Maori Christianity on the East Coast
1840—1870

ON 20 JANUARY 1840 William Williams arrived at Turanga (Poverty Bay) and established the first mission station on the East Coast. His service the following Sunday was attended by at least 1000 Maoris,¹ and even larger numbers attended services held in the area stretching from Uaua (Tolaga Bay) to Hicks Bay. In later years William Leonard Williams estimated that, during the first months of 1840, there were some 3000 practising Christians in this area, and in 1841 Williams claimed that there were about 8600 Maoris attending services on the whole of the East Coast.² This was the response his visits during the 1830s had led him to expect. Here was ‘a large field open which seems to be already white unto the harvest’.³ It was his promised land, the ideal arena for his work as a missionary. These converts he believed to be true converts, the material out of which he would shape a deeply-committed Christian community.

Twenty-five years later, however, another equally rapid conversion took place. In March 1865 Kereopa’s party of Pai Marire arrived at Turanga. By mid-June an estimated half of the Turanga Maoris had declared themselves adherents of the new sect. Williams saw this second conversion as an outright rejection of Christianity. Twenty-five years of his life had been wasted in futile effort. Stunned, he abandoned the mission.

However, Williams had never been completely in touch with the way his congregation related to Christianity. His own rigid perception of life in two shades—black and white (or occasionally, in his more idealistic moments, through rose-coloured glasses)—prevented him from ever understanding the blending of missionary Christianity and Maori spiritism which by 1865 had become the essence of Maori Christianity. In many ways Pai Marire beliefs and practices differed little from this Maori Christianity. What Williams saw as a complete about-face was for a large number of East Coast Maoris simply a statement of their autonomy, both political and spiritual. It was an assertion of ‘Maoriness’,

² W. Williams, Christianity Among the New Zealanders, London, 1867, p.288.
not an outright rejection of Christianity nor a declaration of war on Europeans.

During Williams's early visits to the East Coast and for eighteen months or so after the Turanga mission was established, the Maoris seem to have clamoured for Christianity, or more specifically for books and missionaries and access to the Christian Atua (God). Primarily Christianity was espoused because of the prestige which could be acquired through it. Knowledge of its value had been conveyed by Maoris visiting from other parts of the North Island. Looking back on this rapid conversion, Williams later stated, 'It was not through the labours of missionaries, for the Word had only been preached by native teachers. The missionaries literally stood “still to see the salvation of God”.'

Christianity was the latest treasure and sacrifices were made to obtain it. However, by mid-1842 the novelty was beginning to wear off. Williams had imposed a strict moral code on the Maoris, and at first many were prepared to conform (though it is quite conceivable that in his enthusiasm Williams exaggerated the extent of this conformity), but the effort could not be sustained. The years between 1842 and 1848 were characterized by falling numbers in Bible classes, and returns to tattooing, polygamy and Maori burial practices. The same years saw the arrival of Catholicism on the East Coast—a religion which achieved popularity primarily because it gave access to the Christian Atua without demanding that Maori traditions and beliefs be abandoned.

Williams, true to his nature, over-reacted to this return to Maori practices. He saw Satan at work and Christianity deserted. In fact, what he saw as a rejection of Christianity was often nowhere near so clear-cut for the Maoris concerned. It is difficult to ascertain from the missionary journals exactly how many Maoris did renounce Christianity. The problem is that often the missionary would consider a group of Maoris to be behaving in a way which was in his opinion tantamount to renouncing Christianity, but which was, as far as those Maoris were concerned, no such thing. For example, in 1845 Williams visited a party at Matawhero (in central Poverty Bay) who had not attended services for a year. He described their behaviour as ‘evil’, ‘sinful’, and a ‘falling off’.

These Maoris, however, must still have thought of themselves as Christians as they had continued to hold their own services throughout the year. Because of the few examples where Williams clearly saw the situation in a different light to the Maoris, one cannot help also being suspicious of the many occasions when he stated that certain groups had completely renounced Christianity. Contrary to Williams’s implications, a ‘disaffected’ or ‘separated’ party was not necessarily heathen. Constantly large numbers of Maoris would suddenly begin to attend Bible classes

4 W. Williams, *Christianity*, p.290.
6 ibid., 11 February 1845, Vol.6, p.796.
and services after having neglected to do so for some months or years. There is no reason to assume that they had ever completely renounced Christianity. The exact reasons why they had neglected their Christian duties for so long varied from group to group. The missionary papers generally fail to provide any specific answers. However it is probably revealing that the word ‘lethargy’ (and an assortment of similes) constantly crops up in the missionary journals written during this period. Rather than being abandoned during these years, Christianity was being trimmed to fit into the Maori world, and at the same time it was becoming established as a social norm. A mingling of beliefs took place constantly. In 1843 there was an attempt to revive tattooing at Patutahi (about six miles inland, on the Waipaoa River). This effort was led by a baptized chief, and it was planned that the daughters of two principal chiefs should be tattooed. Both girls, although baptized, agreed and they were joined by seven others. Another group of Maoris, led by a native teacher, followed the tattooing party and prevented them from carrying out their intention. The recalcitrant group was apprehended near a wood, their testaments and prayer-books open before them. They were about to have prayers before beginning the tattooing. Williams could describe this incident only as an ‘abomination’. From his point of view, Satan had triumphed and the chiefs’ daughters had forsaken their Christian profession. Rather, by praying before they began to be tattooed, the girls were acknowledging the power of the Christian Atua; far from denying him, they were honouring him. The Christian Atua had been accepted to the extent that he was included in the sacred ritual of tattooing. The only form of resistance taking place was towards the moralizing of the missionaries, who said that tattooing was sinful and as such must be given up.

During the mid-1840s, there is also evidence that many former staunch heathens were beginning to feel the need to conform. Some, like Hapuku (a rather troublesome chief from the Mahia), side-stepped into the Catholic camp, but most eventually accepted Anglicanism—at least in name. Even the most powerful chiefs were not immune from this social pressure. At the end of 1848 Te Kani a Takirau (one of the most influential chiefs on the East Coast) began to attend services. He told Baker that ‘his people took advantage of his being disconnected with the Christian party to treat him with neglect and scorn’. As early as 1844 Williams commented that he was baptizing many women whose husbands had been baptized earlier. Some hapu underwent mass conversions on the death of an old heathen chief.

The decade of the 1840s saw the conversion period completed. Between the beginning of 1843 and the end of 1849 at least 2500 adults
were baptized.\textsuperscript{11} During the last two or three years of the decade Williams was no longer complaining about the small numbers applying for baptism, and by 1850 virtually every Maori on the East Coast claimed to be Christian. Late that year Baker commented, ‘There are not many, if indeed any, who remain on the side of heathenism so as publicly to profess it.’\textsuperscript{13} The following year Hamlin reported that, at Wairoa, ‘The whole of the natives may now be said to have joined either the protestants or papists. A few individuals only remain as heathen and even these are regular in the observance of the Lords day.’\textsuperscript{14}

However, only Williams was sufficiently naive to see any depth of spiritual commitment in this widespread acceptance of Christianity. In 1848 he felt hopeful enough to believe that ‘many have come with sincere repentance and lively faith’\textsuperscript{15} With this optimistic outlook, he left the East Coast in October 1850 to make a visit to England. When he returned three years later he was amazed to see the extent to which the material prosperity of the Maoris had grown and was appalled by the ‘worldliness’ of their religion. But the trend towards a greater concern with temporal matters had begun even before Williams left for England. Early in 1850 Ralph Barker, in begging the Church Missionary Society to supply more missionaries, had written, ‘I think this is a very critical period in the history of your New Zealand Mission. The Natives are I think beginning to lose that extreme veneration and superstitious regard for their Missionary and things sacred which they once had.’\textsuperscript{16}

By the early 1850s trade and agriculture, which had steadily been increasing during the 1840s, were booming. Contact with traders and trips to the larger centres of European population became increasingly frequent. Most of the missionaries condemned this contact for leading the Maoris into a mundane pursuit of material goods and for acquainting them with the most popular European vices. In October 1851 Barker stated, ‘our Natives are now grossly worldly minded and covetous in the extreme’,\textsuperscript{17} and at Wairoa the following year Hamlin commented that he had never before known gambling and drunkenness to be so common amongst the Maoris.\textsuperscript{18}

Unlike most of his colleagues, Thomas Grace\textsuperscript{19} encouraged the Maoris to take an interest in trade and the European economy. He was concerned that, without knowledge of these matters, the Maoris would be trodden under in the imminent surge of European immigration. He

\textsuperscript{11} This is the total number of baptisms recorded in Williams’s journals for these years.
\textsuperscript{12} W. Williams to E. G. Marsh, 28 June 1848, MSS 335, Vol.M., AIM.
\textsuperscript{13} C. Baker, Report for 1850, C.N./020, Church Missionary Society (CMS), microfilm, Alexander Turnbull Library (ATL).
\textsuperscript{14} J. Hamlin to the CMS, 30 July 1851, C.N./050.
\textsuperscript{15} W. Williams, Mission Journal, 17 September 1848, Vol.8, p.975.
\textsuperscript{16} R. Barker to the CMS, 28 May 1850, C.N./022.
\textsuperscript{17} R. Barker to the CMS, 1 October 1851, C.N./022.
\textsuperscript{18} J. Hamlin to the CMS, 24 April 1852, C.N./050.
\textsuperscript{19} Thomas Grace took over the Turanga mission during Williams’s absence.
therefore took active measures to ensure that the Maoris would have the knowledge they needed for survival. In doing so he threatened the economic interests of many of the settlers and of some of the missionaries on the Coast, and incurred their wrath. At least two attempts were made to have him removed from the mission. Both failed, but Grace soon found himself to be the scapegoat on whom all responsibility for the worldliness of Maori Christianity and a deterioration in Maori-Pakeha relations was placed.

On his return Williams joined in the general condemnation. The few remaining Christians whom he could consider devout belonged to the older generation. They were his first converts, and often felt a personal loyalty to Williams. Their children, he tended to find ‘altogether unruly’. Numbers attending schools and Bible classes were small, but there is no reason to suspect any falling off in the more superficial Christian devotions—probably most attended Sunday services. There was still a great deal of prestige attached to these gatherings, enough for Grace to describe one as a ‘real Vanity Fair’. Maori Christianity was developing along its own lines. It had become an almost pragmatic blending of missionary Christianity, Maori spiritism, and the pursuit of temporal desires and needs. Grace’s influence could not have been so widespread as this religion for which he was being blamed. Nevertheless Hamlin alone amongst the East Coast missionaries was able to recognize the universality of this compromised Christianity. In 1853 he wrote to the C.M.S., ‘There is . . . a kind of national religion, an outward conforming to Christianity practised among the natives with which is connected great worldliness of mind, and a part of their native superstition is mixed up with it.’

It was becoming clear that if the East Coast Maoris were to experience what the missionaries considered true Christianity, they needed the close supervision and spiritual guidance of a highly trained clergy. Most of the native teachers were totally inadequate. Many had become teachers in order to benefit from the prestige attached to the position. They felt no great religious devotion and were just as likely as their tribesmen to become ‘entangled in the wiles of satan mixing up with Christianity a great deal of native superstition’. Virtually all of them had only a limited knowledge of the scriptures and theology, and for this reason were often subjected to the mockery of their younger, but more learned, students.

To turn to the C.M.S. for more missionaries was futile, as by the 1850s

20 W. Williams to E. G. Marsh, 25 February 1856, MSS 335, Vol.106, AIM.
22 J. Hamlin to the CMS, 10 January 1853, C.N./050.
the Society was already losing interest in the New Zealand mission. With this realization came a change in the priorities of the Turanga mission station. Mass conversion was no longer a feasible objective. The masses had already been converted, though not in the way the missionaries had hoped. The task was now to educate the Maoris in the finer points of the religion they had adopted. This required the services of a large number of highly trained teachers, and one of the major tasks of the mission now became to train those teachers. The absence of European missionaries made necessary the development of a Maori clergy. Leonard Williams devoted himself almost completely to the task of educating young Maori men to be sent to Auckland for further study and ordination.

In 1853 the first Maori to be ordained was admitted to deacon's orders. He was the Reverend Rota Waitoa and was appointed to the Kawakawa (near Hicks Bay) mission station. This was a new state of affairs that was only gradually accepted by the Maoris. Perhaps the most unacceptable thing about a Maori clergy was that clergymen had generally been respected as, in a way, superior individuals. While they were Europeans this image presented no threat to the social order of the Maoris. However, when the clergyman was a Maori it was almost certain to be resented by those who felt their importance and authority diminished by his presence. Rota Waitoa met with ‘much opposition from the chief, Iharaira Houkamau, who resented the idea of a Maori from another tribe assuming the position of a teacher and a leader’.26

The desire to have European missionaries was still strong. In 1860, after becoming Bishop of Waiapu, Williams spent a short time travelling in that area. The general feeling amongst the Maoris was that, because he was Bishop of Waiapu, he should live at Waiapu. Although there was some prestige still to be had from having a missionary under one's patronage, the value of this was steadily being outweighed by widespread concern about the alienation of land, the encroachment of government, and the ever-increasing mortality rate. Williams himself confronted this ambivalence when he endeavoured to acquire more land with which to support the expanded operations of the boarding school. There was a large area of unoccupied land near the mission which was owned by the Rongowhakaata, and in August 1853 a meeting was held to discuss the possibility of some of this land being given to the school. The Rongowhakaata seemed agreeable and told Williams to make his own proposals. However eighteen months passed before he did so, and in April 1855 when he approached the chief Paora, an original proprietor of the land on which the mission stood, for a signature, Paora refused.

25 W. Williams to E. G. Marsh, 22 December 1855, MSS 335, Vol.106, AIM.
27 W. Williams, Private Journal, Vol.5, 10-15 February 1860, MSS papers, ATL.
28 Rongowhakaata was the largest tribe in Turanga, which was also occupied by the smaller T'Aitanga a Mahaki. Ngatiporou occupied the land to the north stretching out to East Cape.
At this Williams threatened to shift the station unless the necessary signatures were given.

Although reluctant to make land available for the school, a number of the Rongowhakaata persistently entreated Williams not to move the mission. The Whanau a Taupara hapu of T’Aitanga a Mahaki took advantage of the delay to offer Williams a large block of land at Wairenga a Hika on the condition that he go and live there. Williams accepted, whereupon the Rongowhakaata immediately held a large meeting at which they claimed they were now ready to give the land originally offered. Williams nevertheless went ahead with the plan to shift to Wairenga a Hika.

However, as soon as the question of land had been settled, Williams found that the Whanau a Taupara were demanding excessively high prices for timber. Knowing how highly his presence was valued he countered with the threat that unless timber was made available he would not consider moving the mission. The following day that difficulty was resolved, but the greatest obstacle was still to be overcome. Although the Maoris were prepared to give their land to Williams, they were extremely reluctant to carry out any transactions through the Crown, and it was not until April 1857 that the deed of cession to the Crown was signed.29

Very little land on the East Coast had been sold to Europeans. Leonard Williams estimated that in 1859 ‘all the purchases when added together did not amount to many hundred acres’.30 Nevertheless the sale of land was a very sensitive issue. Donald McLean had first visited the East Coast early in the 1850s. Tension arising out of this visit, coupled with knowledge of European colonization and Maori land alienation elsewhere in the country, resulted in a heightened concern over issues related to the land. The European population of the East Coast was extremely small.31 While this was the case the Maoris were able to sell or make gifts of small areas of their land without feeling their control of the area and its inhabitants threatened. They were the dominant race and knew it.

However, the threat of greater colonization and the intrusion of government officials into their territory forced them to take a more aggressive stance in asserting their ownership of the land and their autonomy. If the land had not been sold to the Crown, they believed the Crown had no right to exercise any authority on the East Coast. During

30 W. L. Williams, East Coast Historical Records, p.31.
31 The total European population of the whole of the East Coast is unlikely to have risen above 400-500 prior to 1865. In 1847 there were only 40 adult Europeans at Turanga (Oliver, W. H. and Jane M. Thomson, Challenge and Response, Gisborne, 1971, p.21). Before 1854 the population at Wairoa was never more than 60. (J. Hamlin to A. Domett, 14 June 1854, C.N./050.) In East Coast Historical Records (p.31) Leonard Williams claimed that throughout the 1860s there was very little increase in the permanent European population.
the 1850s demands for payment of rent became more common and persistent than they had ever been before. Grace had made strenuous efforts to ensure that the Maoris were not cheated in this area. Land which had been given to a European was still believed to belong to the Maoris, and many began to assert this ownership by demanding rent from those occupying such land. No exception was made for land given for mission stations. In July 1851 Hamlin reported to the C.M.S.: ‘We had a specimen given us at this place [Wairoa] at the beginning of the year, and the same has occurred at various times elsewhere, of the view the natives take of these deeds of gift. I was subject to a great deal of annoyance and insult and was ordered to leave the premises, house, and property on it for them in consequence of the land not having been purchased, unless I would pay a high rental for it which of course I refused to do. This demand was made by the natives of Turanga in which one or two of ours joined. These annoyances are likely to increase.’

In December 1855 H.S. Wardell was appointed resident magistrate at Turanga. In his own opinion he was unwelcome in the area. He said that the Maoris denied the right of the government to send a magistrate to Turanga, and claimed that as they had not sold their land to the Queen, the government had no authority over them. However, as Wardell soon discovered, whether he had a right to be there or not was beside the point—he was powerless. If the Maoris did not agree with his judgements they simply ignored them. Seven years after his arrival Wardell commented: ‘Their conduct towards Europeans generally was such as was to be expected from a people who believed the former to be living amongst them on sufferance: they were exacting in their demands, and arbitrary in their mode of enforcing them, but personal violence was scarcely ever offered to Europeans.’ A second centre of justice—the local runanga (assembly)—seems to have been the real power at Turanga. In 1864 Williams himself had to appeal to the judgement of the runanga when he was accused of being responsible for the death of a Maori’s horse. The runanga also took an active part in fixing rents and prices, on one occasion, at Te Araroa, even going so far as to demand payment for the grass eaten by ducks and chickens. The Maoris’ efforts to impose their own laws on their own land were apparent from one end of the Coast to the other. At Wairoa Europeans were forbidden to travel on Sundays and at Te Reinga a man was fined for trespassing on the ‘King’s highway’.

32 J. Hamlin to the CMS, 30 July 1851, C.N./050.
33 AJHR, 1862, E—7, pp.30-31.
34 ibid., p.31.
35 Because of Maori opposition, Grey’s runanga scheme was never introduced at Turanga. The runanga in this area were all completely free of government interference.
38 ibid., p.213.
June 1858 one very disgruntled settler complained to the *Hawke’s Bay Herald*:

There is a movement among the Natives here the wrong way. They object to the prayers offered for the Queen. They have, in several instances, taken the law into their own lands in defiance of the Resident Magistrate.

You will perceive that we have retrograded to the old times when we had to apply to the one tribe to obtain protection against the others.\(^\text{19}\)

Williams could not understand what the Maoris were so worried about. In 1840 he had come out strongly against land sales. However, by the mid-1850s he had grown complacent. He claimed that in 1840 he had feared that the Maoris would be ‘crushed by the influx of a foreign race’, but he now had seen them withstand initial contact and believed they could continue to do so. Moreover he believed that universal acknowledgement of the government was necessary in order to preserve the peace and it was in the best interests of the Maoris to recognize this.\(^\text{40}\) As far as he was concerned the Maoris misunderstood the motives of the government and, in any case, he was a man of God and these matters were not his business.\(^\text{41}\)

This attitude naturally alienated him from a substantial number of his congregation. Some suspected him, along with all other missionaries, of conniving with the government with a view to getting their land. The ever-increasing mortality rate\(^\text{42}\) aggravated the problem. Christianity had obviously failed in its role as a panacea. On many occasions it was actually singled out as the reason for all the sickness and death, and the missionaries were labelled murderers. In December 1855 Williams discovered that there was a rumour being circulated which alleged that Queen Victoria had told him that she intended to send soldiers to drive the Maoris off their land. He had supposedly replied that it was unnecessary to do so as ‘many persons had died lately, and their receiving the Gospel would soon carry off the rest’.\(^\text{43}\)

In some areas the alarming rate of mortality had a devastating effect on whole communities. In at least one place it was reported that agriculture had come to a halt because of the number of deaths.\(^\text{44}\) More and more often, in their bewilderment, the Maoris turned to the powers of

---

40 W. Williams to Elizabeth Gardiner, 2 April 1863, MSS Papers 175, Folder 6, AIM.
42 During the early 1840s the total Maori population of the East Coast was probably between 16,000 and 18,000. The two figures on which I have based the above estimate are Leonard Williams’s guess that early in the nineteenth century the total population was about 26,000 (*East Coast Historical Records*, p.3) and Williams’s claim that in 1848 the population was 12,000 (W. Williams to E. G. Marsh, 14 February 1848, MSS 335, Folder 186, AIM). Ten years later the estimated Maori population from Hicks Bay to Poverty Bay (inclusive) was about 6,800, and during the next four years it could well have decreased by 50% (AJHR, 1862, E—7, p.30 and E—2, Sec. V, p.5).
43 W. Williams to E. G. Marsh, 22 December 1855, MSS 335, Vol.106, AIM.
44 W. Williams, Mission Journal, 18 October 1855, Vol.9, p.1118.
their tohunga and called upon the old atua for help. Christian and traditional Maori practices were being intermingled more than ever, and it was clear that the missionaries were viewed by many with distrust. Williams found that the crowds who had once gathered to meet him when he travelled through the district, were decreasing rapidly, and in some places he complained about the outright rudeness of the people.

By the late 1850s the work of the mission bore little resemblance to that of 1840. Baptisms were rare, only a small number of carefully selected pupils attended the mission school, and Williams's own task became increasingly that of an overseer, who directed the work of his subordinates and who had himself only limited contact with the Maoris. Collections were now taken at services and fees were charged for marriages.

Although in Williams's opinion few of the Maoris practised true Christianity, most Maoris still considered themselves Christian in spite of their growing detachment from the missionaries and their morality. In May 1858 a large runanga was held at Turanga. Wardell reported that not one person present had supported the Queen's authority, and that one man, Rawiri Pahi, expressed the general feeling when he said: 'All that we will receive from the Europeans is Christianity; we will have nothing to do with their Queen.'

During the early 1860s envoys from Taranaki and Waikato frequently visited the East Coast in search of military support. However, most of the Turanga Maoris had no desire to become involved in what were for them essentially foreign wars. They felt a fierce local patriotism and asserted that 'it was necessary for them to remain at home and take care of their own land'. Christian rhetoric was the language in which this local patriotism expressed itself. In 1863 when a deputation from the Waikato tried to persuade the Rongowhakaata to join the King movement, Anaru Matete (one of the leaders of the tribe) refused, asserting that 'there was no unity except under the Gospel and no sure foundation but Christ'. His statement received much more support than any of those made by the Kingites.

Anaru Matete had always been keenly aware of the concerns and desires of his people. In a way he expresses all that was most important to them at any given time—a kind of barometer. During the 1840s he had been not just a native teacher, but one of the few whom Williams believed to be really progressive in his outlook. During the early 1850s Grace dismissed him (probably for adultery), and a few years later Williams was commenting on his successful involvement in trade and agriculture. Anaru did not simply follow the trends, but at every turn he excelled. He was a natural leader and it is probably quite significant that by the end of 1864, although still advocating peace, he was aware of the

45 AJHR, 1862, E—7, p.31.
46 ibid.
probability of war and warned the people that they should prepare themselves. Most of the young men of Turanga seem to have been ready to follow his advice.\(^48\)

Whilst the Rongowhakaata and T'Aitanga a Mahaki insisted on their right to remain neutral in the wars taking place elsewhere, the Ngatiporou presented a much more divided front. From the late 1850s it was clear that there was a power struggle within this tribe, a struggle which eventually escalated into the East Coast Wars. Although the government and its representatives were totally unwelcome at Turanga, there was at least partial support amongst the Ngatiporou. It seems likely that some hapu (or the leaders of some hapu) believed they could use the government in order to increase their own power. Late in the 1850s Mokena Kohere was appointed native magistrate in the Waiapu area. He carried out his duties in such an overbearing and offensive manner that in September 1859 Williams predicted that if he was 'not checked there will soon be an outbreak'.\(^49\) It was possibly Mokena's conduct (not to mention his alliance with the government) which forced the polarization of attitudes amongst the Ngatiporou. In 1862 a Waiapu Maori, named Tamatatai, attended a Kingite meeting in the Waikato. On returning, he hoisted two Maori King flags at Waiomatatini. Mokena responded by flying the Queen's flag at Rangitukia. During the next two years several parties of Ngatiporou went to fight in the Waikato. However, by mid-1864 active support for the Kingites was falling off. In July of that year Leonard Williams received a rather cryptic note from one of the kawanatanga (government) Maoris at Waiapu: Raniera Kawhia informed him that 'Mokena and his people have arrived at Tikitiki. There were one hundred of them and they conquered the flags of Tikitiki and Pukemaire bringing back all the leaders to this side.'\(^50\) The exact nature of this conquest is uncertain. However, in mid-1864 there were factors other than Mokena operating to dissuade the Kingite Ngatiporou from continuing to participate in war. Reports of Kingite defeats, particularly in the Bay of Plenty, were having far-reaching effects. In their confusion some turned their allegiance to the government, but uncertainty prevailed. Mohi Turei explained to Leonard Williams:

'The rumours here are many and varied. How then can the single bird hear, When she is deafened by the sounds of the many calling and fluttering moths. Even when fed from the Tukauki tree, she will never hear.'\(^51\)

49 ibid., Vol.5, 14 September 1859.
50 R. Kawhia to Mita Renata (Leonard Williams), July 1864, MSS Papers 190, Folder 18, ATL.
51 Mohi Turei to Mihiki Renata (Leonard Williams), 16 July 1864, MSS Papers 190, Folder 18, ATL.
A month later Mohi wrote that there was still division within the Ngatiporou, but that most of the Maori King’s supporters had agreed not to go to war. A few violent spirits remained, but he thought it unlikely that any more would participate in the fighting.\textsuperscript{52}

This then was the situation immediately prior to the arrival of Pai Marire on the East Coast: the Turanga tribes, although declaring themselves neutral, were in fact strongly opposed to any government presence in their territory, whilst the Ngatiporou were tenuously united on the side of the government.

On 1 March 1865 reports arrived at the Turanga mission that a party of Pai Marire, led by Kereopa, had left Opotiki and was on its way to Turanga. Throughout the following week Williams received frequent reassurances to the effect that the local Maoris would not countenance the presence of the killers of the Reverend Carl Sylvius Volkner. The only Maoris who were not prepared to offer security to the mission were Te Whanau a Kai hapu of T’Aitanga a Mahaki who, Leonard Williams wrote, were ‘urging us to get out of the way’.\textsuperscript{53} Williams himself was confident that most of the local Maoris would stand up against the Pai Marire. On 7 March he wrote, ‘The feeling of the natives is to demand the prisoners and the heads as a preliminary and then to send the people back by the road by which they came. If they refuse then force will be resorted to.’\textsuperscript{54} By 11 March about 300 Maoris (mainly from Rongowhakaata) had armed themselves.\textsuperscript{55} On 14 March Kereopa’s party arrived. What followed was completely beyond Williams’s comprehension. After meeting the Pai Marire at Taureka (about ten miles inland on the Waipaoa River), the Rongowhakaata, much to Williams’s disgust, ‘were inviting these miscreants to go to Whakato’.\textsuperscript{56} A few days later a large party of Pai Marire led by Patara arrived from Taranaki.

By early June about one half of the Turanga Maoris had been converted to Pai Marire,\textsuperscript{57} and during the following month the new religion won even more converts.\textsuperscript{58} The conversion of the Turanga Maoris to Pai Marire had been as rapid and widespread as their conversion to Christianity twenty-five years earlier, and their expectations of the new religion were probably no less varied and confused than they had been then.

Many probably hoped to put a halt to the mounting death toll.\textsuperscript{59} One old man confessed that ‘the reason why he enlisted under the Hauhau banner was that Kereopa told him that he would be cured of his lameness if he made a nightly bed companion of the murdered pakeha’s preserved

\textsuperscript{52} Mohi Turei to Mihihi Renata, 5 August 1864, MSS Papers 190, Folder 18, ATL.
\textsuperscript{53} W. L. Williams, Journal, 7 March 1865, MSS 335, Vol.89, pp.1-2, AIM.
\textsuperscript{54} W. Williams, Private Journal, Vol.7, 7 March 1865.
\textsuperscript{55} ibid., 11 March 1865.
\textsuperscript{56} ibid., 14 March 1865.
\textsuperscript{57} W. Williams to H. Venn, 1 June 1865, C.N./096.
\textsuperscript{58} W. Williams to H. Venn, 27 July 1865, C.N./096.
\textsuperscript{59} P. Clark, ‘Hauhau’ The Pai Marire Search for Maori Identity, Auckland, 1975, p.86.
head, which had been brought from Taranaki'.

Pai Marire also provided an opportunity to revive many of the traditional practices which had been abandoned under the influence of the missionaries. The performing of haka and eating of rats was an assertion of Maoriness by the adoption of customs which were traditionally Maori and bore no resemblance to the European way of life.

This desire to assert the independent Maoriness of Turanga was basic to the conversion to Pai Marire. Conversion to the new religion was an act of patriotism (in a very local sense). The initial response to Christianity had been characterized by an almost total submission to the missionaries. However this phase had passed quickly, and Christianity, rather than developing into something resembling the fervent religion of the missionaries, had evolved along Maori lines. Unlike missionary Christianity, it was rarely exclusive. Maori Christianity had room for a number of atua, for spiritism to be a fairly common practice, and for the appearance of new prophets. What was developing was a local religion incorporating both Western and Maori religious beliefs. However, up until 1865 this religion lacked any cohesiveness and leadership. Pai Marire was essentially Maori, and it was to this Maoriness that the Turanga converts responded. What appeared to Williams as an overwhelming abandoning of the faith, was for the Maoris only a short step.

Politically, too, the conversion to Pai Marire did not involve any major change of stance from the preceding six or seven years. While on occasions the opportunity was seized by certain individuals to voice a threat, the general tendency of the Turanga Pai Marire was to reassure the Europeans that they had no intention of harming them, nor any desire to drive them away. The political stance of the Turanga Maoris was still kupapa (neutral).

Despite the fact that this was a peaceful conversion on the part of a people who preferred to avoid bloodshed, most of the European population of Turanga panicked. By May most (including Williams) had left the area. Meanwhile tensions were mounting quickly amongst the rival Maori factions. Mokena Kohere took advantage of the ambiguity of the Rongowhakaata's loyalties to extend his power beyond Waiapu. In the middle of May he erected a government flagstaff on a block of land at Turanganui, thereby challenging the Turanga tribes to take defensive action, and at the same time ensuring himself of government support. If the Turanga tribes disputed his right to the land it would actually appear as though they were rebelling against the flag. Mokena was being deliberately provocative. Both T'Aitanga a Hauiti, most of whom had joined the Pai Marire, and a section of the Rongowhakaata, who were kupapa, were incensed. However, Mokena's cunning had rendered them helpless. Leonard Williams (who had not left with his father) explained, 'they are

---

afraid to bring on a disturbance for fear of embroiling themselves with the Govt'. With no other possibility of solving the problem, the leaders of the Turanga tribes (both Pai Marire and kupapa) wrote to McLean for assistance. McLean was highly esteemed—he was invited as an individual, not as a representative of the Crown. These people were still fiercely independent, and as the situation grew more intense it became increasingly certain that anyone who dared ask for government arms and reinforcements would face the combined opposition of both the Pai Marire and many of those who were not Pai Marire but believed that the government should be kept out of this affair.

As the atmosphere grew more threatening, pa were built and preparations for war were made by all the different factions. Most of those Europeans who had not already left the area now did so. Eventually the government succumbed to Mokena's entreaties (and no doubt also to its own desire for the fertile plains of Turanga) and sent troops to subdue the 'rebellious' Pai Marire.

Those who defended the pa at Wairenga a Hika in November 1865 did not think of themselves as rebels. This was their land, and the government and Ngatiporou were alien aggressors. They fought to defend their independence. Most of the Turanga Maoris had never wanted war. When the crunch came, rather than fight (particularly for a lost cause), many professed Pai Marire now disclaimed their belief. Aggression on the part of the government and the Ngatiporou had forced a polarization in which any Maori who was not Pai Marire, was kawanatanga. But most of these Turanga Maoris remained kupapa at heart and put little effort into the fighting.

In the years immediately after the battle of Wairenga a Hika, Turanga was in a state of chaos. The mission lay in ruins, crops had been neglected, the Ngatiporou had pillaged the area and nearly 300 supposed Pai Marire had been exiled to the Chatham Islands. Although Leonard Williams came back at the end of 1866, his family remained in Auckland, thus making it clear that his return was not intended to be permanent. Williams himself only paid visits which were both infrequent and brief. Both men seemed to want some overwhelming show of repentence before they would even consider again committing themselves to the Maori mission at Turanga.

In April 1865 Williams, disillusioned and embittered, had abandoned the Maoris who, he felt, had already abandoned him. How thousands of baptized Maoris could suddenly renounce their faith, while others merely stood by unresisting, was beyond his comprehension. For twenty-five years he had been out of touch with the real nature of Maori Christianity, and the extent to which the beliefs of his people had actually changed on accepting Pai Marire he did not deem worthy of enquiry. For him Christianity was a rigid, exclusive religion. There was good and evil, God

and Satan, Christian and heathen. In between these extremes there was nothing, simply because anything which was not good, Christian, and godly, must, in his opinion, necessarily be evil. Pai Marire was heathen, Christianity was abandoned, he was unappreciated, and in physical danger—with these beliefs he left Turanga. An old man, he made no attempt to fight Pai Marire. At Taureka, when Kereopa first arrived at Poverty Bay, he did not speak because he did not want to intrude. When, the following Sunday, he condemned Pai Marire at a rather small service, some of the congregation walked out, claiming that he should have made his statement earlier and in the presence of those who could present alternative points of view. An open confrontation would no doubt have impressed many and perhaps have given support to those who were wavering. One man later claimed that he and others had joined the Pai Marire because Kereopa had not been 'confuted at Taureka'. Many claimed that they would never have become Pai Marire if Williams had not left Turanga.

Williams had provided the Christian Maoris with very inadequate leadership. Those who showed most grief when he left were the old. These people were his first converts. They respected and depended on him. For them his leaving was as incomprehensible and disillusioning as the conversion of T'Aitanga a Mahaki to Pai Marire was to Williams himself. One old man, hearing that Williams was planning to leave came to cry over him. At the end of his lamentation he said, 'I have been told you are going, but you are not to go you must remain quiet. You brought the gospel to us, you were the friend of mercy to those who have died (oha tangata mate) and you must continue here till you die.'

For Williams events merely revealed the will of God. The year 1865, like those of the mid-1840s, was a time for separating true Christians from those who only professed Christianity, a time deliberately ordained to make Christianity grow stronger. In December he wrote to Henry Venn: 'It is a marvellous sifting, through which we have had to pass, but it is wisely ordered, and soon we shall have a reaction.' However, his work at Turanga was finished. For the past decade Williams had seen his task as that of preparing a Maori clergy capable of taking over the spiritual leadership of the Maori people. Late in 1866 he maintained that Turanga was 'still too unsettled' for this work. It also seems that continuing at Turanga after the events of 1865 was actually distasteful to him. On his infrequent visits to the area, his contact with the Maoris was minimal. He still described them as 'Hauhaus' and seems to have felt

64 ibid., 19 March 1865.
66 ibid., 4 May 1865, p.42.
68 W. Williams to H. Venn, 6 December 1865, C.N./096.
that he was generally unwanted. On 17 December 1866, he wrote: 'It does not seem likely that I shall ever return to Poverty Bay to live.'

Three days later he wrote to the Colonial Secretary that he and the Bishop of Wellington had decided that the school for the Maori clergy should be transferred to Te Aute.

After the battle at Wairenga a Hika it seems that most of the Turanga Maoris felt alienated from the Anglican Church. At Turanganui which had a Maori population at this time of about 1000, attendance at church services varied from about 40 to 100. Neither Leonard Williams nor his father offered any explanation for the indifference of the Maoris. One can only suggest that they felt that the missionary, whom they had trusted for so long, had let them down by aligning himself with a government which had forced a war on them and which was now making plans to confiscate their land. Since, in the opinion of most Europeans, loyalty and Christianity were virtually synonymous terms, to attend services was an act which would align the Turanga Maoris with those forces which opposed their independence and self-government.

In other areas the Anglican Church fared better. It seems that those Maoris who had supported the government showed their loyalty by continuing to attend to their religious duties as Anglicans. At Waiapu, for example, the Ngatiporou attended services in much larger numbers. A service at Tuparoa (just south of Waiapu) gathered a congregation of between 400 and 500 in February of 1866. However, the nature of the Christianity practised by these people had not changed since before the advent of Pai Marire. It was still a superficial conformity lacking the spiritual zeal desired by the missionaries.

At Turanga the Maoris were living in a spiritual vacuum. Pai Marire, too, had proven inadequate. In 1868 J. H. Campbell reported: 'Hauhauism, as far as regards its fanatical or religious features is dying out, but not so the deeply-seated antagonisms and hatred of our Government and people which has been from the commencement its real characteristic.'

Even though the bitterness remained, there was no real hope of change. The government had finally made its power felt in the area and was clearly there to stay. Anaru Matete and a few followers had fled to the back country from where they hoped to go on resisting the government. Anaru was widely hailed as a folk hero and rumours circulated to the effect that he would drive the government out of the area and apportion the land amongst the people. Pai Marire would be freely practised and all those who had fought to suppress it (including Williams) would be reprimanded.
In spite of the hope expressed in these rumours, most had little faith that continued warfare would bring them anything but further suffering and confiscation. Inactivity and apathy reigned. In 1866 Anaru sent a message to the people of Turanga asking them to join him. The reply, signed by twenty-one Maoris in the area, begged him to give up his rebellion. The very existence of his group, they feared, was enough to provoke a government attack. Their efforts resulted in nothing but the loss of their land, and in any case where could they turn for effective leadership—the Kingites? the Pai Marire? The twenty-one Turanga Maoris were inclined to think neither.\textsuperscript{76}

Te Kooti’s return to the East Coast in 1868 was the last opportunity for open rebellion. Few took it. Although Te Kooti had a number of personal enemies amongst the leaders of the Turanga tribes, it was to a large extent this feeling of hopeless futility which accounted for the relatively insubstantial support which he received. Early successes in battle enhanced his mana. However, with only a few exceptions, the local Maoris expressed no more than passive sympathy. At Oweta he took a large number of the Rongowhakaata prisoner and forced them to follow him. Most of these avoided battle and took the first possible opportunity to escape.\textsuperscript{77}

It was only Mokena Kohere and Ropata Wahawaha and their Ngati- porou followers who were keen to fight. They pursued this new war as a means of exacting utu for insults which were over thirty years old.\textsuperscript{78} It also seems that they hoped to be rewarded with land at Poverty Bay. Leonard Williams commented, ‘Rapata . . . says that when he fought for the Govt before, he was promised great things and got nothing. Now, he says, he does not mean to trust to promises but he just means to take the land for himself.’\textsuperscript{79} After the Poverty Bay massacre the Turanga settlers desperately wanted the protection of a Ngati-porou garrison at Turanganui. Leonard Williams was certain that a ‘large slice of land’ was the only thing that would induce them to establish such a garrison.\textsuperscript{80} He had no doubts that Ropata despised the government and was merely using it for his own ends,\textsuperscript{81} and that Mokena was just as ‘loyal’. When offered money in recognition of his services he turned it down with the comment: ‘Take your money away, the fight was mine, not the

\textsuperscript{76} Tamihana, Rutene, Hape, Te Kemara, W. Kiriahi, Te Matenga, Paratene Pototi, Iraia, Hori Karaka, Waka Puakanga, Pitangungu, Maka nga rangi one, Hami Mataora, Paora Tongara, Herewini te Ngahue, Hemi Mahuki, Te Meihana Hohoro, Hirini te Kani, Hatekea, Hamaiwaho, and Rutene Kiwara to Anaru Matua Kore, Te Wereta, and Hemi, 20 June 1866, MSS Papers 190, Folder 18, ATL.

\textsuperscript{77} Maori Land Court, Gisborne Minute Book No.1, pp.168-207, microfilm, University of Auckland.


\textsuperscript{79} W. L. Williams, Journal, 3 December 1868, MSS 335, Vol.89, p.256.

\textsuperscript{80} ibid., 21 January 1869, p.302.

\textsuperscript{81} W. L. Williams, Journal, MSS Papers, Vol.4, 9-12 March 1869.
They pursued, not just Te Kooti, but all the Rongowhakaata with a vengeance. Most of those who had escaped from Te Kooti after being captured at Oweta returned to the sanctuary of Turanganui only to be imprisoned (or worse—shot) by the Ngatiporou.

The people of Turanga had never chosen to fight. Even Te Kooti had fought only to defend himself and by 1869 it was clear he preferred to stay ahead and out of sight of his Ngatiporou hunters. The Turanga tribes had lost the battle for their autonomy without ever really being at war.

As far as Christianity was concerned the Maoris were 'very listless'. Numbers attending services varied from zero to about 180. The public houses had more appeal. The diocese of Waiapu was no longer Maori: in 1869 it was extended to include all of Hawke's Bay. This meant that the European and Maori populations were now of more or less equal size. Synods were now held in the English language, which virtually precluded the attendance of Maori clergymen. Consequently, in 1868 Maori Church Boards were established to have control of Maori religious matters. The synod no longer had to concern itself with the problems of the Maori church. While the Maori Church Boards worked well enough for the Maori clergymen, they failed to relate to the realities of Maori life. They spent most of their time discussing either purely church matters, such as the buying of altars and communion rails—or moralizing in much the same way as Williams would have done.

At this time, when the Anglican Church could not rouse the enthusiasm of the Maoris, it is significant that increasingly large numbers were showing themselves ready to follow Te Kooti's spiritual guidance, even though they had been unwilling to follow him into battle. Leonard Williams and his father had very little to say about Ringatu. Usually they considered those who professed it to be 'Hauhaus' and had no more time for this religion than they had had for Pai Marire. Their attitude, however, was misleading. The Ringatu karakia (prayers) were taken directly from the Bible, although with emphasis on the Old Testament. Te Kooti, in founding the religion, was not rejecting Christianity. On the contrary he regarded the Anglican Church as the parent and advised his followers to join it if they were ever unable to attend Ringatu services. For many East Coast Maoris, Ringatu filled the gaps which had been left by Williams's; inability to reconcile his rigid moral code with Maori customs, and by his abandoning of the mission. It was a synthesis of missionary Christianity and Maori cosmology, an organized and highly

83 W. L. Williams, Journal, MSS Papers, Vol.9, 23 October 1874.
84 ibid., Vol.10, 13 March 1875.
developed form of the Maori Christianity which had been evolving since the 1840s.

KAY SANDERSON

Wellington