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## EDITOR'S FORUM

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### SAVIOURS AND SAVAGES: AN ITALIAN VIEW OF THE NINETEENTH-CENTURY MAORI WORLD

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Early New Zealand history is the product of English writers. Non-English sources, with the exception of a few in French, are little known. However, there are two major nineteenth-century works written in Italian, both cited by various authors writing about Pai Marire<sup>1</sup> or the Roman Catholic missions in New Zealand, but not always accurately or at great length. Neither work it seems has been translated into English, and they have therefore not been available to a wider public in the hundred or so years since their publication. These two works are *I Protestanti tra i Selvaggi della Nuova Zelanda ossia Storia del Pai Marire*, by Ottavio Barsanti; and *Storia della Nuova Zelanda e dei Suoi Abitatori* (two volumes) by Felice Vaggioli.<sup>2</sup> Both authors were Roman Catholic priests from Italy: Barsanti, a Franciscan, lived in New Zealand from 1860 to early 1866, and Vaggioli, a Benedictine, from 1879 to 1887. These were particularly difficult times for the Maori people. Barsanti arrived just a few months after the outbreak of war in Taranaki and left when Pai Marire was at its height. Vaggioli arrived at the time Te Whiti's ploughmen were at work in Taranaki. Their views of the nineteenth-century Maori world could not but be colored by these events.

Their views were also colored by the religious attitudes of the time. The Protestants had been in New Zealand since 1814 when Samuel

Marsden sent “pious mechanics” to the Bay of Islands to civilize and Christianize the Maori. These C.M.S. missionaries were followed in 1822 by Wesleyans, and although neither mission had an auspicious beginning, by the late 1830s the long years of missionary effort had at last begun to bear fruit. The arrival of the Roman Catholics in New Zealand in 1838 caused consternation in the Protestant world. The Roman Catholic doctrine of the one true church and the claim to sole right to interpret the Bible were a challenge the Protestants could not ignore and one that led to a bitter doctrinal controversy. The Catholic missionaries regarded all Protestants as heretics; many early C.M.S. and Wesleyan missionaries did not even regard the Catholic church as Christian. The fact that its first missionaries were French and that they moved into areas already evangelized by the Protestants only added to the air of mutual distrust.<sup>3</sup>

When Italian priests arrived in New Zealand in 1860 they were, like the French Marists, beyond the pale of colonial society—but at least they were not seen by the English as a political or nationalistic threat. Their relations with the French, and later the Irish, were often uneasy; the Protestant missionaries were not kindly disposed toward them; and the Catholic Maoris were a minority and often disaffected group. The Italians were few in number and since at first they could speak neither Maori nor English, nor hope to find many Italian speakers in the colony, their lot was a lonely and difficult one. This essay attempts to show how their culture, their religion, and their experiences in New Zealand shaped their view of the nineteenth-century Maori world.

### **Barsanti: The Protestants among the Savages of New Zealand**

Father Ottavio Barsanti, O.S.F., arrived in Auckland on the *General Teste* on 30 December 1860. He was the superior of a party of six Franciscan priests and three lay brothers chosen by the Minister General of the Ara Coeli convent in Rome to accompany Bishop Pompallier on his return from Europe where he had gone to seek extra workers for the Diocese of Auckland.<sup>4</sup> The Ara Coeli Franciscans were a federation of different Observant groups, now a single order, the Order of Friars Minor, or O.F.M. Barsanti, who was then about thirty-three years old, belonged to the Observants Minor of the Umbrian Franciscan Province and was a lecturer in theology at Assisi.

Barsanti has been variously described as “a very bright but self-willed man” of “imperious disposition, quick-tempered, suspicious and prone to violence,”<sup>5</sup> and “a colourful ruffian . . . a suitable subject for an

opera or musical comedy.”<sup>6</sup> In a letter to Rome on 4 October 1875 he described himself as “a professor of philosophy, doctor of sacred theology, preacher and apostolic missionary.”<sup>7</sup> He was an intelligent and well-educated man who considered himself an authority on church law, which knowledge he put to good use defending his position vis-à-vis various priests and bishops in New Zealand and Australia during his tempestuous career in the Antipodes.

The Catholic archives in Auckland, Sydney, and especially Rome contain a considerable amount of material—letters, sworn statements, the results of official enquiries, denunciations, claims and counter claims, testimonies, locally printed pamphlets, and even photographs of the good prelate—referring to his various contests with the local church authorities. The greater part of this material emanated from his period in Australia, which lasted almost twenty years and where he was described as “a thorn in the sides of Archbishops Polding and Vaughan.”<sup>8</sup>

But Barsanti's five years in New Zealand were no less stormy. He was adept at exploiting difficulties of bishops in controlling members of religious orders and in manifesting the unwillingness of his own order, the Franciscans, to have its problems solved in a way that would diminish the order's control over its own affairs. It was not unusual at the time for the church to ship “difficult” priests to the colonies in much the same way that aristocratic families dealt with their “difficult” sons. He may even have been made superior of his group in an effort to appease him and to diminish his querulousness, but in vain, for within months of his arrival in New Zealand he had crossed swords with Bishop Pompallier over the question of his leadership of the group. Pompallier planned to use the Franciscans in the Maori mission and gave them North Auckland as their field of work. Joseph Garavel, a French priest who had arrived in New Zealand with Bishop Pompallier in 1850 and who in the late 1850s was “much more in touch with the Maori mind than Pompallier or any other priest,”<sup>9</sup> was sent to work with them and introduce them to the Maori people. This, Barsanti claimed, was tantamount to putting Garavel in charge of them, thus breaking the agreement made in Rome. Toward the end of 1861 he objected to the location of the house given the Franciscans by Pompallier as their convent or friary. This was Pompallier's “best building,” the stone St. Mary's College at Takapuna, a two-story building with about twenty acres of land around it. Barsanti considered it too far away from Auckland, so without consulting Pompallier he and his group abandoned St. Mary's and moved into central Auckland where they rented a house.

When Barsanti turned up at the Cathedral he was told by James McDonald, the vicar general, that his action incurred an automatic suspension. Barsanti was so incensed that he hit or jostled McDonald who was dressed for Mass and carrying the chalice, which fell to the ground and broke. Since such a physical attack carried an automatic excommunication, Pompallier held an official enquiry into the affair with sworn witnesses and all the formalities of a church court. The papers from this enquiry were sent to Rome together with a statement from Barsanti, who also sent many letters to the different authorities in Rome making all sorts of accusations against Pompallier and McDonald. However, Barsanti appears to have been relieved of the excommunication and suspension by Pompallier, but also removed from the superiorship of the Franciscans. He was sent north to join two other Franciscans in the Hokianga district, where he remained officially until 1866.<sup>10</sup>

Barsanti left New Zealand without the permission of either the bishop or his own superiors, and in a letter to Rome in October 1875 he claimed to have been accepted into the Sydney diocese in February 1865.<sup>11</sup> He surely means 1866 for on page 155 of his book he reports seeing Hauhau prisoners in Auckland on 5 February 1866, and on page 39 he speaks of reading the January 1866 issues of the *Daily Southern Cross*. Pompallier, in a letter to Cardinal Barnabo in Rome dated 30 May 1866, refers to the friendly relationship he now enjoys with the Franciscans "above all since the Rev. Fr Barsanti left."<sup>12</sup> However, disagreements between a later bishop and the Franciscans ultimately led to the withdrawal of the order from the diocese. Bishop Croke, writing to Rome on 30 August 1873, said: "The Franciscans, ever a source of much trouble and anxiety have left and I have been fortunate enough to fill their places with good Irish priests."<sup>13</sup>

In Sydney, Barsanti at first found favor with Bishop Polding and for a time acted as his secretary. He was invited to give the clergy retreat in 1867 and was sent to Rome in that year in connection with an enquiry into the integrity of Auxiliary Bishop Sheehy. He acted as secretary and theologian at the 1869 Melbourne synod of Catholic bishops, but he soon incurred Polding's displeasure and spent the next three years in "exile" at St. Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne.<sup>14</sup> During the 1870s he conducted a bitter fight with the Catholic archbishop of Sydney, Roger Vaughan, about which there is an enormous amount of material in the archives of the Propaganda Congregation, Rome. Barsanti even supplied pictures of himself taken by Sydney photographers in the late 1870s, which show him as "a stout, round-faced person with at least two chins and a crucifix stuck in his belt like a weapon."<sup>15</sup>

On 21 May 1875 Barsanti was suspended from the exercise of priestly functions in the Sydney archdiocese by Archbishop Polding, with prompting and support from his chosen successor, Vaughan. Barsanti had had warnings and at least one previous but brief suspension by Polding for repeatedly failing to perform his regular duties. The situation was made worse by his being; often drunk in public, by his bullying verbal assaults on both his fellow priests and lay people, and by at least one case of physical assault: he hit a servant girl on the head with a tumbler and "almost killed" her, allegedly because she was too slow in refilling his glass. This, like his attack on McDonald at the Auckland Cathedral, was cited as a typical example of his violent nature and un-governable temper.

On 4 October 1875 Barsanti made the first of a series of regular appeals to Rome, claiming he was being denied justice in Sydney. Archbishop Vaughan, writing to the Franciscan general superior to seek Barsanti's recall, had emphasized that he had already been moved from both Auckland and Melbourne for stirring up trouble among the priests, among other reasons, and actually asked that he be sent to the Holy Land, to which he had been assigned at some stage and where he may have worked before coming to New Zealand (although this is not clear from the records). Between 1876 and 1883 Vaughan accumulated an impressive pile of testimonies against Barsanti supporting the view that he was, in Vaughan's words, "a scandal and a terror to the people" and had "made a house of the Devil wherever he lived." He was said to have spent most of his time in the "lowest" public houses drinking spirits, arguing violently, and singing raucous songs. Several priests testified to his gluttony, with a great range of anecdotes. Most stressed his "vulgarity": he habitually drank with "the lower classes" and played cards with them for prizes of drink as well as money.

But the papers Vaughan sent to Rome in his efforts to get rid of Barsanti were more than outweighed, literally as well as figuratively, by those Barsanti sent, which even included a locally printed verse denunciation of Vaughan he had written: "To Lord Roger in his Warpaint." But his *pièce de résistance* was surely his letter of 31 August 1878 to the papal secretary of state recommending himself for appointment to the vacant see of Auckland, claiming that an Italian bishop was needed to break "the monotony of Irish abuses."

The picture of his activities is less clear after 1879, but in 1881 Vaughan confirmed to Propaganda that Barsanti was still writing to him and that he refused to reply until Barsanti showed some willingness to withdraw accusations and "make reparation." Fr. Sheridan, who

administered the Sydney archdiocese following Vaughan's sudden death in Europe in August 1883, and who had been a witness to the "assault by tumbler," wrote to the cardinal prefect of Propaganda on 5 May 1884, and mentioned that Barsanti was "settling down" as assistant priest in Newtown, an inner Sydney parish. But this letter was followed by another from Sheridan dated 27 May announcing Barsanti's death on 23 May 1884. He said Barsanti had been admitted to the hospital for attention to an "indisposition." The still doubtful state of Barsanti's position in the eyes of church officials is emphasized by Sheridan's remark that there was no time to give him the sacraments but he hoped Barsanti was in a state of grace. He died in St. Vincent's Hospital, Sydney, and was buried in St. Thomas' churchyard, Petersham.

This then is the colorful author of the pious work on the Protestants among the savages of New Zealand. It is clear from his book that in his five years in New Zealand Barsanti had no personal contact with the followers of Pai Marire and very little with any Maoris. The nearest he came to the Hauhaus was the day in Auckland (5 February 1866) when he witnessed the arrival of thirty or so prisoners, which caused a "sensation of profound commiseration" in his heart.<sup>16</sup> Barsanti's knowledge of both Maori and English at this time was limited, but he read widely and the newspapers of the day were full of information on the progress of the wars between the two races and the spread of Pai Marire.

As to the sources from which I have drawn the material, I would say it is drawn purely from experience, because Pai Marire is an empirical contemporaneous fact which has passed before my own eyes. However . . . I have taken care not to impose my own views and ideas. That which I report . . . [is] lifted bodily from public sources, that is from the New Zealand newspapers . . . I have taken care to remain always acquainted with the facts and to avoid as far as I could all false intelligence and anachronism. To remove the suspicion that I was expressing my own particular opinion when I have had to touch on some odious fact, I have always called on the authority of others on the subject. (P. 5)

His main informants were probably two priests who had had close contact with the Hauhaus: Grange, whom he knew in Auckland, and Garavel who moved to Sydney in 1864. Barsanti also made great use of *Fraser's Magazine* and the *Daily Southern Cross* (which he always wrote *Daily Southren Cross*). Although Barsanti states that his book was

written in New Zealand, it was not published until 1868 and was certainly finished in Australia. It is a small volume of 268 pages with copious footnotes, which should be read according to Barsanti "because they are as necessary as the material contained in the body of the work. Some are historical . . . others philological . . . some are relative to the customs of the natives, a knowledge of them being . . . necessary to the understanding of their genius and to an appreciation of the strangeness of Pai Marire" (p. 4). However, Barsanti's explanations of Maori words and customs clearly demonstrate his limited knowledge of the language and understanding of the people about whom he purports to be writing.<sup>17</sup> In Barsanti's five years in New Zealand he developed firmer views on Protestantism than he did on the Maori. The subtitle of his book, *Story of Pai Marire*, is something of a misnomer. Pai Marire was just a convenient weapon with which he attacked Protestant heresy:

Now that I live among Protestants and I know a good many of them, and each day I find I must examine the foundations and the consequences of their belief, I must confess that all that is attributed to Protestantism is only too true and that the colors in which it has been painted are not black enough to emphasize its ugliness and deformity. (P. 2)

Barsanti's book is not valuable as a history of Pai Marire but as an expression of his view of the reasons for such a movement, which initially he defines as "a new religious system established by the savages of New Zealand by adulterating the Bible and applying to their own needs ideas gleaned from Protestantism" (p. 9). The book is divided into six parts dealing with general, historical, and doctrinal "notions" of Pai Marire, and the development, causes, and results of Pai Marire. The last two parts are purely a reflection of Barsanti's views; the first four are largely a colorful description of the movement "as it has been painted by those who have been in contact with the followers of Pai Marire and have known at first hand their actions" (p. 8).

Under the heading of "Spirit of Pai Marire" Barsanti describes Pai Marire as "a mass of falsities and heresies, a sect, a conspiracy, a web raised on the foundation of odium and contempt of the Pakeha" (p. 28). He then details seven reasons why the Maoris hate the Pakehas and concludes that "Pai Marire, considered subjectively . . . is but a consequence of that bitter hatred which the natives of New Zealand bear towards the Pakehas" (p. 35). He has already noted that "although Pakeha is a general term . . . it would seem that the natives apply this

name only to the English and it is to the English they direct all their odium” (p. 33). The reasons Barsanti gives for the Maoris’ hatred of the Pakeha tell us more about Barsanti’s thoughts than about those of the Maori, although in the 1860s such thinking was fairly widespread and certainly represented in the newspapers of the day. He goes on to say that Pai Marire

considered objectively is without a doubt a web, a party, a sect, which has as its aim to gather together all the sentiments and ideas of the natives whereby to lead them under the banner of a religion to set up a nation, establish for themselves a monarchy, revive their customs, and draw up their own legislation, the Mana of the New Zealanders. (P. 36)

Mana, according to Barsanti is “a Maori expression which means the might or kingdom of the New Zealanders and corresponds to *pro aris focisque* of the Latins and *trono ed altare* of the Italians” (p. 20).

At the end of part 1 Barsanti asks whether the “followers of Pai Marire should be called ‘rebels’ as the English call them” since

the English Crown can only claim sovereignty in New Zealand by virtue of the Treaty of Waitangi, and the nature of that treaty being what it is, it must be concluded that in the view of all nations and in the light of the rights of all peoples, the Maoris are not rebels through struggling for their sovereignty and refusing to subject themselves to the dominion of Queen Victoria, who to the tribes of New Zealand is still a foreign ruler. (P. 44)

He goes on to ask whether they are rebels because they follow Pai Marire, “in as much as it is a formal protest against the teaching of the Evangelicals of London” (p. 45) and concludes that: indeed they are not, for while “unbelievers are obliged to submit to evangelical precepts from the moment they acquire a sufficient knowledge of the Gospel,” the preachers of the Gospel must be “validly instituted and legally sent by He who has the authority” (p. 46). Barsanti, as an “eye witness” of some of these “evangelizers or preachers,” is adamant that

such missionaries have no divine mission . . . and since they preach not Gods truth, but their own private opinions, their dreams, their aberrations regarding the Bible, it follows that



the people before whom they present themselves have no moral obligation to heed them, to believe them, and to submit to the doctrines they preach. Thus the Maoris, denying these ministers by turning to the religion they themselves have founded, cannot in any sense be termed "rebels." (P. 47)

Barsanti is just warming to his theme. In part 5 he says that it is certain that the actions of the English, especially in matters of religion, have brought about a notable change in the character and disposition of the natives.

England sends only idlers, vagabonds, incorrigible rogues, drunkards and swindlers to its colonies. . . . In New Zealand the first Englishmen to set foot were escaped convicts, deserting soldiers and sailors. . . . These were followed by another class of man known as missionaries, but who were in reality cobblers, shop keepers, street sweepers, bar patrons who began their mission with adultery, rape, theft, homicide and who, by accomplishing such a mission, gained their independence and became "gentry." Now what stability, what morality, what religion, what concept of Christian truths and maxims could these poor savages acquire in contact with men of such character and under the tutelage of such missionaries? (P. 171)

In looking for the cause of Pai Marire, Barsanti examines the view of Bishop Selwyn and the opinions expressed in the daily newspapers and finds the causes to which they attribute its genesis but "contributing causes and not the true efficient cause." The true cause is nothing less than Protestantism. "Far from being an inspiration of Catholicism, as some fanatical Anglicans would shamelessly assert, Pai Marire is a natural product of Protestantism" (p. 117). He frequently cites the Protestants' fundamental error, in his view, of allowing their followers to read and interpret the Bible for themselves. "Even those who do not know the letters of the alphabet are entreated to provide themselves with a Bible . . . for merely possessing it and casting an eye at it morning and night is sufficient to become acquainted with all the beautiful truths and maxims contained therein" (p. 196). But he expresses other views too about the causes of Pai Marire. In a passage on pages 37-40 it seems clear he accepts the basis of Pai Marire as nascent nationalism, a response to loss of land, loss of mana (even though he did not recognize it in that terminology).

Banished from their lands, worsted in all their undertakings the Maori had begun to despair of success. There is no courage equal to the courage of fanaticism. It is this which has infused a new spirit in the Maori race. . . . But Pai Marire is also something more than fanaticism, more than a frenzied impulse of a savage people. . . . It is a political and religious movement, a patriotic and nationalist movement. . . . (P. 40)

Later Barsanti attacks the Maori language monthly newspaper *Te Haeata*, published by the Methodist Mission in Auckland between 1859 and 1862, as “one of the most impious and wicked newspapers . . . the cause of all the religious ills among the natives, for in the way it has ridiculed the Catholic Church and its practices and glorified Protestantism, it has led the Maoris to hate the religion of the Pakehas and to renounce their God” (p. 197).<sup>18</sup> He then argues that the cause of Pai Marire is not that the Maoris have misinterpreted the Bible, but that as true Protestants they have exercised their liberty of conscience and have rejected it altogether (p. 199). “Pai Marire then, is naught but a logical consequence of the principles of Protestantism, the result: of all the teaching given the Maoris by the Protestant ministers” (p. 200).

The final part of Barsanti’s book deals with the results of Pai Marire. These he sees as being the disappointment it brought to the Protestant ministers, to the Bible Society, and to the missionary societies in London; and the failure of the Protestant missions in New Zealand. “The real cause, the intrinsic and philosophical cause of the unhappy outcome of the Protestant missions among the savages of New Zealand” is that Protestantism “considers man first of all as a material being, created for commerce, and not as a spiritual being created for his God” (pp. 244, 246)—thus Barsanti echoes Marsden and Williams and the civilizing/Christianizing dichotomy of the early days of the C. M. S. in New Zealand. But it is the ordination of Maori ministers that Barsanti deems to be the final reason for the failure of the Protestant missions, for they

came to the conclusion that even the Pakeha ministers were no more nor less than were the Maori ministers . . . that they had no more need of Pakeha ministers. . . . From the idea of ministers and their ministry they passed to the religion they represented and concluded that it was a vile thing. . . . The end result of it all was that they abandoned themselves to indifference. (Pp. 265-266)

Barsanti concludes his pious treatise on Protestantism among the savages of New Zealand as follows:

Thus through the teaching and institution of Protestantism, the Maoris denied what little Christianity they had received, set themselves against all religious sentiment and threw themselves into the arms of Pai Marireism which, if one excludes the secret odium and bitterness against the Pakehas which constitutes its being and reduces it to its ultimate expression, is naught: but a new genre of indifferentism, the only fruit that Protestantism has harvested from all its sweat and all its labours in the New Zealand mission. (P. 268)

The religious attitudes of the times were certainly more remarkable for bigotry than for understanding between the various sects and churches. As previously stated many early C. M. S. and Wesleyan missionaries did not even regard the Roman Catholic church as a Christian church. William Williams seemed almost unable to write "Catholic" priest or missionary, referring to them instead as "Popish" or "Romish." Catholic missionaries regarded Protestants as heretics; Lampilla referred to them as "children of the devil" and to William Williams as a "false prophet who in sheep's clothing seeks only to deceive and devour his brothers."<sup>19</sup> Each side accused the other of being responsible for inspiring the fanaticism of Pai Marire. Barsanti's views are not too extreme when judged in the climate of his time, but a modern reader is tempted to wonder whether his pious writing was not perhaps some kind of penance for his outlandish behavior.

### **Vaggioli: Story of New Zealand**

Domenico Vaggioli, in company with another Benedictine priest and four lay brothers<sup>20</sup> came to New Zealand with Archbishop Steins, arriving on the *Ringaroota* on 23 December 1879.<sup>21</sup> Vaggioli belonged to the Cassinese Congregation of the Primitive Observance, a branch of the Benedictine family formed with missionary work in mind. The Franciscans had left Auckland in 1873 and the city had been without a bishop for nearly six years. Propaganda in Rome had approached several orders asking if they could undertake mission work in the Auckland diocese and the Benedictines had offered to help on the understanding that they would serve a trial period of some years, during which they would decide whether to take over the diocese. As a result of this

arrangement Auckland had a Benedictine bishop, Dom Edmund Luck, for fourteen years from 1882 to 1896, and an association with the Benedictine community that lasted for fifty years.<sup>22</sup>

Dom Felice Vaggioli, O.S.B.,<sup>23</sup> and Dom Cuthbert Downey were the first Benedictine priests to arrive in New Zealand, and they were followed later in 1880 by another six, mostly from the new Ramsgate community in England. Newton was assigned to the Benedictines as their main center, but on 9 February 1880, Vaggioli was appointed to Gisborne. This was due in part to the Gisborne priest having been moved to a vacancy caused by James McDonald's appointment to the Maori Mission, and in part perhaps to the fact that Vaggioli was "an energetic and masterful man who seems not to have worked very closely with his confrères,"<sup>24</sup> and a "difficult man, restive under authority,"<sup>25</sup> although all the Benedictine priests in New Zealand seemed rather difficult men to control.<sup>26</sup> Simmons describes Vaggioli as energetic, intelligent, and scholarly;<sup>27</sup> in the photograph in his *Storia della Nuova Zelanda* he looks stern, ascetic, and forbidding. His first task in Gisborne was to learn both English and Maori, which he did to good effect, gaining the support of settlers of all denominations and putting the Gisborne parish, which he reportedly found debt ridden, on a firm footing and restoring the poorly built church. He remained in Gisborne until September 1882 when he returned to the community in Newton and was appointed by Bishop Luck as chairman of the committee to gather offerings and subscriptions toward the payment of the debt on their new church of St. Benedict.

In 1885 Vaggioli was appointed to Coromandel where he "suffered from the lack of understanding on the part of the missionary sisters, but found great consolation in his apostolate among the poor woodcutters of the district."<sup>28</sup> The "missionary sisters" were the Sisters of Mercy who had gone to Coromandel when their convent and school were established in 1882. The Irish Sisters of Mercy had first arrived in New Zealand with Pompallier on 9 April 1850. Those who "tackled the roaring settlements full of red-shirted goldminers and bushmen were obviously no pious shrinking violets. . . . Their weapons were the school and their skill as nurses which made them invaluable to Catholics and Protestants alike."<sup>29</sup> It is not clear why Vaggioli did not get along with them—perhaps because he was Italian and they Irish. Although the Irish-English antagonism predominated, there was certainly nationalistic feeling among and between the various religious groups of the day.<sup>30</sup>

Vaggioli was transferred from Coromandel in 1887, and at the end of

that year, due to ill health, he returned to Italy where he eventually became abbot visitor of the Italian province of the Cassinese Congregation of the Benedictines. He died on 23 April 1921. Little has remained in the records of Vaggioli's work in New Zealand, but it is said that he was "an erudite and attractive personality and a good and successful priest in New Zealand, who did a good job in both Gisborne and Auckland, where he was famous for his sermons and talks."<sup>31</sup> Not the colorful character Barsanti was, Vaggioli's name may not have been well remembered in connection with New Zealand had it not been for his massive two-volume history published in Parma in 1891 (vol. 1) and 1896 (vol. 2). The work shows that he gained a good knowledge of the country through firsthand contact and through wide reading.

Vaggioli's two volumes are a general history of New Zealand modeled more or less on A. S. Thomson's two volume *Story of New Zealand* (1859). Volume 1 is divided in two parts, the first of which deals with the physical aspects of the country, the second with its native people. Volume 2 deals with both races, European and Maori, from first contact till 1887. They were written, he said, in compliance with the "exhortation of the Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of the Propaganda of the Faith in his circular of 1883 to all the Catholic Missions of the world . . . to collect and preserve for history what they could discover from the savages about their ancient customs and usages."<sup>32</sup> Vaggioli also read widely among the early writers on New Zealand and quotes extensively and translates many passages from Thomson, Taylor, Servant, Hochstetter, Grey, Williams, Maning, Rusden, and Barsanti. The value of these two volumes lies not in their content, but in their color; the story is old, but the perspective is new. Vaggioli's sources are familiar enough, but he did not always agree with the views of those early writers, especially with their views of the Maori race. He did not agree, for instance, with "the illustrious Doctor Thomson" that "the heads of the New Zealanders are smaller than those of the English" nor with the view that the "intelligence of the New Zealanders is inferior to that of Europeans." He believed that the Maori of old were "sober, honest and hospitable, respecting others" but that, mingling with Europeans they

lost their simplicity and exchanged their hardworking and frugal ways for slothfulness, debauchery, drunkenness and other vices shown them by the English colonists, without gaining any of their good qualities. From this it may be seen that the opinion of those who called the New Zealanders stupid and pusillanimous is quite without value. (Pp. 263, 264)

Thomson's writing is touched with what was later called Social Darwinism, but he also exhibited the sort of racist views that were becoming common among the English of the day. His writing "mirrored the attitudes and concerns of the colonists."<sup>33</sup> Vaggioli feared for the future of the Maori race, but for moral, not racial reasons. In fact he has an altogether nonracist view of the Maori people as ordinary human beings, some good, some bad, some intelligent, some less so, but all, unhappily, led astray by the English. Thomson's Maoris are childlike; Vaggioli's are adults, but misguided. They will perish as a race not because they are racially inferior but because the English, instead of raising their moral standards simply added more vices to those they already possessed. "Poor unhappy New Zealanders! Protestantism planted in their hearts indifferentism above all else; and reduced them to a state of moral and religious degradation worse by far than that which they knew prior to the invasion of the cultured Europeans" (p. 573).

Vaggioli is generally more restrained than Barsanti in his criticism of Protestant missionaries;<sup>34</sup> his severest condemnation is reserved for the English merchants and settlers. Volume 1 ends with a discourse on cannibalism which "commerce and English civilization did not in half a century succeed in ending or diminishing" since "the English merchants sought only profits and their own enrichment to the detriment of those poor simple islanders." Cannibalism did, however, cease to exist in 1843 and

the glory of this solemn victory over the most tremendous barbarism may not be attributed either to commerce or to ephemeral modern civilization, or to the Protestantism introduced by the English; no this glory is entirely due to the teachings of the Catholic Church and to the preaching of its zealous evangelical apostles established there in 1838. (P. 671)

A certain degree of bigotry is to be expected in nineteenth-century missionary writing, but this sort of statement, that the Catholics were able to achieve in five years what the Protestants could not achieve in twenty-five, is unfortunate in the light of Vaggioli's generally enlightened tenor of writing.

Volume 2 opens in the same vein. The missionaries at the Bay of Islands are blamed for not preventing discord between the two races and the atrocities and villany of the whalers and merchants. This is not New Zealand history as seen through Italian eyes; it is simply a rerun of

the well-known Catholic-Protestant controversy. It would have taken more than a handful of missionaries, Protestant or Catholic, to “instil a little humanity” among the Europeans present in New Zealand in the 1820s and 1830s. As Vaggioli himself says, the British government was unable to control its subjects in a country specifically claimed to be “not within His Majesty’s Dominions.”<sup>35</sup>

It is when Vaggioli writes of the wars of the 1860s that an Italian view of New Zealand history emerges.

Until 1859 those poor savages believed that the Colonial Government as well as the English Government would always respect their recognized rights. . . . But in 1860 they were obliged to change their minds, convinced at last . . . that the Colonial Government ranged against them meant to enforce its unjust pretensions through the muzzle of a gun and was determined to subjugate them or crush them. . . . After four years of fierce struggle the insurgent Maoris saw themselves forced out of their peaceful dwellings; saw with immense anguish their churches, villages . . . and all other belongings . . . consigned to the flames; they saw with horror the sacreligious profanation of their burial grounds and the mortal remains of their revered ancestors vilified and thrown to the winds . . . they saw many of their loved ones perish from hunger, from cold and from privation and all of them reduced to the most squalid misery; they saw themselves insulted, reviled and subject to the most villainous indignities on the part of the colonial militia and unprincipled settlers; they saw that the soldiery had neither religion nor conscience, nor decency; but were all intent on drunkenness, immorality and every other irregularity.<sup>36</sup>

This nineteenth-century view of the justice of the Maori cause would not have endeared Vaggioli’s writings to his contemporary Pakehas, as Simmons suggests.<sup>37</sup> A century later it: has a surprisingly modern ring.

Vaggioli deals with Pai Marire briefly in volume 1 and more fully in volume 2. He uses Barsanti as his source and gives what amounts to a summary of Barsanti’s account of Horopapera, of the meaning of Pai Marire terminology, of the propagation of the movement, and of the tragedies at Opotiki and Whakatane.<sup>38</sup> Vaggioli disagreed with Barsanti on some points, however. For instance Barsanti believed Tamihana had gone over to the Hauhaus. In a note on page 39 he comments that the author of an article in *Fraser’s Magazine* was mistaken in believing that

he had not done so, that the article was written before the publication of another in "all the newspapers of New Zealand," reporting that Tamihana and Rewi had "unfortunately espoused the new cause." Vaggioli says Tamihana "did not take part in the fanaticism of the Hauhaus; . . . he ever sought the good in the two races and union and peace between them, as did Bishop Selwyn, Sir William Martin, Mons. Pompallier, all the Catholic missionaries and many other honourable and upright people in the Colony" (p. 434). Barsanti was more susceptible to the sensationalist press than was Vaggioli, and was more bigoted in outlook. Vaggioli is prepared to accept "the Maori view, expressed in the official documents compiled by Volkner's killers and sent to the Government in Auckland" (p. 434), that Pai Marire was a response not to Protestantism, but to the treatment the Maori received at the hands of the English settlers.

Vaggioli follows Barsanti in his account of the killing of Volkner, of Grace's escape from Hauhaus hands, and of Garavel's supposed part in the affair.<sup>39</sup>

Notwithstanding the clear proof of the falsity of the accusation hurled at Father Garavel and the Catholic priests, all English writers either maintained total silence on the subject or gave credit to the lies put out by Hadfield by declaring it a proven fact that the Catholic Missionaries had a part in the death of Volkner. . . . Among these betrayers of the truth must be counted Rusden, who prides himself on having written his History from official documents! Unhappy history; what hands you have fallen into! (P. 435)

In fact Rusden has very little to say about Catholicism or its missionaries, but mentions that the Pai Marire liturgy was supposed to be compounded partly of Roman Catholic elements. However, he suggests that Kereopa and his followers appreciated that "a recognition of the Pope of Rome was treachery not only to the Queen but to the very essence of English freedom" and that they courted the religion of Rome as a means of breaking down Maori loyalty to the Queen.<sup>40</sup> It is fanciful to suggest the Hauhaus understood all the implications of the Reformation, but this does not amount to Rusden's having accused the Catholic missionaries of having a part in the death of Volkner. Vaggioli also accuses Rusden of "passing over in a single sentence" the Maori lapse from Christianity when they observed "the conduct of the majority of the militia and colonists who passed for Christians without observing the laws of Christianity" (p. 436). Yet Rusden's and Vaggioli's views on nineteenth-



century Maori-Pakeha relations are not dissimilar. Rusden's three volume *History of New Zealand* published in 1883 is, according to Hocken, "a full and scholarly work, abounding in laborious research and criticism, discounted by strong philo-Maori views, and censure on the treatment adopted towards the natives since our first contact with them and especially during the war of 1860-69."<sup>41</sup> The *History* was suppressed after a trial for libel brought against Rusden by John Bryce (Minister of Native Affairs in the Hall, Whitaker, and Atkinson ministries from 1879 to 1884), who claimed he had been defamed by certain statements in the book.<sup>42</sup>

Vaggioli quotes Rusden word for word—but without acknowledging the fact—on the role of the Maori Land Court in dispossessing the Maori of their land. He also uses Rusden as a source of information on Te Whiti, to whom he devotes eleven pages. He called Te Whiti "more of a politician than all the politicians in New Zealand," "a man without peer in the annals of the Maoris," and said of him that his attitude was "that of one who aspired to become the Saviour of the Maori race." However, Vaggioli found it "surprising that this man endowed with talent and intelligence, with the just ideas which he has about the various Protestant sects and about the Catholic religion, persists in maintaining his religious errors" (pp. 510, 515, 516).

Vaggioli's history ends on a somber note. The colonists of New Zealand in the 1870s are far from models of virtue and morality, and the Maoris are even further. They are less barbarous but not better than their ancestors, and from the Europeans they have learned vices but not virtues. "If this is the civilization intended to be gifted to the Maoris, better would it have been for them to remain in their ancient state of barbarity and simplicity" (pp. 544, 546). Vaggioli notes the rapid material progress made by New Zealand "under the enterprising spirit of the Anglo-Saxon race" but concludes: "Only the Maoris see themselves slowly disappearing; conscious of being unable to survive the invasion of the colonists they prepare to perish with a fatalistic resignation which stirs pity" (p. 547). The Maori have lost: heart and hope, not because they are inherently inferior to the European, but because they have turned their back on Vaggioli's God. But his dire predictions of a terrible end apply equally to the colony, whose increasing debt will cause its "ephemeral grandeur to vanish like the mist" (p. 547).

### Conclusion

New Zealand in the later nineteenth century was not an easy place in which to fulfill a missionary vocation. Gone were the early days of more

egalitarian race relations; gone the heady days of mass conversions. Rather than winning converts the missions were losing many of those they had made earlier. If the Protestant missionaries with a good command of the Maori language found the times difficult, how much more difficult it must have been for Italian religious, fresh from Europe. They had come to fight a losing battle on all fronts. One way to salvage something from their time among the "savages" was to bring a knowledge of them to a wider audience at home, where New Zealand was little known. But their limited command of the Maori language meant that they understood them only in their own terms. They were dependent too on English-language sources, which were in themselves subjective and with which they often disagreed, so that at times their writing tells us more about the writer and his view of English Protestants than it tells us about the Maori. The Protestants were missionaries of English culture as much as they were missionaries of religion. The Catholic Church was more tolerant of the local laws and customs of its converts; its missionaries were taught not to draw parallels between the customs of the natives and those of Europe, to accept harmless native customs, and to use caution in eradicating others.<sup>43</sup> So they were less judgmental of the Maori than they were of their fellow Pakeha. We might talk then of a Catholic view of the nineteenth-century Maori world, were it not for the fact that many of the Irish seemed to have the same sort of racist views as the English. The Italian view, like the French perhaps, was not a racist view. The Maori was not seen as inherently inferior, his ways were not necessarily to be changed. He was to be made Christian, that is Catholic, and thus would inevitably become civilized. He would become a Maori Catholic, not a Catholic Maori. It was Protestantism, not race, which held him back, so judgments were made in moral not racial terms.

This different point of view would in itself be sufficient to make the writings of these two Italian priests interesting and valuable. They are also valuable in that they are almost the only record in Italian of the nineteenth-century Maori world. Barsanti was bigoted and biased, but no more so than many of his Protestant contemporaries. In his personal problems he had first to struggle with Satan and then with his bishop, and he found a convenient scapegoat in the Protestants. His book is not so much the story of *Pai Marire* as a pious treatise inspired by the bitter doctrinal controversies of the times and calculated to create a sympathetic reception in his readers. Barsanti, like Vaggioli, perhaps understood well enough the reasons underlying *Pai Marire*. He talks of Protestant missionaries taking land from the Maori in great quantities and

paying only with trifles, and reports that the Maori were impressed when the Roman Catholic missionaries did not take land. He quotes newspaper articles emphasizing the importance of land, yet he chooses to play down this most fundamental reason in favor of spirited attacks on Protestantism, Protestant missionaries, and Protestant methods. It is perhaps an act of atonement of one fallen from grace.

Vaggioli's writing is more soundly based. His *Story of New Zealand* is a comprehensive history and deserves to be better known. He wrote with more judgment and less bias than Barsanti. He had a wider knowledge of the country and a deeper understanding of and compassion for the Maori people; and though he was dependent on English-language sources for much of his information, his view and judgment differed. All the missionary writers were products of their culture, their religion, their time, and all were writing for a home market on which they were dependent for funds to prosecute the struggle against darkness and heresy and bring salvation to savage souls. It is as well for Barsanti and Vaggioli that they were able to write in a language little understood on this side of the world. Had they written in English their books may have suffered the same fate as Rusden's, for their writings record a period in New Zealand's history when it was not at all clear who were the saviours and who the savages.

## NOTES

1. Pai Marire, founded in 1862 by the prophet Te Ua, was one of the many attempts on the part of the Maori to adjust to intensifying European contact. Pai Marire literally means "good and peaceful," and it is necessary to distinguish between the religion as devised by Te Ua and the interpretation put on it by his followers. Early writers described it variously as "blasphemous nonsense," "a return to barbarism and superstition," and "a struggle to preserve national existence." Paul Clark's *"Hauhau": The Pai Marire Search for Mauri Identity* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, Oxford University Press, 1975), was "A more positive approach to Pai Marire, one that emphasizes its adaptive qualities." But whereas Clark saw the movement as based on a new and uniquely Maori religious foundation, Lesley Head in her "Te Ua and the Hauhau Faith in the Light of the Ua Cospel Notebook" (M.A. Thesis, University of Canterbury, 1983) says it was a Biblical religion firmly within the Judeo-Christian tradition. Her view is based on "a full and accurate translation of a difficult text previously only partly or wrongly translated." Obviously the last word has not been written on this complex movement.

2. For an annotated translation of excerpts from all three volumes, see Hazel Riseborough, "Saviours and Savages: An Italian View of the 19th Century Maori World" (BA Honors Research Exercise, Massey University, 1983).

3. See Jane Thomson, "Some Reasons for the Failure of the Roman Catholic Mission to the Maoris, 1838-1860," *New Zealand Journal of History* 3 (1969), 166-174, for a discussion on the difficulties faced by the Roman Catholics and on Catholic-Protestant discord.

4. ACPF SRC Oceania, vol. 6, f. 1078. (Reference given by Fr. E. R. Simmons.)

5. E. R. Simmons, *In Cruce Salus: A History of the Diocese of Auckland 1848-1980* (Auckland: Catholic Publications Centre, 1982), 139, 155; Simmons, personal communication, 20 April 1983.

6. A. E. Cahill, personal communication, 29 May 1983.

7. Mr. A. E. Cahill of the History Department, University of Sydney, kindly supplied information from the archives of the Propaganda Congregation, Rome, the Vatican's "Colonial Office." His sources are ACPF SRC Oceania, vol. 11, 1877-1878, folios 469-721; vol. 12, 1879, folios 6-7, 208-212, 1119-1161; vol. 13, 1880-1881, folios 432-501; and vol. 14, 1882-1884, folios 937, 1101, 1136. Most of the information on Barsanti in Australia used in this paper is from these sources.

8. T. J. Linane, "From Abel to Zundolovich," *Footprints* 1, no. 3 (1971), 23. This list of priests who worked in Australia in the nineteenth century appears regularly in *Footprints*, the quarterly journal of the Diocesan Historical Commission, Melbourne. The article on Barsanti was from information supplied by Fr. Angelo O'Hagan, Box Hill, Victoria.

9. Simmons, 63.

10. Fr. E. R. Simmons, personal communication, 20 April 1983.

11. See note 7.

12. Quoted in Simmons, 76.

13. Quoted in Simmons, 119.

14. Linane, 23.

15. A. E. Cahill, personal communication, 29 May 1983. Fr. E. R. Simmons kindly loaned a photograph from the Auckland Catholic Diocesan Archives that shows Barsanti in similar guise but presumably many years younger.

16. Ottavio Barsanti, *I Protestanti tra i Selvaggi Della Nuova Zelanda ossia Storia del Pai Marire* (Turin: Pietro Di G. Marietti, Tipografo Pontificio, 1868), 155. Subsequent references will be given in parentheses in the text.

17. See Riseborough, Research Exercise, 61-62.

18. *Te Haeata* was nothing exceptional when compared in tone to many of the publications of the day issued by both Catholics and Protestants. See Riseborough, Research Exercise, 158-166, for Maori text and English translations of the articles from *Te Haeata* that so raised Barsanti's ire.

19. Jane Thomson, "The Roman Catholic Mission in New Zealand 1838-1870" (M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1966), 60.

20. Simmons, 143; but there is some disagreement on the composition of the party. Vaggioli (vol. 2, p. 519) says there were three priests and two lay brothers.

21. The name of the vessel is variously spelled "Ringaroonia" (*Herald*, 23 December 1879) and "Ringarooma" (*N. Z. Tablet*, 19 December 1879); its date of arrival is given both as 22 and 23 December.

22. Simmons, 142-143.

23. This was Domenico Vaggioli's religious title and name. He was known in New Zealand as Father Felix Vaggioli, as the Benedictine title Dom was not used there.
24. David Parry, "The Subiakan Mission to New Zealand," *Tjurunga: An Australasian Benedictine Review* 8 (1974), 340.
25. Sr. M. Gregory, personal communication, 26 August 1983.
26. Simmons, 165.
27. *Ibid.*, 144.
28. Parry, 340.
29. Simmons, 167.
30. See, for example, Simmons, 169-170, 185.
31. Fr. E. R. Simmons, personal communication, 20 April 1983.
32. Felice Vaggioli, *Storia della Nuova Zelanda e dei Suoi Abitatori*, vol. 1 (Parma: Tipografia Vesc. Fiaccadori, 1891), 1. Subsequent references to this volume will be given in parentheses in the text.
33. M. P. K. Sorrenson, *Maori Origins and Migrations: The Genesis of Some Pakeha Myths and Legends* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, Oxford University Press, 1979), 74.
34. But William Williams comes in for a lot of criticism. See Riseborough, *Research Exercise*, 119, 142.
35. Peter Adams, *Fatal Necessity: British Intervention in New Zealand 1830-1847* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, Oxford University Press, 1977), 52-53.
36. Felice Vaggioli, *Storia della Nuova Zelanda e dei Suoi Abitatori*, vol. 2 (Parma: Tipografia Vesc. Fiaccadori, 1896), 357. Subsequent references to this volume will be given in parentheses in the text.
37. Simmons, 139.
38. V. Lanternari, in *The Religions of the Oppressed* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1963), 248-256, citing Vaggioli and failing to mention Barsanti, uses this as his main source on the history of the movement in his account of Pai Marire.
39. See Riseborough, *Research Exercise*, 69. For a well-documented account of the killing of the C.M.S. missionary Volkner by Hauhaus in Opotiki in 1865, Garavel's supposed involvement, and the execution of Kereopa in 1872 for his complicity in the crime, see Clark, 20-21, 31-41.
40. G. W. Rusden, *History of New Zealand*, vol. 2 (London: Chapman and Hall; Melbourne and Sydney: George Robertson, 1883), 286-287.
41. T. W. Hocken, *A Bibliography of the Literature Relating to New Zealand* (Wellington: Government Printer, 1909), 348-349.
42. A. H. McLintock, ed., *An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, vol. 2 (Wellington: Government Printer, 1966), 303.
43. Thomson, "Roman Catholic Mission," 95-96.