CHAPTER 5.

MAORI MISSION BEFORE ARRIVAL OF THE MILL HILL FATHERS.

The Catholic Church was present in New Zealand even before the first Catholic missionaries came to evangelise in 1838.

The first presence of the Catholic Church existed in the persons of the Catholic seamen, traders, settlers who visited or lived around the coasts - and even a few Maori converts. We know something about some of them, but there are many that have made no mark on the pages of history. One of the most important of them all, and surely the most colourful, was the huge, red-headed, Irish sea-captain, Peter Dillon, who claimed to know the South Seas better than any other European of his time. Another name that has come down to us is that of another Irishman, Thomas Poynton, who settled on the Hokianga in 1828 with his Australian wife, and was engaged in the timber trade. On his visits to Sydney, Poynton apparently left no doubt of his sincere devotion to the Church and his lively desire to see Catholic priests come to New Zealand. But Poynton was only one of many Irish and English Catholics in northern New Zealand at the time. We know of a few individuals, but Poynton himself spoke of "forty or fifty British Catholics" in the north in 1838.

There were Catholics of other nations, too. A group of Frenchmen found their way down to the Tauranga area and married Maori wives there - Louis Bidois, Charles Poitier, Emile Borel and Michael Ottanon. In the Bay of Islands area there were the Caflers, the Bernard brothers, Pierre Bonnefin, Francis Rozier and others. An Italian Catholic, Dominique Ferraris, helped the Catholic Mission to become established at Whangaroa. Some of these Catholics married Maori girls who subsequently became Catholics. But some Maori men and women were received into the Church on their own account. (1)

Dr. Ullathorne, Vicar general of Australia, wrote to the Propagation of the Faith in Lyons about two Maori converts in Sydney in 1835: "A short time after the arrival of our bishop at Sydney two natives of New Zealand were presented to him, a young man and a young woman. Their relations, who were tribal chiefs, had sent them under the care of an Irish sailor, to have them instructed in the Catholic religion. They were instructed and baptised and returned to their country. The latest news that comes to us from New Zealand informs us that the new Christians, back with their tribe, have aroused the liveliest interest there. Their reports have decided another chief to send a messenger to the bishop to express his own desire and that of his son to be instructed and baptised as soon as the bishop could go to them. These circumstances lead us to believe that the present time would be very propitious for sending missionaries to this country." (2)

It is clear, then, that there was a significant number of European and Maori Catholics in northern New Zealand by 1838 - about 50 - and that they and some of the Catholic seamen who visited the country were already engaged in the work of evangelisation. (3)
The Anglicans of the Church Missionary Society (C.M.S.) started their mission in New Zealand in 1814. Seven years later the Methodist Missionary Society (M.M.S.) began their work of evangelisation in New Zealand.

The Catholic world suddenly woke up to the fact that the Protestants were evangelising one large section of the world, Western Oceania, where the Church didn’t have a mission. And so quite suddenly Pope Gregory XVI, in the octave of Pentecost 1835, erected the Apostolic Vicariate of Western Oceania and turned on the Marist Society, still in the womb as a Society, one might say, and gave it recognition so that it might undertake the task of establishing the Faith in Western Oceania. Father Pompallier (not a Marist, but a man very much in Marist circles) was consecrated bishop to complete the task force.

Their preparation was in the tradition of the first Irish monks, consigning their coracles to the currents. Their expedition was not properly planned. A thorough study should have been made of the geography of the area, the dispositions of other missionaries, the focal points of trade and mission, the political spheres of influence, the territories of densest population etc. All this should have been done before a single missionary set forth on a ship for the South Pacific.

Peter Dillon, the Irish sea captain, had made six visits to the Bay of Islands before 1827 and had been writing to the Roman Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith for several years from the Pacific which he knew intimately, offering to lead the first Catholic missionaries into the islands and naming the chiefs and princes who would give the catholic missionaries a welcome. Yet Dillon was ignored and the Pompallier party spent two months in Le Havre looking for a ship to Latin America, unaware that across the Channel ships were sailing regularly for Sydney.

On Christmas Eve 1836 the first missionary party left Europe from Le Havre and started the long journey to New Zealand via Cape Horn. The leader was Bishop Pompallier and with him were four French priests (one of whom died of a fever before Valparaiso was reached and was buried at sea) and three lay Brothers. Landings were made at Tahiti, Vavau, Wallis and Futuna where Peter Chanel (now St. Peter Chanel) was left to open a mission station. The others sailed on to Sydney, Australia, and from there made their way to New Zealand, which they reached on Wednesday, January 10th, 1838. The Marists who arrived with the Bishop were Father Servant and Brother Michael Colomban. The following Saturday Mass was celebrated (probably for the first time ever in New Zealand) in the house of Thomas Poynton at Totara Point on the Mangamuka River. It was Bishop Pompallier’s intention to establish his first Mission among a tribe as yet untouched by Protestantism, but, because things had not been properly planned, it was made in the very midst of the oldest Protestant missions in the Hokianga district.

The coming of the Catholics stirred up a hornet’s nest. Pompallier found himself working in an area which had been for years the chief sphere of activity of the Anglican and Methodist missionaries. To these men, most of
them of an evangelical and fundamentalist turn of mind, the Catholic Church was the Scarlet Woman, the Babylonian whore, and the presence of a French Catholic bishop in their midst was a profound shock to them as Protestants and a deep affront to them as Englishmen. Their opposition was not all due to prejudice and bigotry. From the first, Pompallier regarded ‘heresy’ as having no rights and took every opportunity to refute not only the calumnies of the Protestant missionaries but also the very basis of their beliefs.

The witnesses of the Love that surpasses all understanding lost credibility through their heated misunderstandings of one another. And the witness must have been further impaired by domestic quarrels among the missionaries in both the Wesleyan and Anglican camps. The difficulties between Bishop Pompallier and the Marists, which had begun as early as Valparaiso, en route to New Zealand, may not have reached the public notice. Differences between other Christian bodies were more widely known and so in that early period they made no converts. It was not the sole reason. In those first ten years their weakness in the language would have made it almost impossible to make the Christian message understood at any depth.

Only Kendall was an educated man among the Anglicans. The Williams who came in 1823 coincided with a change in the fortunes of their mission, if it did not help to produce it. They became expert Maori scholars. The Catholic mission suffered from the same limitations. Williams, in a letter, wrote of the Pompallier catechism: “The productions of the Popish Bishop are miserably bad. His attempts at translation are a perfect failure - in his efforts to improve on what has long been in existence among the missionaries.” The Wesleyan John White, (Billy Blue was his nickname), said the same thing, as did some of the Catholic missionaries. Pompallier had of course only been two years in the country. It was all part of the great hurry. But it saddled the mission with prayers and catechism, seriously reduced in spiritual vitality by their poor Maori format.

But what for a start shook the Maoris out of their Stone Age indifference, was not the gospel but the Pakeha, this very different version of man, and the goods he brought. One has to read Manning’s account of his arrival in the country to see what impact the coming of the Pakeha had on the Maori at his first appearance. An impoverished people were confronted for the first time with a dazzling array of consumer goods, many of them with exciting possibilities. To possess them was the driving force of the Maori at that period, especially the iron, the nails, the weapons, the guns. Hongi walked through all the glories of Victorian England and the only emotion he ever showed was when he was given a peek at King George’s arsenal. The Pakeha was the way to these things. The chiefs vied with each other on obtaining a Pakeha. And for this patronage and protection, even the C.M.S. and the M.M.S. indulged in gunrunning. But by the time the Catholics got going, this era had almost ended. The inter-tribal combats, which flared up in more extensive fashion because of the guns, flickered out almost as quickly. After a period when the magnet of cargo nullified the very light pull of the Christian cult, came a period of abundant harvest. We have not the equivalent on the Catholic side of the diary of William Williams, missionary of the East Coast between 1840 and 1850, but the story therein is corroborated by the stories we have of our own
missions. The fishermen found the fish coming in shoals. Father Reignier, working at Rotorua, in a short time increased his 100 souls to 1300, all plucked from the Protestants.

To a certain extent all missionaries had to be itinerants. This did not cease for the Marists when finally so many of them were pushed by the pressure of events into European parishes. But for Bishop Pompallier, mobility was the word "to show the soutane" as Father Garin put it. They would harry the "heretics" and also outflank them. William Williams was in a sense in a fixed mission, and yet he says: "Fancy a clergyman being required to itinerate from London to Edinburgh on foot, and then to Southampton and back again, and then when he is at home having charge in addition of 300 candidates for baptism, 700 regular attendants at Bible class, who have been left in the interval, not to competent curates, but to teachers who require themselves to be taught." But he restricted himself to the East Coast and made it, or what remained of it, an Anglican preserve even to this day.

Bishop Pompallier had his Marists continually moving round. The programme could have been successful if it had been carried through consistently and followed up. If the soutane could not mobilise all those who for a whole variety of reasons had not succumbed to the "mihingare" (as the Anglicans were called), then the accoutrements of the episcopal office would, and the Bishop gave himself the maximum of exposure. "Tana potae tana tokotoko" (His hat, his crook) the people's amazed reaction to his splendid presence made a good introduction for the faith, the Catholic faith, which as the Anglicans had become "mihingare" became the "Pikopo" (Bishop) from its association in the Maori mind with the man who impressed most. The result of the Bishop's extensive tours was a catechumenate he reckoned four or five times the 5,000 who had been baptised. (A figure ending with 000, in mission circles, seems to be a guess, varying according as the missioner is of sanguine or pessimistic disposition. Bishop Pompallier, like Father Riordan later, (another 000 addict), were of the sanguine type. Vague also, is his reference in the account of his work where he enumerates between fifteen and eighteen thousand (sic) lost to the faith from the lack of follow up. Father Forest was the most incisive of his critics, although a personal friend of the Bishop. He blames the Bishop's kindness and too great readiness in regard to conversions, like an over eager auctioneer, to accept a smile as a bid. With a dress on, or a hanky in the hand, many, very many declared for the Pikopo. And after a few days instruction they were baptised. The surprising thing is, not so much that when the pressures came later, so many fell away, but that a certain number persevered. Says Father Forest in his letter to Father Colin that he wrote as a trouble-shooter for the Society "Only in two or three stations are there solid Catholics."

And as the spread of the faith was far too much the personal triumph of the Bishop - he was essentially a solo performer - the slowing down, and the defection of many can be ascribed at least in part to him. He wrote at one stage to Propaganda, saying he needed a hundred men, while he was not working with the men he had. And as with the men, his need of money was far greater than he could ever hope to receive. He had to be reminded by the heads of the Society or the Propagation of the Faith that the first rule of good business was to work within his means. Some of the saints have defied this
rule and got away with it. Bishop Pompallier did not. He thereby gained great credit in the eyes of the Maori, (when the money ran out they contrasted him and his poverty—stricken Marists with the rather well—landed Anglicans,) but it fell in the business world. And with an assist from a current depression he ended up with a bankrupt diocese in 1868.

It was not, however, the bankruptcy that substantially destroyed the first missionary achievement. This was merely in the nature of overkill. During the forties and fifties, Pakeha were coming into the country, and during the fifties the Pakeha population for the first time became greater than the Maori. With a considerable amount of land sold to the Pakeha, often for a pittance, the chiefs took fright and began to resist any further alienation of their land. The Taranaki and Waikato wars stemmed from this struggle. And although it was only the two provinces involved, Waikato and Taranaki and many Maoris fought on the side of the Pakeha, yet the wars introduced a new phase in Pakeha-Maori relations. The wars induced a completely new climate. Unable to defeat the Pakeha militarily, the Maori adopted a sullen uncooperative attitude. He was disillusioned with the Pakeha and this stretched even to his religion. This disenchantment stretched even to parts of New Zealand that had not been involved in the wars. It also coincided with a reversion to native cults.

The "Pai Marire" cult swept all over the country although not all joined it. It even reached Otaki and shook the Church there. And the Franciscan Barsanti, who wrote a history of the cult, mentions the effect it had on the northern missions, on people who had showed complete unwillingness to join in the Waikato wars. Unfortunately for the Catholic Church, it was during this period, in 1850, that the Marists left the Auckland Diocese. The break was decided on by Rome in view of the long history of strained relations between the Bishop and the Society, especially its head, Father Colin. Father Roach has written up the history of this most unfortunate affair. The missionary style and autocratic attitude of the Bishop has already been mentioned. His great gifts and achievements as pastor of his Maori people were not in evidence in his handling of his assistant pastors. He showed no ability to make them work as a team. It is possible he found some of them no great shakes as missioners. And undoubtedly he could attract the Maoris. Father Petit-Jean writing to Father Colin in 1842 says, "Our Bishop has many talents for attracting the Maori. He has, it seems to me, from way back, a brilliant reputation for ability, character influence, indeed noble blood" (5). This, in view of Father Forest’s observations, may have been a somewhat extravagant evaluation, but it does show how the Bishop could well have felt that his authority and talents, the fact that he was in the field first, gave him the right to command and to have the unconditional obedience of his Marist subjects. What galled him in the extreme was that instead of listening to him, their Bishop in God, they were under the direction of Father Colin, a man who by temperament and style was completely different from the Bishop, a man of sound business talent and considerable organisational ability, who was absolutely appalled by the Bishop’s slap happy accountancy, his autocratic style of rule, and the hardships that ensued for his men therefrom.

In a memorial to Propaganda, Father Colin put his point of view (Father Roach's thesis.) It is succinctly and strongly expressed. On the question of
unity of viewpoint, this never existed between the Vicar Apostolic and his collaborators on the Mission or in Europe. There was no hope it would ever exist unless the missionaries ceased to have eyes to see with and ears to hear with. In these circumstances, what hope was there for the New Zealand mission, even with the best of intentions on all sides, when the Vicar Apostolic disagrees with his missionaries on (1) the number of baptised and catechumens, (2) the mode of producing books for the Maoris, (3) the manner of administering goods for the Mission, (4) the dispositions requisite for Baptism... The missionaries considered Pompallier inept for laying the foundation of a mission, creating an organisation, and keeping it stable when it prospered....."Not one of them (the missionaries) hesitates to see in this worthy Bishop two men, one of a great zeal and large heart, the other of a narrow judgement that makes indescribably difficult mutual relations of administration and dependence. and he finishes up to say that Pompallier's retirement would bring peace to all.

Bishop Pompallier’s statement to Propaganda was directed mainly at the attempt of the Archbishop of Lyons" to usurp the prerogatives of a Bishop and interfere with the orderly running of his Vicariate. It was an old chestnut for Propaganda, but new because of the particular status of the Society, which was not as the Paris Foreign Missions, but a multi-purpose congregation incapable of being what Pompallier wanted, a feeder for the missions., with purposes, administration etc all geared to that end, and so to him.

The final decision of Rome on the question was a victory for Pompallier. He had offered to resign. He was reinstated in Auckland. Wellington was cut off and given to Viard with the Marists. In 1850 the Marists left the Auckland diocese. It was a turning point in the history of the Society, particularly in New Zealand. It is a failure that has been glossed over. Father Colin had spoken of “this desolate mission”. He was not unaware of what the withdrawal of his men would mean to a mission that had never been really stabilised. He could not have been aware of the political developments that would threaten the very existence of the missions in many places. The fifties saw the Pakeha become the majority and the consequent land disputes culminating in the wars. And worse still, as we have already pointed out, in a complete change in the relations of Maori and Pakeha, and the decline of the Maori into a less and less important minority. Whereas the initial enthusiasm for the Pakeha would naturally have extended to his religion, as part of the dazzling package that the Maori saw in the coming of the Pakeha, now came apathy, mistrust and a return to ancient cults. Waikato where the Marists had built up a Mission closed its wharepuni to the European missionary and substituted for it the "Pai Marire" cult, which swept the country and changed the climate of relationships even in districts which were not touched by the wars of the sixties.

Barsanti, a member of a Franciscan group imported by the Bishop to succeed the Marists on the missions, spoke of the disaffection in the Northern Missions that made the apostolate impossible for the time being, because of the inroads of Pai Marire. Would it have been much different if the Marists had stayed on? Would the Pai Marire have cut such a swath in the standing corn of the believers? Was not Bishop Pompallier able to ride out the Hone Heke war because he was obviously not involved with the dominating power and would
not Marists have been in the same position? Or if they had had to leave their missions, would they not have been in the best position to restore them? No matter how it is looked at, the whole business was disaster, a whole dimension of which was ill appreciated. Father Colin couldn’t appreciate it, fighting as he was for the life of his fledgling congregation. And Bishop Pompallier was so concerned with justifying himself and his policy in what seemed a most unfavourable situation that he also was not in a position to see what would happen. This dimension was the Maori Catholic flock itself.

A girl, a child of divorced parents, once wrote a pamphlet against divorce. The divorce had seemed to her parents as inevitable, the best thing in the circumstances. "But why didn’t they think of me" was her plaint. One could voice the same complaint for the Maori in the final divorce of 1850 that settled the litigation. All that was at stake in the litigation, the evils that either Father Colin or Bishop Pompallier feared from the other, were on a different scale, a much lesser scale, and a different order almost, to the evil that hit the Missions. If the Society of Mary could well be called the Mother of the Mission in New Zealand, was it right that she should be compelled to cut the umbilical cord at a time when the baby was not viable? It is difficult to see on what grounds the congregation of Propaganda made its decision, except it was to defend the rights of a vicar apostolic. One of the Cardinals nearly leaped out of the chair at the suggestion that Bishop Pompallier should resign (although the terms of the resignation were not humiliating). And if these were the grounds, the decision did not achieve them, and Bishop Pompallier’s resignation in 1868 was much more humiliating than the suggested resignation or reassignment would have been in 1848.

The history of the Mission after 1850 is one of quick decline, a decline that had begun much earlier - the Bishop had complained about wholesale defections in his mid-forties account of his labours to date, because of lack of follow up. But now it was the Maori situation itself that became completely different as the Pakeha increased in number and in the fifties became numerically superior. The first emigrants were people who were lured by the prospect of land and had been Promised Land. We have seen how the effusive welcome of the beginning to the Pakeha changed finally to hostility and war, succeeded by at the best, a sullen apathy to the Pakeha and his ways, and his religion. Bishop Pompallier’s new team was completely inadequate for the Maori work, and the work for the Pakeha Catholic competed unfairly with their availability for the Maori. They never really looked like a fair substitute for the original missions, only Garavel in the Waikato made any impact on them, and that quite a big one. He was accused of disloyalty to the government and whether the charge was true or false, it was deemed prudent to remove him from the missions. But undoubtedly, he was a figure of some importance in the eyes of both sides, and there is a story that it was because of his dismissal, (some of the Maori thought he had been killed), that Kereopa murdered Volkner, who had referred a supposedly seditious letter (carried by Garavel for Wiremu Tamehana to the Maori people in Tauranga) to Governor Grey. Fathers Grange and d’Ackermann were the only others who seem to have inserted themselves into Maori life to any extent. These two kept the flag flying in Waikato and round Opotiki. But elsewhere the sheep were without a shepherd.
A directory of 1858 reveals that Hokianga, the first Mission, Bay of Islands, Whangaroa, Kaipara, Rotorua, Whakatane and Matamata, all of which had Churches and presbyteries, were without a resident priest. They were visited occasionally. By 1867 Grange and Boibieux, the last in the field, were working among the colonists in Auckland.

In a memorial sent in 1868 by an Auckland diocesan committee to Rome, asking for a Bishop to put the diocese in order, the figure of European Catholics in the diocese is given as 15,000. The Maori people are not listed at all. During the years following the end of the Maori wars, a Father McDonald, an Irish priest, conducted a lone apostolate among the small-scattered Catholic Maori groups of the diocese that remained. For forty years he did his best to keep the light of faith alive where it still flickered, and surely the performance must rank with the best in the history of the Mission.

FATHER JAMES McDONALD
(1827-1890)

After the withdrawal of the Marist Fathers from the Auckland Diocese the faith was kept alive by the periodical visits of individual priests (Marists, Benedictines and Franciscans) but principally by the great zeal of Father (‘Doctor’) James McDonald.

James McDonald was born near Kilkenny, Ireland, in 1827, trained at All Hallows and ordained priest in 1851. He arrived in Auckland on March 9th, 1852 and made the Maori people his special care early on in his ministry, although it was only in the last 10 years of his life that he was able to devote himself wholly to them.

After his arrival in New Zealand he was sent to the North Shore to replace Father Kums and proved so successful that Pompallier moved him to St.Patrick’s and made him Vicar General.

James McDonald seems to have been a man of small ability in administration and no great power of mind in the conventional sense but, like his brother Walter who arrived in 1855, he had a kind of flair for creating a legend about himself, a legend which delighted the Maori, his friends and himself, but exasperated his enemies. Stories about him show an almost child-like delight in mystification, a total disregard for respectability in dress and a great goodness and love for the Maori people.

James McDonald was a loyal follower of Pompallier, a trusted lieutenant and a good friend whose devotion to Pompallier was equalled only by his dedication to the welfare of the Maori people.

The Franciscans (6 Priests and one Brother) had arrived in Auckland on Dec.30th, 1860. Their Superior, Ottavio Barsanti, was an intelligent, well-educated man but of a somewhat imperious disposition, quick-tempered, suspicious and prone to violence. The influence James McDonald had among the Maori people provoked Barsanti’s jealousy. His smouldering resentment broke out into violence when he assaulted James McDonald, the Vicar
General, as the latter was going out to celebrate Mass in the cathedral. Barsanti was formally suspended. Claims and counter-claims were sent to Rome. (6)

When Pompallier left New Zealand on Feb. 19th, 1868 (his final departure), the Diocese was left in the care of the Vicar General, James McDonald.

Having returned to Europe, Pompallier, on April 10th 1869, wrote down his suggestions for the future of the Diocese of Auckland and these suggestions became part of the documentation for the August 9th meeting of the Congregation. Pompallier was in favour of an English rather than an Irish successor and suggested Roger (Bede) Vaughan, who became Archbishop of Sydney later on (Roger Vaughan is the brother of Cardinal Herbert Vaughan). He suggested that James McDonald to be the bishop for the Maori people. On August 6th Pompallier wrote to Monsignor Simeoni at Propaganda, giving a warm recommendation to James McDonald, obviously hoping that this would influence the Congregation making his old friend and helper a bishop. The chances were small of that happening, since unknown to him, Propaganda had inquired of McDonald's inveterate enemy Barsanti as to the Vicar General's suitability for the office of bishop. (The inquiry was made in February 1864. Barsanti replied on Oct. 7th 1867 (presumably the letter took a long time to reach him). Barsanti wrote: "McDonald was "the most ignorant imprudent priest there could be......if your Eminence saw this cursed McDonald you would scarcely permit him to say low Mass"(7). On July 23rd Propaganda wrote to Bishop J.A. Goold of Melbourne appointing him Apostolic Administrator of Auckland in place of James McDonald who was to be removed from office immediately. (8)

Archbishop Steins (the third Bishop of Auckland) had not been in Auckland for two months when he decided to do something practical about the Maori Mission. On February 19th, 1880, he wrote to James McDonald: (9)

My dear and very Rev Father MacDonald,

From the day of my arrival here I have been informed that I have in my diocese a large number of Maoris, who are left without any Priest. Which grieves me more than I can say. The number of Priests I can dispose of is very small and amongst them there are only two or three who know the Maori language. Nevertheless it is my most wish to do for that beloved portion of my flock whatever is in my power so at last they may enjoy the benefits and the consolations of our Holy religion.

I therefore, appoint you very Reverend Father James MacDonald, who by your zeal and your charity have won the esteem and the affection of our Maoris to visit them all, and to help them by instructions and by the administration of the Holy Sacraments.

Be so good as to let them know that at all times I shall try to provide for them, and with great pleasure, as far as lies in my power. For the present I can do no more, except to recommend them daily to God at the Holy Sacrifice.
May God give His blessing upon the work you take zealously upon you, and reward you most abundantly.

Your servant in X.

Walter Steins S.J.
Archbp. Bishop of Auckland

More and more the Maori became his own people and for them their beloved "Maketenara" was their one friend and leader. During the last few years of his life James McDonald valiantly and single-handed kept the spark of Catholicism alive in Northland.

His death on July 6, 1890, at Purakau (Hokianga) was the end of this legendary figure.

BISHOPS CROKE, STEINS AND LUCK

After Bishop Pompallier’s return to Europe and his resignation, Most Rev. Thomas William Croke was appointed Bishop of Auckland in 1870. He was somewhat too capable a man to be permanently stuck in a bankrupt missionary diocese at the other end of the world. He had a number of attributes that made him a very good choice for Auckland at that time. His intelligence, learning and experience gave him confidence to deal with a difficult situation. His financial experience and his personal wealth gave him an advantage in dealing with the finances of the diocese. And he was a man who knew his own mind, made it up quickly and gave firm decisions. During the four years of his administration he encountered difficulties and discouragement. His annoyances were of all kinds - seasickness, getting wet, rain on St. Patrick’s day, difficulties over purchase of land, some of his clergy were alcoholics. Not the least was the loss to the Faith of the Maori people. He wrote: "I visited a district lately where 25 years ago there were 5000 Catholic Maoris; in 1863 there were 1500; I found only one, and he was living with the priest". It has been suggested that Croke’s reluctance to provide for his Maori parishioners was because Pompallier’s “original mandate, to convert the Maori, no longer made much sense, as they were difficult enough to approach, let alone convert. The wheel has turned full circle, and the original mission to the Maori had to give way to the urgent spiritual needs of the English-speaking colonists, many of whom were Irish”, as was Croke. (10) Unable to bear the strain, Bishop Croke resigned in 1874 and for the next five years the Auckland Diocese was without a Bishop.

His successor was Most Rev. Walter Steins, S.J., who was called from the See of Bombay and Poona in 1879. After only two months of his arrival in Auckland he wrote to Father James McDonald, appointing him Maori Missioner for all the Maori in the Auckland Diocese. Already in failing health, Bishop Steins, after less than two years zealous labour in New Zealand, died in Sydney, 1881.

The fourth Bishop of Auckland, Most Rev. John Edmund Luck, was a member of the Order of St. Benedict. He was consecrated on August 13th, 1882 and at once tackled the many problems of the Diocese. His first major difficulty was
the small number of his priests. This too had been a worry for Bishop Pompallier. In this regard, Bishop Luck was deeply concerned about the Maori Mission work and it was Bishop Luck who brought the Mill Hill Fathers to New Zealand.

OTHERS

Besides Pompallier, the French priests, James McDonald, the Marists and the Sisters of Mercy many others have worked on the Maori Mission. “Father Timothy O’Rourke was in 1851 exercising his ministry in the Maori language - the first Irishman to do so. After brief service at Maketu he left for Melbourne. The brother of James McDonald, Walter, arrived in 1856 and for a time served on the Maori Mission at Kororareka. Father Breen, after a pressure-cooker theological course at St. Mary’s North Shore, was ordained in March 1852 and was appointed to the Maori Mission on the East Coast. Sad to relate, after a zealous ministry of less than a year, he met his death by drowning on his way to another mission. The same fate met another Maori missionary, Father Alletag, in 1863, the only one of the 1850 Marist replacements to remain in the diocese of Auckland till his death. Father James Paul joined the diocese in 1856 and for a time served on the Maori Mission at Rangiaohia. Father M. D. O’Hara, another Irish priest, went to the Waikato in 1856.

In 1860 six Franciscans joined the Auckland Mission. To the Franciscan Fathers was assigned all Northland, only Puhoi, then in charge of a German diocesan priest, Father d’Akermann, being excluded. The Franciscan Fathers Gregori and Pasinetti were posted to the Hokianga Maori Mission and their confrere Father del Monte to Kororareka. Father Pasinetti - “Tewano” to the Maoris - covered a district later attended by the Mill Hill Father O’Callaghan, who, also bearing that name, shared his mana. However in 1874 the eight Franciscans then labouring in the diocese, were not recognised by Bishop Croke (Pompallier’s successor) as a moral body; they were to be entirely dependent on him; he would not deal with other religious superiors. The Franciscans left Auckland and its Maori Mission to render yeoman service in China and other mission fields.

Also in 1860 two members of the Order of St. Viator joined the Auckland Mission. One of these, Father J. M. Grange, was later ordained (1861) and joined the diocesan clergy serving on the Maori Mission at Whakatane until forced out by the Hauhau disturbers in 1867.

Of the diocesans in the 1860 contingent, several were assigned to Maori Mission work. Father Bucas took over the Waikato and Father Vinay was posted to Rangiaohia. Father Boibieux was stationed at Rotorua but later went to the South Island. Father Emmanuel Royer went to Tauranga but he, too, later went to the South Island. Father Anthony Pompallier was given the charge of the Maori Mission at Ngaruawahia but after a few brief years he terminated his services as a diocesan of his uncle to join the Marist Fathers. He was professed on September 22, 1867 and was attached to the Marist Community in Algiers, Louisiana, U.S.A.
Many more names could be mentioned but it is evident that when the first Mill Hill Fathers (Becker and Madan) arrived in New Zealand on Dec. 20th, 1886 they joined the litany of great Maori missioners, priests, brothers, sisters and lay people who had worked on the Maori Mission in bygone years.

During the Mill Hill presence in New Zealand others did great Maori Mission work. The religious orders of Sisters deserve special mention. No one can doubt the fine work done by the Sisters e.g. the Sisters of the Mission, the Sisters of Mercy, the Marist Sisters, the Missionary Sisters of the Society of Mary, the Sisters of St. Joseph, the Sisters of the Holy Family and the Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion. No one can doubt the value of the results they achieved. It is shown more than anything in the very real respect and even love that the Catholic people have always had for the Sisters. The Sisters, given a mere pittance for their work, had to give music lessons outside school hours to make ends meet. The nun’s life was one of unceasing activity from five in the morning until nine at night. The only privacy was provided by a dormitory cubicle containing the bare essentials and divided off from the others by a curtain of unbleached calico. The nuns were the drudges of the New Zealand Church and the fact that they were cheerful and uncomplaining did not alter the fact of their servitude. (11)

As the Mill Hill Fathers worked in the North, the Marist Fathers did Maori Mission work in the South. Mary C. Goulter, coming to the defence of the Marist Fathers in the New Zealand Tablet of 1954 rightly complains that Maori Mission was being considered synonymous with Mill Hill Fathers. She writes: "If you look at the map of the North Island, and draw a line across it from west to east well above New Plymouth and Napier, you will have a rough idea of the area of the Auckland Diocesan Maori Mission, which for the last hundred and twenty years has been very successfully staffed by the Mill Hill Fathers. Their missions are, on the whole, old-established; the natives of some have been Catholic for three or four generations. Their work tends to be better known, if only because the Mill Hill Fathers are strangers to us, who have come with a definite purpose and have carried it out. Till to day their name is synonymous in our ears with 'Maori Mission'. (12) Also the Marist Brothers did sterling work on the Maori Mission; neither should the numerous laypeople be forgotten who supported the Maori Mission by their prayers and financial support. Mention should also be made of those of the diocesan clergy who tried their best to look after the Maori people, like Father Michael O’Hara of Otahuhu who in 1878 began to make regular annual tours of the Kaipara, attending to the spiritual needs of both Europeans and Maori. Mention should be made of those of the diocesan clergy who looked after the Maori in their own parishes or who supported the Mill Hill Fathers in their apostolate.

The Mill Hill Fathers played a great part in the Maori Mission work in the Auckland (and later Hamilton) Diocese and "the Mill Hill mission turned out to be perhaps the most important gift of Bishop Luck to his people". (13)

However even the practical supporters of the Mill Hill Fathers and their Maori Mission know surprisingly little about its history, because it stayed largely unknown and, as it were, hidden.
1) "Pompallier" by E. R. Simmons, pg.15-16
2) L.G.Keys, The Life and Times of Bishop Pompallier, Christchurch 1957, pg.78
3) "Pompallier" by E.R.Simmons, pg. 16
4) Based on "The Maori Mission – a personal view" by Fr. J. Durning, S.M.
5) "Anonymous Apostle" pg 68
6) "In Cruce Salus" by E.R. Simmons, p.64-65
8) "Pompallier" by E. R. Simmons, p. 187-188
9) Archives Auckland Diocese STE 1-6/3
10) Thomas William Croke, Diary entry January 1872, CRO 1-2, Croke Diaries, ACDA
11) "In Cruce Salus" by E. R. Simmons, p.204
12) "Our debt to the Maoris" by Mary C. Goulter, New Zealand Tablet 1954.
13) "In Cruce Salus" by E. R. Simmons, p.135
14) "In Cruce Salus" by E. R. Simmons, p.180