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**Jean Baptiste Francois Pompallier – Loved and Lamented through the
Generations in New Zealand**

**An Overview and Appraisal of Bishop Pompallier's Mission to Maori, its
Continuation and the Return of his Body to New Zealand**

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree in Master of
Philosophy in History

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Contents

	Page
List of Abbreviations	5
Preface	6
Introduction	17
Part 1: Hikoi: Pompallier’s ‘21st Century Journeys’ ending at Motuti, Hokianga ..	22
Events Leading to the Return of Pompallier’s Remains.....	24
Start of the Hikoi Tapu in Rome	28
Arrival of Pompallier in New Zealand and First Auckland visit	29
South Island Journeys.....	31
North Island Journeys	34
Northland	40
Reactions to Hikoi	48
Aftermath – Pilgrimages to Motuti	53
Part 2: Looking Back at Pompallier the Man and His Activities	55
1868 – 1850’s, Pompallier’s departures and returns.....	55
Return after First Ad Limina visit to Rome in 1849 and Aftermath.	61
Franciscans.....	63
Origins	67
Role of Catholic Bishop.....	70
Part 3: Bishop Pompallier and Marist Superior Fr. Colin –	
Role played by Marists	76
Controversies, Perseverance, Ecclesiastical Policies.....	78

Marist Role in the Maori Mission	87
Part 4: Development of the Maori Mission through the decades.....	92
The Maori Mission in Early Days	94
Oral Tradition	101
Maori Mission 20 th Century Onwards.....	105
Part 5: Adverse and Positive Reactions to Pompallier and his Mission -	
Some Causes	114
Pompallier under Scrutiny	116
Maori Mission Evidence	122
Recent Times – Recent Changes.....	126
Part 6: Pompallier as a Uniting Force in the Hikoi	136
Coming Together of Pakeha and Maori to lobby for Return of JBFP’s Remains...	136
French Reconnections	141
More Unity	144
Summary	146
Appendices	
A: Bishop Pompallier’s ‘Tree of the Church’	153
B: Main Journeys of Bishop Pompallier 1838-1846	154
C: Early Lists of Society of Mary (Marists).....	155
D: List of Marist Missionaries on the ‘Maori’ Mission in N.Z.	156
E: Otaki/Pukekaraka Time Line	161
F: Graphs 1-3, Mill Hill Fathers on Maori Mission	163
G: Graphs 4-7, Marists on Maori Mission	166
Bibliography.....	170

List of Abbreviations

ACDA	Auckland Catholic Diocese Archives
ACPF	SC Archives of the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith – Rome
DMPCA	Diocesan Maori Pastoral Council Auckland
MAW	Marist Archives Wellington
AMO	Annales des Missions d'Oceania
NCRS	National Catholic Resource Centre
NZJH	New Zealand Journal of History
OMPA	Oceania Marist Province Archives
PDC	Pompallier Diocesan Centre
POM	Bishop Pompallier
PP	Parish priest
SM	Society of Mary
WD	Wellington Diocese
WDA	Wellington Diocese Archives

Jean Baptiste Francois Pompallier – Loved and Lamented through the Generations in New Zealand

An overview and appraisal of Bishop Pompallier’s Mission to Maori and its Continuation and the Return of his Body to New Zealand

Preface

This work is presented in apologetic mode due to criticisms of Bishop Pompallier and his mission to Maori, which has come from all quarters, though denial of Pompallier’s genuine shortcomings is not the purpose either.¹ Nonetheless it is, for all intents and purposes, a limited ‘apologia pro’ Bishop Jean Baptiste Francois Pompallier. The objective of this thesis is twofold: firstly to present information about Bishop Jean Baptiste Francois Pompallier, Catholic missionary bishop in New Zealand, that demonstrates Maori regard for him has continuity over the years as evidenced by real individual actions; secondly to disprove or at least unsettle the claim that his Catholic mission to Maori was a failure.² A case has not yet been made for his enduring ‘relationship’ with Maori and how memory of him was maintained through the generations; but the focus has been on his administration, personnel, financial and other problems. This work is an attempt to redress the balance. The fact that over a hundred years after his death Maori petitioned authorities for the return of “Pomaparie’s” bones, must be a

¹ See Oxford Dictionary - apologia= APOLOGY *n.* 1; esp. a written defense or justification of the opinions or conduct of a writer, speaker, etc. The currency of the word is largely due to J. H. Newman's *Apologia pro Vita Sua*, 1864. 1784 J. NEWTON Apologia. Four letters to a Minister of an independent Church: by a Minister of the Church of England. 1876 C. M. DAVIES *North. Lond.* 356 A very manful.apologia was that with which Miss Miller favoured the large audience. 1883 *Sat. Rev.* 10 Nov. 613/1 The Duke [of Argyll] has put his own version of the story on record. This apologia is a pamphlet, entitled *Crofts and Farms in the Hebrides*. 1903 *Westm. Gaz.* 20 Jan. 8/2 They may be taken as his ‘Apologia’ though not in any sense an apology for the achievements of his official career. 1927 A. H. MCNEILE *Introd. N.T.* ii. 12 His [St. Mark’s] Gospel is not an *apologia* to Jews but an *apologia* to the world of the truth of Christianity. <http://dictionary.oed.com.ezproxy.auckland.ac.nz/cgi/entry/50010381?>

²An example of claim of failure is found in E.R. Simmons *A Brief History of the Catholic Church in New Zealand*. (Auckland: CPC 1978). p.5. Fr. Simmons states: “Bishop Pompallier’s thirty three years as an active bishop ended in failure and disappointment.” (p. 50.)

starting point for further consideration of the importance to them of the man, known affectionately as “Epikopo”.³ With respect to opinions of mission in New Zealand it is of interest to note that claim was made in 1969 that “in the New Zealand vernacular, ‘missionaries’ are exclusively these men of the Anglican Church Missionary Society and the Wesley Methodist Mission.”⁴ This ‘usage’ is said to not be, “just a result of religious bias; rather it is also a linguistic eccentricity of historical origin”.⁵ Therefore, the history of the Catholic Mission may have been overlooked, to varying degrees by those historians subscribing to this viewpoint and would also explain the lack of secular historical material relating to Pompallier and *his* mission. It was further argued, by historian Ruth Ross, member of the New Zealand Historic Places Trust and not a Catholic, that Pompallier was “opposed by the Protestants in a spirit, and in language, which today appears singularly lacking in Christian charity”.⁶ Even though the Catholics were said to be “no less rigid in their religious attitudes” it is acknowledged that “their language at least was more moderate”, thus indicating some vindication of Pompallier and his missionaries.⁷ Since these thoughts were expressed further work has been published addressing the balance of opinions to some degree, but also more harsh criticisms have been levied at Pompallier.⁸ Even though Pompallier himself was originally targeted by his opponents, both lay and clerical, to the degree that his life and mission was threatened with destruction, gradually he won acceptance, even admiration and genuine affection. For example in a letter (1839) to Fr. Colin,

³ This was an affectionate name, given him by Maori due to the Latin for bishop, episcopus. “Pikopos” came to be another name for Catholics (and thereby followers of the Bishop). The terms are found in many publications both Catholic and Protestant.

⁴ Ruth Ross *Catholic Origins form part of N.Z. History in Marist Messenger* (a national Catholic Monthly established 1929). Wellington: Society of Mary New Zealand August 1970, p.13. Printed version of a talk given by her in 1969. Hereafter publication ref. *Marist Messenger*.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 13. Ruth Ross describes herself as “a non-Catholic venturing into the field of Catholic history” whilst recording “her warmest thanks...to Archbishop Liston and ...Cardinal McKeefry, for “much kindness and encouragement”. Ruth Ross, *A Guide to Pompallier House* (Wellington: Government Printer, 1970), p. 7.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 13. Ross worked with Catholic historian Fr. E. Simmons, assisting him in the organization of Auckland Diocesan Archival material and would have gained more knowledge of Pompallier from this material. Fr. Simmons subsequently wrote a biography: *Pompallier Prince of Bishops*. (Auckland: CPC, 1984) hereafter referred to as Simmons, *Pompallier*.

⁸ Simmons, *Pompallier* 1984. Jessie Munro, “Colin and Pompallier” in *Catholic Beginnings in Oceania Marist Missionary Perspectives* Ed. Alois Greiler SM, (Hindmarsh: ATF Press, 2009), pp. 65-85.

Marist Superior, a whaling captain, gave his impression about Pompallier upon returning home. He said “I can add what Monseigneur will not tell you: he is not only beloved but adored by the natives, liked and held in esteem by the English and Americans.”⁹ (The word adored was underlined in the original text). This sort of testimony is not uncommon in records of the time. The Marist Order has made much correspondence about the mission more readily available over the last two years, thus greatly assisting research, on the establishment and continuation of Pompallier’s mission to Maori and how involvement has been sustained through the decades. The use of *modern* hermeneutical practices though, when examining writings from Pompallier’s particularly difficult time, can present certain problems with accurate interpretation, causing some conflict in opinions with regard to Bishop Pompallier’s reputation and character.¹⁰

With respect to the Catholic Maori Mission certain knowledge of the missionaries and their “flocks” is gained from what they have recorded of their own work through the decades. The name “Marists” is synonymous with the Maori mission, due to their pivotal connection to Pompallier and their records are an invaluable source of information.”¹¹ *The Marist Messenger* has recorded historical facts of the Marist Order, including those relating to Pompallier indicating subsequent development of Maori Catholicism, as Marists continued as Maori missionaries.¹² It was also instrumental in keeping alive knowledge of the history of the Catholic Church in New Zealand, and it inevitably made references to Bishop Pompallier, thus preserving an historic record like other New Zealand Catholic publications. Other information is also contained in the

⁹ Munro “Colin and Pompallier”, p.74.

¹⁰ Reference here is made in particular to the letters of missionaries to their superiors, as in those to the founder of the Marist Order Fr. Colin and correspondence between Pompallier and his personnel. Cognizance of the limitation of hermeneutics in attempting to read back into history certain hypotheses has to be borne in mind, particularly when so much of the history is contained in private correspondence. Also attempting to read certain inferences into statements made at the time may not result in accurate comprehension.

¹¹ A publication assembled “to commemorate the centenary of the establishment of the New Zealand Province of the Society of Mary 1889-1989” gives an overview of the Mission to Maori during the period 1838-1989. Ref. Fathers and Brothers of the Society of Mary. *Aspects of the Apostolates of the Society of Mary in New Zealand*. Ed Peter Ewart SM (Wellington: Marist NZ Province, 1989.) (hereafter referred to as *SMs in NZ 1889-1989*).

¹² *Marist Messenger* National Catholic Monthly established 1929. Wellington: Society of Mary New Zealand Province.

various publications of the Catholic Church which started in Pompallier's time with the acquisition of a printing press, as well as correspondence written by hand. The most comprehensive New Zealand work on Pompallier and his mission to Maori though, as Founder and Father of the Catholic Church in Western Oceania, is the biography written by Miss Lillian Keys, only eighty-nine years after Pompallier's final departure. This work, *The Life and Times of Bishop Pompallier*, largely based on primary sources, is said to be "a treasure...for which future generations owe...a debt of gratitude."¹³ Miss Keys was able to bring to her study of Pompallier, "ample knowledge of the early years of New Zealand, as well as "serious research for and scholarly examination of letters, papers, documents and reports".¹⁴ A New Zealand bishop at the time that it was published, James Liston, in commenting on this work, said that despite failures, Pompallier "shines in his own right as a noble missionary, worthy of a place with the greatest, his life having the quality of a crusade".¹⁵

The full story of the history of the Catholic Maori Mission is still yet to be told, although some attempt has been made.¹⁶ Assessment of Pompallier's mission is incomplete without a certain degree of knowledge of this whole mission to Maori and how it developed, and thereby a picture is gained as to *why* it can be claimed that he was a man loved through the generations. It can be argued that "no other aspect of European intervention in New Zealand had such a swift and conspicuous effect on the country's social terrain as the spread of Christianity in this period" of

¹³ Archbishop Liston, D.D. Bishop of Auckland in Foreword in Lillian Keys *The Life and Times of Bishop Pompallier*. (Christchurch: Pegasus, 1957), pp.13-14.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* Foreword, p.13.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ A number of works, relating to the Mission have been written through the decades and are contained in Catholic archives. For Example Fr. G. Arbuckle SM *The Church in a Multi-Cultural Society* Wellington: NZ Bishops Conference, 1976. Also known as *The Arbuckle Report* "prepared for private use only" by and described as a sociological survey gives detailed information about Maori in general and refers to the Catholic Mission. An unpublished work was written by Maori Missioner Fr. J. Durning in early 1970's entitled *History of the Maori Mission* and reserved in the Marist Archives, Wellington. Articles near the time of the 2002 Hiko include that of Rory Sweetman, "Pompallier's Legacy, Short History of the Catholic Church in New Zealand." *New Zealand Geographic*, no. 54 (Nov/Dec 2001): 10-29.

Pompallier's fledgling mission.¹⁷ Therefore, the overall impact of Christianity has to be taken into account when analyzing the success of the Catholic Church, even though its different teachings inevitably caused confusion for some. Subsequent charges of neglect, abandonment or failure with respect to this Mission have to be measured against the background of the difficult times, and with the intentions of most missionaries, of whatever religious persuasion, which may be presumed to have been for the good. Accordingly, the missionaries' severity of language can be understood as part of the stresses of the uncertain times. Vows taken to maintain poverty, chastity and obedience, invariably affected *how* both men and women in the Catholic missionary field were able to work, as opposed to how missionaries of other churches were obliged to operate, with the necessary restrictions placed them by commitment to wives and families. Forty six Catholic priests and sixteen brothers, as well as many nuns, are recorded as ministering to the Christians in the early period of the establishment of the Catholic Church in New Zealand, from 1838 to 1870.¹⁸

Bishop Pompallier's careful recruitment of others to assist him in his missionary endeavours were well made and identified those noted for their commitment to the task. Apprehension of the vital part which Marist, Franciscan, Mill Hill, Benedictine and other orders played in Pompallier's New Zealand mission is essential in understanding *how* the mission to Maori continued. This success of the continuation of the Maori mission is also identifiable by examination of the work of Catholic diocesan priests and religious who worked either solely or partially for Maori, from the time of the establishment of the Mission by Pompallier to the present day. Devotion to the spiritual needs of Maori by various priests and religious originated from the time of the very beginning of the mission and is still discernable through the ensuing decades down to the

¹⁷ Paul Moon, *Newest Country in the World*, (Auckland: Penguin, 2007) 97.

¹⁸ Phillip Turner, "The Politics of Neutrality the Catholic Mission and the Maori", (MA Thesis presented in partial completion of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in History, Auckland University 1986) held in Colin Library Edition, Good Shepherd College, Auckland.

present day. Claims made in relation to failure of the Maori mission do not take into account the diversity of the work undertaken on behalf of this mission. The actual *claim* of failure of the Roman Catholic Mission of the Maoris 1838 – 1860 can be said to have been “coloured by unavoidable reliance on Protestant sources”.¹⁹ This sort of claim could also be said to be due to ignorance of the considerable volume of primary sources held in Marist, diocesan and other archives, which are now more accessible.

Memory of Jean Baptiste Francois Pompallier has been continuously kept alive since his departure from New Zealand in 1868.²⁰ In some ways his was an untimely departure as he incurred blame for the financial crisis caused in part by the devastation brought about by wars between the relatively recently established English Government and the Maori tribes. Pompallier tried valiantly to intervene and prevent these wars from which Maori struggled to recover, as their numbers and health had already declined to such an extent that they were not expected to survive as a race. As also pointed out at the time and over the decades since, matters of justice concerning Maori land and sovereignty were at stake in the wars. An influx of Europeans also overshadowed Maori rights and needs to some degree. Similarly it can be argued that more balance is required in opinions of Pompallier and his mission and that there has been a lack of comprehension of the man; his missionary crusade, his necessary commitment to Catholicism, but also his dedication to a race largely unknown at the time of his encounter with them. This very obscurity of a people subsequently affected adversely by essential changes in their lifestyle enabled grave abuses at the time. Introduction of ways foreign to Maori was a cause of contention and in some areas detrimental but also admittedly a cause of improvement in material matters by way of education.

¹⁹ Ibid, i.

²⁰ According to some Maori, they have kept the following quotation in mind with respect to Pompallier. “The memory of him shall not depart away, and his name shall be in request from generation to generation”. Ecclus. 30:6-14 in Roman Catholic Daily Missal 1962. (Kansas City: Angelus Press, 2004), 983. Source: Jim Parkinson kamautua from Far North.

Lack of comprehension of Pompallier and the Catholic mission to Maori relates firstly to: a misunderstanding of the role of a Catholic bishop in missionary territory at the time of his mission; secondly to misapprehension of the personality and trials of Bishop Pompallier and thirdly to lack of appreciation of the genuine relationship between him, Maori people and the trials both faced at the time of encounter. Comprehension of the distinction between the Protestant missions and the very different Catholic mission is essential in gaining more insight into the nature of the Catholic missionaries' endeavours. The level of success of these endeavours has been debated over the decades, but the claims *against* success have been largely unsubstantiated, with little or no historical accounts available regarding the continuity of the Catholic Maori mission over the years.²¹ Proving that the love of Pompallier has continuity over the years is possible when records are examined, oral history, and real individual actions are considered, particularly in view of the 2002 Hikoi which brought Pompallier's "bones" back to New Zealand. Disproving or at least unsettling the claim that his mission to Maori was a failure is also possible by an in-depth study of Pompallier's own writings; ecclesiastical records, as well as Maori oral tradition and academic writings of those who also deny failure.²² For instance, writing in 1937, one researcher says that his research work "was written to show that the Catholic Mission is worthy to compare favourably with the Missions of any other denomination and that is an injustice to dismiss its labours with a sentence or two, as is done by many notable New Zealand historians" and "to clear up three general misconceptions relative to the Catholic

²¹ Catholic Church records prove this continuity as will be shown later, with archival material retained by relevant orders as well as dioceses demonstrating evidence of the Maori Mission through the decades.

²² First hand accounts have been given by many missionaries themselves records of which have been preserved by the Catholic Church as well work presented as theses. E.g. C.P. Bowler SM *An Historical Account and Appreciation of the Labours of the Marist Missioners in the Auckland District of New Zealand 1838-1848*, 1930 (Copy obtained from General House Archives in Rome "ACME", 2009), M. I. Taylor, *The Origin and Establishment of the Catholic Maori Mission in New Zealand* (Wellington: Marist Archives circa 1940's – photocopied by Fr. A Jones SM 1991) P.J. Kane, *Early History of the Catholic Church in New Zealand 1838-1848*, 1937 (Sighted MAW 2009.) The early work of Murphy Ellen (Sister Mary Simeon – Mission sister) *The Missionary Work of Bishop Pompallier* (Auckland University, 1932). This thesis is referred to by Fr Mulcahy SM, former Marist Archivist Wellington in his recording of the Maori Mission. See MAW.

Missions”.²³ These misconceptions will be listed and discussed later; they include Pompallier and the Treaty of Waitangi, the gifts he distributed among Maori and his communications with Hone Heke at the time of the wars.

The claim of this thesis that Bishop Pompallier has been loved and lamented through the generations has been maintained principally by Maori, but also by those Europeans who later benefited from his missionary efforts. The positive reputation that Pompallier developed is evident principally from the actions of Catholic Maori, who have kept his memory alive by various means, not least of which has been, and continues to be, by naming their children “Pompallier” after him.²⁴ When available evidence is scrutinized, especially that which records the history of those actively engaged in the field of Maori mission, it at least unsettles the claim of failure. This evidence has been carefully kept by the Catholic Church in her various archives including those of the Marist Fathers and Brothers, countrywide Diocesan Archives and also those of the other Religious involved in the Maori mission but principally the Marist Order, Franciscans, Mill Hill Fathers, Sisters of Mercy, Daughters of Our Lady of Compassion. These orders have all kept records detailing their involvement, to greater and lesser degrees, with Maori and their Catholic faith, publishing official commemorative material in honour of various “milestones” of their orders.²⁵

Evidence of the success of Pompallier’s mission to establish Catholicism in New Zealand is also contained in the Catholic records documenting the continuation of the Maori Catholic faith from

²³ P.J. Kane *Early History of the Catholic Church in New Zealand 1838-1848*, 1937, Introduction, p. 1.

²⁴ Naming children after Pompallier has been a continuous tradition among Maori. See Fr. Henare Tate personal interview January 2009. Also at the time of the 2002 Hiko another such baptism was publicly performed. Ref. media reports and also verbal testimony from Hiko leaders. Oral history obtained from Maori themselves also testifies to the reality of the success of their own mission. Refs conversations with many Maori including Fr. Henare Tate, Fr. Antony Brown, leaders of the Catholic Maori Council as well as personal Maori friends some of whom do not care to be mentioned.

²⁵ Each order has its own archives where such material is kept and access is variable depending on circumstances.

the very beginning of the mission. Regular acknowledgement of Pompallier is found in these records demonstrating his importance as the official 'Founding Father' of the Catholic faith in New Zealand and elsewhere in Oceanic islands. More personal continual devotion to Pompallier is also uncovered by oral history, which gives access to the views passed down by elders to each successive generation.

The impact made by Pompallier affected forever the fabric of New Zealand, as did the impact made by other missionaries who taught the same sort of Christian message concerning peace, charity, forgiveness of enemies and reconciliation. This teaching, which concerns true tolerance and "caritas", without any condescension, inevitably resulted in a better New Zealand society than the society which Pompallier saw when he arrived, which was plagued with violent lawlessness. The particular mission commenced by Pompallier has to be taken as a whole, and not in isolated pockets, in order to get a view of the broad picture. The original mission encompassed vast areas which were later split up in to various dioceses. Changing patterns of Maori habitation of areas and the gradual development of urban maraes caused some difficulty in the provision of priests, and eventually Maoris in urban areas were expected to attend local parishes. In order to respond to needs, Maori Catholic publications were introduced and edited by Maori Mission priests.

Drawing on information from around the country, which have been kept up over the decades and demonstrate the continuity of the Maori mission, a record of Catholic Maori activities is revealed. An example is publication of the proceedings of the *Hui Aranga* "Te Aranga Ake" (The Resurrection), which began in 1946, which has been held in various parts of the North and South Islands. That of 2009 was held in Palmerston North Catholic Diocese. Other Catholic Maori publications telling similar stories include *Whiti Ora*, started in 1948, while Maori activities before this date were reported in Catholic newspapers like *The Month* and *Zealandia*. This

material assists in disproving the charge of failure on the part of Pompallier and provides (with assistance of the knowledge of Maori themselves) evidence of the enduring success of the mission. Success is reflected in the almost tangible, but nonetheless mysterious, unbroken bond, between Maori and Pompallier, established in 1838 and continuing to this day (2009); surviving approximately seventeen decades. Such a “relationship” is surely the explanation of why the bishop is still referred to as “a man loved through the generations”, with his loss still lamented, as one could see from the emotion displayed on the occasion of his “return”.

Apprehension of the fact that the Catholic missionaries were primarily concerned with Catholic ecclesiastical matters, not politics, helps us to avoid acrimony. Political matters regarding the Established Church of England, connected to the English government, were in the forefront of both Catholic and non-Catholic ecclesiastical circles at the time of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, hence the request put forward by Pompallier. In this regard mention must be made of the impact of the 1829 Emancipation Act in England.²⁶ Any interpretation of the foundational Catholic mission in New Zealand has to be made with full recognition that the Catholic Church was still emerging from repression in England and France and what this meant for those struggling with restoration. Bishop Pompallier could not be certain “that freedom of worship and equality would automatically follow the British annexation...alone of all the British colonies established up to that date, New Zealand did not have an established Church”.²⁷ The Anglican Church did for a time, though, receive “very preferential treatment”.²⁸ It is well said “that Pompallier’s doubts were well founded is shown by the proceedings of the 1850’s when the

²⁶ See ‘A Bill for the Relief of His Majesty’s Roman Catholic Subjects’, *Hansard* (24 March 1829) <http://www.historyhome.co.uk/peel/ireland/catheman.htm>

²⁷ Fr. John Pierce *Bishop Pompallier and the Treaty of Waitangi*. An unsubmitted thesis for MA and Honours in History, 69. Confirmed by personal conversation with former Auckland Archivist Fr. Bruce Bolland (2009) who had in turn received the thesis from Fr. Pierce who advised that Bishop Liston did not wish the thesis to be submitted. Fr. Pierce attached as an appendix An Act for the Relief of his Majesty’s Roman Catholic Subjects. 1829.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

Anglican Church came near to being the Established Church of the country.²⁹ Theological knowledge of the Catholic Church's practices of religious celibacy and other vows, its intentions towards its converts and how its message, "not of this world" was preached, is necessary in order to understand that the early Catholic Mission in New Zealand could not have had political aspirations, for itself.³⁰

Jumping forward in time, some mention also has to be made in this work, of the effects of the Council of Vatican II on Maori Catholicism, due to changes in liturgical practices which bore some resemblance to the original "Reformation", which had caused the suppression of Catholicism in England. Generally speaking, Vatican II brought about a diminished sense of appreciation of tradition which included early missionary endeavours and their traditional methods. The effects of the diminution of Catholic tradition, albeit for the most part an unintentional diminution is briefly discussed in concluding parts of this thesis. The overriding intention though is to present a more positive image of Pompallier and his mission, the significance of which has been neglected for approximately half a century. Reminders of the early times explain why Pompallier's remains are enshrined in the tiny Purakau Church which was "taken on the Hokianga tide to Motuti".³¹ Again It is well said that, with respect to Pompallier's faults and failings (all too common in human nature generally): "There is no sense in blame...there were too many extenuating circumstances".³²

²⁹ Ibid. p. 69.

³⁰ Reasonable knowledge of the Catholic faith per se can be said to desirable in order to avoid miscomprehension leading to charges of failure. Ref. Jane Thomson, "Some Reasons for the Failure of the Roman Catholic Mission to the Maoris, 1838-1860", *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol 1 No. 2, October, 1969, pp.166-229. See Phillip Turner *The Politics of Neutrality, the Catholic Mission and the Maori 1838 – 1870*, i-viii. Turner takes issue with Thomson's article.

³¹ Jessie Munro "Catholic Beginnings in Oceania" in *Marist Missionary Perspectives* Ed. Alois Greiler SM, (2009), p. 85.

³² Ibid, p. 85.