

SETTING THE SCENE

The Creation & Inspiration of the Church Missionary Society

By Roshan Allpress

On a Friday evening in April 1799, a small group of men gathered at the *Castle and Falcon* pub in the City of London. The purpose of their meeting was to form a new society to spread the gospel to a globalising world – to disseminate ‘treasures more valuable than silver and gold ... the offerings of spiritual peace and Christian freedom.’¹

The ‘Society for Missions to Africa and the East instituted by members of the Established Church’ – later shortened to the more succinct ‘Church Missionary Society’ (CMS) – was the result of the collaboration of overlapping networks of Evangelical clergy, businessmen, artists, politicians and philanthropists. They had experimented and debated for years how best to use their access to Britain’s global trade routes and growing Empire to spread Christianity among those who had not heard it preached. Rev. John Venn, chair of the meeting in the *Castle and Falcon*, summed up their conclusion: ‘If Asia and Africa ever receive the faith of Christ, they must owe it to the successful labour of missionaries’.² What was needed was a means to send them.

This means – the CMS – was founded in the middle of a period of significant global

change. In the last two decades of the eighteenth century Britain had weathered the secession of the 13 American colonies, riots in London, a major rebellion in Ireland and high-profile corruption scandals in the East India Company’s administration. Coupled with the costs of a century of near-constant warfare with France, many Britons were eager to find a new moral direction for the nation and Empire. New developments, such as James Cook’s scientific voyages to the Pacific, the establishment of the colony at Botany Bay in Australia and the rapid growth of the British presence in India led to a widely held sense that the ‘East’ was opening up. In the Atlantic small but hopeful gains were being made in the campaign to end the slave trade, leading some to imagine that the relationship between Africa and Europe, tainted for centuries by the horrors of human trafficking, might be re-forged on a new basis of mutual philanthropy.

Among those who felt the spur of these shifts and opportunities most clearly were those who had been influenced by the Evangelical movement. To Evangelical minds British society and culture were desperately in need of reform and the

injustices of the Empire had to be righted. Most pressing however, was the plight of the many millions who had never heard the gospel, but who were now able to be reached, as the CMS committee wrote, 'Shall we sit still and make no effort for the conversion of our fellow-creatures?'³

At the forefront of Evangelical efforts were a small community of friends and neighbours in the parish of Clapham, where John Venn was Rector. The group included the politician William Wilberforce, Henry Thornton (a wealthy and influential banker) and his brother Samuel (Governor of the Bank of England), Charles Grant and Edward Parry (directors of the East India Company), and John Shore (former Governor General of India). These individuals were involved in campaigns as diverse as the abolition of slavery, the mass promotion of literacy and efforts to improve the working conditions of chimney sweeps.

By 1799 the members of the Clapham Sect had already experimented widely with different ways to encourage missions. Wilberforce and the Thornton brothers had been influential in securing the appointment of chaplains throughout the British Empire, including sending Samuel Marsden to Sydney. Charles Grant had championed a scheme to send Anglican missionaries to Bengal in 1787 as well as lobbying Parliament to open India to missionaries. Their most ambitious project, the establishment of the colony of Sierra Leone, was intended to hasten the abolition of the slave trade by developing economic alternatives to slaving for West Africa. As a mission settlement it was also intended to encourage the spread of Christianity in Africa. Nor did they direct their efforts only outside Britain, financing 'missions' to convert and improve the economies of rural communities in Somerset, Yorkshire and elsewhere, with

Wilberforce writing to his friend Hannah More, 'these poor people must not ... be suffered to continue in their present lamentable state of darkness'.⁴

By 1799 Anglican missions already had a century-long history, but proponents of new initiatives walked a political tight-rope. Originating around the turn of the eighteenth-century when the afterglow of the English Reformation was settling into a more stable political framework the 'Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge' and the 'Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts' supported missionaries in British North America, the West Indies, and on the Indian subcontinent.⁵ However, both societies were wedded to the episcopal structures of the Anglican Church and had limited resources or enthusiasm for expanding their reach to Africa and the Pacific. In contrast attempts by Dissenters during the 1790s, including William Carey's Baptist mission to Bengal, and the interdenominational London Missionary Society's mission to Tahiti, were notable for underestimating the difficulties involved in establishing new mission settlements. In the climate of political suspicion following the French Revolution Dissenters were also frequently accused of arousing seditious unrest. Nevertheless, both the Baptist and London Missionary Societies were remarkably effective in fundraising, the latter raising more than 10 times the annual income of the SPG in its first year.⁶ By mixing this new public enthusiasm with the respectability of the Established Church and the political and business acumen of its lay leadership, the CMS hoped to strike an effective middle path. In many ways, the first decade was a disappointment. Bishops were initially unwilling to lend open support to the new organisation. Funding came in slowly and

problematically. Despite their willingness to recruit less-educated laypeople as ‘catechists’, few suitable English-speaking candidates emerged and the Society resorted to sending German missionaries to Sierra Leone with little success.

However, as the decade progressed, the potential support base for the CMS slowly grew. Publications like the *Christian Observer* and other Clapham-led organisations such as the ‘British and Foreign Bible Society’ (BFBS) contributed to developing an increasingly informed and sympathetic supporter base. The Parliamentary abolition of the slave trade in 1807 established William Wilberforce and other members of the Clapham Sect as national moral heroes. This increased the credibility of the CMS and the belief among its supporters that it might be possible for Christian activists to ameliorate the worst effects of the Empire. Following a model developed by the bankers on its committee the CMS also began building a national network of auxiliary societies, utilising country banking networks to raise funds on a much larger scale. Annual income, at its nadir of £542 in 1804, rose rapidly, surpassing £2000 in 1806 and £10 000 in 1814.⁷

By the end of 1807, when Samuel Marsden returned to London on furlough with a proposal to establish a mission settlement among the ‘New Zealanders’, the CMS was in a position to consider a project of this scale. New Zealand represented the coming together of the multiple threads behind the CMS – an indigenous society unreached by the

gospel that stood to benefit from access to global trade and knowledge and which was increasingly accessible by British ships sailing from India and Australia.

As the Society reported in 1812,

We are fully aware, that political greatness and extended dominion are no tests of Divine approbation ... but, from the dispositions which God has been pleased to put into our hearts, we humbly hope that our country has been exalted among the nations for nobler purposes; that the empire of Britain shall be an empire of mercy ... and the period of her ministry shall have been terminated in the universal diffusion of Christianity.⁸

FOR FURTHER READING, SEE:

Allan Davidson, Stuart Lange, Peter Lineham and Adrienne Puckey (eds.), *Te Rongopai 1814: ‘Takoto te pai!’* (Auckland, 2014).

¹ *Account of a Society for Missions to Africa and the East Instituted by Members of the Established Church* (1799), 7, 13.

² Michael M. Hennell, *John Venn and the Clapham Sect* (Cambridge, 1958), 245.

³ Hennell, 244.

⁴ Robert Isaac Wilberforce and Samuel Wilberforce, *The Life of William Wilberforce*, Vol. 1 (London, 1838), 247.

⁵ See Bob Tennant, *Corporate Holiness: Pulpit Preaching and the Church of England Missionary Societies, 1760-1870* Oxford, 2013; and Rowan Strong, *Anglicanism and the British Empire, c.1700-1850* (Oxford, 2007).

⁶ Tennant, 94.

⁷ Tennant, 99.

⁸ *A Sermon ... before the Society for Missions to Africa and the East... also the Report of the Committee* (London, 1812), 437-438.

UNCOVERING OUR WHAKAPAPA

By Sophia Sinclair

Hebrews chapter 11 is like visiting a hall of fame featuring heroes of the faith. The author lists examples of women and men who lived by faith. The list continues until we read in verse 32:

And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson and Jephthah, about David and Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies. Women received back their dead, raised to life again. There were others who were tortured, refusing to be released so that they might gain an even better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were put to death by stoning; they were sawn in two; they were killed by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and ill-treated – the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, living in caves and in holes in the ground. These were all commended for their faith ...

If *Our Story: Aotearoa* was the letter to the Hebrews, the individual stories and chapters would be those first names who lived ‘by faith’. But what about those we ‘do not have time to tell about’? Just like the writer of Hebrews laments the lack of time we recognise there are so many more stories that make up the whakapapa or genealogy of the New Zealand Church Missionary Society (NZCMS).

The driving principles of NZCMS formed a stable foundation for mission work and a fertile soil for God’s church to grow. The emphasis was on five core beliefs: following God’s leading, starting small, trusting God to find the right people, putting money in second place and depending on God’s Spirit for all things.¹ Since 1892 we have seen the people of NZCMS live out these principles with faith and integrity.

There are stories of treks through wild, tiger-laden jungles; tales of imprisonment, starvation and going without comforts; accounts of faith and bravery in the face of evil and witchcraft; anecdotes of using wit, humour and resourcefulness to face difficulties; narratives of

persevering through sickness and disease; accounts of enduring hard, slow progress and practicing patience; stories of life, loss, love and faith.

Our story includes following God's leading to locations such as Japan, India, China, Indonesia, Singapore, Pakistan, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanganyika/Tanzania, Uganda, Spain, Chile, Peru, Brazil, the Northern Territory of Australia, Papua New Guinea, the Pacific Islands, Nicaragua, Egypt, Lebanon and the Middle East, Afghanistan and Central Asia, Albania and Eastern Europe.

Our whakapapa includes faithful Christians who served as teachers, evangelists, bishops, church officials, administrators, coordinators, community workers, community leaders, advocates, theological educators, trainers, nurses, specialists, doctors, agriculturalists, pastors, lecturers, mentors, graphic designers, youth workers, business owners, women's workers, media specialists, translators, house parents, guest house hosts, counsellors, New Zealand-based supporters and staff.

Finally, at the heart of each story is the gospel. Since its inception NZCMS has been driven by the desire that the world might know the God who has created us and redeems us. The Kingdom of God has been our focus and our goal, with each Mission Partner striving: 'to preach Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake'.² Our history is the story of a mighty God working powerfully through ordinary Kiwis.

¹ *New Zealand Church Missionary Association
22nd Annual Report for the Year 1914*

² 2 Corinthians 4:5



WORD & DANCE

By Te Pihopa Te Kitoi Pikaahu

As a bishop, I have been speaking a lot about dancing in the last year. To be more precise it has been my express intention to utter the words of *Te Hari a Ngapuhi* – The Dance of Ngapuhi – The Joy of Ngapuhi, every time I stand to address a church gathering. A hari, like a haka, is a dance – but a very different type of dance.

Hari also means joy, so it would be accurate to understand the dance itself as a joyful type of dancing. So after hearing, listening, observing and participating in the events on Christmas Day 1814, Maori began to make a real ‘song and dance’ of their experience in as much as they could understand what had witnessed before their very eyes.

I first heard *Te Hari a Ngapuhi* 30 years ago as I listened to our kaumatua Fred Wilcox chanting the words when he stood to speak at Komiti Tumuaki (the Standing Committee of the Diocese of Auckland). He always began his whaikorero (formal speech) by reciting the words of *Te Hari a Ngapuhi*. I know now that he was making a statement, an introduction or summary of his public confession of faith. As a Christian, and a descendent of the first of the tupuna to hear the proclamation of

the gospel, he identified himself fully with the events of Christmas Day 1814. That event was in his whakapapa – his history.

What captured my imagination and interest most was his stance. His body language, movement and his facial expression sent his message clearly. Every time he recited the words he was full of conviction, passion, energy and obvious pride. It probably had a lot to do with his identity as a Christian (he was later an ordained priest) and as a very staunch Ngapuhi person. Fred would speak the words of *Te Hari a Ngapuhi* for the remainder of his life.

I later came across the text of *Te Hari a Ngapuhi*¹ when I stumbled on it in the Maori magazine *Te Ao Hou* (April 1956) in a paper written by Mr Hoterene Keretene of Otiria in the Bay of Islands.

The theme for our Hui Amorangi of Te Taitokerau this year is: ‘Takoto te Pai’. It is our motto and comes from *Te Hari a Ngapuhi* which, according to Keretene, was the first authentic reaction and single collective response from the tupuna who were present at Oihi, immediately following Samuel Marsden’s sermon and service.²

On Christmas Eve, 1814, Ruatara, on his own initiative, organised the space where the church service was to be held. He arranged it as an open air church with an improvised reading desk, pulpit and canoes serving as pews. On Christmas Day Ruatara and Korokoro, wearing the uniforms given to them by Governor Macquarie, acted as Masters of Ceremony by indicating to Maori how they should behave – when they should stand or sit.

At the end of his sermon, Maori said that they could not understand what Marsden meant. Ruatara replied that ‘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’.

Significantly Maori heard Marsden’s sermon through Ruatara’s translation. What they heard and understood we do not know. What is significant is that Maori were hearing Marsden’s message from a Maori. Author and traveller John Liddiard Nicholas describes how Maori responded to the service:

Three or four hundred, surrounding Mr. Marsden and myself, commenced their war dance, yelling and shouting in their usual style, which they did, I suppose, from the idea that this furious demonstration of their joy would be the most grateful return they could make us for the solemn spectacle.³

Nicholas describes his perception of the ‘war dance’. He emphasises the ‘yelling and shouting’, on the one hand, and ‘the furious demonstration of their joy’ on the other. One is left with the view that the yelling, the shouting and furious demonstration is quite definitely part of the ‘their joy’ as the ‘most grateful return they could make for the solemn spectacle’ they had witnessed.

This response, although not a dance as such, is similar to the reaction from the



shepherds who both heard and received the message from the angel of the Lord,

But the angel said to them, Do not be afraid; for see I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people'. Then the great army of the heavenly angels singing praises to God, 'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom he favours!' ⁴

In Ecclesiastes we hear of God's appointed time. There is a time to speak and a time to dance. It all began with a kauwhau (sermon), and ended with a hari (dance). It started with words alone (speech) and ended with words and dance (action).

Te Hari a Ngapuhi speaks of movement, of creating space – ka nukunuku, ka nekeneke – describing a process of making space for the gospel to come into the world. Maori made space for the gospel to enter into their hearts, to enter into their lives, to enter into their communities and into their world as they knew it.

The arrival of gospel is likened to the flight of the Pīpiwharauoa – the Shining Cuckoo – titiro ki nga wai o Tokerau e hora nei me he pīpiwharauoa ki tua. The Shining Cuckoo is the messenger bird that heralds spring – i.e. the good news of spring. Spring is a theological metaphor for hope and salvation. That message of hope and salvation has come from across or beyond the horizon. Theologically, it is about fulfilment, the 'ordinance of God'. Everything has its season, a time for everything. ⁵

As the Pīpiwharauoa sets off in flight and lands from one place to the next – whiti whiti, tata tata – in the same way

the gospel is dynamic not dormant. As the gospel is received and internalised (incarnation), a turning point in attitude is reached and a new pattern of belief and values (new life) is established and affirmed (transformation) – takoto te pai!

The pīpi in pīpiwharauoa is the young, the chick of the Shining Cuckoo - the Wharauoa. The pīpiwharauoa, the chick of the Shining Cuckoo is the smallest of all the birds. The Wharauoa lays its eggs in the nest of another bird. Like the pīpiwharauoa the gospel relies on its new context to grow to maturity to be an effective agent in the new world.

Understanding Takoto te Pai theologically as a statement of faith and public affirmation means, 'let good be established, let peace be established, let the reign of God, vis-à-vis, the Kingdom of God be established'.

It is an affirmation of God's goodness and grace, proclaiming peace and love, announcing the advent of the kingdom of God. That is worth making a song and dance of receiving and living out our Christian faith.

¹ The full Maori text of this article can be found in Appendix 1.

² A full translation of the article can be found in Appendix 2.

³ J.L. Nicholas, *Narrative of a Voyage to New Zealand, Performed in the years 1814 and 1815 in the Company of the Rev. Samuel Marsden, Principal Chaplain of New South Wales*, 2 vols., (London: James Black, 1817), vol.1, 94

⁴ Luke 2:10b-14

⁵ Ecclesiastes 3:1