



METHODISM IN NEW ZEALAND:
Resources for Historical Research in the Alexander Turnbull Library.
By J. E. Traue, Chief Librarian, Turnbull Library

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FOREWORD

This issue of Proceedings brings to members a wealth of information about resources for students and others interested in learning more about 'the Methodist Story', housed at the Alexander Turnbull Library, situated in the Terrace, Wellington.

The Lecture was delivered originally by Mr J.E. Traue, the Chief Librarian, at the Annual General Meeting of the Society held at the Library on Saturday, November 6th, 1976. We regret the long delay in publication, but the manuscript was lost, and it is only recently that we were able to secure a duplicate copy from Mr Traue.

The Society records its warm appreciation of Mr Traue's kindness, both in preparing and delivering the Lecture and enabling us to hear the same in the comfortable surroundings of the Library itself.

We express the hope that the information herein will be of great interest and value to our members, and also to others engaged in historical research.

L.K.M. Gilmore, Secretary, Wesley Historical Society (N.Z.)
December, 1980.

INTRODUCTION.

In my preliminary discussions with your good secretary Leslie Gilmore I described the content of my lecture this evening as, and I quote, "original materials for research on the history of Methodism in New Zealand held in the collections of the Alexander Turnbull Library". I should now like, with your permission, to give a formal title to this lecture thus: "Methodism in New Zealand: Resources for Historical Research in the Alexander Turnbull Library." This formulation places the emphases with greater precision than my original description. The first element in now "Methodism in New Zealand", the particular concern of the members of the church; the second element is "Resources for Historical Research," the concern of the Wesley Historical Society and of historians; and the third element is "The Collections of the Alexander Turnbull Library", the concern of historians and librarians. These three elements and their concerned publics - Methodists, members of the Wesley Historical Society and of historians, librarians - have special relationships and I trust that in the course of this lecture we shall come to understand the nature of these relationships and their bearing on the future of historical research and publication in New Zealand.

I shall begin with the subject I know most about, the collections of the Alexander Turnbull Library, and as the evening proceeds move out from my home base into the, for me, uncertain grounds of Methodist historical scholarship. I trust that you will extend to me a helping hand if I falter and stumble on your home ground, for I cannot claim that I look upon all the world as my parish. My expertise is in librarianship, especially the management of national resources for historical research, and not in the writing of history. My knowledge of Methodist history is I am ashamed to admit only marginally above that of an informed layman.

THE COLLECTIONS OF THE ALEXANDER TURNBULL LIBRARY.

The Alexander Turnbull Library, which began as the bequest to the nation in 1918 of New Zealand's finest private collection, is now a division of the National Library of New Zealand and as such has assumed certain national responsibilities. The National Library Act of 1965 charges the National Library with the responsibility "to collect, preserve and make available recorded knowledge, particularly that relating to New Zealand" and the functions of the National Librarian include that of "develop(ing) and maintain(ing) a national collection of library material, including a comprehensive collection of library material relating to New Zealand and the people of New Zealand."

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To the Alexander Turnbull Library has fallen the responsibility to carry out those sections of the Act that concern "library material relating to New Zealand" together with certain other specialist areas such as early printed books. Our job is first to develop and maintain the national collection of printed materials relating to New Zealand. In simple terms this means we must acquire and preserve every piece of printed matter -books, pamphlets, leaflets, posters, periodicals, newspapers, annual reports, printed maps - published in or relating to this country. Thus we are acquiring under this policy the total current printed output of the Methodist Church of New Zealand and are seeking to acquire the whole of the past output either in the original form or facsimile or microfilm copies. This daunting concept of the total collection of a country's printed output, a concept enshrined in our National Library Act is worth further examination. It is essentially a creation of the nineteenth century. Before then, and even now for the majority of librarians, the task of the librarian was to collect and preserve the best examples of the culture. In the mid nineteenth century, under the combined influences of romantic nationalism and a new scholarship which placed strong emphasis on comparative studies, national libraries in England, Germany, the United States and France began collecting the entire national output of printed materials without regard for quality, relevance or likely use. It was argued that no part of a nation's output of printed matter was without significance and some even argued that the bad books produced by a society were as valuable to the social historian as the good books. Such a total collection is expensive to gather and to maintain and most countries can afford only one such collection; in New Zealand the Turnbull has been assigned such a role.

The policy of the Turnbull Library of gathering in one copy of everything printed makes it possible for other libraries to be selective, to choose only the best or the most useful, safe in the knowledge that the publications they neglect will be preserved elsewhere.

The Turnbull should therefore with the passage of time, because of this national responsibility, develop the best collection of printed material on Methodism in New Zealand in any library.

The Alexander Turnbull Library has also accepted responsibility within the National Library for the development of a number of national research collections. Most of these relate to New Zealand and the Pacific and support the collections of printed materials. For example' we have a national photographic collection with well over 250,000 photographs on New Zealand and the Pacific; a national collection of original pictorial works from the time of Captain Cook which now comprises over 12,000 drawings and paintings; a number of national collections of original manuscripts and

archives; and a national collection of New Zealand and Pacific maps. As well, because of our strengths in non-New Zealand subjects we have been given responsibility for a national research collection of early printed books, a national collection on John Milton and the English Revolution and Commonwealth of the mid-seventeenth century, and other collections near to national standards on fine printing and the history of printing.

Our objectives then are to build the national collection of printed materials relating to New Zealand and a number of special national research collections which include non-printed materials such as paintings and drawings, maps, photographs, sound recordings, unpublished letters, diaries, notebooks, business records, organisational archives, in fact anything on paper, canvas, film or tape which will in the words of Alexander Turnbull "assist future searchers after the truth" about our country.

METHODIST RECORDS IN THE TURNBULL COLLECTIONS.

This rather detailed discussion of the nature of the Turnbull collections and current policies is an essential prelude to any discussion of the Library's holdings of material relating to Methodism in New Zealand. At this stage of the discussion it will suffice to say that because Turnbull must look to national needs it is likely to have strong Methodist related materials where such materials have a clear national importance. Not unexpectedly the strongest sections relate to the Maori missions, with the bulk of the material falling in the period from 1822 to the land wars of the 1860s. Samuel Leigh, William White, John Aldred, Samuel Ironside, John Whiteley, Thomas Buddle, James Buller, John Crump, John Hobbs, George Buttle, Joseph Orton, James Shepherd, Gideon and Mary Anne Smales nee Bumby, Nathaniel Turner, James Watkin and William Woon, the pioneers of Methodism's missionary golden age are all represented in the Turnbull collections by letters, diaries, journals, reports, notebooks and sermons. For those of you who recognise some of these names as ornaments of the collections of the Mitchell Library in Sydney, the Australian National Library in Canberra, the Hocken Library in Dunedin and the Library of the Auckland Institute and Museum, may I explain that Turnbull has not by superior detective work uncovered a cache of hitherto unknown papers. What we have done is to exploit modern technology to acquire copies either on micro-film or paper from sister institutions. From the Mitchell Library in Sydney have come microfilms of the papers of George Hawke, Joseph Or ton's Journal of 1855 and 1840, James Shepherd's Journal 1822-25, Nathaniel Turner's papers 1856-1849 and Journal of 1855, the Wesleyan Mission papers 1856-79; from the Australian National Library in Canberra copies of James Buller's Letters 1857-59, Samuel Ironside's Diary 1859-45, Gideon Smales'

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copybook of letters 1845-45; from the Methodist Missionary Society in London 5,500 feet of microfilm covering most of the early records on missionary activity in New Zealand and the Pacific; from the Methodist Theological College in Auckland over 1700 feet of microfilm of their missionary records. Most of this copying, and it is still going on, dates from the creation of the National Library in 1966 and is a reflection of Turnbull's explicit role in building national research collections. Unlike private collectors who acquire manuscripts for their rarity, research libraries acquire them for their research value and in most cases are prepared to share their treasures with sister institutions.

Our special treasures are the originals of diaries, journals and letters of John Aldred, James Buller, George Buttle, Gideon and Mary Anne Smales, John Whiteley and William Woon. John Aldred who arrived in New Zealand in 1840 on the TRITON is represented by his original Diary 1852-1864 and by a copy of his Journal for the same period (the original remains in private hands). The James Buller collection is probably the richest of Turnbull's holdings of the Methodist missionaries. We have the originals of his Journal 1858-44, journals for 1856-57 and 1857-58, a badly broken run of his diaries, his correspondence 1844-77, the texts of his lectures and practically all of his sermons 1856-1881 (over a foot of shelf space), and the original manuscript of his book *Forty Years in New Zealand*. James Buller's biographer will find treasure indeed in the Turnbull collections. George Buttle, who arrived with John Aldred in 1840, is well represented in the Newman-Buttle family correspondence now held by Turnbull, (the originals are in private hands); Mary Anne Smales, the sister of John Bumby, is represented by her two volume journal and album 1858-1860; her husband Gideon Smales is represented by his Papers 1871-76 (on indefinite loan from the owner) and his handwritten "Episodes in the life of an old missionary." John Whiteley's Journal 1852-42, 1861-65 is supported by a volume of abstracts of copies of letters sent to the committee 1855-40, his papers 1855-61, a biographical memoir by one of his children, and his notes of his journey to London in 1851 for interview by the Wesleyan Missionary Society. And last, but only because of the alphabet, the two volume Journal by William Woon, the indefatigable printer, 1850-59, a major documentary source.

The Turnbull collections, because they attempt to be all inclusive for printed materials relating to New Zealand, and because they include a number of collections of original manuscript materials for the pioneer missionary period supplemented by copies from other libraries, can support research into the Methodist mission to the Maoris in the nineteenth century at all levels, from the amateur genealogist to the university professor. But unfortunately, when it comes to the history of the European Methodist Church, and the recent history of the Maori mission, the story is different. Our collections of printed materials remain strong, both in books and periodical

publications, but the original manuscript materials, the sources most prized by scholars, are few and far between. Apart from the pioneer missionaries (whose papers have survived primarily because of their missionary content) who became active in the European ministry we have only the Rev. Thomas Goodwill Carr's Life Story, a 65 page manuscript covering his life in New Zealand 1875-1917; a fragment of the papers of T.E. Taylor (Tommy Taylor); the papers of Ormond Burton; a promise of the papers of C.G. Scrimgeour; and the records of Wesley Methodist Church in Wellington, 1847-1861.

Turnbull appears not to be alone in this situation, that is of having a strong research collection on the early Methodist missions and next to nothing on the European Methodist Church. From what records are available to me the Hocken Library and the Auckland Institute and Museum appear to follow the pattern of the Turnbull. And it seems to me, though the statistical evidence is not conclusive, that the pattern of advanced research shows the same characteristics, that is of a concentration of theses and books on the early missionary period to the comparative neglect of the Methodist European ministry. Is there perhaps a causal relationship between libraries' collections and the patterns of historical research? In an attempt to test some of my hypo-theses I analysed the proportions of published books and pamphlets on the Methodist Maori missions and the Methodist Church in general in the Turnbull Library's catalogue. Approximately two fifths were on the Maori missions; of all publications the majority were published this century. I then looked for a bench-mark and took Morley's History of Methodism in New Zealand published in 1900. In 1900, with the heroic age of the Maori Mission so much closer and forming the larger part of New Zealand's Methodist history, the proportions are almost exactly the same, two fifths on the Maori mission, three fifths on the European ministry. Today with an additional 75 years of the European ministry the emphasis has hardly changed. One can think of a number of obvious reasons why this should be so. Most historians prefer the long perspective rather than dealing with contemporary events; the earlier period has been researched by others, and the secondary sources are better. Some other reasons are less obvious. For most of the nineteenth century, and certainly for the pioneer period, people are pre-eminent and organisations are secondary. It is still an age of heroes, whereas in the twentieth century there is little room for the hero. In this century most of us work through organisations and it is the organisation which is increasingly conferring status, and stature, on people. Biography and biographically oriented history is more attractive and in many ways less demanding than institutional history, and the records that are available in libraries are pre-eminently biographical records of the nineteenth century. Which brings me back to the question: is there a causal relationship between what libraries collect and the patterns of historical research? I suspect that there is and that for the reasons I give it will become stronger with time. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the reading rooms of the British Museum were filled with men

writing books. They were almost to a man self employed writers and a university academic was a rare bird indeed. Today the reading rooms are crammed with university academics and the self employed writer is the rare bird. Research in the United States, Britain, Europe, Australia, and increasingly in New Zealand is becoming the preserve of the university academic. Unlike the self employed writer he looks not to the general public for his reputation but to his fellow academics. They judge him on the soundness of his scholarship and a na.lor base of sound scholarship is sound sources. To an increasing extent the writing of history is being determined by the depth of the documentation readily available in research libraries. Research libraries are assuming a gatekeeper role in historical research, that is to say, that their decisions on what enters their collections and what is excluded is shaping the kind of history that will be written by the new professional historians. I suspect, but I can't prove, that we shall see a substantial increase in amateur historians in the near future. With higher standards of education, longer life expectancies and earlier retiring ages an increasing number of well-educated, lively minded sixty and seventy year olds with an interest in New Zealand history will be descending upon our research libraries. The first wave has arrived but is still absorbed in genealogical research; soon they will begin to look for wider historical horizons. and for this group also it is likely that their researches will be determined by what libraries have in their collections.

If I am right on the nature of the resources on Methodism held in New Zealand libraries and the likely behaviour of historians, academic and amateur, then Methodist history in New Zealand will show an increasing emphasis on the early missionary period and comparative neglect of the European Church, and that I believe would be unfortunate. I have up to now excluded the most important element in the story, the Wesley Historical Society itself which has honoured me by inviting me to deliver this lecture and must by now be wondering what I am about. If it were not for the Society's publications on the European Church the balance in favour of the missionary years would be even greater and the history of New Zealand Methodism would be so much the poorer. But I suspect that the Society's role in the writing of Methodist history must of necessity be circumscribed. The rule that it has filled admirably in the past and will continue in the future is the essential one of historical compilation, the assembly from the basic records of the salient facts and dates. In this the Society performs for Methodist history the same role that the local historical society fulfils for the secular history of New Zealand, From the compilations others draw for speeches, sermons, pamphlets, articles, and general histories, and above this is the realm of the historian who addresses himself to cause and effect and attempts to draw lessons from the past. I suspect that the pressures of modern society will effectively preclude most of your members from aspiring beyond the level of compilation. William Morley managed in the nineteenth century to combine his duties as connexional secretary with the writing of his monumental History of Methodism in 510 pages. What connexional

secretary today could hope to find time for an equivalent work? The pressures of the age are such that the John Owens of this world are the most likely to make the final assessments; especially when the emphasis moves as it must from the heroic age to the age of institutional history.

TWO INTERESTING METHODIST DOCUMENTS.

I should like before I conclude to read to you from some old documents written in the middle of last century and then from a new document compiled in this library within the last year

A LETTER FROM THE REV. GEO. BUTTLE TO HIS SISTER.

Waipa. June 25, 1855.

My dear Sister,

If you and your dear husband were now here I could take you to a place not far from here, where there are collected some two or three hundred natives. Taking your stand in the midst and looking round upon them, I think it most likely your impression would be of poverty and want, of dirt and general wretchedness (a few cases excepted) - they are the most finished picture it had ever been your lot to behold.

When I told you that these same people at whom you are looking are on the point of paying £400 within some 20 for a flour mill, I can imagine what your surprise would be. In your mind the two ideas would not be easily reconciled, but it is so, as I can state from personal knowledge, I having been their treasurer in the affair. One hundred and twenty-seven pounds they have already paid to the mill-wright, two hundreds are now in my hands and which will be called for in the course of a week or two, -and the remaining fifty-three pounds forming the last payment and making in all the sum of £380 to be advanced on the completion of the mill.

I think I hear you saying: "The New Zealanders are a wonderful people." They are. But it requires a near and personal acquaintance with them in order to credit some things which might be told of them. They have been repeatedly termed (and I think with a great deal of propriety), adult children. Of habits of individual industry and steady application to work they know hardly anything and can do nothing but in a large combination, and under the influence of excitement; but under such circumstances they can sometimes perform wonders.

They are properly under this influence with reference to this mill they are building. Every nerve is being strained to its utmost limit of elasticity. Numbers

of them have not a house which they can call their own, and very many of them, when they have put their pound or ten shillings, into the mill bag have not another penny in the world. Not another 1

Since I commenced writing this, a circumstance has occurred which may serve to illustrate a remark made above in reference to their character. On the first of January of the present year, a large party took a canoe and started to Auckland to bring a pair of stones for their mill. It occupied them a whole month to do this. Being a very dry summer, on their arrival here, there was not sufficient water in the tributary stream on which their mill is built, to allow of the canoe passing up it. There remained nothing but that the stones should be taken on shore and left on the banks of the Waipa at the mouth of the smaller river. Five months they had to lie here when at length the rain came, the water rose and preparations were made to remove the stones to their destination. Instead of having two canoes, and placing one stone in each, and I fear it may be added, their laziness operating a little, not wishing to go twice, they would have only one canoe and take both the stones at once. They had got them nicely on board, and were pulling round a point of land so as to direct, the head of the canoe up the small stream, when just as they were in the confluence of the two rivers, the Waipa and the tributary (what they were doing I don't know, but there is little doubt that much carelessness had to do with it) over went the canoe, every man into the water and the stones to the bottom. I was told there were thirty feet of water where they went down.

The circumstance cast a gloom over the people for a while, and they consulted among themselves as to whether they should raise these or make application by way of request to the Governor to give them a pair of stones. They finally determined upon the former course. But see how they are situated for such an under-taking - without ropes; without blocks; without crow-bars, without crane or indeed without any other engine at all adapted to such a work. Literally with nothing but their bare hands. What do they do? First of all, they collect flax (harakeke) of which they twine very strong ropes. This done three men, stripped, dive down to the stones with one of the ropes and poles. Then partly by raising one side of the stone with the poles and partly by scooping away the sand from underneath it, they succeed in passing one end of the rope through the hole in the centre of stone and fastening it. The other end communicates with the shore, where one and all apply their strength and by dint of sheer dragging they completely effect the recovery of their lost property. It should be borne in mind that when this took place it was nearly the depth of winter, the days very short and the water very cold, but this work of raising I believe was accomplished in one day.

Your dear husband will not require to be told what a pair of large and heavy mill-stones are, and I can almost fancy his applauding this as an achievement.

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My dear sister how I wish we could so interest them in behalf of Jesus Christ and His Gospel, the salvation of their own souls, or the education of their children. But alas, alas.

Although dear Jane and Mehetabel have done it, I must not fail to add my expression of my thanks for the box and its contents. O the scene its arrival at Waipa occasioned - some scampering for very joy of feeling; our little Jim looking down into it and weeping, not recognising anything which he could assure himself was for him. ardon this tedious scrawl and believe me my dear sister, with great affection,

Yours Geo. Buttle.

WESLEY CHURCH INVENTORY.

The document recently created by the Library has a sturdy no-nonsense title "MS papers 1185, Wesley Methodist Church, Taranaki Street." Some of the headings are: Baptismal Register (Sydney Street Primitive Methodists) 1847-1895{ Baptismal Registers 1885-1944; marriage registers; Meetings of Church Trustees 1859-1875; Quarterly meetings Wellington Mission 1864-1892, 1912-1929; Wesley Bible Class Executive; Wesley Youth Council meetings; Leaders' meetings of Wesleyan Church; Brooklyn Methodist Improvement Society; Young Men's Wesleyan Mutual Improvement Society; Circuit Schedule Book; Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour; Minutes of Primitive Methodist Conference 1915; Minutes of first Conference of Methodist Church of N.Z. (Independent) 1915; and on and on it goes.

The first, by a Methodist missionary, is in the Turnbull collections and is an essential document of our colonial history. It is of importance in any understanding of Maori-European cultural contact and of Christian missionary endeavour. But to me it is not an essential part of our Methodist history.

The second, prepared by a member of the staff of the Turnbull Library, is to my mind the essential stuff of Methodism in this country. And it is the only one of its kind in our national collections. If I dare summarise the burden of my major theme, it is that for the early period of New Zealand history the records created by Methodists are here, are alive and well, and are producing theses, books and articles on early New Zealand history. The essential story of Methodism in New Zealand, as far as it is reflected in printed materials, is here, but it alone is not sufficient to produce the regular flow of theses, books and articles necessary to interpret the Methodist experience to New Zealanders.

POSTSCRIPT

In a letter dated 19th December, 1980, Mr Traue suggests that the following Postscript be added:

"Since 1976 the Library has received another small group of records from the Wesley Methodist Church in Wellington spanning the years 1897-1958 which fills some gaps in the earlier deposit, and on transfer from the General Assembly Library the Journal (1849-1856) of Thomas Skinner a Wesleyan Missionary at Rotoaira and New Plymouth. The autograph album of Annie Langham from 1860-1902 provides some useful insights into the missionary work of the Rev. and Mrs Langham in Fiji."