the publication 'Waka Maori', written by a Maori who in Grace's opinion was highly intelligent. In this the author asked "Why are some of us raised to permanent positions in Government and not in the Church? Why is there no Maori Bishop, since the natives of these Islands have, for a considerable time, embraced Christianity?"

In 1880 the General Synod ". . . received with much pleasure the Memorial of the Native Church Board of the Diocese of Auckland for the appointment of a Suffragan Bishop for the Maori portion of the Church in the Diocese, regarding it as proof of the vitality of that portion of the Church; but the Synod, looking at the one-ness which exists between the English and the Maori portions of the Church throughout New Zealand, and hoping that they will be brought yet closer together in worship and Church organisation, considers that the present proposal for the appointment of a Suffragan Bishop, would not be desirable and is unable to comply with the request . . ." Once the Settler Church had gained the ascendancy and overall authority, it was not about to surrender part of its control easily.

In 1913 the General Synod was able to bypass a motion calling for the Maori section of the Church to have representation at General Synod of both clerical and lay members elected from among the Maori people.

The rising popularity of the movement started by T. W. Ratana caused the Church in the 1920s to fear for its Maori membership. In his Presidential Address to the General Synod of 1925, Archbishop Julius recalled Selwyn's parting address to the Province, bequeathing to us "as a precious legacy the Native Pastors and the remnant of their flocks. In some sort we have endeavoured to fulfill the task. There are many good Christians among the Maoris; they are served by many faithful Pastors, but none of us can regard the situation as satisfactory. The Maori Mission ought to be

in some measure Provincial, but efforts to make it so have broken down, in part because the Church has not escaped the influence of the foolish and petty jealousies which divide the chief cities of the Dominion. Perhaps there is no type of Christian Mission in which the man counts for so much and money for so little. We want another Apostle of the Maoris . . .”

Later in the 1925 Synod, a Select Committee recommended that a Commission be set up to “. . . consider what steps may be taken to consider the present position of the Maori Church and advance the Kingdom of Christ among the Maoris . . .” The Select Committee consisted of two bishops, three archdeacons, and two laymen. As there were no Maori members of the General Synod, the membership of that group is understandable. However, no such restriction need have been placed on the membership of the Commission set up as a result, but the membership of this was as follows: The bishops in the North Island, the same three archdeacons, and two European priests. The terms of reference of the Commission were destined also to have a familiar ring:

1

To make careful enquiry into the present state of the work of the Church amongst the Maori People in those districts which are, at least outwardly, Christian.

2

To enquire as to the best means to be adopted to evangelise those Maori who are indifferent or avowedly hostile to Christianity.

3

To consider and report upon the growing manifestation of a desire on the part of Maori Christians for a greater degree of self-expression, both in the services of the church and control and government of the work of the Church amongst them, and more particularly how to incorporate into the work of the Church the best features and characteristics of Maori ideals.

4

To formulate a scheme whereby the Maori portion of the Church may have proper representation on the General Synod.

5

To consider whether it would be advisable to establish the work of the Church amongst the Maoris as a separate entity.

The Commission resolved to consult the Maori Church at a Conference, and this was duly held at Rotorua in June, 1925. Leading spokesmen amongst the Maori clergy in each of the North Island dioceses were present. These men were asked to form a Committee to bring their own report to the Commission, and this report was subsequently adopted unanimously by all present, and sent on to the Standing Committee of General Synod. The Report was in six parts:

a)

That, in the opinion of the Committee, it is advisable

that, in place of the present arrangement whereby Maori Mission work is carried on in each Diocese separately, the work be united into one mission for the whole of the Province of New Zealand.

b)

That the Mission be constituted with a Bishop at its head, and with Archdeacons, the latter to be members of the Maori race working under him; a Synod or other properly constituted authority; and a Standing Committee.

c)

That in each Archdeaconry of the Mission there be a properly constituted Archdeaconry Board.

d)

That, in the opinion of the Committee, the steps previously recommended would have the effect of so stimulating the interest of Maori Church people that an adequate response would be forthcoming to meet the extra financial outlay involved.

e)

The Committee feels it to be its duty to inform the conference that amongst the Maori Church people there is a very generally expressed desire that the Bishop at the head of the Mission be a member of the Maori race, but at the same time, in view of the difficulties which would of necessity surround the office of Bishop in the first appointment, the Committee does not wish to stress this point, and would welcome the appointment whether the Bishop was a Pakeha or Maori.

A further Commission was then set up to examine the constitutional questions involved. Three bishops, three archdeacons and two laymen this time made up the group: One of the laymen, and the only Maori, was The Hon. A.T. Ngata, M.P. (later Sir Apirana Ngata).

This Commission had three short recommendations:

That a separate Maori diocese be created, to be called the Diocese of Aotearoa.

That the area of such Diocese be the area of the Te Aute College Endowment, or an area in the Bay of Islands based on Paihia.

That a Special Session of the General Synod be convened for the purpose of passing necessary legislation.

The legislation was prepared, and the Commission obtained the necessary number of signatures to a Requisition for the convening of a Special Session of the General Synod.

The Special Session was held in December 1925. It had been a year of intense activity, after so much delay. In his Presidential Address, the new Archbishop, A.W. Averill, dealt at length with the constitutional legality of the proposal to create a Maori Diocese, and giving as his personal view “. . . I cannot see that there is any real Constitutional difficulty . . . so long as we are satisfied that circumstances require such a change in the organisation of

Church Work amongst the Maoris"

The Archbishop then gave his view of the underlying reason for taking this step. ". . . a Maori Church for Maoris because they are Maoris is un-Christian and unthinkable, and a Diocese for the Maoris because they are Maoris is equally un-Christian and unthinkable. The one idea in the creation of our Diocese for the Maoris is the spiritual welfare of the Maori Race so that it may be enabled to make its full contribution to the fullness of the Holy Catholic Church"

The Bill to create a Maori Diocese was passed on the second day of the Special Session of the General Synod. The Diocese of Aotearoa was to have its own Synod and Standing Committee, and the jurisdiction of the Bishop could extend to all members of the Maori race living in any part of the country, provided that the Bishop of a particular Diocese gave his written consent for the provision of such ministry. The Bishop was also given the right to licence clergy to exercise the care of souls or to hold other ecclesiastical office in respect of the Maori Race within his jurisdiction.

The Bishops then proceeded to meet the Maori representatives for the purpose of nominating a bishop for the Diocese of Aotearoa. Led by Sir Apirana Ngata, the Maori conference insisted that the first bishop must be a Maori. The Bishops, however, ". . . could not see their way to hand over their sacred responsibility for their Maori people to any one of the Maori clergy at the present time" After several sittings, and some intense negotiations including an attempt to persuade the Maori leaders that accepting a Pakeha nominee would also solve the problem of the lack of finance, the Conference was adjourned. A second attempt to make progress later in the year, was similarly deadlocked. A compromise was suggested which would have created a Maori Bishop as an assistant to the Primate but this was not supported by the diocesan synods.

The next step came at the 1928 General Synod. A select Committee set up to examine the question of the Maori Bishopric urged General Synod to rescind the 1925 legislation, and create an Assistant Bishop who would be a Maori, working under a diocesan bishop.

Accordingly, the Statute which was entitled "Of Episcopal Supervision of the Maori Race" came into being, and for the next fifty years the Bishop of Aotearoa existed as a suffragan bishop to the Bishop of Waiapu, with ". . . episcopal supervision of members of the Maori Race in the said Diocese and also in any Diocese the Bishop of which shall have given him under his hand and seal a commission thereto" What seemed at first an acceptable compromise, soon was revealed as grossly inadequate.

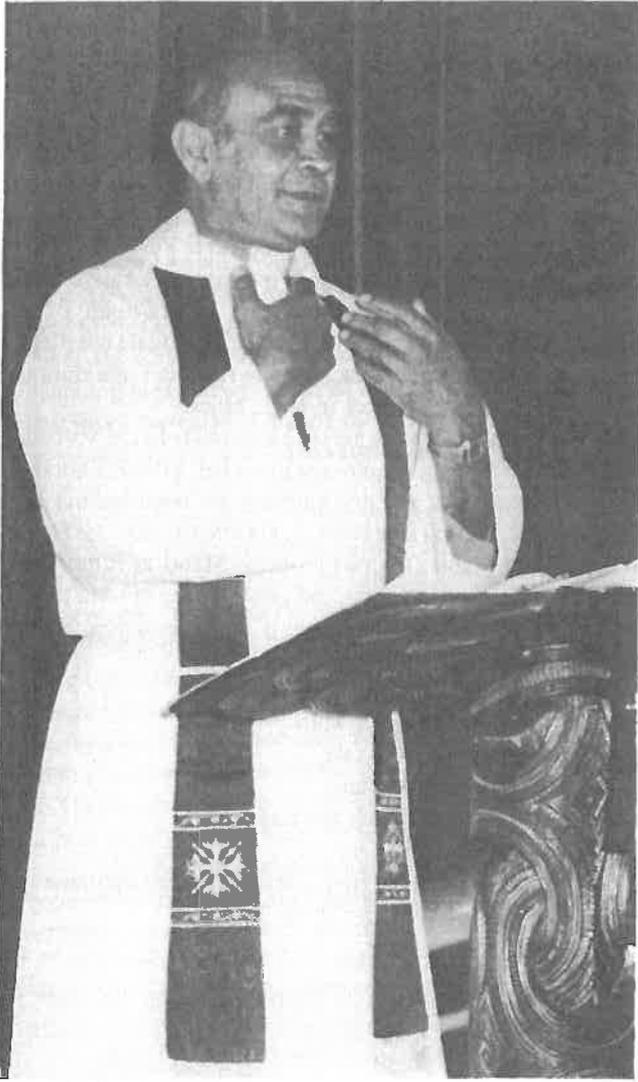
The Maori people were challenged to provide the finance for their Bishop. From within the Diocese of Waiapu, Maori people responded. Ngata pledged that his own people, Ngati Porou, would provide two hundred pounds, to be guaranteed by their two companies — the Ngati Porou



Manuhua Augustus Bennett.

Dairy Company and the Waiapu Farmers' Co-op Ltd. The Arawa people, in recognition that the first bishop was an Arawa, provided two hundred and fifty pounds through their Arawa Trust Board. This amount was subsidised by the Henry and William Williams Memorial Trust, thus arriving at the sum of eight hundred pounds for stipend and one hundred pounds for travel. When the first bishop, Frederick Augustus Bennett was consecrated, he continued to live in a house at Kohupatiki that had been deeded to him personally. He later transferred the home to the Diocese in order to provide a home for future bishops. The first five years of the new arrangement coincided with the years of the Depression. In 1932 the Diocese of Waiapu appealed for help from the other dioceses to provide for the financing of the Maori Bishop, as the Williams Trust had been forced to reduce their subsidy by two hundred pounds. The Auckland Maori Synod responded immediately with a promise of an annual commitment of one hundred pounds, but the Diocesan Standing Committee reacted angrily and refused to allow any money to be sent for such a purpose. The reason given was that no such provision had been made by the General Synod. The Maori people in the Diocese of Auckland were being thwarted by a resolution of a body on which they had no voice and no vote.

The first Bishop of Aotearoa was received en-



Whakahuihui Vercoe.

thusiastically by the Maori people wherever he went. Outside Waiapu, Auckland was regarded as a priority because of the significant numbers of Maori people resident in the Diocese. However, with the consecration in 1940 of Archdeacon Simkin as Bishop of Auckland, a new policy was put in place in that diocese. Many of the Maori Pastorates were abolished, and Maori clergy became assistant curates to Pakeha Vicars in various areas. It was felt that the Church should show the way with a policy of integration. In 1946 a further appeal from the Diocese of Waiapu asking each diocese to co-operate with the Bishop of Aotearoa in his work for the development of the spiritual side of the Maori Race, met a positive response from all except Auckland. Bishop Simkin refused to give the Bishop of Aotearoa access to the Maori people in Auckland, and withdrew diocesan financial support.

The first three bishops were all greatly respected men, yet it was not uncommon to hear their own people refer to

their office as that of "the bob-tail bishop", as men of war without guns, as no more than the tukutuku without the poupou (lattice-work without supporting pillars). On one occasion, the Chaplain to the Maori Battalion, in camp at Ohaeawai in Northland, had more than 100 candidates for confirmation, but as the Bishop of Aotearoa was not permitted to officiate in that Diocese, the Chaplain was forced to move his group in Army trucks to Rotorua in order to allow the Bishop of Aotearoa to confirm them. When Wiremu Netana Panapa was consecrated as the second Bishop of Aotearoa, the restriction placed on his activities in the Diocese of Auckland were felt all the more, as he was a man of the North, and his own people resided there.

In 1928 the General Synod had resolved to approve the principle of the Maori people having direct representation on General Synod with a right to vote, and appointed another Commission to consider the necessary legislation. A report was finally made to the 1961 General Synod, with an apology for the lack of any suitable legislation, and a request to sit again with enlarged membership. A Bill was presented to the 1964 General Synod with three provisions, relating to the status of the Bishop of Aotearoa, Maori representation in Synod, and establishment of Maori pastorates and mission districts. The Synod decided that "... until it be found practicable to make more permanent provisions for further such forward movement, the Bishop of Aotearoa shall have a seat as a bishop in the General Synod" The clause providing for separate Maori representation on General Synod was defeated.

In 1976 a further attempt to provide separate Maori representation in General Synod was also defeated, but the sixth in a long line of such Commissions was set up to re-examine the whole situation. This body was responsible for the presentation of the legislation in 1978 which provided for . . . "the full pastoral episcopal care and supervision of the Maori people" The Bishop of Aotearoa was to be licensed by the Primate to share in partnership with each diocesan bishop, under a Commission from each diocesan bishop, in the ministry of episcopal care for and oversight of the Maori people. Provision was made for the Aotearoa Council to be the equivalent of a synod, and its Executive Committee to be the equivalent of a Standing Committee.

Bishop Panapa had had a two-fold aim for his episcopate: to unify the work of the Maori Mission throughout the Province and to create a Maori Diocese. Bishop Manuhua Bennett inherited a situation in which the Church had simply not allowed these things to happen. He was determined to work towards the resolution of this impasse so that his successor should not be hampered in the way that the first three bishops had been.

The 1978 legislation took some very significant steps in

this regard. The status of the Bishop as an equal with the diocesans was safeguarded. A structure was set in place which both supported the Bishop and provided the whole Church with the possibility of hearing a Maori voice and learning something of the Maori values which had ensured the continuing life and spirituality of the Maori Church in the face of enormous mis-understanding and neglect for over 160 years.

In order to give some foundation to that equality, each diocese was invited to assist the Bishopric of Aotearoa provide for a permanent Endowment Fund. Target amounts were set and agreed to by each diocese. The process of reaching those targets differed in each diocese, but in some instances provided a means of mutual understanding, respect and trust in a co-operative effort, between the Maori Church and the descendants of the Settler Church.

On other grounds, however, the emergence of the Bishopric of Aotearoa has caused different reactions. A great deal of effort has gone into an attempt to define, to understand, to display "Partnership". For the minority partner that effort has been costly. The familiar question of loyalties to two masters has often been raised. The minority partner has felt acutely that the majority partner has remained inert, has made little attempt to be anything more than a partner in name only.

On the positive side, it is possible to identify a number of advances which have been made since the 1978 legislation.

— The Aotearoa representation in General Synod has gained the respect of that body for its contribution to and enrichment of the whole life of the Church;

— The Bishopric Office and administration has taken its place alongside that of the dioceses — and a number of bodies have demonstrated their trust.

— The Ministry Education programme gives a hint of the enormous potential of the Bishopric. Where it has been allowed to develop according to tikanga Maori, not subject to diocesan restrictions and guidelines out of another culture, it has been successful.

— There is an increasing awareness in parts of the worldwide Anglican Communion of the potential creativity in the Bishopric, and a number of requests for help from other ethnic minorities within the Church. The Bishopric was able to assist and advise the Australian Church in the 1985 process leading to the Consecration of the first Aboriginal Bishop.

— The Bishopric representatives in the Maori Council of Churches continue to play a major part in ecumenical activities. In this respect the change from diocesan representation to Bishopric representation is significant. They are elected by, and responsible to, a national Maori base.

— The Bishopric was able to negotiate with a major overseas Archdiocese and successfully establish a chaplaincy to the Maori people in Sydney.

— The Bishopric was asked to take a significant part in

the process of appointment of the Maori Studies Lecturer at St. John's College.

— New initiatives in the South Island have come from Bishopric direction.

— Church-related bodies that administer Maori land trusts have been greatly helped by valuable advice from the Maori perspective.

— The Aotearoa Trust Board is carefully administering a potentially valuable economic base.

— A fruitful and trusting relationship with the Henry and William Williams Memorial Trust is evolving.

There are still problems, however, and these can be identified in the following areas:

— The Bishop of Aotearoa is seldom permitted to act on his own. That does not apply to his episcopal partners. True partners do not always act in tandem — rather do they often act in trust, individually.

— The Bishop of Aotearoa is still seen as "The Visiting Preacher". He is referred to as a guest at Maori Church hui, and invited to preach, but not to be the chairman. A clear instance of control rather than partnership.

— The Aotearoa Council provides an enjoyable Maori form of synodical government, without standing orders, yet managing to perform efficiently. A common Maori identity, unity and purpose emerges, only to be eventually frustrated by the proudly independent and autonomous diocesan structures.

— The granting of episcopal 'status' but the withholding of episcopal 'jurisdiction' has caused continuing dissatisfaction over the inability of the Bishop of Aotearoa to select, train, ordain and licence clergy and lay workers.

The familiar debate continues. The 1985 meeting of the Aotearoa Council gave careful consideration to a number of papers setting out self-determination as a goal for the Bishopric, in which Maori identity and a Maori cultural framework would be given greater prominence. The suggestion is that more Maori control and self-determination would result in the Maori partner becoming more visible, more responsible, more aggressive, and better able to negotiate with the diocesan partners.

Ko te pae tawhiti

Whaia kia tata.

Ko te pai tata

Whakamaua kia tina.

FOOTNOTES;

1. See Binney, Judith: "The Legacy of Guilt: A Life of Thomas Kendall" O.U.P. 1968 for a full discussion of this statement.
2. Morrell W.P. "The Anglican Church in New Zealand" C.P.N.Z. 1973. Page 47.
3. A remark often heard in marae whaikorero, perhaps originating from the Sunday attack on Ruapekapeka Pa in Northland, 1845/46. Quoted in a sermon preached by The Venerable K.M. Ihaka at the Third Aotearoa Council meeting at Waiomatatini, August 1982.