Booklet

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PEOPLE OF AO-TE-AROA

THE ADVENTIST MISSION TO MAORIS

By Milton Hook

Seventh-day Adventist Heritage Series

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr Milton Hook is the author of "Flames Over Battle Creek", a brief history of the early days at the Review and Herald Publishing Association as seen through the eyes of George Amadon, printer's foreman at the institution. Dr Hook's doctoral dissertation researched the pioneering years of the Avondale School, 1894 to 1900, and he has published some of these findings.

He spent three years as a mission director in Papua New Guinea. His teaching years include primary, secondary and college level experience, especially in Bible subjects, in Australia, New Zealand and America. He is an ordained minister, married and the father of two sons.

He would welcome any information which may enhance the content of this series.

The Land of the Long White Cloud (Ao-Te-Aroa), otherwise called New Zealand, is the homeland of the Maori race. Early English settlers were struck by their kindness and intelligence. However, there was a time when relations soured and flared into war. The Maoris maintained they were cheated of their lands and duped by unscrupulous European colonists. In the wake of the M0000000000aori Wars poverty and disease decimated this fine race. They became demoralized, dwindling in numbers, and suspicious of settler and missionary alike.

The missionaries had, nevertheless, taught them to revere the Bible. Many were skilled in reading it in their own language. Some could even understand the English translation. But their loss of confidence and detachment from Europeans fostered the emergence of a chieftain ministry. Local Maori leaders would preach their own brand of religion, a mixture of Christianity and folklore. Groups such as the Ringatus, followers of Maori leader Te Kooti Rikirangi, were taught that the seventh-day was the Sabbath. For this reason they would regularly meet in their whare (meeting house) to worship on Saturdays in spite of the example set by the pakehas (white settlers). They also revered the twelfth day of each month to commemorate the twelve apostles.

The Sabbath-keeping Maoris were of special interest to Pastor Stephen Haskell. When he first toured New Zealand late in 1885 he visited some in their pahs (settlements) near Rotorua. He was told by a local authority that the number of Sabbath-keepers in New Zealand was over two thousand people. From that time onward

Adventists hoped and prayed for a large-scale conversion of these people. However, during the next fifty years the Adventist missionaries experienced only a few cracks in the wall of suspicion and reticence.

For many years Joseph and Hannah Hare had ministered among the local Maoris of Kaeo in the far north. When they became Adventists they continued their witness. Their second son, Edward, had trained earlier as a missionary to the Maoris. When he became an Adventist he made plans to publish a four-page paper to evangelize these people. He found a retired missionary in Auckland who was revising the Maori translation of the Bible. This man offered to do his translation work free. But this whole project was left for others to initiate later. A handful of senior Maoris at Kaeo did accept Seventh-day Adventism, Elirja Shepherd being the first in late 1886, followed by her two brothers, Isaac and Moses. Until his death in 1898 Isaac led the little group of Sabbath-keepers at Pungairi, near Kaeo.

When Arthur Daniells conducted his Napier mission programme in 1888 he visited some of the nearby Sabbath-keeping Maoris who were followers of Te Kooti but he made little impact. Nevertheless, Adventism in general flourished early on the eastern shore of the North Island. Parallel with this phenomenon was the occasional breakthrough into the Maori race.

The following year (1889) Robert Hare held a series of evangelistic meetings at Gisborne. There, a Maori named Francis or "Fanny" Moore was baptized in the Tareheru River. Later, her mother and sister joined the church, and some of their relatives also formed a company further north at Tolaga Bay. Into that company in 1893 Margaret Lockwood, a much loved Maori midwife in the community who became a mother of thirteen herself, was baptized by American Pastor Gilbert Wilson. One of her children, Matilda or "Mattie", was later baptized when a student at the Avondale School and married Australian-born William Tulloch. Another Maori woman, Hannah Ranginia, was baptized by Wilson in 1894 at Tolaga Bay. Some of

her relatives, along with Josephine Glover, were baptised a little later.

While Wilson was baptizing some in the Gisborne/Tolaga Bay area others were showing an interest elsewhere. Andrew Simpson, a canvasser, was holding Sunday afternoon meetings at a Maori pah near Blenheim in the South Island. Mr Everson, an Adventist chef at Te Aute or Williams College situated between Napier and Hastings, stirred considerable curiosity among the young men in that Anglican institution. They watched him regularly take Sabbaths off to attend worship services in Napier. His actions prompted the boys to ask questions. He captured their interest with a Bible study on Daniel 2 and continued to share his relatively new-found faith. He himself had become an Adventist by reading literature while a chef on board a ship plying the New Zealand coasts.

Two sixteen-year-olds at Te Aute College, both the sons of Maori chiefs, transferred to Adventist schools. One was Maul Pomare, affectionately known as "Pom", who went to America and qualified as a physician. The other boy was Itereamer Mikaera, better known as "Wi" or "Willie". He first attended the Australasian Bible School in Melbourne during 1893 and 1894, later assisted with Maori translation work at the Avondale Press, and then studied medicine at Queen's College in Canada. Pastor Wilson, Margaret Caro, Ellen White and others, made substantial donations towards the education of these young men but both later chose to work outside the denomination and their membership lapsed. "Pom" enjoyed an outstanding career, first in the public health service, and then in the New Zealand parliament, where he virtually single-handedly reversed the fortunes of his dying kinsmen by educating them in healthful living and restoring hope in their hearts. He was a big man in many ways- knighted by the Queen, over 1.9 metres tall and solidly built, and his oratory and humour often carried the day. On one occasion he was challenged by a political opponent who claimed he couldn't be pure Maori because he had such a light-coloured skin. "Pom" countered by saying, "lt's true I probably do

have some white blood in me. My ancestors ate a few English fellows who landed on our shores."

Pastor Wilson organized some translation work while he was President of the New Zealand Conference (1893-1895) including a tract entitled, "The Curse of the Liquor Traffic". This was distributed freely among the Maoris because alcohol was one of the scourges introduced to them by the English settlers. In his travels Wilson also tried to break down prejudice by visiting Maoris at their pahs. On one occasion he arrived at Kaeo as the local Maoris were having a "bone scrape". At these ceremonies the bones of a loved one were exhumed and placed on a hillside watched by a holy man while the others mourned and feasted. While they were all congregated together Wilson took the opportunity to address them. He first encountered scepticism and distrust of pakehas, but they eventually invited him into their whare and by the light of the whale-oil and tallow candles he sang and spoke a simple gospel message. Some hunted up the passages in their Bibles. Afterwards, there were handshakes all around and one said to him, "We are looking for light."

Little progress was evident between 1894 and 1900. A great deal of hope rested with "Pom" and "Willie" returning from overseas to pioneer among their own race. "Pom" made a brief return in 1895 but his incorporation into the conference team was bungled and he quickly embarked for America again to further his studies. Sabbath School offerings were gathered in 1899 for the Maori work and a request was lodged for Dr Joseph Caldwell to transfer from the Cook Islands to work among the Maoris - the languages of these two groups of people being similar. Development languished. Caldwell and his family didn't arrive in New Zealand until February 1901. To make matters worse his wife, Julia, was broken in health and racked with recurring fevers. Nevertheless, Pastor Edward Gates, Moses Shepherd, and Dr. Caldwell searched for a locality in the Urewera and Waikato regions where some work among the Maoris might be centralized. Finally, the little township of Kawhia, south of Raglan on the west coast, was singled out.

Caldwell was breaking new ground. There were many Ringatus in the area but no Christian group was working among them. The Hill family, among the earliest of Daniells' converts in Auckland, had settled at Raglan. They welcomed the coming of the Caldwells. However, the whole exercise hinged on the health of Julia Caldwell. Tragically, despite the invigorating climate of the west coast and, finally, the care ministered at the Christchurch Sanitarium she succumbed on March 1, 1902. Caldwell had built a mission home but had barely begun to make an impact among the Maoris. He returned to America heartbroken. The Hill family, especially daughter Annie, continued to conduct Sabbath School and distribute Maori tracts and magazines in the vicinity. Apart from these efforts the work for Maoris in the Waikato region was abandoned for over a decade.

In 1906 the focus of attention shifted back to the east coast, the scene of earlier exploits. Vice-president of the New Zealand Conference, schoolteacher William James Smith, was appointed to work especially for the Maoris. He made an exploratory trip from Gisborne as far north as Tokomaru Bay, holding two public meetings en route for the small company of Maori Seventh-day Adventists at Tolaga Bay who met regularly for services in the local school. Smith found it impossible to rent a home at Tolaga Bay so he opted to settle his wife and family at Gisborne. The local church members at Gisborne donated a horse which enabled him to visit all the Maori pahs in the neighbourhood. In the course of his circuit-riding he gave away Maori tracts and sold some copies of "Christ Our Saviour", then in a Maori translation. He himself began to learn the Maori language.

Smith devoted some of his time to the publication of a monthly paper for the Maoris. "Fanny" Moore assisted him in this venture. They named it "Te Karere O Te Pono" (The Herald of Truth). The first issue appeared in July 1907 and by the end of the year Smith had secured one hundred annual subscriptions, mainly from the pahs near Gisborne and Tolaga Bay. Others were sent free to Maori chiefs. Bundles were posted to church members for distribution from

centres such as Kaeo, Cambridge, Wellington, and even the Chatham Islands. The Maoris loved to read and these papers were eagerly sought by them. Up to that time Smith's initiative in this respect proved to be the most effective means of reaching the Maori mind.

As so often happened, despite the whiff of success in the air the worker hurried away in response to a more urgent task. At the end of 1907 Smith transferred to be principal at the new training school near Cambridge. To replace him a New Zealand sheep farmer, William Carswell, returned from Australia with his wife, Janet.

Fred and Nellie Redward, both graduate nurses of the Sydney Sanitarium, had joined Smith in Gisborne in the latter half of 1906, selling literature and ministering to the Maori sick. They spent the winter of 1907 at Tolaga Bay where pneumonia and whooping cough were rife among the Maoris. Some died and the Maoris went into mourning. Redward was reluctant to approach them at this time fearing he too would contract a disease by the customary greeting of nose-rubbing. After nearly two years work on the east coast the Redwards became discouraged and resigned. Their places were filled by Read and Lucy Smith.

Read Smith was raised by godly parents in England and from his boyhood had aspired to be a doctor-missionary. He immigrated to Australia, met and married Lucy, then worked as a businessman in Western Australia. It was there they accepted Adventism and his earlier aspirations were revived. They both trained as nurses at the Sydney Sanitarium, graduating together in 1908. Their work among the Maoris was therefore their first appointment. Centering at Tolaga Bay they immediately found themselves immersed in a hectic schedule of visitations and treatments at the pahs. On occasion they would spend weeks at Tokomaru Bay doing the same work. There the chief had a furnished home for them to live in. Visits ranged further a field, south of Gisborneto Nuhaka, Opoutama, and Mahia. At Tokomaru Bay the pressure of visiting the homes forced them to

partition a room in their cottage and have the patients come to them for treatments.

At home base, Tolaga Bay, Smith reported three hundred treatments in a month. He also told of a Sunday School they held each week in the whare. To gather everyone together they would begin singing and the call to assemble then fanned out through the Maori community. After thirty minutes of singing, their voices quite hoarse, up to fifty of all ages would meet.

The work load made inroads into their health reserves. Smith himself went down with a severe attack of whooping cough. He had barely recovered when he was called north to Tokomaru Bay for two urgent cases. These he nursed back to health and was about to return home when five children were stricken with typhoid. Single-handedly, over the next few weeks, he brought them all through this crisis too. Then he returned to Lucy at Tolaga Bay, only to be hit with the same typhoid himself. William and "Mattie" Tulloch, who were expecting another infant* at the time, took the risk and cared for him in their own home as Lucy did all she could to treat him. But he passed away on September 3, 1910. He was only thirty-five years old. Lucy couldn't be persuaded to leave her post. She lingered on until the following year, continuing the Sunday School for the children and doing some nursing, before returning to Australia. This tragedy staggered the church membership and effectively brought an end to medical work among the Maoris. All further efforts were restricted to the publication and distribution of literature.

Carswell continued on with the translation and printing of literature in the Maori language just as William Smith had done. "Fanny" Moore maintained her assistance too. Carswell eventually located at the little village of Puha, up the valley from Gisborne, where he could be close to some Maori pahs. Later he shifted further inland to Whatatutu and then back to Gisborne. He, too, ranged south to Te Reinga and Wairoa, visiting other pahs, canvassing the Maori translation of "Christ Our Saviour", promoting his monthly paper, and giving out tracts. At one time he visited Ringatus near Wanganui.

*This baby grew up to be Dr. Allan Tulloch

On another occasion he received news that a few Ringatus were showing a real interest at Waipapakauri in the far north. Always hoping for a major breakthrough with these people, he made the long journey and found they were employed in digging kauri gum from the swamps --up to their waists all day in the cold murk delving for the commodity. However, because of Janet Carswell's poor health he was obliged to spend a large proportion of his time at home. He concentrated on a Maori translation of Pastor John Fulton's Bible studies. This was published in 1914 under the title "Te Taro O Te Ora"(The Bread of Life). In mid-1911 the size of the monthly "Te Karere OTe Pono" was doubled to eight pages with illustrations included. At the same time Avondale Press began to print each issue instead of it being done in Gisborne.

Janet Carswell finally had to go to the Sydney Sanitarium for prolonged treatment and William followed soon after. Even though he left the area in late 1911 he continued to publish the Maori paper until 1914. Lines from a poem he published in another church paper in 1912 express his deep feelings for the Maoris,

> *For this race I sigh, as the end draws nigh, And how many are sunk in sin; Through the white man's vice, and Satan's device, It is hard these souls to win...*

As from January 1912, the New Zealand Conference no longer bore the responsibility of the Maori mission. Instead, the Australasian Union Conference assumed control. This management at arms length, as it were, proved unsatisfactory. Americans Albert and Minnie Chaney were appointed to operate from the Gisborne church and try to minister to the Maoris in the east coast district. To step into Carswell's shoes was a daunting task and Chaney had difficulty gaining acceptance because of the language barrier. He found it hard to learn the Maori language and after a short time transferred out.

In mid-1913 Harold and Alice Letts were appointed to the Maori work but, once again, the term was brief. Early in 1913 Reg and Emily Piper had returned with health problems from mission service inthe Cook Islands. When Letts opted out then Piper was asked in January 1914 to try Maori evangelism.

Piper was advised to search out the Ringatus during his travels because of their similar belief about the Sabbath. He kept away from the east coast where so much time and effort had been invested and where there were already a handful of believers. He returned to the King Country on the west coast where Caldwell had earlier settled and capitalized on the witness of the Hill family. The Hills, Piper found, were still actively engaged in evangelism among the nearby Maoris. He made an extensive tour of the region beginning at Taumarunui. He visited Maori pahs at the head-waters of the Wanganui River and also at the nearly deserted Waitomo settlement. By train he then journeyed north to Ngaruawahia where an annual Maori gathering was being held. He gave away a lot of literature, especially the anti-smoking tract. Then he borrowed a bicycle and peddled to the pahs at Te Kowai, Whata-Whata, and Waingaro. He reached Raglan by launch and, in company with Annie Hill, rode horseback down to the Kawhai pahs. There he found the Mormons had established themselves.

Piper's itinerary on the west coast was only an exploratory trip. He eventually located at Tauranga where there were quite a number of Ringatus. It was thought this would be a productive field. He was breaking entirely new ground at Tauranga. A Niuean young lady, "Vai" Kerisome, who had spent three years studying at the Avondale School and helping in translation work at the Avondale Press, came to assist the Pipers briefly.

All official efforts died away after 1914. The Tauranga venture came to nothing. Carswell, still editing the Maori paper from his Sydney home, was transferred in 1915 to Queensland where he became engrossed in public evangelism for the Childers church. Between the two World Wars there were only some unofficial and self-

supporting efforts put forth, e.g., Maude (Cammell) Smith's teaching of Maoris near Auckland in the late 1920's.

Reflecting on the efforts put forth on behalf of the Maoris, Carswell admitted the task had been uphill "on account of the wide dispersion of the people." Furthermore, at times he wished for a school in which to train the Maori youth. The experience of sending "Pom" and "Willie" overseas to study and then not reaping any direct benefits for the church had demonstrated the risk that students would return with mixed feelings about church employment.

Natural difficulties were compounded by what appears to be some poor choices of personnel. Missionaries returning from the Pacific Islands in poor health, such as Julia Caldwell and Reg Piper, could hardly be expected to match the task. When the Maori work was reactivated in 1941 this fault was repeated. Hubert and Elsmer Tolhurst, he on sick leave, were asked to work among the Ringatus at Ohope and Taneatua in the Bay of Plenty region when they came from Tonga. After four years there was still no response from the Ringatus. It raises the question, Was it a valid assumption to think that Sabbath-keeping Maoris would be the best prospect for evangelism, or would it have been better to work for non-Sabbath-keeping Maoris?

The best breakthrough occurred in the far north. Paul and Lillian Claus were appointed to the Kaitaia church and a great deal of their time was spent in ministry for local Maori people. Like Read and Lucy Smith they mingled and identified closely with the Maoris. Claus helped in their little sawmill. He distributed vast quantities of carrot juice and whole-ground wheat flour in an effort to guarantee better health for the Maoris and guard against sickness. Some Maoris responded. First among them was Bella Melville, a part-Maori. She influenced her brother, Fred Conrad at Te Kao, to accept Adventism, along with Richard or "Glass" Murray. An Anglican lay-preacher, Tipane Kapa and Lucy Ratcliffe were baptized soon after.

At first the Te Kao believers met in Murray's home for services. Later, a block of land was donated and they congregated there for worship in a tin shed. All the while they went gum digging to raise funds to buy a better structure. In 1947 they purchased an ex-army hut at Waipapakauri and transported it north to Te Kao where it was dedicated as the first Maori church, March 27, 1948.

The longing for a landslide conversion of the Ringatus was never fulfilled. Instead, they occasionally responded in ones and twos. As the twentieth century wore on the Maori race itself became more integrated with the pakehas. There was no longer the need for separate Maori-language literature. The wrongs of the colonial past were generally forgiven and the old-time distrust largely dissipated. In the Adventist Church nowadays it is conventional to see an intermingling and a difference in ancestry is of little consequence. Read Smith, who gave his life for the Maoris, would rejoice to see it.

Major sources for this booklet are the "Bible Echo and Signs of the Times", the "Home Missionary", the "Australasian Record", and the author's personal collection of pioneer data.

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