Noeline V. Hall. *I Have Planted . . .: A Biography of Alfred Nesbit Brown.* Palmerston North, New Zealand: The Dunmore Press, 1981. Pp. 267, illustrations, maps, bibliography, index.

Much has been written lately about the negative and positive aspects of the work of missionaries. There appears to be general agreement that missionaries provided important ethnographic and linguistic information concerning the indigenous people among whom they had been sent to work. Missionaries, furthermore, saved many lives while acting as peacemakers among groups engaged in internecine conflicts. Their contribution to the preservation of native languages is undoubted, for one of their first self-set tasks was the translation of the Bible into the vernacular. On the other hand, missionaries have been accused of having been directly or indirectly involved in transforming indigenous cultures, making changes which many anthropologists, who tend to regard each culture and each society as a complete organic system, consider unfortunate. Nevertheless, one

could argue that while most indigenous people, like the Maori, valued their own culture, they were not reluctant to accept changes which they thought would improve their situation. The Maori, for instance, soon realized that availability of medical treatment, education for themselves and their children, better knowledge of agricultural methods and animal husbandry, and even cessation of intertribal hostilities could ensure them a better standard of living; they therefore began to listen to the message of the missionaries. They were, however, by no means passive "spectators" in the process of "christianization," often succeeding in manipulating the missionaries to achieve their own goals.

Against this background of critical reappraisal of missionary activities, it is particularly appropriate that Noeline Hall should have written a biography of Archdeacon Alfred Nesbit Brown. Brown, born in Colchester in 1803, joined the Church Missionary Society in 1827 and sailed with his bride to New Zealand in 1829. New Zealand at that time had not yet become a British colony but was administered by the governor of New South Wales. It was considered one of the most dangerous places in the Pacific, for a number of traders and seafarers had met with hostility, treachery, and murder at the hands of Maori warriors. Only after Samuel Marsden received a friendly welcome were the anxieties of would-be settlers allayed. Brown had been assigned by the C.M.S. to teach the children of other missionaries who had followed Marsden in the 1820s to Pahia in the Bay of Islands, the main center of missionary activities. However, the young clergyman's central concern was the conversion of the Maori. Until he was assigned to his own mission station, he served his apprenticeship under Henry and William Williams, who had gained the confidence of the local tribal chiefs. He accompanied them on some of their. peace-making voyages, acquiring proficiency in the Maori language and gaining an insight into traditional tribal customs, which proved invaluable later in his career.

In 1834 Brown, in the company of William Williams, journeyed to the Waikato and Tauranga areas to select a suitable site for a mission station further south. They found just what they were looking for at Te Papa. Te Papa, now Tauranga, had been a fortified Maori *pa,* with an excellent crescent-shaped harbor, but it was unoccupied at the time of their visit. The former inhabitants had been surprised in a raid and the survivors had fled into the adjoining forests, leaving Te Papa deserted. However, over ten thousand Maori were believed to live in the vicinity and Brown uudertook to take the gospel to the remotest Maori settlement in his district. At first he and his family lived in simple Maori-style rush huts. Later he built the fine stone house with four elegantly proportioned windows

flanked with dark brown venetian shutters, which still stands in a quiet suburban street in Tauranga. One of the most historic pieces of furniture at "The Elms," as the house is now called, is the oval mahogany table, which the Browns brought out with them from England. British officers who had been chosen to lead the attack on the Ngatiporou stronghold at Gate Pa on April 29, 1864, dined at that table on the eve of the battle. The following day all but Dr. Manley, the Army surgeon, were killed. Brown then had the sad task of burying his former guests.

During this battle, Brown must have had reason to be both encouraged and discouraged with regard to his missionary efforts. Brown could see some of the fruits of his missionary work among the Maori in their unusually generous treatment of the enemy, for the rules governing the fighting had been drawn up by a young mission student, Henare Taratoa, who was later killed in the battle for Te Ranga. The Ngatiporou warriors were credited with great chivalry and generosity to their enemies in this campaign. They tended the wounded British soldiers and assured others that if they fled "to the house of the priest," even though carrying arms, they would not be attacked. But while Brown endeavored to mediate between the British authorities and the Maori, assisting in the negotiations which led to peace, his missionary work received a severe setback as a consequence of this conflict. When the Maori once again dispersed, their desire to familiarize themselves with the gospel had considerably diminished; they no longer regarded missionaries as impartial mediators who had their interests at heart.

This was a bitter disappointment to Brown, who had traveled many miles on foot through rugged country and shown great courage and tenacity in his efforts to convert the Maori. During the 1840s and 50s he had high hopes of realizing his objectives. These he expressed in letters to his family and colleagues. He was a stubbornly single-minded man, determined to carry out his mission despite the obvious reluctance of the Maori to accept Christian teachings.

Noeline Hall's painstaking research clearly reveals the positive as well as the negative aspects of the process of "missionization." Having spent nearly fifty years with his flock, Brown knew their language well, and his biography provides us with invaluable insights into the steady deterioration of Maori-Pakeha relations. There can be no question that over time he began to feel greater sympathy for the Maori and intervened with the British, and later the New Zealand authorities, on their behalf. In times of peace the Archdeacon provided medical care and educational facilities for the Maori, settled local disputes, and prevented a number of raids.

On the negative side, however, one must admit that Brown, like the other missionaries, supported British colonial policies in New Zealand and was responsible for procuring the signatures of the leading chiefs in his district to the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840. However, he lived to regret his contribution to the subjugation of the Maori, subsequently realizing that the settlers would wish to acquire more land than the Maori wanted to sell to the government, and that serious conflicts between the settlers, the government, and the Maori were likely to ensue. Indeed the missionaries, as Brown put it, were "placed in a delicate and difficult position": the Maoris would ask their advice with regard to land sales making it difficult for the missionaries to fulfill their role as trusted friends of the Maori without offending the powers that be. Until he died he worked indefatigably to protect the Maori against exploitation by unscrupulous whites, mediating between his flock and the authorities. Nevertheless, he firmly believed that the only "real solution" to the problems of the Maori, "was a full commitment to God."

Brown's attitude towards Maori culture tended to be narrow and ethnocentric, for he failed to realize how deeply rooted their customs and behavior patterns were. Determined to eradicate "heathenish" practices, such as constant raiding, dancing, polygamy, and killing for revenge, he suffered many disappointments, particularly when he realized the superficial nature of some of the conversions he had effected.

His feelings about the teachings of the Wesleyan missionaries were unambiguous; he believed that their approach merely confused the Maori, emphasizing mysteries, visions, and dreams rather than "the plain heart-searching truths that meet us in every page of the word of God." He also showed his hostility towards the activities of the Roman Catholic priests and catechists in his area, for the Maori in the Te Papa district displayed great interest in Catholic doctrines. Bishop Pompallier's visit in 1840 resulted in a large number of putative conversions. But the Maori did not attempt to disguise their motives: they had heard that the Bishop would give blankets, as well as crucifixes, beads, and medals to all Catholic converts. The fact that the Catholic missionaries lived very simply on small sections of land which were granted but not sold to them by the Maori and took a tolerant view of long-established Maori customs such as wearing traditional flax skirts or dancing the *haka,* further contributed to their popularity.

As far as the question of land purchases was concerned, Brown ranged himself firmly on the side of the C.M.S., which limited to 2560 acres the amount of land that missionaries could purchase for their own use. Despite this, some of the missionaries, like Henry Williams, had bought addi-

tional land for their children. Brown, however, was quite adamant on the question of land claimants, showing an admirable integrity even where his friend Henry Williams was concerned; he himself purchased only about 1280 acres, for which he paid "at Sydney prices 73:10s."

I Have Planted . . . A Biography of Alfred Nesbit Brown is an invaluable contribution to nineteenth century New Zealand history. The author has made good use of her primary sources, providing many valuable insights into the relations between Brown and the other New Zealand missionaries and his changing attitudes towards the Maori. Despite the fact that after 1860 no continuous primary sources were available, Noeline Hall has been able to throw some light on Brown's role during the Maori wars and the post-war period. This is a scholarly, but eminently readable account of missionary activity in New Zealand, from its inception until 1884, when "the work of the C.M.S. had almost run its course in the missionary field." The positive as well as the negative aspects of Brown's efforts have been candidly assessed in terms of contemporary standards; his ascetic humorlessness and lack of tolerance, however, are balanced by the dedication he showed in his self-imposed task and his sympathy for the Maori's grievances in the later years of his stewardship. As the author herself puts it: "If judged by the standards and ideals of his own age, both spiritual and secular, Brown more than measures up to them, and by the end of his life has something to spare by our own standards."

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