

Samuel Marsden to Josiah Pratt

Ivy Lane, March 24th 1808

Rev^d Sir,

With great diffidence I respectfully submit the following Observations relative to New Zealand to the Consideration of the Society for Missions to Africa and the East, as that Island may lie without the Limits of the Society's designs towards the Heathens – From the different Reports we have had of the natives of New Zealand; and the late Communication with one of their Chiefs, who visited Port Jackson, and who appeared a very extraordinary man, possess of the greatest natural Abilities, and expressed the most ardent desire to improve his Subjects, according to human Estimate this Island seems to afford some Prospect for Missionary Labors. New Zealand & its natural Productions are little known to the civilized world – No Commerce has been carried on there [f] further than a few Ships taking Cargoes & Masts and Spars from the Island to India and China. The Chief who visited Port Jackson has shewn every Attention to the South Sea Whalers, who have touched at his Settlement for Refreshments; and to any other Vessels that have had an occasion for his Assistance from New South Wales. Every benevolent mind acquainted with the ignorant State of these Islanders, must feel a wish that some small Attempt may be made towards their Civilization and general Improvement in the simple Arts, and Christian Knowledge – Should a Mission to New Zealand come within the Limits of the Society's original Plans, it possesses apparently the best means for making an Attempt towards the Civilization and Conversion of the New Zealanders, of any other Society instituted for the benevolent Purposes of

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propagating the Gospel amongst the Heathens. There are two promising Circumstances that afford strong Ground to hope that some good might be effected on that Island – First, it's relative Situation to the Settlements [f] at Port Jackson and Norfolk Island, being distant only about eighty Leagues from the latter, and four hundred from the former. Hence its local situation would open an easy Communication with either, or both of these Settlements, which is of the utmost importance to the Comfort and Safety of the Missionaries amongst uncivilized Heathens; as well as to the Success of the Mission – The second Circumstance is, the only officiating Ministers in these Settlements are of the established Church; who would if they were men of Piety cheerfully second the wishes of the Society in Europe. The Ministers of the Establishment must from the official Rank which they hold in the Settlements have very considerable Influence, as the Executive Authority will require their Aid in carrying on the Public Service, amongst the peculiar Class of Subjects of which these Settlements are composed. If the Clergy are men truly devoted to God; and are willing to exert their Power and Influence in promoting the Cause of Christianity, they will have an extensive Field of usefulness; not only in New South Wales, but in [f] the neighbouring Islands in the South Seas. A Governor of New South Wales however profane he may be, and however great an Enemy to real Godliness, will avoid for his own Sake, all open war with the Ministers of the Establishment, unless their own unguarded Conduct should give him a decided Advantage over them. They will at all times have a Claim upon the Governor for his Protection and Support in the due Performance of every moral

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and religious duty, connected with their sacred Functions; and enjoined upon them by his Majesty's Commission. If the Ministers act consistent with the dignity of their public Characters, tho' the doctrines they preach may disgust and offend the carnal mind in every Rank of Society, yet their Persons will be revered, and their Opinions will have great weight with those in Authority on every civil, political, and moral Subject. On this Account it may justly be inferred that the regular Clergy in New South Wales, from the certain Influence unavoidably attached to their public Situation under the [f] present Circumstances of that Settlement may very much promote a Mission to New Zealand connected with the established Church, without creating any Suspicion, or giving any Offence to those in Authority in the Colony; or to any other Persons in England. Was a Mission formed for that Island by any other Society; the Ministers of that Establishment, might most ardently desire to countenance and support such a desirable an undertaking, whoever might be the first Promoters of it; yet their wishes might be defeated and their Exertions cramped by the Authority of the Governor, if he was disposed to oppose the Mission. The object I wish to impress upon the minds of the Society is this; that it would not be proper for any Missionaries to be placed on an Island amongst uncivilized Heathen without establishing a regular Communication with them— Let the Missionaries be ever so much devoted to the Cause of the Mission, yet they will want Supplies, Protection, and Encouragement— The Ministers in the Establishment resident in N.S. Wales [f] from their personal Influence with those in Authority; as well as from their extensive Influence

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which they must at all times possess thro' the Settlement, will most probably have the means in their Power to afford the Missionaries employed at New Zealand such Aid as their Circumstances from time to time may require –

I am of an Opinion that a Mission sent out to New Zealand under the Patronage of the established Church would rather be considered as Part of the civil Government of N.S. Wales, than as a seperate Body; and have no doubt but a Governor, whosoever he might be, would feel it his duty to afford the Missionaries every Protection and Support, and more particularly so, as the British Government seem well disposed towards the Natives of that Island. Till the Society come to some determination to turn their Attention to the above object, it would be unnecessary to take into Consideration what would apparently be the best mode to give Effect to the Mission, what difficulties are likely to oppose the work, and what would be the be the [f] best means for removing these difficulties –

At the time of my arrival in England I suggested a few Thoughts to the Missionary Society in London, relative to their Mission established at Otaheite – but it would be irrelovent [sic] to introduce them into this Letter, before the Subject is brought under the immediate Consideration of the Society – Having an ardent wish, that the New Zealanders may enjoy the Sweets of Civilization, and the more inestimable Blessings of divine Revelation: I shall feel a peculiar Pleasure in seconding any Attempt the Society might be inclined to make for their general Improvement, and Advantage – Any further

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Information that may be required upon this Subject, that may come within my Knowledge, I will very readily communicate –

I have the honor to be

Rev^d Sir

Your most obedient

humble Servant

Samuel Marsden

Rev. Josiah Pratt

Secretary to the Society for Missionsto Africa & the East