

A portrait of Samuel Marsden, an elderly man with light-colored, wavy hair, wearing a dark coat and a white cravat. The background is dark and textured.

**The World,
the Flesh and
the Devil**

*The life and opinions of Samuel Marsden
in England and the Antipodes, 1765-1838*

Andrew Sharp

A major new biography of the leading evangelist to New Zealand, the 'flogging parson' Rev. Samuel Marsden, and the struggles with 'the world, the flesh and the devil' that he spent his life pursuing.

New Zealanders know Samuel Marsden as the founder of the CMS missions that brought Christianity (and perhaps sheep) to New Zealand. Australians know him as 'the flogging parson' who established large landholdings and was dismissed from his position as magistrate for exceeding his jurisdiction. English readers know of Marsden for his key role in the history of missions and empire. In this major biography spanning research, and the subject's life, across England, New South Wales and New Zealand, Andrew Sharp tells the story of Marsden's life from the inside. Sharp focuses on revealing to modern readers the powerful evangelical lens through which Marsden understood the world. By diving deeply into key moments – the voyage out, the disputes with Macquarie, the founding of missions – Sharp gets us to reimagine the world as Marsden saw it: always under threat from the Prince of Darkness, in need of 'a bold reprover of vice', a world written in the words of the King James Bible. Andrew Sharp takes us back into the nineteenth-century world, and an evangelical mind, to reveal the past as truly a foreign country.

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The voyage to Botany Bay, 1793–94

I The diary

Stories were told later of the Marsdens' departure from England in July 1793. One – which may or may not be true but was a family tradition – pictured Marsden as a favourite with the religious community in Hull, often asked to preach in its different churches.

One Sunday morning, when he was just about to enter the pulpit, a signal gun was heard; his ship was about to sail, and it was, of course, impossible for him to preach. Taking his bride under his arm, he immediately left the church and walked down to the beach; but he was attended by the whole congregation, which . . . followed in a body. From the boat into which he stepped he gave his parting benedictions, which they returned with fervent prayers, and tender farewells. He now found himself in a new world.¹

Another – more certainly true – was made famous by Rev. Legh Richmond who may have known Marsden in Cambridge and certainly became his friend, if not then, then during his leave in England fourteen years later. Richmond's story had Marsden on the Isle of Wight while his ship waited for favourable weather to sail from Weymouth. While he was on the island he converted an amiable and attractive but thoughtless young woman from her worldly attachments to clothes and such frippery, so that when she died attended by Richmond, her priest, in about 1800, she did so in a state of grace.² This story was first published as *The Dairyman's Daughter* in 1809, and then in 1814 by the Religious Tract Society. The Tract Society – conceived and created by evangelicals at the turn of the century – published two editions of 20,000 each in 1816 alone and it was republished with two other tracts in Richmond's other mass-seller, *The Annals of the Poor*. It has been estimated that, leaving aside editions in French, Italian, German, Danish and Swedish, there were two million copies of *The Dairyman's Daughter* published in English, in the USA as well as in the UK. Marsden was not named in the tract, but for any who cared to think of it or heard of his role,³ it can only have been him that it referred to: 'she heard a sermon preached at — church by a gentleman that was going to —, as a chaplain to the colony, and from that time she seemed quite another creature'. And so began Marsden's evangelical adventures as the public came to see

them through the burgeoning industry of religious tracts designed to reach down to the mass of the populations of the UK and the USA, not to mention the European lands where the tracts were also published.⁴

Marsden's own account of his departure and much else is to be found in the journal (he called it a 'Diary') that he wrote during his seven-month journey and more sporadically thereafter for another four months.⁵ It is possible that his sponsors asked him to keep a journal for them as they seem to have asked of Johnson, the first chaplain to Botany Bay,⁶ and as was to be the common practice of the missionary societies in later years. It is also possible that he wrote with an eye to its being read by other Christians as a source of inspiration. Less commendably, his writing may just have been a narcissistic exercise in false consciousness of holiness. Isaac Milner was to ask when he published his brother's journals: 'Does it really make a man more diligent and watchful against his spiritual enemies or does it not rather tend to promote formality, and self-deception?'⁷ All these uses of journals were recognised among his connections, though, on balance, they approved of them.⁸ Marsden's was certainly written in his best clear hand and with fewer corrections than might be expected. But if there are reasons for thinking that his diary cannot be taken utterly at face value, there was certainly a well-established tradition of 'serious' religious men and women confiding their experiences to a journal as a discipline of the soul; and since the manuscript never reached his sponsors or the printing press but lay long among his papers, unadjusted and uncorrected by him, it seems probable that this is how it should be taken. However that may be, the diary evokes a sensibility that he brought with him from England and which remained with him for the rest of his life.

II The journey

Marsden began his journal in a burst of missionary enthusiasm on 27 July 1793, when the store ship *William* (305 tons) dropped anchor at Weymouth after its first day's manoeuvrings from Spithead: 'I am now about to quit my native country with a view of preaching the *everlasting gospel* [*Revelation* 14:6]. Oh that God would make my way prosperous that the end of my going may be answered in the conversion of many poor souls. *Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me* [*Psalms* 4:6]. *May I walk in the light as thou art in the light* [*1 John* 1:7].' His announcement of their departure was sadly premature. It was not until two months later that the vessel finally quit the British Isles from Cork. Until then the *William* had to wait off Weymouth while the East India convoy of 40-odd vessels assembled and the weather decided to co-operate before they could make their way across the Irish Sea. As soon as they left Ireland on 20 September he was horribly seasick (as both the Marsdens were whenever the sea was up): 'Oh, how miserable must their state be who have all their religion to seek, when sickness and death come upon them! Lord grant that this may never be my case.' He was so ill that he almost wished to 'know the lord now, and come to die in peace,

New Zealand 1820s and 30s



84. Paihia in 1827
85. Kerikeri in 1827-8
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Intentions revealed and troubles emerging in the Bay of Islands, c. 1814–17

I Marsden's diplomacy during his first visit to the Bay, 1814–15

By 1814 the *Boyd* episode had receded comfortably enough into the past for Marsden, with permission from Macquarie, to send Kendall and Hall over on an exploratory visit to the Bay of Islands. As he was always to be, he was keenly aware of the diplomatic and public relations aspects of the visit. He instructed Captain Peter Dillon of the *Active* that their 'first object' was 'to promote a friendly intercourse with the Natives of New Zealand'. He was to avoid any quarrels between them and the ship's company, 'and everything to be done that can with kindness to gain their confidence'. He was to tell them that Marsden intended to visit them soon, and that when the *Active* returned to New South Wales, a few of their chiefs and their children should come over on a friendly visit.¹ Marsden also sent letters and gifts to a number of chiefs in the Bay where he meant to settle the mission. He sent one letter to 'Duaterra King' with his greetings, indicating his burgeoning household and their friendly knowledge of Ruatara by adding that, 'Ann, Elizabeth, Mary, Jane, Charles, Martha, Nanny² and Mrs. Bishop, Mrs. Marsden are all well and wish to know how you are'. He also sent 'a steel mill to grind his wheat, a sieve to clean it, and a few other useful presents';³ also gifts from 'Charles' and 'Mrs Marsden', including clothes and seeds, rum, tea, sugar, flour and cheese. In exchange he asked that Ruatara should send him various trade articles, aided in this, he hoped, by Kawiti⁴ and Tara. He sent a jacket for Kawiti and wrote a separate letter to him, much along the lines of the one to Ruatara. Kendall reported: 'Duaterra gladly received Mr. Marsden's letter The name of Mr. Marsden is well known in the Bay of Islands. The natives mention him in their songs and speak of him with respect.'⁵

It was therefore not difficult for Kendall and Hall to get volunteers for the return voyage to Port Jackson. Five rangatira came: Ruatara, his uncle Hongi Hika – whom Marsden and others called Shunghee – together with Korokoro and his brother Tui, and 'Tui's brother' from the opposite, southern, side of the Bay, each with a number of their followers. Kendall's journal recorded that all had gone well, most importantly that they had found no danger to threaten settlers,⁶ and so the way was cleared for Macquarie to allow Marsden to go to New Zealand with those he intended to settle.

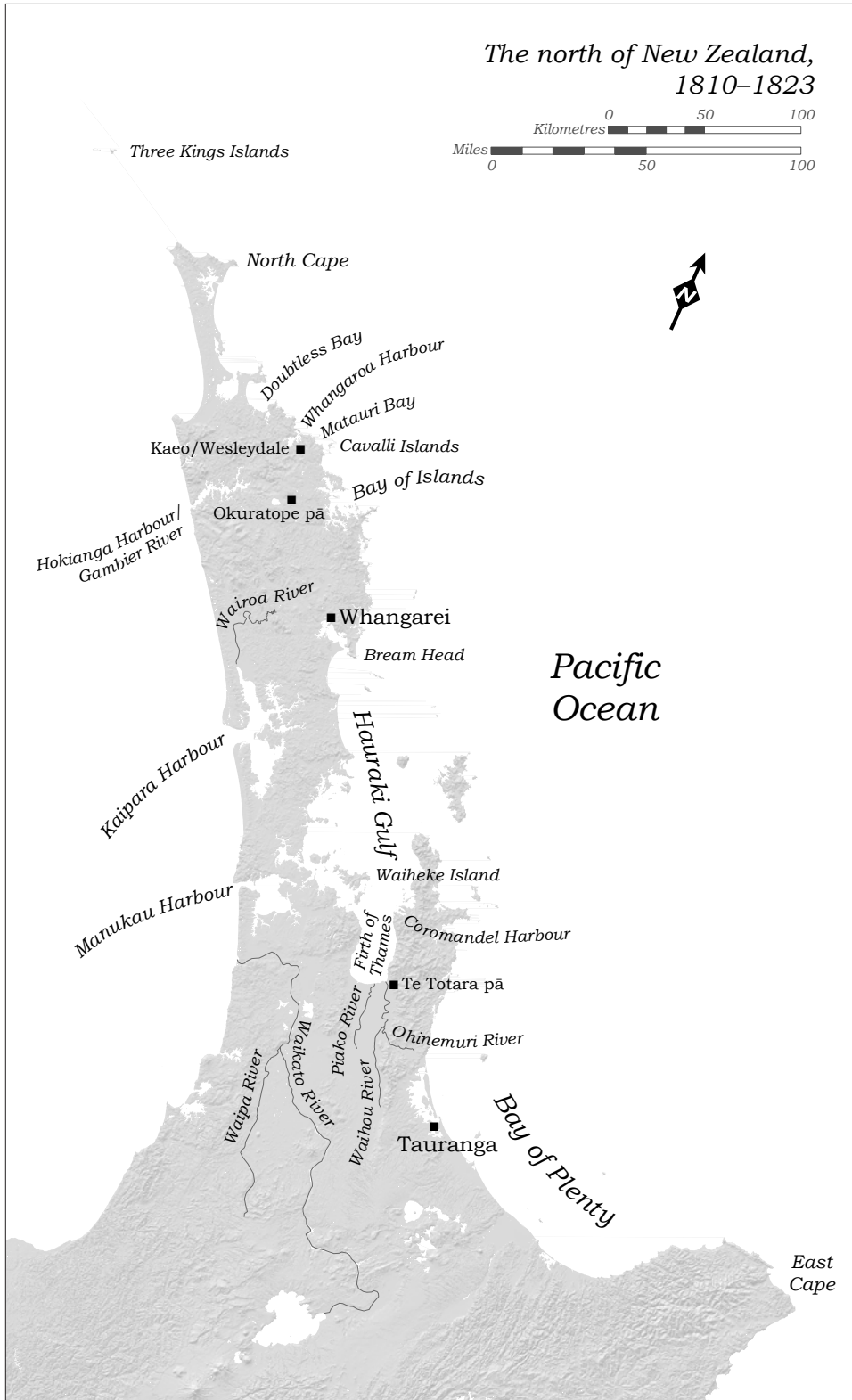
The other objects of the first exploratory voyage were to seek out trade opportunities so as to resource that and following voyages, and to ensure that a Christian tone was set from the beginning of contact. Dillon should keep an eye open for articles of

trade between the New Zealanders and New South Wales, and bring back with him some hemp (flax), pork ('if it is to be obtained'), salt fish, kauri tree resin, and potatoes – which 'had better be kept in the baskets in which the natives bring them as I think they keep better that way'. Kendall and Hall should apply themselves 'to procure a cargo to defray the expences along with you', but 'I wish you not to allow any private trade with the natives nor any natives to be brought on board by the ship's company': women on board caused problems of a kind he most wished to avoid. On Sundays when the ship's company was aboard, Kendall should read the prayers of the Church; on shore they should take great care to observe the Sabbath and make sure there was no buying and selling on that sacred day. As the demands of trade should be met, so should those of Christian morals and the public observance of religion.

When Marsden accompanied the first settlers to the Bay in November his most immediate object was that of safely settling the mission under the protection of those he trusted. But the search for trade, as a means both for the civilisation of the New Zealanders and for the sustenance of the mission, remained at the forefront of his mind, as did the introduction of Christianity.

When the *Active* under the command of Captain John Hansen, King's father-in-law, weighed anchor at Port Jackson, Marsden, Kendall, Hall and King took with them several 'Chiefs in the Bay of Islands', most of whom had come from there with Kendall and Hall.⁷ They also took young Maui from Marsden's household as his principal translator. With his aid, and later with the aid of others, Marsden intended to explain to the New Zealanders he encountered how the missionaries had been sent to bring them mutual peace and prosperity as well as Christianity. His own presence would be important. As he told Pratt, 'I think my going along . . . will give weight and importance to the Missionaries among the Chiefs and their People.'⁸ This was soon demonstrated, when, en route to the Bay, the *Active* anchored off the North Cape of New Zealand. A group of the Aupōuri iwi came aboard and it emerged that they already knew some of the visitors, not least 'Jem', a Tahitian who had lived with the Macarthurs, and who 'had been in the habit of calling at my house in Parramatta'. Contact established, he told them about the settlement the CMS proposed. He assured them it was 'for the general benefit of their country' and not just for those who lived in the Bay of Islands. He distributed gifts and heard from them that it was Europeans who had precipitated the *Boyd* massacre further south, and he heard their own complaints of atrocities inflicted on them by visiting whalers. Reassuring them, he produced Macquarie's Proclamation that authorised Kendall, Hongi, Ruatara and Korokoro to report atrocities to New South Wales. He assured them that both King George of England and Governor Macquarie would 'punish any act of fraud or cruelty committed by the Europeans'. In return, Te Aupōuri promised not to 'injure the crews of vessels that might call there'.⁹ The far north would be a safer place than it had been.

A few days later and 50 miles further south along the east coast he resumed his diplomatic efforts. The brig anchored so that he could make friendly visits to the Cavalli Islands¹⁰ and then to the mainland at Matauri Bay to speak with the Ngāti Pou iwi of



nearby Whangaroa. Just as he had with Te Aupōuri, he distributed gifts, sympathised with their tale of their sufferings at the hands of cruel and fraudulent Europeans, and gave Macquarie's Proclamation to them. He conversed with Te Puhī, whom he took to have directed the *Boyd* massacre. As he did at the North Cape, so he knew at least one of the principal men among Ngāti Pou. That was 'George' (Te Ara) who had visited him in Parramatta, and he who had been flogged by Captain Thompson in 1809, fatally for him and the *Boyd*. Marsden's companion, Nicholas, did not much like or trust George,¹¹ but Marsden expressed sympathy with him and took note of what he said as part of his campaign to protect the New Zealanders against visiting shipping.

Marsden intended peace among the tribes as well as between New Zealanders and Europeans. On a level piece of Hongi's land overlooking Matauri Bay, he brokered a peace between the Ngāti Pou and Hongi's Ngāpuhi iwi. Together with Nicholas and Hongi, he spent the night with Ngāti Pou to persuade them of the benefits of peace, telling them that 'it would be much more to their interest and happiness to turn their attention to agriculture and the improvement of their country than continue to fight and murder each other'. This would be made easier, 'particularly now the Europeans were going to settle amongst them, through whom they could obtain wheat to sow their lands with and tools for agriculture'.

George replied then that they did not want to fight any more and were ready to make peace. Much conversation passed, principally respecting New Zealand and Port Jackson, which George had visited. I endeavoured to impress upon his mind the comforts we enjoyed compared to them in our mode of living, houses, etc., which he well knew, and all the comforts they might equally enjoy in a short time by cultivating their lands and improving themselves in useful knowledge, which they would now have the opportunity to acquire from the European settlers.

With an acute eye for what would capture a Christian readership in Britain at which he aimed the journal where he recorded these events, Marsden then embarked on the first of the several passages of Christian romanticism that were to mark his reports from then on and often to be quoted by his admirers. His diplomatic efforts were not intended only for the New Zealanders but for the Christian world.

As the evening advanced the people began to retire to rest in different groups. About 11 o'clock Mr Nicholas and myself wrapped ourselves up in our great-coats and prepared for rest also. George directed me to lie by his side; his wife and child lay upon the right hand and Mr. Nicholas close by. The night was clear, the stars shone brightly, and the sea in front was smooth. Around us were numerous spears stuck upright in the ground and groups of natives lying in all directions like a flock of sheep upon the grass, as there were neither tents nor huts to cover them.

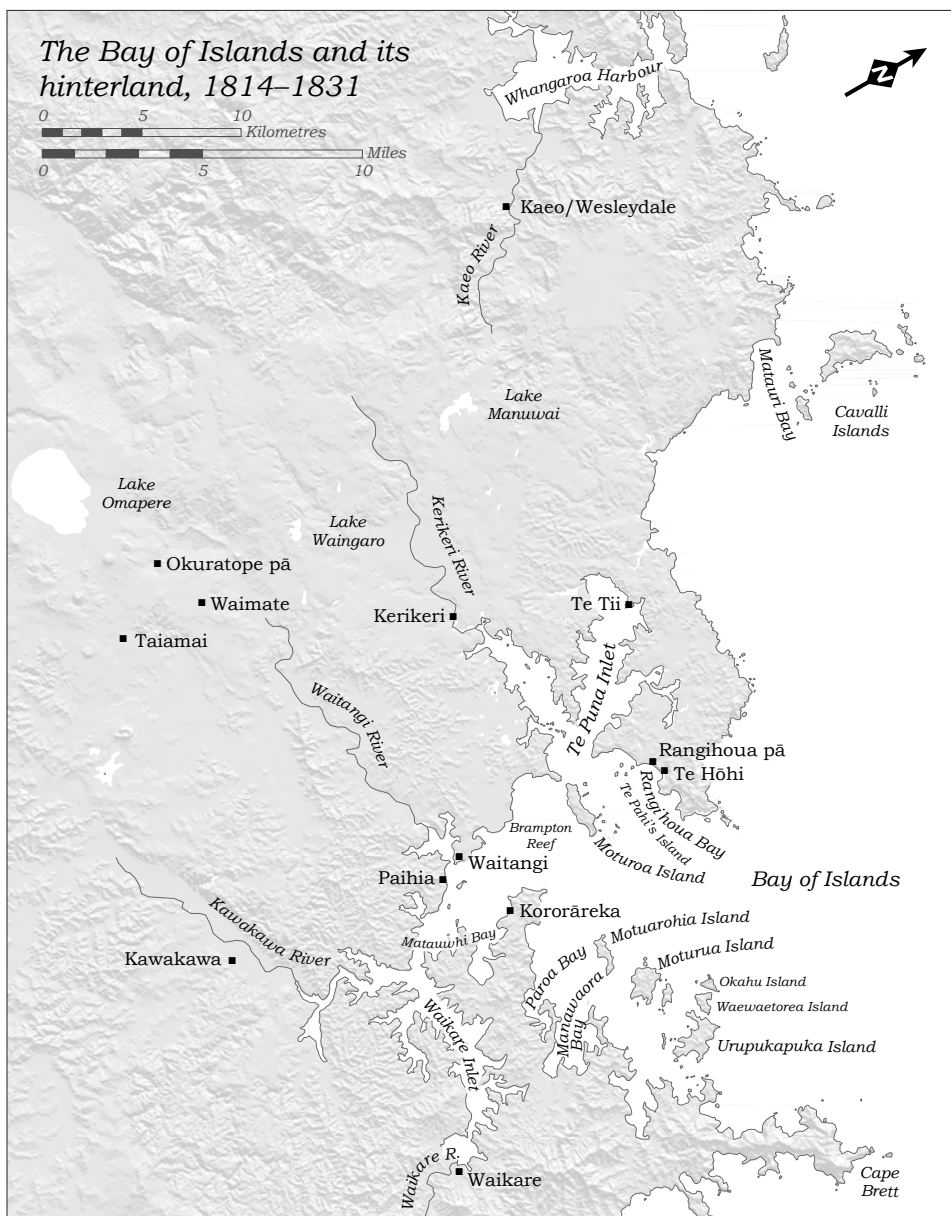
I viewed our present situation with new sensations and feelings that I cannot express. Surrounded by cannibals, who had massacred and devoured our countrymen, I wondered

much at the mysteries of Providence, and how these things could be. Never did I behold the blessed advantages of civilization in a more grateful light than now.

More prosaically, returning to the *Active* for breakfast accompanied by a host of his new friends, he introduced them to the missionaries and explained their roles: 'Mr. Kendall to instruct their children, Mr. Hall to build houses, boats, etc., Mr. King to make fishing lines, and Mr. Hanson to command the *Active*, which would be employed in bringing axes and such other articles as were wanted from Port Jackson to enable them to cultivate their land and improve their country.'¹²

When the *Active* next anchored off Rangihoua Bay on 22 December 1814, his previous friendships and contacts with the New Zealanders bore still greater fruit. He went ashore to be greeted by men, women and children: 'Mr Marsden's name was familiar in their mouths, and they crowded round with strong marks of affectionate regard', Nicholas noted.¹³ On Christmas Eve Marsden landed the mission's horses and cattle, and, advised by Ruatara and the chiefs of the place, 'fixed upon a place for the present residence of the settlers . . . on a piece of ground adjoining to the native town'.¹⁴ This was Te Hōhi, though it was more often known to the missionaries as 'Rangeehoo' after the pā on the steep hill overlooking it from the west, or sometimes even more loosely as Tippona (Te Puna), the area of fertile rising valley lying close to the west and north of the pā.

Settling in Rangihoua Bay raised problems for the missionaries. Marsden knew that it would appear to the New Zealanders that it allied them with a particular iwi and a particular hapū of that iwi; and while he had, even before he left Sydney, probably settled on Te Hōhi, and consciously put the mission under the protection of Ruatara's Te Hikatu hapū of Ngāpuhi, he did not intend it to become hostage to a single grouping. He knew that Ruatara could be no Pomare II to the mission because the Bay, a fertile fishing ground and full of islands, peninsulas, bays and river mouths, was dominated by no single people or polity. It was the more or less permanent home of some but was regularly visited for seafood and sea expeditions by others, and was an assembly point for war parties (tauā) about to put to sea. It presented a patchwork of tribal and family settlements, alliances, loyalties and living histories, liable to unify or divide in ways he did not understand in detail but certainly appreciated in general.¹⁵ That Christmas Eve, back on board the *Active*, he was presented with a vivid illustration of these tribal conditions. Korokoro, not long since a passenger on the *Active*, now approached the visitors' vessel from the other, southern, side of the Bay in full battle array. With him – all of them in huge, magnificently ornamented canoes – were Tui and several other 'chiefs who had come along with him', and also 'a number of other chiefs from other districts'. The tauā seemed to Nicholas perhaps to threaten the vessel and even perhaps Rangihoua pā. But a peaceful ceremony was intended both by Korokoro and Ruatara. Korokoro came aboard, introduced the missionaries to his party, and praised the kindness of the missionaries to him in Port Jackson. He then – furthering Marsden's own purpose – explained to his party what the missionaries proposed doing in the Bay.



In Marsden’s mind the southern chiefs were leaders to be respected independently of his ties with Ruatara. This was a wise thought, evidenced in his initial letters to and presents to Korokoro (of Paroa), Tara (of Kororāreka) and Kawiti (a close junior relation of Tara), and probably reinforced in his mind by Kendall and Hall during their first, exploratory, visit, during which they had assessed the lay of the tribal land.¹⁶ Nicholas was soon vastly amused at the spectacle of a ‘sham fight’ put on by Korokoro and Ruatara after Korokoro’s speech-making.¹⁷ But Marsden took the encounter much

more seriously. It was not simply a spectacle designed to illustrate a friendly alliance; it also demonstrated the rivalry of the two sides and the potential for future enmity and violence. He continued to take great care from then on to cultivate the friendship of the natives outside the confines of Rangihoua. The first Christian service, held the next day at Te Hōhi, combined the iwi of both north and south of the Bay.

Marsden gave an account of the service in the Christian-romantic – and that day imperialist – style, designed so successfully for British consumption that it became a staple of accounts of his intentions for and impact on New Zealand from that time forward. Some of it must be quoted for the flavour and so that the reader may begin to think about the many interpretations that might be given to it. On Christmas Eve, Ruatara had, unasked, enclosed about half an acre of land with a fence near the beach at Te Hōhi, prepared the compound for a church service, and probably caused a union flag to be placed at the summit of the pā:

On Sunday morning (December 25th) when I was upon deck I saw the English flag flying, which was a pleasing sight in New Zealand. I considered it the signal for the dawn of civilization, liberty, and religion in that dark and benighted land. I never viewed the British colours with more gratification, and flattered myself they would never be removed till the natives of that island enjoyed all the happiness of British subjects. . . .

When we landed we found Korokoro, Duaterra and Shunghee dressed in regimentals which Governor Macquarie had given them, with their men drawn up ready to march into the Enclosure to attend Divine service. They had their swords by their sides and a switch in their hands. We entered the enclosure and were placed in the seats on each side of the pulpit. Korokoro marched his men on and placed them on my right hand in the rear of the Europeans and Duaterra placed his men on the left. The inhabitants of the town with the women and children and a number of other chiefs formed a circle around the whole. A very solemn silence prevailed – the sight was truly impressive. I got up and began the service with singing the Old Hundred Psalm, and felt my very soul melt within me when I viewed the congregation and considered the state we were in.

After reading the service, during which the natives stood up and sat down at the signal given by the motion of Korokoro's switch which was regulated by the movements of the Europeans, it being Christmas Day, I preached from the second chapter of St. Luke's Gospel, the tenth verse: 'Behold I bring you glad tidings of great joy.' The natives told Duaterra they could not understand what I meant. He replied they were not to mind that now for they would understand by and by, and that he would explain my meaning as far as he could. When I had done preaching he informed them what I had been talking about.

Ruatara, Marsden concluded, had done all he could to make the service a success so as to show that he would do all he could for the mission, 'and that the good of his country was his principal consideration. In the above manner the Gospel has been introduced into New Zealand, and I fervently pray that the glory of it may never depart from its inhabitants till time shall be no more.'

Marsden's readers would have understood him to be stressing the potential for civilisation and order among his congregation and the novelty of the situation that the participants found themselves in. Here was Marsden the priest pronouncing the familiar words of the service, preaching a well-trodden Christian theme, and leading the singing of a well-known psalm that stressed the unity of all creatures and their subjection to a benevolent creator who deserved their praise and thanks: 'All creatures that on earth do dwell / Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice / Come ye before him and rejoice. // Know that the Lord is God indeed / Without our aid he did us make: / We are his flock, he doth us feed, / And for his sheep he doth us take.' On the other hand, there were the New Zealanders. They did not know the tongue Marsden spoke, and could not in any case have understood the complex message of the gospel though they might earlier on his travels have understood his simple messages of human peace, relayed by a translator as they were delivered.¹⁸ Yet there they were, potentially part of God's flock, and potentially perhaps even subjects to King George III (or to his Regent son). For Marsden's part, knowing the history of communications between the missionaries and the Tahitians for much of the past 20 years, he would have been under no illusions that the gospel would have been understood when he first introduced it. It was the ceremony, the gestures and the ritual formulae of the service that probably mattered most to him, though he may also have wished to introduce them to his favourite psalm, sung as he and his family had left England in 1809. The New Zealanders, whatever they thought then – he made no guess – would understand later.¹⁹ For himself, he was never to understand their language well and was always to rely on an interpreter when he travelled. He may have improved his grasp after 1814, but was never able to translate with ease, or to speak with any fluency.²⁰ It would have been most likely in 1830 that he remarked to Henry Williams, after Williams had translated – 'Maoris bored stiff, thought Williams' – a service for him: 'What a wonderful language! I have never heard so much of its wonderful condensation and economy of words. Now my benediction, I notice, you translated in just five or six words! Wonderful.' Marsden might well have admired the brevity after he had delivered a 'prolix benediction' of 'about seven sentences', but it appears that Williams had not translated the benediction at all. He had said to the congregation, 'the old man says he is finished'.²¹ The readers of the *Missionary Register* in 1838 were not supposed to be surprised when they were informed he used a translator in his transactions when he visited the New Zealanders for the last time.²²

Christmas over, needing timber to build the settlement, and already perhaps sensing the tension among the New Zealanders,²³ Marsden began to balance as best he might the political demands of the New Zealanders. He ordered the *Active* to the 'timber district' – to the southern arm of the Bay formed by the Kawakawa and Waikare rivers. She anchored off Kororāreka (modern Russell) and he and his party began the processes of trading, gift-giving, feasting and conversing with the locals. He knew that they were not always at one with the kin groups of the northern and north-eastern shores and islands of the Bay – with Ruatara, Hongi and others of his New Zealand friends. And so – to use language unavailable to him to describe his first week on the

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