

# Missionary Man

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This month a quick look at two different missionaries from two different faiths, who made names for themselves in New Zealand history.

First a name I know well, mainly as I went to a school named after this 'whipping missionary'.

## **Marsden, Samuel**

Born in Yorkshire in 1765, he studied at Cambridge before being appointed assistant chaplain for New South Wales. He married shortly before leaving, and his daughter was born in Sydney. He was an industrious man, taking over a large block of land and farming it extensively. But he also won himself a reputation for harsh discipline against the convicts when he became a magistrate. Though he was extremely busy with all his various jobs, it was missionary work he felt was calling. He determined that the Maori needed to be evangelised.

In 1807 Marsden went to London to ask the Church Missionary Society to fund a mission to New Zealand. When he succeeded he gathered together a band of lay settlers to accompany him, including a teacher, and a joiner. But because of delays and bureaucracy he did not sail for New Zealand until 1814. He even had to pay for his own ship. Though his mission started off well in the Bay of Islands, but the climate of violence in the area surrounding it disturbed him. Even the missionaries argued amongst themselves. For a good few years Marsden struggled on against a climate of increasing unrest. Tribes were trading for muskets with settlers all about, and back in New South Wales, Marsden had plenty of arguments with the governor who treated the whole mission thing as a bit of a joke. Marsden however responded by cracking down on those who were running guns, and in some cases committing adultery.

In 1819 he bought a block of land in Kerikeri, and in 1823 opened a station at Paihia, which Reverend Henry Williams took over. During these times Marsden himself travelled over the countryside, seeing all its wildness. He also played the roles of peacemaker in a variety of occasions, and he preached in Maori, as he had learned the language. As he worked on into old age Maori and settler alike revered him. But in June 1837 he left New Zealand for the last time, for on 12th May 1838 he died at Paramata.

Marsden was human, he did make mistakes, but he also changed the face of New Zealand. He was an occasional voice of restraint on the British authorities, and spoke against barbarity on both sides of the argument. He was stern, but this was tempered by generosity.

## **Jean Baptiste François Pompallier**

Pompallier was born in France, and received the education of the middle class. Ordained as a twenty four year old in Lyons, he served there for seven years. Rome picked him as the first vicar apostolic of Western Oceania, and made titular Bishop in 1836.

He set out in that same year with priests and brother for New Zealand, and made it his base. Learning Maori quickly, he soon had stations at Hokianga, Kororareka, Whangaroa, Kaipara, Tauranga, Akaroa, Matamata, Opotiki, Maketu, Auckland, Wellington, Otaki, Rotorua, Rangiaowhia and Whakatane. Pompallier was even at the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, and it is thanks to him that New Zealanders are granted the rights to spiritual freedom. He was the one responsible for the 4th article of the Treaty that gives us that.

But by 1846 there was a split between Pompallier and the Marist brothers. When he visited Rome they divided New Zealand into two dioceses; he got Auckland, Wellington was given to the Marists. While in Europe Pompallier raised funds for the mission, and when he returned his Catholic population had nearly doubled. He set up schools and bought in more priests and lay people to teach. But there were problems, many Maori had drifted away, and their missions could never pay back money Pompallier had borrowed for them. Despite mortgaging land, the debt kept growing, and Pompallier was getting too sick to cope with it all. He resigned his position.

It was a terrible end to a career that had earned him much respect among the Maori. He did not denigrate their customs, and unlike other missionaries did not insist they dress as Europeans. His instructions to his priests sound practical *"God does not require European dress from those who want to serve him - He wants our hearts and that is all ... It is better to go to Heaven wearing native dress than to go to Hell in European clothing."*

But still even today he is a sometimes contentious figure- but not to those of his faith. He died in 1871 in France. And though he was not to be remembered as a great administrator, he was remembered for his genuine piety, and a desire to help others. Even today after all the years since his death Maori in the Hokianga hold him in great regard. And campaigned to bring his body back to the land where he worked so hard. His bones were exhumed, and will be interned at Hokianga on the 164th anniversary of his first Mass in New Zealand.

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