

**Adjusting the Mission: Women Missionaries, Motivations, and Maori in Aotearoa/New
Zealand, 1823-1867**

Allison Richmond

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Dr. Matthew Schauer

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*Adjusting the Mission: Women Missionaries, Motivations, and Maori in Aotearoa/New Zealand,
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On April 12, 1799, several British men, including the accomplished abolitionist William Wilberforce, established the Church Missionary Society (CMS) with the main intentions of advocating for end of the slave trade, promoting social reform within Britain, and spreading the Gospel throughout Britain's colonies.¹ Within the context of promoting Christianity worldwide, the Society primarily used mission schools and education in order to reach indigenous populations.² In 1822, the Church Missionary Society of England employed Henry Williams and his wife, Marianne Williams, as head missionaries of the CMS station in the Bay of Islands, Aotearoa/New Zealand. The CMS headquarters in London held a celebration for the Williams' momentous occasion, and Reverend Williams spoke out about his faith in Mrs. Williams as a missionary, stating:

With Regard to Mrs. Williams, I beg to say that she does not accompany me merely as my wife, but as a fellow helper in the work. Though it will be, for some time, her chief care to watch over those tender plants which are committed to her immediate charge, yet she will, I trust, be performing therein no inconsiderable duty to the Mission.³

Rather than viewing her as his assistant in the Mission, Reverend Williams thought of his wife as a competent partner and vital agent in missionary service, emphasizing the Church Mission Society's need for women in evangelism. In this speech, Rev. Williams' phrase "tender plants" referred to the women and children that fell under Mrs. Williams' supervision in the mission school, as missions and other colonial efforts supposed that women were more suitable to relate

¹ "Our History." Church Mission Society. Accessed April 3, 2020. <https://churchmissionsociety.org/about/our-history/>.

² Tanya Fitzgerald, "To unite their strength with ours: Women and Missionary Work in Aoteroa/New Zealand 1827-45," *The Journal of Pacific History* 39 (2004), 148.

³ Marianne Williams and Caroline Fitzgerald, *Letters from the Bay of Islands: the Story of Marianne Williams* (North Shore, N.Z.: Penguin, 2010), 6.

to, and therefore minister to, indigenous women and children. In turn, women provided a valuable service to the cause of the mission.⁴

Other male missionaries shared the same sentiments as Rev. Williams. William Williams (Henry Williams' brother) included extensive accounts from female "missionaries" in the CMS mission in his newsletters on the progress of the mission station, including reports from Mrs. Williams about their arrival and perceptions of indigenous people. In one entry, Reverend William Williams reported on the "precious moment" that Mrs. Marianne Williams experienced upon arrival in New Zealand, when the local indigenous population "hailed the ship" and welcomed her and her family onto the island, illustrating her thrill at the prospect of ministry to indigenous people.⁵ For women and men, however, the process of evangelism looked a bit different. While the wives of missionaries in the CMS were often not paid for their service or considered "proper missionaries", they were expected to serve alongside their husbands in a variety of duties and perform functions of their own, such as teaching and supervising indigenous children, nursing and midwifery, and farming and agriculture.⁶ However, as noted by Henry Williams in his toast, the work of missionary women was crucial to the operation of the mission.

Rather than dismissing Mrs. Williams' account or solely highlighting the experiences of missionary men, Williams' inclusion of these entries indicates that both male missionaries and Williams' wider audience back in England thought that the accounts of missionary women were

⁴ Catherine Hall, "Of Gender and Empire: Reflections on the Nineteenth Century," in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine, 46-76 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 61.

⁵ See William Williams, *Christianity Among the New Zealanders: With Six Illustrations* (London: Seeley Jackson and Halliday, 1867), 43. This volume by William Williams goes into detail on the culture, practices, and progress of the Church Mission Society in New Zealand, providing accounts from many of the missionaries on testimonies of healing and conversion narratives.

⁶ Fitzgerald, "To Unite their Strength with Ours," 147.

of some importance. Although contemporary history has a tendency to define the British imperial project with the famed accomplishments of men, women played an integral role in the British Empire, particularly in missionary work. As such, this history also tends to conflate the motivations of missionary women with those of their husbands. While many missionary women did indeed accompany their husbands in the mission, this is not to say that they always fully conceded to their husbands' Imperial ambitions. The purpose of this essay is to turn away from the traditional narratives that overlook the voices of these women, and instead view them as agents of their own livelihood. Their important contributions to the field of missionary work demonstrate their essentiality to the cause of imperialism, despite the seemingly contradictory social norms of the time.

The social oppression of women was a theme seen throughout the Victorian period, with women lacking access to the same educational opportunities as men, the right to vote, and the notion of "separate spheres," which relegated women's activities largely to all matters domestic and related to the family and home.⁷ The status of being unmarried stigmatized the lives of many women, with domesticity and child rearing seen as the pinnacle of achievement for any middle or upper class woman, thus placing single women in a subservient position within a patriarchal society as well.⁸ Since the oppression of women played such an integral role in the formation of patriarchy in nineteenth century Britain, this leaves the question, why were women encouraged and expected to undertake sizable responsibility within processes of imperialism, particularly in

⁷ See Philippa Levine. "Love, Friendship, and Feminism in Later 19th-century England," *Women's Studies International Forum* 13 (1990): 63-78 for further reading on women's activism and social norms in Victorian England.

⁸ Danika Rockett, *Single Women in the Borders: Religion and Philanthropy as Paths to Social Action in Victorian Britain*, 2012. Dissertation.

missions? Were missionary women motivated by a sense of duty to their nation and imperialism, or was it a personal sentiment of religious obligation?

Beginning in the early nineteenth century, Christians and missionaries were establishing mission settlements in New Zealand, such as the previously mentioned Church Mission Society and the London Mission Society, with the aim of converting and assimilating indigenes. Theoretically, missions would promote the commercial and governmental ventures of the British Empire at large by expanding influence and creating more colonial subjects. At the start of the nineteenth century, the white populations of New Zealand and Australia gradually began to grow with the increased convict transportation and programs that encouraged white settlement, such as subsidized travel to these areas, a program that was established after the British imposed more direct rule on the colony in 1840.⁹ As this migration spiked, so too did conflicts with the Maori people, or the Indigenous communities within Aotearoa/New Zealand. These conflicts ultimately led to the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840, which granted sovereignty to the British over Maori lands. By reducing their landholdings, the Maori population quickly began to decline, leading to the unprecedented numbers of white people in New Zealand. While missionaries were some of the first British settlers in these areas, they did not necessarily travel to New Zealand with the same goals as those who took advantage of the assisted passage programs, or those who were transported for criminal offenses.

By examining the letters and journal entries of Marianne Williams, as well as the writings of male missionaries such as William Yate, William Williams, and Thomas Kendall, one can understand that women were vital to the missionary imperial project in terms of their supposed ability to effectively minister to indigenous women and children. Using the sources of

⁹ Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, 76.

Marianne Williams in particular, as well as shorter excerpts from other missionary women, such as Jane Williams and Maria Coldham, I contend that rather than possessing a sense of duty to Britain and the Crown like their husbands, the journals and letters that these women left behind demonstrate their deep sense of religious conviction to the missionary cause.

It is true that missionary women often served alongside their husbands who had imperial ambitions that extended beyond religious duty. However, this has led to contemporary history viewing women's work in the missions as an extension of her husband's, rather than viewing the woman as her own agent.¹⁰ In addition to illuminating the motivations of these women, this paper will also illustrate the independence that these women exhibited and the work that they carried out on their own accord, rather than reduce them to the status of "missionary's wife." While married women like Marianne and Jane Williams were not necessarily compensated by the CMS for their services, and were thus not considered proper missionaries, I will refer to them as missionaries for the purpose of my argument. After all, these women performed similar tasks to their husbands and had an equal amount of contact with indigenous populations, and in the words of Henry Williams, functioned as "fellow helper[s] in the work."¹¹

Relating to the missionary field, one of the main points of contention in the conversation surrounding imperialism is the "civilizing mission."¹² This phrase refers to the efforts of imperial agents to force European ideas, culture, and religion onto native populations of a specific locale, with the intention of erasing indigenous identity in the process. In turn, this system would theoretically convert colonization and resource extraction into more streamlined processes for the British, as they would hopefully be met with little resistance from their "assimilated"

¹⁰ Mary A. Procida, *Married to the Empire: Gender, Politics and Imperialism in India, 1883-1947* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), 5.

¹¹ Williams, *Letters from the Bay of Islands*, 6.

¹² Harry Liebersohn, "Introduction: The Civilizing Mission," *Journal of World History* 27, (2016): 383.

subjects. As an added bonus of assimilation, Britain could also use the labor of the indigenous populations for further colonial endeavors, such as in establishments like the Civil Service and other mission work. The "civilizing mission" process took shape in different ways from colony to colony. Historians like Antoinette Burton, Mary Procida, and Tanya Fitzgerald have wrestled with understanding where the British distinguished civilization from savagery within varying imperial contexts, and how gender influenced these conceptions. In the British colony of New Zealand, the relationship between Indigenous people and white settlers functioned somewhat differently than other areas of the Empire.

The British regarded Maori, or the indigenous people of New Zealand, with a higher degree of respect in terms of the perceived advancement of their civilization, standing in contrast to their perception of, for example, Aboriginal people in Australia.¹³ Many British settlers and visitors of New Zealand, including William Williams, described Maori people as a "Superior race of savages."¹⁴ Despite these differences in perception, the British still abandoned no opportunity for colonialism in New Zealand. In 1940, the British government began to offer subsidized costs or even free transport to places like Australia and New Zealand with the hope of populating these areas with as many Britons as possible.¹⁵ Following the population philosophy of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, a British political figure living in Australia, an equal balance of men, women, and families must settle in both Australia and New Zealand in order to populate the areas with a comfortable amount of white inhabitants.¹⁶ The assisted passage process functioned

¹³ See Margaret Jacobson, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 2009) for further history on the forced removal and brutal mistreatment of Aboriginal people in Australia.

¹⁴ William Williams, *Christianity Among the New Zealanders: With Six Illustrations* (London: Seeley Jackson and Halliday, 1867), 16.

¹⁵ Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, 50.

¹⁶ Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, 80.

efficiently for the most part, with the population increasing significantly within the first ten years of its establishment.¹⁷ The subsidized travel served as one of the main avenues of white population growth in New Zealand in particular, ultimately contributing to the ethnic demographics of New Zealand in the present day.

Migration Processes to New Zealand

Points of contact such as trading relationships and the exchange of religious practices fostered by missionaries and Maoris shaped both British and Maori culture within New Zealand, eventually evolving into the national culture of New Zealand that exists today. While Maori practices have always been highly influential on the traditions in New Zealand, the nation's white presence largely began with the migration patterns that started with missionaries such as the Williams's, as well as convicts living in New South Wales who decided to try their luck by crossing into New Zealand. For these missionaries, as well as the thousands of others, New Zealand represented an opportunity to start a new life, often either in business or in mission work. However, white settlement also ultimately meant a massive decline in the Maori populations, either from disease or from their decreased land holdings that resulted from the Treaty of Waitangi.¹⁸ Signed in 1840 by British officials and Maori chiefs, this treaty effectively granted sovereignty of the land to the British Crown.¹⁹ Misunderstandings arose on the Maori side of the treaty, as their concept of sovereignty was compatible with their own land holdings.²⁰ This led to tension between the Maori and the Britons, aggravated by the fact that the New

¹⁷ Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, 42, 53, 77.

¹⁸ Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, 84.

¹⁹ Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, 78.

²⁰ Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, 78.

Zealand government was floundering due to the inefficiency in communication with the British Crown.²¹

Skirmishes and battles, as well as the communication of new diseases brought by immigrants from mainland England, continued to decrease the Maori population. In 1840, New Zealand was home to around 2,000 Europeans 70,000 Maori.²² By 1858, the Maori population had decreased to just over 56,000, while the European population increased to over 59,000. This massive influx in population over the span of less than twenty years indicates the temptation of opportunities in New Zealand for people from mainland Europe, as well as the efficiency of assisted passages. Without these subsidized travel costs, many of the immigrants would not have been able to move their lives to New Zealand. The New Zealand Company, the speculative venture that originally offered the assisted passages, made some attempt at being selective with whom they offered the passages to, targeting “mechanics, gardeners, and agricultural laborers, being married, and not exceeding thirty years of age.”²³ Setting themselves apart from the Penal Colony of Australia, enticing advertisements that promoted the temperate weather and “productive soil” also convinced many migrants to move to this newly acquired colony.²⁴ Advertisers heavily embellished their statements on the temperate climate, likely purposefully overlooking the heavily wooded areas that needed total clearing in order to create space for thousands of new immigrants, resulting in a dreary and barren sight for those arriving on the island.²⁵

²¹ Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, 79.

²² Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, 84.

²³ *The Examiner*, June 23, 1839, cited in Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, 85.

²⁴ Edward Gibbon Wakefield, *The British Colonization of New Zealand* (London, 1837) Cited in Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, 94.

²⁵ Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*, 94.

While many married couples migrated to New Zealand following Edward Gibbon Wakefield's plan for a proper gender balance, some women migrated alone. Although there was much encouragement for families to bring their children and for married people to come together, the gender ratio was still highly skewed and continued to fluctuate throughout the nineteenth century. Men greatly outnumbered women, so advertisements began to promote the possibility of opportunities in domestic service for women, which for many women translated into an opportunity to escape the gloomy and polluted city at the height of the Industrial Revolution.²⁶ Women in New Zealand often did have more opportunity than they would have found in the United Kingdom, with many serving as teachers, agricultural laborers, missionaries, and wool processors.²⁷ Although women could find opportunity in New Zealand, their choices were often stigmatized, as emigrating alone indicated a deficiency in moral character.²⁸ British society often viewed emigration to Australia and New Zealand as a last resort for those who failed to advance themselves in England, and this perception was magnified in single women, who were thought of as unfit to travel alone.²⁹ Nevertheless, women often had to weigh the benefits and disadvantages of moving thousands of miles away, and self-interest and a desire for independence almost always played a part in their decision.

Missionaries in New Zealand

Historical research done on missionary work in New Zealand provides information on the intersections in perceptions of race, gender, and other social conventions. The British perception

²⁶ Phillips and Hearn, *Settlers*, 104.

²⁷ Phillips and Hearn, *Settlers*

²⁸ A. James Hammerton, "Gender and Migration" in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) 161.

²⁹ A James Hammerton, *Gender and Migration*, 161.

of Maori people serves as a fertile ground for discourse regarding the relationship between indigenous populations and colonial culture. Since the British respected the warrior culture associated with the Maori and thought of their social structure as somewhat advanced, the cultural relationship between the British and Maori exemplify an interesting dynamic between gender, race, and the power relationships between these social categories. For this paper, I have studied gender history that largely focuses on the connections between white female missionaries in New Zealand and Maori people, as well as studies of race that examine the relationships between colonialism and surrounding indigenous populations. Secondary literature relating to the history of education and colonial politics in New Zealand, provides insight into some of the primary sources on the mission schools that are examined in this essay.

Examining the Maori tribe in particular, historians have investigated how the work of female missionaries in particular affected tribal culture. In her article entitled “‘To unite their strength with ours’: Women and Missionary Work in Aoteroa/New Zealand,” Tanya Fitzgerald, one of the more prolific scholars of mission work in New Zealand and Australia, argues for the significance of female missionaries’ endeavors to the Imperial cause.³⁰ Since the Church Missionary Society (CMS) saw women as more suitable for relating to (and therefore converting) Native women, the religious efforts of women like Marianne Williams and Jane Nelson Williams proved vital to the Civilizing Mission. In another piece, Fitzgerald considers the perspectives of Maori women in relation to the female missionaries, noting the many instances in which Maori women and children escaped from and resisted Western modes of education from the CMS.³¹ Along the same lines as Fitzgerald’s studies on missionaries’ efforts

³⁰ Tanya Fitzgerald, “To Unite Their Strength with Ours.”

³¹ Tanya Fitzgerald, “Jumping the Fences: Maori women’s resistance to missionary schooling in northern New Zealand 1823- 1835,” *Paedagogica Historica* 37 (2001).

in educating indigenous peoples, Kuni Jenkins and Kay Morris Matthews look toward the importance of female Maori students in mission schools rather than examining the lives of the missionaries. The authors argue that young Maori girls within these schools were “viewed as critical agents of change in the transformation of Maori society,” uncovering the further implications of colonialism aimed at children, particularly girls.

Other studies in women’s missionary work contain information about women missionaries’ perceptions of Maori people relative to those of men. In Kathryn Rountree’s essay “Re-Making the Maori Female Body: Marianne William's Mission in the Bay of Islands,” she compares women missionaries’ views on Maori bodies to those of the “male gaze.” She argues that while women largely echoed the sentiments of their male counterparts when it came to the positioning of Indigenous peoples, women’s perceptions seemed to focus more on clothing and cleansing Maori women rather than immediately exoticizing them.³² This work ties in with the primary sources left behind by Marianne Williams, who perceives the Maori women as being in a “degraded state” and in need of Christian assistance.³³ In terms of the relationship between gender and imperialism, Mary Procida provides a fascinating study in *Married to the Empire*. While this piece focuses on India rather than the Australia-New Zealand region, her study draws attention to the imperial power and influence that women held in the British colonies.

Like many of the female missionaries that I have studied, Procida’s research focuses mostly on women who were the wives of men in government or military positions in India. However, her research magnifies the imperial work that wives were able to do on their accord,

³² Kathryn Rountree, “Re-Making the Maori Female Body: Marianne William's Mission in the Bay of Islands,” *The Journal of Pacific History* 35, (2000).

³³ Marianne Williams’ diary entry, August 12, 1823, in *Letters from the Bay of Islands*, 60.

such as the imperial influence they held within the Anglo-Indian home.³⁴ While Procida points out that Anglo-Indian women were given certain “masculine” qualities within the context of the Empire, they were still able to retain much of their femininity through their ties to domestic life and the home. This is similar to the situation found within the missionary communities in New Zealand, as mission societies valued women’s perceived capability to relate to, and therefore teach, indigenous women in ways of domesticity. This book is of particular importance to my study, as the purpose of my research has been to investigate how women acted as independent agents of colonial culture, rather than understanding their actions within the contexts of their marriage to a missionary husband.

Other forms of gender history that I have studied are included in *Gender and Empire*, a collection of essays edited by Philippa Levine. These essays examine a variety of social functions influenced by gender, such as sexuality, domesticity and child rearing, faith and religion, and migration to various colonies.³⁵ Two essays that will be of particular interest to this study are “Faith, Missionary Life, and Family” by Patricia Grimshaw and “Gender and Migration” by A. James Hammerton.³⁶ Grimshaw’s essay looks at the individual motivations for both single and married women who joined in on the missionary cause throughout the various colonies. She provides insight on the different goals between single and married women, pointing out that single women likely had motivations that were more personal since they traveled on their volition, rather than following their husbands. In Hammerton’s piece, he examines the migration patterns to New Zealand, taking into account the attempts to entice

³⁴ Mary A. Procida, *Married to the Empire: Gender, Politics and Imperialism in India, 1883-1947* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014).

³⁵ Philippa Levine, *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009)

³⁶ Patricia Grimshaw, “Faith, Missionary, and Family Life,” in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine. (Oxford University Press, 2009) 260-281; A. James Hammerton, “Gender and Migration,” in *Gender and Empire*, ed. Philippa Levine. (Oxford University Press, 2009) 156-181.

families and women to come to the nation and repopulate. These two works are significant put together the motivations for women to travel over the “tyranny of distance” in order to minister to indigenous populations, as well as illuminating the benefits that they saw in this endeavor for themselves.

Other authors, such as Harper and Constantine, look into migration in New Zealand and Australia and motivations for settlement in the British Empire’s White Dominions, arguing that migrants sped up the process of a global economy and the creation of a British culture that expanded beyond the boundaries of the Mainland.³⁷ This study also takes into account the many other races and nationalities that looked to Australia/New Zealand as a land of opportunity and how the British regulated their migration. Like Harper and Constantine, Phillips and Hearn examine the individual motivations of hundreds of men, women, and families who settled in New Zealand during the nineteenth century.³⁸

When examining cross-cultural contact between Britons and Maori in New Zealand, it is vital to acknowledge that cultural exchange was not solely based on British ideas influencing or erasing indigenous customs. As Tony Ballantyne argues in *Entanglements of Empire*, Maori were not passive in the process of creating a national identity.³⁹ Despite heavy urging from British missionaries for the Maori to abandon certain elements of their culture, such as facial tattooing (ta moko), death ceremonies, and certain styles of slavery continuing in some indigenous communities, the Maori people largely resisted the many forms of cultural change that the British encouraged.⁴⁰ While there were certain elements of Maori tradition that the

³⁷ Harper and Constantine, *Migration and Empire*.

³⁸ Jock Phillips and T. J. Hearn, *Settlers: New Zealand Immigrants from England, Ireland & Scotland, 1800-1945* (Auckland, N.Z.: Auckland University Press, 2008).

³⁹ Tony Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire: Missionaries, Māori, and the Question of the Body* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

⁴⁰ Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire*, 67.

British continued to make attempts to erase, the missionaries adopted other methods of Maori life. Since New Zealand was unfamiliar territory for the British missionaries, the Maori inhabited a dominant power position in terms of survival. The missionaries were dependent on the indigenous populations for knowledge about the terrain, how and where to find and produce food, and for trade connections.⁴¹ Maori culture influenced the British way of life in New Zealand as a result of this close connection between the two racial groups, and the British began to adopt practices of food preparation and architectural styles that the Maori had originally established.⁴²

This culture filters into politics and economics as well, as pointed out by Augie Fleras and Paul Spoonley in *Recalling Aotearoa*, which explains the Maori's input in political and cultural movements.⁴³ Other scholars do similar work on indigenous culture, with Toon van Meijl discussing the various resurgences in Maori culture and how traditions have evolved over time. For these authors, noting that Maori culture is not and never was static has become an important point to emphasize. In order to understand British missionaries' perceptions of Maori culture in addition to their motivations for carrying out this imperial work, it is crucial to recognize the ways in which cultural exchange forged connections between indigenes and Britons.

Arrival at the Paihia Mission

For women like Marianne Williams, leaving mainland England and traveling to the distant island of New Zealand posed both an ambitious and exciting opportunity. The Williams

⁴¹ Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire*, 111.

⁴² Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire*, 78.

⁴³ Augie Fleras and Paul Spoonley, *Recalling Aotearoa: Indigenous Politics and Ethnic Relations in New Zealand* (Auckland, N.Z.: Oxford University Press, 2002).

couple already had a family of their own when they departed, with three children all under the age of four.⁴⁴ The ship that they traveled on, the *Lord Sidmouth*, was chartered to carry female convicts to New South Wales, the Australian penal colony. The Williams family occupied one cramped cabin of their own on a deck above where the ship held the prisoners. In her letters, Marianne frequently complained of the seasickness that both her and her children constantly experienced, as Henry was the only member of the family that had traveled by ship before.⁴⁵ Aside from the six months of nausea and headaches that the new missionaries endured, Mrs. and Reverend Williams also write of the prevalence of pests aboard the ship, namely cockroaches. Marianne noted the horrific scene she came upon when visiting the holding deck for the prisoners. She exclaimed, “The number of the children and the sick was much greater. The cockroaches were swarming in some of the berths where the poor women lay, too ill to regard them, and the water was so bad, that those who were frantic with thirst could scarcely bear to taste it.”⁴⁶ While the Williams’s inhabited somewhat better conditions than the convict women aboard the ship, Henry noted the amount of pests that they faced on the upper decks as well, complaining that they had “committed dreadful havoc” upon the ship’s food stores.⁴⁷ Despite the family’s unfamiliar circumstances, the Williams couple used their opportunity aboard a convict ship to preach and spread Christianity to the rest of the passengers. According to Reverend Williams, Mrs. Williams was the first to have the idea of reading scripture to the passengers below deck and was quite eager to minister to these convict women. Following her lead, Henry decided to conduct a church service for all passengers the following Sunday.⁴⁸ The

⁴⁴ Diary Entry of Marianne Williams, September 15, 1822, *Letters from the Bay of Islands*, 27.

⁴⁵ Diary Entry of Marianne Williams, September 20, 1822, *Letters from the Bay of Islands*, 29.

⁴⁶ Diary Entry of Marianne Williams, September 26, 1822, *Letters from the Bay of Islands*, 34.

⁴⁷ Diary Entry of Rev. Henry Williams, September 26, 1822, *Letters from the Bay of Islands*, 35.

⁴⁸ Diary Entry of Rev. Henry Williams, September 23, 1822, *Letters from the Bay of Islands*, 31.

couple continued to preach to the convicts throughout the duration of their journey, illustrating that they were both spiritually dedicated to their mission, and emphasizing that their objectives were truly religious, and not necessarily coupled with the direct intention of supporting the imperial aims of England.

Upon their arrival in New Zealand, Marianne quickly went to work in helping to establish the Paihia mission school and was thrilled at the prospect of spreading Christianity to young Maori children, particularly girls. Marianne's intentions as a missionary were quite evident in her personal journals, and she even denounced the harms brought upon Maori people by non-missionary Englishmen. She wrote,

Many are the evils, besides the rage for muskets and powder, which arise from the frequent arrival of European vessels, and sad indeed it is that the practice of Englishmen should be in every way opposed to the precepts and steady example of the faithful missionary.⁴⁹

By advocating against the economic activities of English businessmen, specifically with regard to the trade of guns and ammunition, Mrs. Williams emphasized her dedication to her cause as a missionary, as well as her critique of Britain's capitalist efforts that created a cycle of dependency for the Maori people.

Although a majority of the female missionaries in New Zealand were married to missionaries themselves, a select few women joined the mission alone and on their own accord. Since unmarried women were not tied to husbands or children, they were more apt to dedicate their lives to the cause of the mission without the distraction of a family.⁵⁰ Even Henry Williams commented that caring for her children provided Marianne with "much to occupy her attention, and though she is frequently tired in her work, she is not tired of her work."⁵¹ Single women did

⁴⁹ Diary Entry of Marianne Williams, August 12, 1823, *Letters from the Bay of Islands*, 60.

⁵⁰ Fitzgerald, "To Unite Their Strength with Ours," 155.

⁵¹ Henry Williams to Secretary, 9 July 1824, cited in Fitzgerald, "To Unite Their Strength with Ours," 155.

not pose this potential issue for the mission, leading some to apply for the work. Most of the time, the women who applied for positions within the CMS and other mission societies were often already related to a missionary ministering in the same area.⁵² Oftentimes, the single women working at the missions were the daughters or sisters of missionaries themselves, so they had been raised in the field and were already familiar with the duties, such as Marianne Williams' daughter Maria and William Yates' sister, Sarah.⁵³ Single women rarely applied for these positions without having some prior connection to the local missionary service, as the journey was exceptionally long. It was at the same time of this recruitment that the CMS began to give women missionaries small allowances, providing for the potential that some of the single women would never marry, such as Sarah Yate.

Serving in similar domestic educational duties as the married women, these single missionaries were instrumental in the function of the mission schools, and their presence added to the comradery and surrogate sisterhood that women experienced at the mission station. In a letter addressed to Maria Williams upon her acceptance into the CMS, mission official William Jowett stated that he would "pray that all the poor New Zealanders who have the privilege of seeing you all on hearing of your Christian ways may be constrained to say, 'see how their sisters love one another.'"⁵⁴ Once again, the single women in the mission were encouraged to perpetuate Christian morals in order to "lead by example." For these women, however, joining a mission and expressing agency over their livelihoods and careers may have served as a liberating practice in an age when this independence broke the status quo.

⁵² Fitzgerald, "To Unite Their Strength with Ours," 156.

⁵³ Fitzgerald, "To Unite Their Strength with Ours," 156.

⁵⁴ William Jowett to Maria Williams, August 7, 1834. Cited in Fitzgerald, "To Unite Their Strength with Ours," 158.

Duties of a Female Missionary in the School

While Marianne's Bible readings on the *Lord Sidmouth* in addition to her critical perception of the trading system seem to suggest that she would have found herself at odds with the capitalist endeavors of British imperialism, her work at the Paihia mission station suggests that she subscribed to similar beliefs about the moral value of physical labor. Being the wife of a prolific missionary, Mrs. Williams was encouraged by the Church Mission Society to train Maori girls and women in the ways of domesticity and child rearing. Her status as a married mother provided an advantageous opportunity for colonial education by example, as she was able to properly speak from experience and relay her western homemaking knowledge to indigenous women. In education efforts, which female missionaries were often charged with, the mission expected them to teach Maori girls in the same fashion as a middle-class English girls' school.⁵⁵ Once the Maori girls arrived, they were to be instructed in ways of the domestic, including activities like meal preparation, laundry, and housekeeping.⁵⁶

Before their departure, the Church Mission Society expressed to Reverend Williams that they had "the best hope that [the couple] will exhibit to the Natives the instructive example of a happy Christian family."⁵⁷ Marianne, as well as her sister-in-law Jane, taught young Maori girls how to sew, tend to a garden, and other forms of "constant employment to keep them out of mischief, dirt, and idleness."⁵⁸ Her desire to keep the Maori girls "constantly employed" echoed the views of other missionaries in the moral value of labor and consistent occupation. As

⁵⁵ Kuni Jenkins and Kay Matthews, "Knowing Their Place: the Political Socialisation of Maori Women in New Zealand through Schooling Policy and Practice, 1867-1969," *Womens History Review* 7, no. 1 (January 1998): 89.

⁵⁶ Jenkins and Matthews, "Knowing Their Place," 89.

⁵⁷ From the instructions of the Committee of the CMS to Henry Williams, 6 Aug. 1822, prior to departure for missionary work in New Zealand. Cited in Kathryn Rountree, "Remaking the Maori Female Body," 54.

⁵⁸ Diary Entry of Jane Williams, February 3, 1829, *Letters from the Bay of Islands*, 158-159.

missions were the entities that originally established western education for Maori children, the state later joined their efforts between 1847 and 1867 in order to officially provide English-style education nationwide.⁵⁹ In 1867, the government enacted the Native Schools Act, which solidified monetary provisions for schools that instructed “children of the aboriginal native race and of half-castes.”⁶⁰ This policy, which lasted until the 1960s, enforced and even extended the colonial aims of missionary schooling. While missionaries were encouraged to learn the Maori language in order to promote more effective communication, the Native Schools Act stipulated lessons that were only taught in English. Many Maori took issue with this, and even petitioned for an amendment to the act that allowed children to speak Maori within the school.⁶¹ While change was slow within the stipulations of the act as a response to these petitions, the laws on Native schools began to grow more progressive as time went on, but they were still enforced well in the twentieth century.

Somewhat contradictory to the colonial and economic aims of many efforts that reflected imperialism in a commercial sense, however, certain facets of the Church Missionary Society in New Zealand catered to the needs of the Maori. For example, the students under the watch of Jane and Marianne expressed their desire to practice certain traditions, such as weaving “native mats” to give as gifts to the missionaries, to which the two women happily obliged, even providing the girls with the flax rope needed to create one.⁶² As discussed by Tony Ballantyne, the missionaries did not denounce every form of Maori culture and often admired certain elements. While Marianne and Jane may not have intended for the Maori girls and women to

⁵⁹ Jenkins and Matthews, “Knowing Their Place,” 86.

⁶⁰ AN ACT to regulate and provide Subsidies for Maori Schools. 10 October, 1867, No. 41.

⁶¹ Petition of Wi Te Hakiro and 336 Others [TRANSLATION.] — 7. “Native Schools Act, 1867.” <http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/tm/scholarly/tei-BIM873TeHa-t1-g1-t2.html>

⁶² Diary Entry of Marianne Williams, February 5, 1829, *Letters from the Bay of Islands*, 160.

keep every piece of their indigenous tradition, their toleration for it suggests that their mission was more religious in nature rather than exhibiting a desire for colonial conformity and assimilation.

Economic Relations in New Zealand

While Marianne was critical of the procedures in trading with the Maori, her position is complicated by the reality that missionaries carried out many of these transactions with the Maori, as well as the fact that many Maori tribal leaders often sought out trading relationships with the British. Since missionaries began as largely dependent on Maori populations for practical knowledge of land and sources, the Maori stipulated most of the terms of trade. By providing missionaries with food products such as pork and cultivated yams and potatoes, the Maori expected products such as metal tools in return. Eventually, the Maori began to demand implements that were a bit more expensive, such as firearms and other forms of weaponry. The Maori saw weapons like these as necessary, as they provided strategic advantage over neighboring enemy tribes, as well as giving them the ability to properly compete with the weapons of the British.⁶³

Seasoned male missionaries such as Samuel Marsden and Thomas Kendall often presided over the trading relationships between the English and Maori, understanding that it provided valuable goods to the mission stations, as well as recognizing that it fostered an amicable relationship between missionaries and Maori tribal leaders that was conducive to the spread of Christianity.⁶⁴ Unlike Williams, the experienced missionary Samuel Marsden saw the dissemination of Christianity as going hand-in-hand with imperial commerce and the development

⁶³ Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire*, 111.

⁶⁴ Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire*, 112.

of a “civilized” society. In a correspondence with another Reverend, Marsden suggests that trade with the Indigenous populations is vital to their growth as a coherent society, stating, “A hundred thousand men will never form themselves into any regular society and enjoy the productions of their country without commerce.”⁶⁵ Along with commerce came the emphasis on mission work aimed at providing vocational training to Indigenous people. Aside from the belief that this type of education would help the Maori build a capitalist economic and societal structure, many missionaries like Marsden believed that the industrious labor of Maori people would function as an evangelizing opportunity as well as a way to make the missions self-sustaining.⁶⁶ For many Christians, labor came with the connotation of physically strengthening the body and promoting self-discipline and responsibility. In the context of indigenous populations, missionaries like Marsden saw labor also as a way of curtailing the risk of uprisings, and the same principle was applied to convicts in Australia.⁶⁷

The Indigenous Perspective

While the effects of white settlement in New Zealand can be examined through quantified ratios in demographics and religious influence, this wholly neglects the possibility of investigating the impact of the colonies on the Maori people. Despite the primary sources that indicate a certain degree of respect for Maori culture, it is crucial to recognize that these sources are more nuanced than they seem. In fact, many Maori people rejected the attempts at assimilation carried out by missionaries and pushed for reform, and most missionaries actively discouraged many cultural practices familiar to Maori populations. This is not to say, however,

⁶⁵ J.B. Marsden, *Memoirs of the Life and Labors of the Rev. Samuel Marsden* (London: Religious Tract Society, 1838), 89.

⁶⁶ Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire*, 101.

⁶⁷ Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire*, 102.

that all Maori rejected the presence of Europeans. As discussed with capitalism and trade, many indigenous rangatira, or Maori aristocrats, encouraged a trading relationship with England in order to obtain goods like metal tools, firearms and other weapons, and various crops and agricultural practices.⁶⁸ These same rangatira often determined the terms of trade, both commercially and culturally, within the context of mission work in New Zealand. Maori were not passive in the assimilation process; British missionaries initially depended on their knowledge of land, their protection, and their land in order to keep the mission stable. Unless they saw an advantageous relationship with the newcomers, Maori would sometimes attack arriving migrants or visitors. From approximately 1810 to 1830, the tribes would practice *murū*, or a plunder ritual, on many mission stations.⁶⁹

Coupled with numerous other attacks on sealers and explorers, these offensives served as the standard for the British perspective on the Maori's cultural advancement.⁷⁰ The indigenous populations both in New Zealand and elsewhere were rarely submissive to the colonial efforts of the Crown or the missionaries, and the Maori in particular instead took control in the terms of the trade. Beginning in 1808 with Samuel Marsden's focus on expanding the missionary role in New Zealand, notable Maori rangatira Te Pahi and Ruatara interacted with Samuel Marsden to establish trading agreements, and Marsden spoke highly of their perceived "cultural capacity."⁷¹ Accompanying Marsden in his communication with the rangatira was John Liddiard Nicholas, who wrote that the Maori expressed the "ardent desire for acquiring knowledge" and an eagerness for establishing a mission station in the area, promising "to all persons engaged in it,

⁶⁸ Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire*, 57-61

⁶⁹ Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire*, 57.

⁷⁰ Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire*, 59.

⁷¹ Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire*, 59.

hospitality and kindness from his own tribe, and safe protections from the attacks of any other.”⁷² This narrative obviously does not take into account the motivations that underpinned Te Pahi and Ruatara’s eagerness to accept Marsden’s ideas. Since Marsden could offer the Maori beneficial trade goods, their statements included nuances that Marsden and Nicholas were clearly ignorant of. When put into context, these pieces of evidence highlight the active role that Maori had in colonial relationships. Rather than being immediately and fully subjugated by the Crown, the indigenous populations in this case saw some benefit in establishing consistent relationships with the colonizer.

Maori women also wielded significant influence, as Britain understood them as vital agents of social change and assimilation within the Maori communities themselves.⁷³ In order to enforce western ideas of domestic tradition and childrearing practices, the missions required some degree of cooperation from the Maori women. For many indigenous women, however, giving up certain parts of their culture and adopting a Christian way of life were not appealing or even possible, leading to various forms of resistance from the *wanau*, directly translating to “family” or students, of the mission.⁷⁴ The CMS identified many Maori women as victims of a culture that demeaned their role, particularly women of the Nga Puhi tribe. In this way, the mission viewed schools that were established specifically for the domestic training of Maori women and girls as forms of protection for a population perceived as vulnerable and helpless. By separating Maori men from the women, their sexualities were thought to be kept in check,

⁷² Nicholas, *Narrative of the Voyage to New Zealand*, 1:13-14, 1817. Cited in Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire*, 271.

⁷³ Kuni Jenkins and Kay Matthews, “Knowing Their Place: the Political Socialisation of Maori Women in New Zealand through Schooling Policy and Practice, 1867-1969,” *Womens History Review* 7, no. 1 (January 1998): 89.

⁷⁴ Ballantyne, *Entanglements of Empire*, 61.

continuing the enforcement of traditional Christian values.⁷⁵ While many Nga Puhī women supported the potential for secular education, particularly for the access to printed materials that it offered, attempts by the CMS to convert the women to Christianity were often met with various forms of resistance. For instance, many of these women simply ignored the efforts of women like Marianne and Jane Williams in domestic training and refused to follow instructions. Furthermore, many refused to wear the provided western-style clothes in the proper manner, often using them as accessories rather than practical bodily coverings.⁷⁶ While the CMS did not always force Maori women to be instructed in the mission station, many of them spent much of their days in the classroom. In order to resist this, the Nga Puhī women would simply leave and return to their own families, which encouraged the Indigenous community interactions that the CMS was clear to discourage.⁷⁷

While the efforts to force a western-style education onto the Maori populations were not as violent as those used in the cases of, for example, Aboriginal people in Australia, the notion of colonial assimilation was alive and well for the British missionaries in New Zealand. Of course, this inherently white supremacist relationship failed to foster a “proper educational relationship” between English teachers and Maori subjects, which resulted in these forms of resistance from the Nga Puhī women.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, these instances of resistance and agency from the Maori people emphasize their ability to determine the most advantageous outcome for themselves as individuals, pushing back against the notion that indigenous populations under colonial control were totally submissive to or fully subjugated by the Crown’s forces. Furthermore, they illustrate

⁷⁵ Tanya Fitzgerald, “Jumping the Fences: Maori women’s resistance to missionary schooling in northern New Zealand 1823- 1835,” *Paedagogica Historica* 37 (2001), 187.

⁷⁶ Fitzgerald, “Jumping the Fences,” 190.

⁷⁷ Fitzgerald, “Jumping the Fences,” 191.

⁷⁸ Alison Jones and Kuni Jenkins, “Invitation and Refusal: A Reading of the Beginnings of Schooling in Aotearoa New Zealand,” *History of Education* 37, no. 2 (2008): 187.

the discontent that many Maori people experienced in the missions process, standing in stark contrast to the optimistic portrayal of indigenous acceptance of Christianity posited by the Church Mission Society.

Conclusion

For women like Marianne and Jane Williams, as well as their single daughters and sisters, the mission served as a way for them to express their religious identity in addition to acting as an avenue for pursuing a degree of independence away from the gloom of mainland England. In viewing their motivations separate from those of their male counterparts, one can better understand how the religious aspects of the mission affected the indigenous populations. Furthermore, by reading the primary sources through a gendered lens, it allows us to see the process of imperialism as a vehicle for understanding gender difference and the ways in which women took advantage of religious opportunity. By speaking out against the commercial ventures of many mission societies, women like Marianne Williams were able to assert their discontent with the quintessential capitalistic motives of imperialism, and assert a different model of colonial assimilation. Functioning as essential facets of the mission in their knowledge of the domestic and their “maternal” nature, missionary women also served a vital role in the process of colonial assimilation, regardless of their personal religious motivations.

However, it is vital to acknowledge the resistance of Maori people within the colonial promotion of assimilating indigenous populations. Debunking the myth that indigenes were immediately eager to accept Christianity and a western way of life regardless of the repercussions, the sources that this paper has employed illustrate that building an empire was a two-way process that depended on some cooperation from the Maori that it later sought to erase.

Although some Maori rangatira accepted the English ideas imposed by missionaries like Marsden, this acceptance is nuanced and underpinned by a desire to advance their own tribal welfare. In addition, many Maori people, including many women, dismissed the assimilation attempts posited by the CMS. While the Maori population declined particularly following the Treaty of Waitangi in addition to the Crown's mandate of English schooling and the subsequent cultural erasure, the Maori in Aotearoa have made many successes in their strive for cultural acceptance. Evident by their petitions against legislation such as the Native Schools Act, Maori have continuously asserted active roles in rallying for their integration into a broader culture of New Zealand. Since the nineteenth century, Maori culture has experienced drastic resurgences in movements for social reform and better treatment of disenfranchised indigenous populations, particularly in the 1970s.⁷⁹ This feeds into the present day, in which respect for the Maori culture and language is more clearly evident in the everyday practice of those living on the island, particularly in items such as public signs that include English and Maori translations. Although the missionary work and assimilation attempts of women in the mission are now mostly a phenomenon of the past, the imperial legacies of the broader mission speak volumes about the gendered ways of approaching colonialism.

⁷⁹ Augie Fleras and Paul Spoonley, *Recalling Aotearoa: Indigenous Politics and Ethnic Relations in New Zealand* (Auckland, N.Z.: Oxford University Press, 2002).

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