It is not to be doubted that this country has been invested with wealth and power, with arts and knowledge, with the sway of distant lands, and the mastery of restless waters, for some great and important purpose in the government of the world. Can we suppose otherwise than that it is our office to carry civilization and humanity, peace and good government, and, above all, the knowledge of the true God, to the uttermost ends of the earth?
— The Rev. W. Whewell’s sermon to the Trinity Board, quoted in the Report... on Aborigines, 1837.

This essay is an examination of the British civilizing mission in antipodean New Zealand, and in particular of the rôle attributed to those vital agents of civilization — commerce, Christianity, and colonization. They were confidently expected to bring about what Europeans in the nineteenth century called the amalgamation of the races. The civilized Maori were ultimately to be absorbed or assimilated into the European population. Perhaps to a greater extent than any other British colony New Zealand was, and has remained, a monument to the evangelicals and the utilitarians. But in New Zealand the civilizing mission was continued — by British colonists — through the later nineteenth century (and indeed into the twentieth) when it was being tempered or abandoned in other parts of the colonial empire for segregation or differentiation. This essay will explain some of the reasons why New Zealand was different.

The continued pursuit of assimilation in New Zealand owed a good deal to assessments of the Maori and their capacity for civilization. Indeed the Maori had the good fortune to be ranked higher than most other ‘savages’. Exponents of the old theory of a Great Chain of Being invariably put the Maori somewhat above the unfortunate Hottentots or Australian Aborigines who were usually placed in the last links in the chain between man and the apes. It was much the same if a more modern though still pre-Darwinian evolutionary scheme was used, for the Maori, with their sedentary agriculture and skilled arts, were usually placed on the border between savagery and barbarism and assumed to be capable, with proper guidance, of graduating to civilization. It is true that some
Christian diffusionists saw the Maori as having degenerated from a higher stage, but they had little doubt that the process could be reversed. Moreover they regarded the Maori as having descended from one of the lost tribes of Israel: these Polynesian sons of Shem could at least escape the stigma that was attached to the African (and Australian) sons of Ham. The Maori were well treated by the early exponents of anthropology.

Nevertheless the Maori who emerges from the pages of early publications on New Zealand was no Noble Savage: that reputation so far as Polynesians were concerned was reserved for the more compliant Tahitians. The Maori gloried in war and indulged in cannibalism. They dealt some savage and apparently treacherous blows to incautious explorers and traders: Tasman lost four men; Cook on his first voyage was repeatedly greeted by aggressive behaviour and often opened fire; on Cook's second voyage the Adventure, commanded by Furneaux, lost ten men; and in the same year the French explorer, Marion du Fresne, who apparently did regard the Maori as a Noble Savage, was killed along with twenty-six of his crew. The victims were eaten. This savage behaviour had one beneficial result: New Zealand was spared from becoming a convict settlement. But ships from the convict settlement that was established in Australia were soon frequenting New Zealand waters and some of them — the most notable was the Boyd in 1809 — were cut off and their crews killed. The Maori remained dangerous and apparently treacherous savages.

Yet this was not the only aspect of their behaviour that attracted notice. The Maori had quite an advanced form of agriculture, sophisticated fishing gear, skilfully woven garments, and elaborately carved artefacts; these were clear evidence of industry and ingenuity. Moreover the Maori were quickly alive to the possibilities of commerce; they were willing, after an initial display of defiance, to barter fresh fish, artefacts, and, with more hesitation, women, for cloth, bottles, spike nails, and iron. This could become the seed of a valuable commerce since New Zealand, as Cook found, was rich in products like hemp and spars that were useful to a naval and mercantile power. Yet there remained a problem of how to discipline and guide the Maori into peaceable and reliable trading partners, and of persuading them that they would gain more by open-handed exchange than by attempting to 'pluck the Pakeha' or steal their goods. There was also a good deal that Europeans had to learn about Maori culture and behaviour. Cook and his companions began to unravel some of the apparent irrationalities of Maori savagery. They inquired closely and persistently into the nature of Maori cannibalism and found — correctly, as it turned out — that this was a means of utu, of taking revenge upon one's enemy. Though the Maori were fierce and unrelenting in dealing with their enemies, their treatment of kin was marked by tenderness and affection. As Cook, Banks and others soon found friendship and hospitality could be extended to strangers once initial suspicion had been overcome and other proprieties observed. Cook summed it up by noting
that ‘Notwithstanding they are Cannibals, they are naturaly of a good disposisision [sic] and have not a little share of humanity’. Europeans still had to learn to respect the laws of tapu and the mana of chiefs; it was probably their failure to do so that provoked the massacres of Marion du Fresne and some of his crew, and the crew of the Boyd. Such affrays emphasized the dangers of commercial contact with the Maori, but such was their demand for European goods and particularly military hardware that the Maori soon accommodated themselves to even the most outrageous behaviour of Europeans. For a period after 1815 New Zealand offered merchants and whalers lucrative cargoes of whale oil, flax (scraped by hand by Maori women at a ton per musket) and timber, cheap provisions and ample pleasures.

The details of this burgeoning commerce cannot be measured here; my concern is with commerce as an agent for civilizing the Maori. Though there was much criticism of the activities of unscrupulous traders and the ill effects of unregulated trade in muskets and spirits, few European observers doubted the ultimate beneficence of properly conducted commerce. Take for instance that pioneer of commerce and Christianity in New Zealand, the Rev. Samuel Marsden, chaplain to the convict settlement at New South Wales and founder of the Anglican mission to New Zealand. He indulged in the New Zealand trade (though not, be it added, the musket trade) for his personal profit, distributing agricultural implements in the rather naive hope that they would be used solely for agricultural purposes: ‘as the comforts of the natives increase so will their civilization be proportionately improved. ... They neither want industry nor natural ability of mind nor strength of body. All these they possess, perhaps, in superior degree to any other barbarous race upon earth. And as their climate and soil are suitable for agriculture they no doubt will make a very rapid progress in the attainment of the necessary comforts of civil life.’ Thanks to the patient instruction of Marsden’s lieutenants — and also to an insatiable demand for iron wares — the Maori did make rapid progress in agriculture, and in the barter of agricultural produce with visiting ships. Marsden saw in agriculture and trade the first steps in civilization and, in turn, the adoption of Christianity; for the Maori they provided the wherewithal for war. Certainly Hongi Hika, the Ngapuhi chief who was the first to obtain a supply of muskets, was to demonstrate in his career of conquest in the 1820s that trade provided the sinews of war. Other chiefs quickly followed suit. Yet there was always hope that commercial activity would eventually provide a substitute for war. Thus Augustus Earle, an itinerant artist who visited northern New Zealand in the late 1820s, hoped that commerce would replace barbarous rites. After a visit to the Hokianga river where he noted the Maori keenly working in a European boat-yard, Earle described boat-building as ‘the best method of civilizing a savage’. And as J. S. Polack put it, ‘however simple the wants of people may be, yet no sooner are they possessed of the article of European manufacture, the possession of it begets additional requisites;
thus, slowly, but nevertheless eventually, progresses their civilization'.

Polack was writing in the year of New Zealand's annexation when there was widespread optimism that the Maori had at last found in agriculture and trade a substitute rather than the means for war: "The most pleasurable devotion of time, is no longer the dance of love or war; but barter. . . . This new passion with the New Zealander, may be regarded as the primary cause of his progression, from uncivilization to a new moral state of existence." Another observer saw the Maori as having become 'irrevocably enslaved by wants which were unfelt by their ancestors'.

European optimism was to continue in the first two decades of colonization, despite the set-backs of military conflict in the New Zealand Company settlements and Heke's war in the north, for the Maori continued to supply the colonists with agricultural produce, labour, and other services. By the early 1850s Maori agriculture was so advanced that they were able to supply the bulk of New Zealand's exports to the Victorian goldfields. Sir George Grey, who as governor had effectively ended the conflicts in the Cook Straits settlements and in the north and done much to encourage Maori agriculture and commerce, left the country in peace and prosperity in 1853, confidently asserting that the amalgamation of the races was rapidly being achieved. By 1859, when A. S. Thomson published his *Story of New Zealand . . . Savage and Civilized*, the progress was even more impressive:

tattooed natives are to be seen between the plough handles, and men congregate around the evening fire to talk about the appearance of the crops. The sound of the flail is heard in the huts; and the beggar, the constant attendant of the enlightened civilization of Europe, is unknown. The engrossing subjects of conversation are the relative value of mills, vessels, horses, and bullocks, with the best means of raising money for purchasing these articles. . . . But the amount of free-labour produce exchanged for articles of usefulness and gratification is the best measure of this progressive civilization . . . idleness, the besetting sin of savages and the root of all evil, is fast giving way to industry.

Within a year this idyllic condition was being destroyed by war between the races. But this crisis in the civilizing mission cannot be examined until the roles of Christianity and colonization have been discussed.

In the New Zealand case the precise relationship of commerce and Christianity as agents of civilization was subject to some confusion. Marsden assumed that it was necessary to civilize before attempting to convert the heathen. So he started his New Zealand mission with godly mechanics rather than ordained priests. Kendall, the first head of the mission, was a schoolmaster; he was accompanied by a blacksmith and a carpenter; and a little later, following Hongi's persistent requests, Marsden sent over George Clarke, a gunsmith. But the godly mechanics made no progress whatsoever in converting the Maori. Their predicament was neatly if cruelly summed up by the ungodly Earle: 'I once saw a sturdy blacksmith . . . sitting in the midst of a group of savages, attempting to expound to them the mysteries of our holy redemption — perplexing his
own brains, as well as those of his auditors, with the most incomprehensible and absurd opinions. In fact the local missionaries were gradually rectifying Marsden's error. The arrival of the Williams brothers in the mid-1820s had provided a new and effective leadership. Henry, a former naval officer, became head of the C.M.S. mission, earned the respect of the proud and turbulent chiefs as a man of mana, and began to emerge in the late 1820s as a successful peacemaker. William was a scholar who gave a lead to the translation of Christian texts into the Maori language and later produced the first useful Maori dictionary. The missionaries now reversed Marsden's priorities and concentrated on Christian instruction and conversion before civilization. They were soon to be justified: in the 1830s there was first a trickle and then a flood of 'conversions'. It was now generally agreed—even by Marsden's first biographer—that the missionaries had been right and Marsden wrong. As the historian Herman Merivale argued, the only experiments in civilization which offered the remotest chance of success were those which commenced with religious instruction. Others, not too concerned with priorities, were content to equate the two. Thus, according to G. L. Craik, the Maori had been 'brought into contact with the light of knowledge and civilization. Christianity, emphatically the religion of civilization, goes forth among them.' Christianity, the religion of civilization: that was a phrase that would reverberate through the mission records; Christianity would do for the Maori what it had done for the barbarous inhabitants of Britain.

For some years the mission stations, with their neat cottages and cultivations, their regular religious observances, their prim morality, and their pious converts, were islands of Christian civilization in a barbarous sea. Yet, as the missionary W. Yate noted in 1835 in discussing one of those 'hopeful deaths' that so encouraged the mission camp, 'the New Zealanders are neither too ignorant nor too savage to be made the subjects of the saving and sanctifying influence of the Gospel. The time is not far distant when the nation will be acknowledged as a Christian nation'. He was right; the heathen tide was beginning to recede. By 1847 G. F. Angas, another itinerant artist, could announce that 'the change from barbarism has been rapid ... and complete'. He went on to contrast the scene with that eight years ago when at J. Morgan's mission station in the Waikato 'cannibals held banquets of human flesh at his door' before a terrified Mrs Morgan. Fortunately the 'cannibal banquet' was a thing of the past, and within about ten years the bulk of the Maori population had become professing Christians or, as they called themselves, mihinare Maori. Most of them had joined the mission camp.

Whether they had been genuinely converted — made over in body and soul to Christ — has been much debated, for it often seemed that the Maori had taken over the external expressions of Christian civilization without its inner religious conviction. Thus the Maori demand for literacy could, since all the texts were religious, be interpreted as a Maori thirst for Christian instruction; but it was to a large extent merely an urge to learn
to read and write.\textsuperscript{29} The same sort of point could be made about mission-promoted agriculture and even Victorian social practices: Maori motives in adopting these did not necessarily coincide with missionary objectives. Though there were a few contemporary cynics, most observers were content to laud the missionary achievement in converting and civilizing the Maori, at least until the wars of the 1860s brought about a massive Maori rejection of the missionaries (if not of their message). Prior to that, Maori backsliding could usually be attributed to the influence of degenerate whites. By the late 1830s it had become evident that hopes of a mission-dominated theocracy were being destroyed by a rapid influx of lawless settlers, many of them escaped or ex-convicts or ships' deserters. Such uncontrolled colonization by 'the veriest refuse of civilized society'\textsuperscript{30} was likely not to promote civilization but to destroy the progress that had been made. On this point the missionaries and the Colonial Reformers led by E. G. Wakefield were in agreement.

Before examining the contribution of systematic colonization to the civilization of the Maori, it is worth pausing briefly to see if anything can be said for what Robert FitzRoy, later a Governor of New Zealand, called these 'democratic seceders from regular government',\textsuperscript{31} the Pakeha–Maori. Though these pre-1840 settlers had many critics, they also had a few defenders. The exuberant Earle, having earned missionary disapproval by living with a Maori girl, claimed that the whalers had done more to civilize the Maori than the missionaries: 'To the courage and enterprise of the commanders of whalers all credit is due for working the rapid change in these once bloody-minded savages.'\textsuperscript{32} In later years some of the old settlers managed to make themselves into a legend. According to W. Brodie, anxiously promoting the land claims of the old settlers, 'We, by personal sufferings and exertions, laid the foundations of an empire; we civilized and Christianized the savage.'\textsuperscript{33} In 1862 F. E. Maning, the most famous Pakeha–Maori of them all, immortalized his kind in \textit{Old New Zealand}, a book which has undeservedly become a local classic. Needless to say it was not Maning but the historian Thomson who attempted an objective assessment of the rôle of the old settler. Thomson was no missionary-baiter and gave proper recognition to the achievements of Marsden and the missionaries. He had no time for the beachcombers, but he staunchly defended the Pakeha–Maori traders and the whalers: 'Impartial witnesses, in 1840, admitted the civilization introduced by these men to be more practically useful than that around the mission stations.... The truth is, their evil doings, which were neither few nor small, were loudly proclaimed, while their good deeds went unrecorded.... They taught the natives to trust white men, and encouraged industry, the promotion of peace and civilization, by opening up a steady market for flax and potatoes; their half-caste children were hostages for good behaviour and the stepping stones to health and progress.'\textsuperscript{34}

Thomson could have said more, for he was on the point of drawing an important contrast between the approach of the missionary and the
Pakeha–Maori to the civilizing mission. The missionaries tried to promote the civilization of the Maori while also retaining a considerable measure of social separation; they tried to turn the Maori into brown-skinned Pakeha, but they did not take Maori wives or even encourage their sons to do so (and for their daughters to take Maori husbands would have been unthinkable). But the Pakeha-Maori had no hesitation in taking Maori mistresses; and the Dane, Tapsell, even persuaded the missionaries to give him a Christian marriage. They were therefore the real pioneers of the amalgamation of the races. Yet, as Thomson went on to suggest, the ‘golden age’ of the Pakeha–Maori trader did not long outlast the coming of systematic colonization. He was no longer needed once a numerous body of settlers had been established since the Maori could deal directly with them. But there was more to the decline of the Pakeha–Maori than that. Like the missionaries, the colonists brought wives with them, or made up the shortfall by importing seamstresses and servant girls. The social distance of the mission stations was perpetuated in the colony at large and the rate of miscegenation slowed. New Zealand was to be no Portuguese colony. Yet it is important to emphasize that there was no formal segregation, nor any significant demand for it: colonial New Zealand remained committed to the amalgamation of the races.

With annexation and the beginning of systematic colonization under the auspices of the New Zealand Company the civilizing mission gained a new lease of life. According to Wakefield and Ward, the plans of their organization were ‘entirely new . . . for though professions of a desire to civilize barbarians have often been used as pretexts for oppressing and exterminating them, no attempt to improve a savage people by means of colonization, was ever made deliberately and systematically. The success of that experiment must in a great measure depend on the natural capacity of the inferior race for improvement. . . . In this respect the native inhabitants of New Zealand are superior to most, if not all thoroughly savage people.’ Company spokesmen deemed it expedient to use the language of the humanitarians. Historians have come to treat with a grain of salt the exalted promises of Wakefield and his fellow propagandists. But their plan for civilizing the Maori should not be too cynically dismissed for much of the programme of the New Zealand Company became the common property of the colony when the settlers achieved self-government.

At the heart of the Company plan were the proposals to deal with Maori land. The Company proposed to buy land for colonization from the Maori owners but considered it unnecessary to pay a high price, since the ‘real payment’ was to be ‘the conferring on them of the great boon of civilization’. Then, every eleventh allotment in each settlement was to be reserved for the Maori chiefs from whom the land had been purchased; and allocated to them in the lottery by which the remainder of the land was allotted to European colonists. Wakefield hoped to create a Maori landowning gentry interspersed among the European gentry, an early
exercise of 'pepper-potting'. Just as the European colonists would employ Company labourers, so the Maori landowners would employ Maori labour recruited from the lower ranks of the tribe. It was a system which Jerningham Wakefield said would preserve the chief in his high station among his own people and, through social alliances with the settlers, promote amalgamation — 'perhaps the wisest and most charitable devices for the gradual amelioration of the barbarous races . . . that have been known in the history of the world'.38 "There is good reason to hope,' said his father, 'that . . . future generations of Europeans and natives may inter-marry and become one people.'39 And this was far better than segregating the Maori on large and remote reserves like the Indian reserves of Canada where 'the defective habits and inclinations of the savage are preserved, and his existence as an isolated and inferior being is encouraged and perpetuated'.40 Moreover the Maori were thought to be manageable. Divided into hostile tribes and thought to number some 115,000 in the early 1840s,41 they constituted no long-term barrier to colonization. It was true that their warrior reputation meant that they could not be shot off like vermin — like the Australian and Tasmanian Aborigines — and if further warning was needed it was delivered with the Wairau massacre in 1843; there were no more settler commandos. The methods of the South African and Australian frontiers could not be easily applied in New Zealand. Nor was there any need to apply the segregation policies of those colonies since the Maori continued to display a capacity and apparently a desire for civilization. Amalgamation remained a possible goal.

There is no need to examine the detailed working of the Company plan. It was hopelessly bungled through dishonest and incomplete purchases and haphazard administration.42 Many legitimate Maori claimants were left out of the original purchases and even those whose rights were recognized were often unhappy with the reserves that were allocated to them, since these seldom coincided with existing villages. Though a few of the chiefs were carefully patronized by the Wakefields and went, top hats, morning suits and all, to Company levees, for most of the Maori systematic colonization under the Wakefield system proved a disillusioning experience that boded ill for their future. Yet that future rested more in the hands of the government than the New Zealand Company which was soon forced to abandon its colonizing role.

Under the Treaty of Waitangi of 1840 Maori rights to land were recognized, and the Crown was accorded a right of pre-emption to purchase such lands as the Maori owners were willing to sell. The Crown and, in effect for the first fifteen years or so, the governors, thus played a vital role in the continuation of colonization. If plenty of Maori land was purchased and made available for settlement the colonists were relatively content; if not, they pressed for the abolition of pre-emption and the right to purchase land directly from the Maori. This was conceded by the hapless FitzRoy in 1844, but his successor, Grey, resumed pre-emption. He
embarked on a vigorous programme of purchase and managed to acquire land well in advance of the needs of settlement in many parts of the country. However neither Grey nor his successor, Browne, was able to purchase much land in Taranaki or Waikato, two of the most fertile and desirable districts in the North Island. In particular there was a bitter dispute over the Waitara block in Taranaki. Governor Browne's attempt to purchase part of this block from a minor chief, in defiance of the leading chief and the bulk of his tribe, and the occupation of the disputed land by military force provoked the outbreak of war in 1860. The war soon spread to Waikato and other districts; it continued intermittently for more than ten years. As a consequence of settler criticism of the government bungling of the Waitara purchase, the Crown's right of pre-emption was abolished once more by the Native Land Act of 1862. A second Native Land Act in 1865 provided for a Native Land Court to adjudicate Maori titles and allowed settlers to purchase land belonging to the individuals named in the court's orders. The system of 'free trade' in Maori lands thus initiated was to continue for many years.

This brief recital of the main facts relating to the conflict over land and the outbreak of war needs to be related to the continuation of the civilizing mission. For the Crown purchase régime had continued some of the leading features of the Wakefieldian system. As Grey and the chief land purchase commissioner, Donald McLean, never tired of telling the Maori, it was not the low price that was paid that would be their real benefit, but the settlement in their midst of civilized colonists. Civilization would spread to the Maori like a benevolent infection. And something like the Company 'tenths' system was continued in some of the Crown purchases in that provision was made for the establishment of small Maori reserves or endowments for supporting schools or hospitals. Little practical effect was given to these provisions. For Maori who had sold land the future was by no means as bright as the purchase agents had pretended. The shiny gold sovereigns paid for the land were soon spent, but the land was gone for ever. And as the Maori landed estate decreased, colonists continued to pour into the country: in 1858 the European population passed that of the Maori whose numbers were declining. The progress of colonization was being achieved by the dispossession, possibly the extermination, of the Maori. This much became evident with the great pressure that was exerted on the Waitara and Waikato tribes. Their progressive advance in agriculture — in civilization — brought forth the admiration and the envy of the settlers; but in resisting the European seizure of their lands in the wars they were described as rebels and suffered the confiscation of their land. Yet even confiscation could be justified by an appeal to the civilizing mission; it was necessary, said Premier Domett in 1863, to confiscate the land of the rebel Maori to force them into civilization, since peaceful methods had failed.

It is rather too tempting to see in the settler use of their civilizing mission a cynical attempt to possess Maori lands, by fair means or foul. But there
was rather more to it than that. There was the equally important question of law and order. Ever since the Treaty of Waitangi had transferred sovereignty from Maori chiefs to the Queen, and New Zealand had become a British colony, the governors and, after them, settler politicians, had set their faces firmly against any independent exercise of sovereign powers by Maori chiefs, let alone the Maori King who was set up by the Waikato tribes in 1858. Despite the urging of the Colonial Office and a special provision in the 1852 Constitution Act to set aside districts beyond the European settlements where Maori law and custom would prevail, no such districts were ever established. It was the consistent object of successive New Zealand governments to bring Maori and their property within the scope of English civil and criminal law, including locally enacted laws. This could be seen as upholding not merely the first clause of the Treaty of Waitangi (which related to the transfer of sovereignty) but also the third, which promised Maori the rights and privileges of British subjects. The Maori were to have equality before the law, reiterated in successive pieces of legislation, including the Native Rights Act, 1865. At the height of the war there were some infringements of this principle, notably with the New Zealand Settlements Act of 1863, which provided for the confiscation of the 'rebels' land', and the Suppression of Rebellion Act, also of 1863, which permitted trial by court martial and the suspension of habeas corpus. Yet these were seen as temporary expedients, necessary to bring the 'rebel' Maori under law and order. And while military suppression of the 'rebellion' continued legislation designed to bring about a long-term peace was being passed. The Native Rights Act and the Native Lands Acts were part of this. So too was the Native Representation Act of 1867 which provided for the election — by adult male franchise — of four Maori to the House of Representatives. When the 1852 Constitution Act was framed it was assumed that Maori would exercise the franchise along with Europeans, on a common roll. A few did in fact do so, but the courts decided that Maori property, being communal, could not be used as a qualification; they needed individual freehold or leasehold titles. The Native Land Acts made provision for such titles but little land had been individualized and few Maori electors registered when the Act of 1867 was passed. The government of the day had decided that Maori representation was a useful expedient to balance an increase in South Island representation to enfranchise the gold diggers. Separate Maori representation was expected to be temporary; it has remained to this day because Maori have been unwilling to give it up.

Several other aspects of government policy of the 1860s need to be mentioned since these reinforced the drive to assimilate the Maori. Thus the Native Schools Act of 1867 provided for village primary schools to replace the now deserted mission schools; these soon came to be regarded as a prime agency in the Europeanization of Maori children, even to the extent of prohibiting the use of the Maori language. But they were not segregated schools since they admitted local European children. Then
there was the continued introduction into largely Maori districts of Resident Magistrates. Unlike his counterpart in British territories in Asia and Africa, the R.M. was not an agent of indirect rule, but a key figure in displacing Maori law and custom by English criminal and civil law. The R.M., the Native Land Court judge, the village school teacher and the Native Medical Officer, had succeeded the merchants and the missionaries as the prime agents of civilization.

It is time to return to the question posed at the beginning: Why was the policy of assimilation continued in New Zealand when it was being tempered or abandoned elsewhere?

Clearly, the main reason was that assimilation could be equated with settler interests, notably in relation to the acquisition of Maori land. It was hardly coincidental that legislation to individualize Maori land titles and allow ‘free trade’, and to confiscate the land of ‘rebel’ Maori was passed soon after the settlers took responsibility for Native Affairs in the early 1860s. The objective of the Native Land Act, Henry Sewell told parliament, was two-fold: to amalgamate the Maori to the British social and political system, and to bring the bulk of the Maori lands within the reach of colonization. The legislation, said Frederick Whitaker, was necessary ‘to break down the beastly communism of the tribe’ which stood as a barrier to the assimilation of the Maori. The ‘free trade’ policy was continued vigorously for the remainder of the nineteenth century and played a vital part in the opening up of the central North Island for European settlement, including those two last refuges of Maori independence, the King Country and the Urewera. Moreover the policy could be pursued with a relatively free conscience, since Maori population was still declining and there was little likelihood that they would need the land.

Though the Native Land Acts were clearly the most important weapon in promoting the assimilation policy, other aspects of the application of law were of importance. In particular there was the continuing settler demand that all Maori who plundered, assaulted or murdered settlers, must be brought to justice — to British justice — and prevented from absconding to Maori districts. This remained a problem even when the wars were over, since Maori accused of such crimes were able to obtain refuge in the King Country (until about 1885) or the Urewera (until 1892, or, in some estimates, 1917). Coupled with the settler drive to impose the British legal and judicial system was a determination not to recognize any independent Maori authorities whether these were village runanga (committees) or quasi-national political movements like the King Movement or Kotahitanga, the Maori Parliament or Home Rule movement of the late nineteenth century. Maori had been granted representation in the European parliament; this was their proper forum. At Waitangi in 1840 Hobson had announced: ‘We are now one people.’ Thereafter settlers were to assume, with some satisfaction, that they were fulfilling this pronouncement when they were making of the Maori a British people.

Finally, and this is a matter of considerable importance that is not
examined here, there remained in Maori responses in the later nineteenth century sufficient to persuade Europeans that assimilation was indeed coming about. It is true that there was apparently a reversion to savagery, even to cannibalism, with the Hau Hau movement during the wars; but the movement quickly petered out and was replaced by pacifist Christian cults. More important, in the later stages of the wars several Maori leaders allied with the Europeans in the pursuit of rebel guerilla leaders. These faithful allies could not be excluded from the post-war settlement; several of them became Maori M.Ps. But the future did not rest entirely in their hands. At the end of the century a new Maori élite emerged from the church secondary schools and the universities. Their efforts for Maori health and land reform coincided with a revival of Maori population in the early years of the twentieth century. Again it was plausible for Europeans to believe that their assimilation policy was working; now it seemed to have the enthusiastic support of a new Maori élite.

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NOTES

1 H.C.425, 1837, p. 76.
2 This is a revised version of a paper read to Professor Gallagher's seminar at Cambridge in 1974 while I held a Smuts fellowship. I am grateful to the Managers of the Smuts Fund for their support. I am aware that much of the language of this paper is more suited to the nineteenth than the twentieth century and that the 'answers' are more varied and complex, especially in terms of Maori motivation, than those discussed here.


Elder, p. 170.

Narrative, p. 67.


ibid., p. 183.


Narrative, p. 86.

J. B. Marsden, p. 79; also *Report on Aborigines*, p. 54, quoting a New Zealand missionary.


See, for example, Charles Darwin’s description of the Bay of Islands, in 1835: *Narrative of the ... Adventure and Beagle*, III, *Journal and Remarks*, 1839, pp. 491–509. Darwin thought Maori were inferior to Tahitians.


*Savage Life and Scenes in Australia and New Zealand*, London, 1847, I, 337.


Surveying Voyages of the Beagle, II, 580.

Narrative, p. 139.

Remarks on ... *New Zealand*, 1845, p. 71.

*The Story of New Zealand*, I, 303.


*The British Colonisation of New Zealand*, pp. 27–8.


ibid., II, 451.

*The British Colonisation of New Zealand*, pp. 29.

*Adventure in New Zealand*, I, 41.

Dieffenbach (II, 83) estimated the Maori population at 114,890 in 1843.


Memorandum, 5 October 1863, *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives*, 1863, A, 84, p. 11.


For a fuller discussion see Alan Ward, *A Show of Justice*, Canberra, 1974, especially ch. xiv.
Atkinson was more typical of colonial politicians than such spectacular figures as Grey, Vogel, and Seddon, and an account of his career takes the reader to the centre of nineteenth-century politics in New Zealand. Judith Bassett also gives a very human portrait of a man of integrity and forward-looking if somewhat cloudy ideals (which his contemporaries called 'fads') who had to struggle with an ailing economy. $9.15

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