



Inside Life

200 Years
of Christianity
in New Zealand

Letting Others Go Free

Artificial Life?

**NOAH movie:
Courage, Faith, Hope**

Issue 21
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Inside Life

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Inside Life is a magazine of understanding. Rather than just reporting on life, **Inside Life** seeks to delve inside the marvellous mystery that is life, to discover what it is all about. What does life mean? Where did it come from? How can we make the most of it?

Inside Life provides insight and answers to life's deep questions and challenges, and aims to provide articles of lasting hope, help, and encouragement for successful living in today's fast-moving world.

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Our Cover: *The flag pole at Waitangi (where the Treaty of Waitangi was first signed in February 1840) flies the first New Zealand colonial flag (left), the current New Zealand flag (top) and the British flag (right). The flag pole's shape can be seen as symbolic of the central teaching of Christianity (see box on p. 6).*

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200 Years of Christianity in New Zealand

By Rex Morgan

Many Christians in New Zealand are celebrating the 200th year since the first public Christian service was held in New Zealand in 1814. This anniversary is important, not only to the history of their faith, but to the development of New Zealand as a whole.

Christianity had a very significant role in the founding of our nation, including the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. Christians were the backbone of the first permanent settlement by Europeans in New Zealand, having been invited by Maori to live near them. Indeed, Christianity has contributed immensely to the growth and success of our nation.

Many Kiwis have a rather sketchy knowledge of their country's history. History is notorious for being a dull and boring study. But it doesn't have to be that way. A look at the records of early European settlement in Aotearoa can be quite enthralling.

Have you ever wondered what the Maori thought when they first spotted huge ships with billowing sails off the coast? How did they respond when the white-skinned people wearing strange clothing wanted to come ashore? How long was it before the visitors began building European houses? How did the first horses and cattle come to New Zealand? Whose idea was the Treaty of Waitangi? The answers to questions like these can be fascinating.

The First European Visitors

Most Kiwis know that the first recorded European sighting of 'the land of the long white cloud' was by the Dutch navigator Abel Tasman in

1642. On seeing the two ships in Golden Bay, the Maori launched several canoes to take a closer look at the strangers. Unfortunately there was some disagreement and a skirmish in which four Europeans and a Maori lost their lives.

After that Tasman avoided contact with Maori, whom he considered as 'enemies'. He never set foot on shore, but it was the Dutch who called the country 'Nieuw Zeeland'.

It was over 100 years before the next European visitor, James Cook, came in 1769. He spent six months sailing around New Zealand, and made contact with Maori on a few occasions, even trading some food with them. Amazingly, the French explorer Jean de Surville arrived at almost exactly the same time, and his ship criss-crossed the path of Cook's without either of them actually realising the other was there!

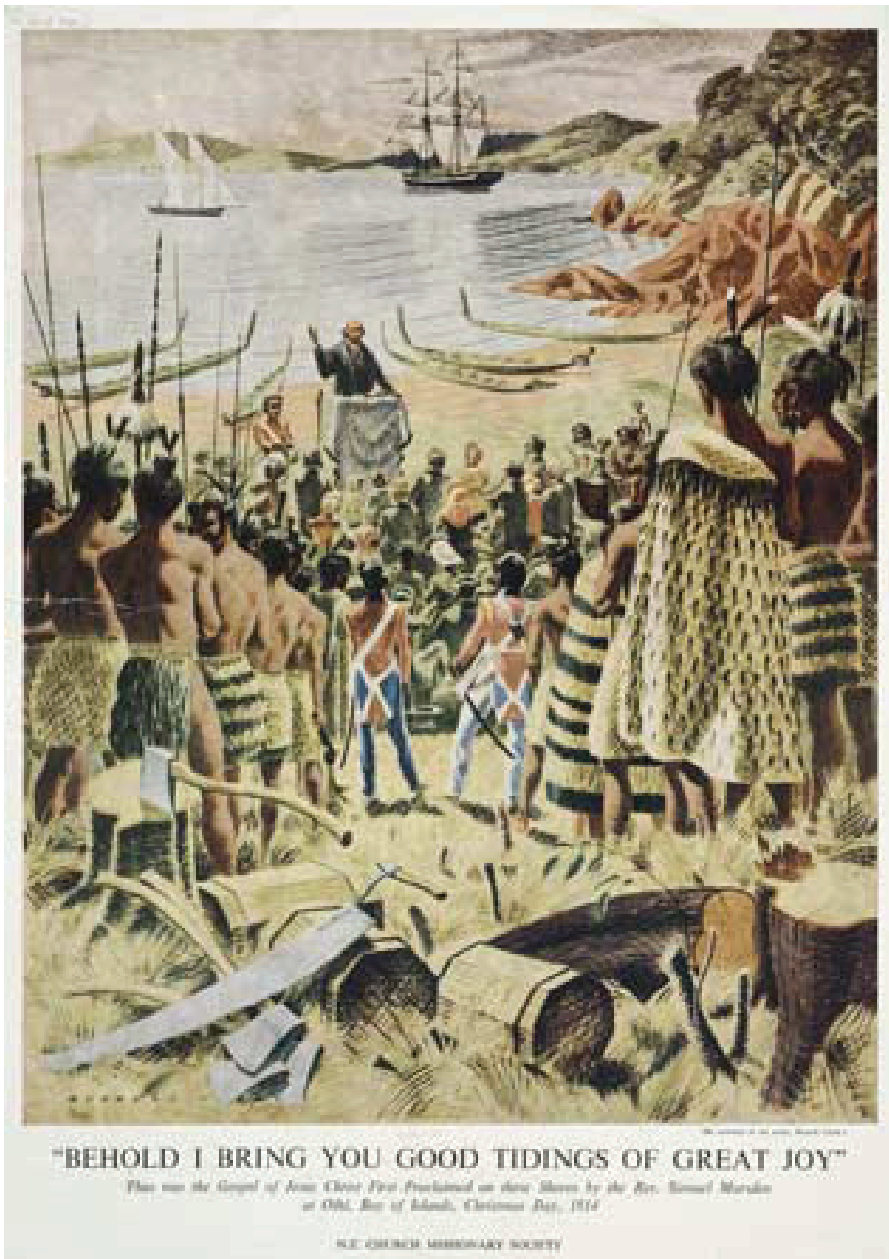
Three years later another French navigator, Marion du Fresne, turned up and gave names to a few places, including 'Mascarin Peak', not knowing Cook had already named



A Celtic cross at Rangihoua Bay commemorates the arrival of missionary Samuel Marsden and his Christian message in 1814.

it Mount Egmont! Du Fresne's crew set up camp for a while and got on quite well with Maori, but when they moved an abandoned canoe to their camp, the Maori objected and killed du Fresne and some of his men.

By this time there were convict settlements in Australia and on Norfolk Island, and in 1793 a ship was sent to pick up a couple of Maori, named Tuki and Huru, and take them to teach the Norfolk Islanders how to use flax to make ropes and clothes. Philip King, the Governor of Norfolk Island, developed a special attachment to the two men. He gave them axes and tools, and when they



In December 1814, Anglican missionary Samuel Marsden arrived at the Bay of Islands after journeying from his base in New South Wales. He came ashore at Rangihoua Bay on Christmas Day and preached the first Christian sermon ever delivered in New Zealand, to Maori and Europeans. This is artist Russell Clark's depiction of the event, painted in 1964.

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returned home they requested the ship's guns to be fired, which caused the other Maori much amazement!

Before long, whaling and sealing ships began visiting New Zealand and made further contact with Maori, taking some of them to live in Australia.

Enter Samuel Marsden

In 1794, on the recommendation of the anti-slavery reformer William Wilberforce, Samuel Marsden was sent to Australia as chaplain to the

convict settlement in New South Wales. He visited Governor King on Norfolk Island and found out how well the Maori were regarded. So he invited some of the Maori living in Australia to stay at his home in Parramatta. He got on particularly well with Te Pahi, an important chief from the Bay of Islands, and his nephew Ruatara. Marsden learnt Maori from Ruatara, and taught him English and skills such as gardening, and they began discussing spiritual matters.

Meanwhile, back in New Zealand some of the whaling and sealing captains were mistreating some Maori, promising to sail them to Australia, and then flogging them and using them as slaves. In retaliation Maori attacked a ship, the Boyd, and set it on fire, killing and eating the captain and crew.

An interesting account records that Ruatara, wishing to introduce wheat production into New Zealand, brought back a quantity of seed wheat to share with a number of chiefs. It grew well, but the Maori, never having seen it before, thought they would find the grain in the roots, as with potatoes. When no grain was found they pulled all the plants out and burnt them. Ruatara left his wheat to mature and the locals were amazed to see that the wheat grew at the top of the plants!¹

Shipping between Australia and New Zealand was very irregular, so Samuel Marsden bought his own brig, the Active, and sent it across the Tasman in June 1814 with two missionaries, Thomas Kendall, a schoolteacher, and William Hall, a carpenter. Marsden believed in teaching physical skills, as well as spiritual instruction.

Kendall and Hall arrived at Ruatara's home at Rangihoua in the Bay of Islands, and began to teach the locals gardening and building techniques. Kendall started lessons for the children. After a few weeks they took Ruatara back to Australia, along with three other chiefs. As an insight into the way learning was achieved, records show that the Maori were given a fishhook for every page of an English grammar book they learnt on the voyage!

Marsden himself joined the next trip to New Zealand, which had 35 people on board, including Ruatara and nine other Maori, as well as cattle, sheep, pigs, poultry, horses, goats, cats, and dogs. 'It bore a perfect resemblance to Noah's Ark!' commented a sailor in the ship's journal, adding that 'It wasn't very comfortable'.

The Story of Tarore

In 1835 a missionary gave a twelve year old Maori girl called Tarore a small book entitled 'Te Rongopai a Ruka', the gospel of Luke in Maori. Tarore's father, Ngakuku, was the chief of the Waikato tribe. He saw that Tarore treasured the book very highly, so he asked her to read it to him.

One night when Tarore's family needed to travel across the Kaimai ranges to Tauranga, they stopped to spend the night at the Wairere Falls. Their campfire attracted a raiding party from a rival Rotorua tribe, led by Uita. Tarore was killed while sleeping with the book under her pillow. Uita took the book, but he was unable to read, so it lay discarded for some time. One day a slave, Ripahau, who was able to read, came on a visit. He read Tarore's book aloud to Uita, who was convicted by its words. He took to heart the message to love one's enemies, and decided to become a Christian. He

even sent a message to Ngakuku to apologise for killing Tarore.

Although his friends expressed a desire for utu (revenge), Ngakuku had also been touched by the message of Luke, and he forgave Uita. And so the two tribes were reconciled. Peace had come, not through war, but through listening to and practicing the words of a book, interesting evidence that truly the pen can be mightier than the sword.

But that wasn't the end of the story. The slave, Ripahau, later went south to Otaki and taught Tamihana, the son of the great chief Te Rauparaha to read. He sent back to Rotorua for more books and amazingly Tarore's very book was returned to him, still with Ngakuku's name in it! Tamihana became a Christian, as did Ripahau, and even Te Rauparaha was strongly influenced by Christianity. Tarore's book was then taken down to the South Island, and used to spread the gospel there. When Bishop Selwyn visited the South Island six years later, although no European



Tarore's Grave

minister had yet travelled there, many Maori had learned to read and write and had become Christians. The only book they had known was Tarore's 'Te Rongopai a Ruka'. What an amazing and productive journey had been taken by this little book!

The gospel of Luke is widely available today.

Have you read it?

On 22 December 1814 they landed at Ruatara's pa of Rangihoua, where the Maori were amazed to see the strange animals from abroad. One cow took off into their midst, causing alarm and terror! Marsden climbed up and rode one of the horses along the beach, and the locals stared at him in wide-eyed amazement. Ruatara had tried to tell them about horses in the past, but since there was no Maori word for horse, he had to use the word kuri (dog). When he had spoken of large kuri carrying people in 'land canoes' (carriages), they hadn't believed him.

The First Service

On Christmas Day 1814 Ruatara fenced off some land on the beach front at Oihi Bay, down the hill from Rangihoua pa. He erected a pulpit and reading desk made from an old canoe and a couple of planks, and covered them with cloth he had brought from Australia. He arranged old canoes as seats for the missionaries and other Europeans.

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It is interesting to note that the missionaries came to New Zealand at the request of Maori, and the hosts arranged for this first service. Quite a few chiefs had come from surrounding districts to be in the audience. Professors of Maori education Alison Jones and Kuni Kaa recently wrote: 'This year it is time to remember and celebrate that Pakeha came to New Zealand under Maori protection and at Maori invitation, and to reflect on what that invitation might mean 200 years later'.²

Marsden was delighted with the preparations and this opportunity to 'publish the glad tidings of the gospel for the first time on this island'. He announced the first hymn, 'All People That on Earth Do Dwell', and later commented: 'I felt my very soul melting within me as I viewed the congregation'.³

One of the chiefs, Korokoro, gave signals for the Maori audience to

stand up and sit down at the right time, and if anyone started talking, he tapped them on the head with his cane.

Marsden chose a passage from the book of Luke for his sermon text, announcing the birth of Jesus as 'good tidings of great joy for all people'.⁴ At last the gospel had come to another far-flung nation.

It was a lot for the Maori to take in, and some of them whispered to Ruatara that they couldn't follow what was being spoken. After Marsden finished the service, Ruatara explained the importance of what had been said. As they left the enclosure, more than 300 Maori surrounded the Europeans and performed a rousing haka. Oral tradition records the words as a joyous chant expressing pleasure at the arrival of the visitors with their message of peace and joy.

Marsden went back to the ship and wrote in his journal: 'In this manner

the gospel has been introduced into New Zealand. I fervently pray that the glory of it may never depart from its inhabitants until time shall be no more'.⁵

Marsden stayed for three months, departing at the end of February 1815. He left a group of hardy and courageous missionaries teaching the Maori skills such as gardening, farming, rope making, and building. In 1816 Thomas Kendall opened the first school with a roll of 33 children. The mission also taught Maori the values of peace, forgiveness, and reconciliation, in an era where there was much fighting amongst the tribes, with cannibalism, sorcery, and the principle of 'utu' (vengeance) holding sway. Maori had

long practiced aroha (love) towards their own iwi (tribe), but biblical principles such as the instruction to 'love your enemies'⁶ were radical new concepts.

Interestingly, the great naturalist Charles Darwin visited New Zealand on the Beagle in 1835. He was astonished to see an English farmhouse with well-dressed fields at Waimate. He remarked: 'Native workmanship, taught by the missionaries, has effected this; the lesson of the missionary is the enchanter's wand. The house has been built, the windows framed, the fields ploughed, and even the trees grafted, by the Maori. At the mill a Maori was seen powdered white with flour, like his brother miller in England'.⁷

The Gospel Spreads

The Christian message began to spread throughout New Zealand. This was due not so much to the missionaries, who remained in the north for some years, as to the Maori, who journeyed to the Bay of Islands to hear it, or were taken there as slaves and then took it back to their areas. 'These dark skinned teachers carried Christianity into a hundred nooks and corners', stated William Pember Reeves in *The Long White Cloud*.

Rotongia, a chief from the Waikato, for instance, who had walked 250 miles to Paihia, stated: 'One thing only do I desire; it is not a blanket, it is not anything that will pass away, but this is my great desire—the word of God'.⁸ He was referring to the printing of the first New Testament in Maori in 1837, for which there was a huge demand for copies.

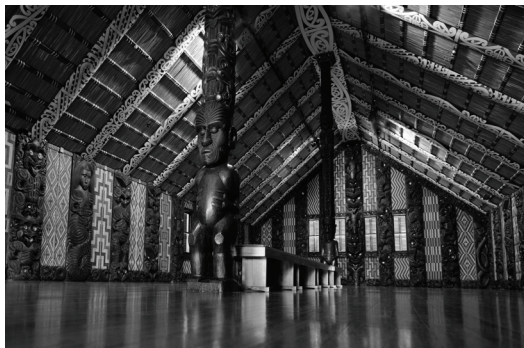
Noted historian Michael King observed: 'From the 1830s the momentum had been increased by the activity of Maori evangelists, many of them former slaves who had been converted in Ngapuhi territory and then allowed to return home when their masters also embraced the new faith and rejected slavery as an institution'.⁹ By the mid-1840s it is estimated that half of the Maori population was gathering regularly for Christian worship.¹⁰

As more and more Europeans came to settle in New Zealand, disputes began to arise. New Zealand did not have any rule of law; justice had to be sought in New South Wales. So the Maori asked for some form of law appropriate for New Zealand. The answer was to send William Hobson to establish a British colony, and to design a treaty as a legal base for the fledgling nation.

The Treaty of Waitangi was quickly put together by Hobson and British Resident James Busby, and translated into Maori by the missionary Henry Williams.



There are two buildings side by side at Waitangi: the Treaty House (the residence of James Busby), where the Treaty was signed in 1840, and the Whare Runanga (Maori meeting house) built by Maori to commemorate the centennial in 1940.



The two types of architecture (one divided into rooms for privacy and functionality; the other with a large hall where everybody sleeps and shares discussions, with ornate carvings recording ancestral stories) represent two different types of people, cultures and ways of life.



It is inevitable that clashes will sometimes occur when two so diverse cultures come together. However, there is a key to achieving the unity of separate peoples. As you step back from the two buildings, you see a large flag pole on the Treaty Grounds, in the shape of a cross. This is of course the symbol of Jesus Christ, worshipped by Christians as having died on a cross to become the mediator of reconciliation between all people. At the foot of the cross of Jesus all people become one.

'If Williams had not actively courted the chiefs and explained to them the importance of the treaty—specifically that the Crown was honouring their request for protection—it would never have been signed', states historian Keith Newman.¹¹

The missionaries supported the document, believing it was the best chance of protecting Maori interests in the face of increasing British settlement.¹² They were the ones who led the effort to take the treaty throughout the nation, collecting signatures from the chiefs of the various tribes.

When preparing Maori leaders to sign the treaty, British Resident James Busby told them that the English too had been a nation of warring tribes until the story of Jesus had brought forgiveness, reconciliation, and restitution.¹³

Dr Laurie Guy's 2011 book, *Shaping Godzone*, states that 'the church has been midwife to the nation', and claims that

...without missionary influence there would have been no Treaty of Waitangi and no New Zealand as we know it today.

Governor Hobson expressed his gratitude for the efforts of Henry Williams, and later declared to the Legislative Council (in 1841) that if it wasn't for the help of the missionaries, a British colony would not have been established in New Zealand.¹⁴

Christianity's Contribution

It is easy to underestimate the valuable contribution of Christianity to our national story. Imagine if it hadn't been missionaries who started the first permanent settlement. Many of the sealers and whalers arriving in the early 1800s had been convicts in Australia and their behaviour was very disorderly. Their drunken conduct caused the principal settlement of Kororareka to be called 'the hell-hole of the Pacific'. They fought with Maori and took advantage of them.

The missionaries on the other hand were eager to live together with Maori

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and teach them literacy and other practical skills, as well as the ethical message of love and peace which is the foundation of the Christian gospel. Historian James Belich described the missionaries as 'agents of virtue in a world of vice'—a world the British Resident James Busby labelled 'extreme frontier chaos'.¹⁵

Historian Dr Paul Moon records: 'Christianity played a central role in the development of our state education system. By the 1820s, New Zealand's mission schools were the only source of primary schooling in the country'.¹⁶

A missionary, explorer, botanist, and politician, William Colenso brought the first printing press to New Zealand, and published the New Testament in Maori in 1837. 'This had a profound impact as the Maori language had no form of written script prior to the printing of the New Testament. By the middle of the 19th century, two thirds of Maori had rejected their old ways and turned to the Christian message'.¹⁷

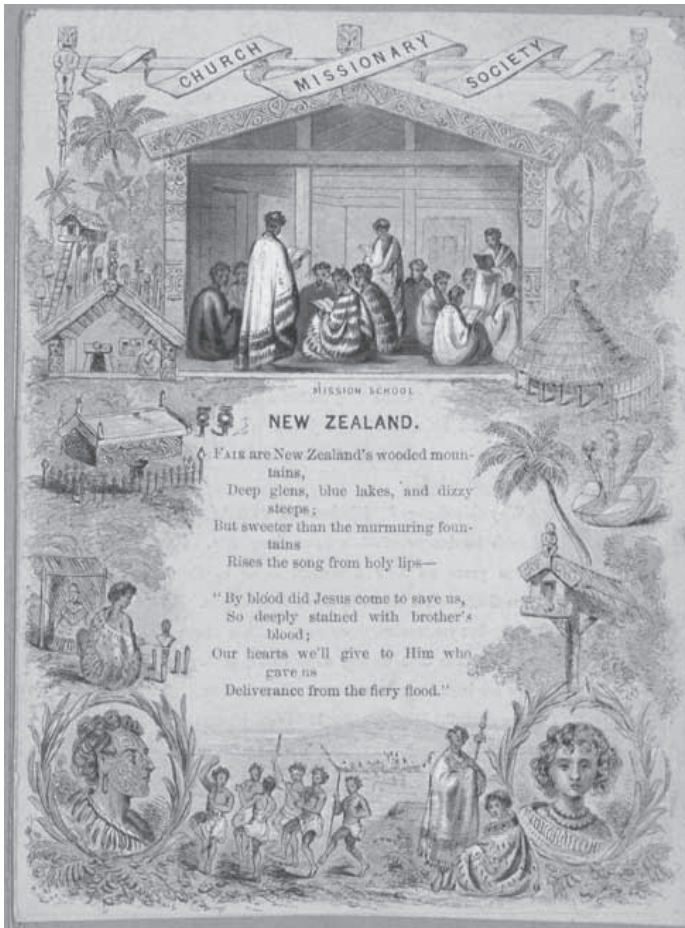
The strongest testimony to the benefits brought by Christianity comes

from Maori themselves. The great Ngapuhi chief Tamati Waka Nene said: 'When the Governor came here he brought with him the word of God by which we live; and it is through the teaching of that word that we are able to meet together this day under one roof'.¹⁸

Another Maori chief, Eruera Kahawai of Rotorua is quoted as saying in 1860:

It was the introduction of the gospel that put an end to all our evil ways. Yes, my friends, it was Christianity alone that did it. It put an end to thieving and many other sins. We have abandoned our old ways. The rule is now kindness to the orphan, charity, peace, and agricultural pursuits. I have now come under the wings of the Queen.¹⁹

Keith Newman writes: 'The tectonic shift away from blood utu and cannibalism, the rapid growth in literacy, the reduction of inter-tribal wars, new agricultural and trading skills and the freeing of slaves can primarily be attributed to the practical, spiritual, and humanitarian input of the missionaries and their faithful Maori teachers'.²⁰



The first Christian mission in New Zealand was founded in 1814 by a Sydney chaplain, Samuel Marsden. Though they had little success initially in converting Maori, the missionaries also wrote down the Maori language and started printing books in Maori. One of the leading missionary organisations was the Church Missionary Society. In a tract published in England after 1849 by the society to muster support, there were images of Maori and Maori life. On the page pictured here are verses of the society's 50th jubilee hymn.

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All of this is not to say that the missionaries were always just and right in their conduct. Far from it! They squabbled amongst themselves and often set a poor example of their faith. According to John Stenhouse, in an article entitled 'The History of the Christian Movement in New Zealand': 'Many Maori became disillusioned with Pakeha Christianity, especially after the wars of the 1860s. Tragically, they had reason so to do'.²¹ In the land wars a number of missionaries acted as chaplains to government troops, and this seemed like a stab in the back to many Christian Maori. Large numbers of Maori left the established

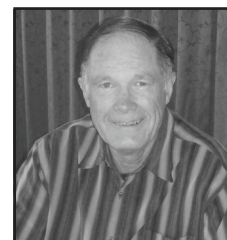
churches as they failed to come to support of Maori when their land was unjustly confiscated, such as at Parihaka in the 1870s.

But Stenhouse notes: 'If Maori-Pakeha relations have been relatively good in comparison with race relations elsewhere in the world, then evangelical Christianity had a great deal to do with it. Professor Sir Keith Sinclair, who could never be accused of having a religious axe to grind, has argued exactly this. The fact that Maori rights and welfare were respected and protected as much as they were in New Zealand, enshrined in the Treaty of Waitangi and in subsequent legislation, shows how important Christian attitudes were in setting positive standards for Pakeha attitudes and behaviour from the beginning of settlement'.²²

New Zealand certainly has a rich and fascinating history. The bicentenary of Christianity is an opportune occasion to review the development of our nationhood, and to recognise the positive contribution Christianity has made to our heritage.

Notes

- ¹ Samuel Marsden, HO 176A, p. 26; Patricia Bawden, *The Years Before Waitangi*, 2006 reprint, p. 49
- ² Alison Jones and Kuni Kaa, 'The day Maori first said, Haere mai, Pakeha', *NZ Herald*, 6 February 2014
- ³ Robert McNab, *Historical Records of New Zealand*, 1908-1914, Vol. 1, p. 363
- ⁴ Luke 2:10-11
- ⁵ Robert McNab, *Historical Records of New Zealand*, 1908-1914, Vol 1, p. 363
- ⁶ Matthew 5:44
- ⁷ Charles Darwin, *Journal of Researches*, London, 1890, pp. 509-510
- ⁸ British and Foreign Bible Society, 37th Report
- ⁹ Michael King, *History of New Zealand*, 2003, p. 143
- ¹⁰ NZ Christian Network, 'Discussion Paper for the Gospel Bicentenary'
- ¹¹ Keith Newman, *Bible and Treaty*, 2010, p. 148
- ¹² NZ Christian Network, 'Discussion Paper for the Gospel Bicentenary'
- ¹³ Jeff Fountain, 'Midwife to a Nation', www.schumancentre.eu/category/weeklyword
- ¹⁴ Keith Newman, *Bible and Treaty*, 2010, p. 159
- ¹⁵ New Zealand History Online, section 'The Christian Missionaries'
- ¹⁶ Paul Moon, 'Bible in School battles denying our heritage', *NZ Herald*, 13 February 2014
- ¹⁷ www.cai.org/bible-studies/christian-history-new-zealand
- ¹⁸ Keith Newman, *Bible and Treaty*, 2010, p. 290
- ¹⁹ *Te Karere The Maori Messenger* newspaper, July 1860
- ²⁰ Keith Newman, *Bible and Treaty*, 2010, p. 312
- ²¹ *New Vision, New Zealand*, 1993, New Zealand Christian Network, p. 34
- ²² Keith Sinclair, 'Why are Race Relations in New Zealand Better Than in South Africa, South Australia or South Dakota?' *New Zealand Journal of History*, 5:2 1971, pp. 121-127



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Rex has

worked in Christian ministry and office administration for over 30 years and has contributed articles to a number of international publications. Rex can be contacted at rex@gci.org.nz

Artificial Life?

By Joseph Tkach

There was a time when Christians could say with some confidence: 'Scientists will never create life'. Well, they can't say that with quite the same confidence now.

In 2010 it was announced that a team of scientists succeeded in creating life. In a landmark experiment they created the world's first synthetic life form in the laboratory. This controversial feat occupied 20 scientists for more than ten years at an estimated cost of US\$40m and was described by one researcher as 'a defining moment in biology'.

Quite obviously, this experiment was performed with a remarkable amount of work by a highly skilled team of quantum and computational chemists, protein engineers, biochemists, and molecular biologists.

It is important to understand that these scientists have not created life from nothing. Nor have they claimed to. What they have done is to remodel an existing life form to generate a new one. Another way of looking at it would be like a team of highly trained engineers taking parts from other existing engines to build a brand new working engine. But let's not underestimate what these scientists have achieved.

The researchers pieced together enzymes from about one hundred proteins of known structure, essentially mixing and matching protein regions to produce enzyme mosaics. They planned and performed well-thought-out design strategies in order to prepare artificial DNA molecules that were carefully manipulated by highly skilled chemists.

The ingenuity of this scientific team was evident throughout the process. Their efforts are of huge theological and philosophical significance. Let me quickly explain why!

Their work provides evidence that if life is to undergo any significant transformation at the biochemical level, intelligent agents must be directly involved. Their work was based upon decades of accumulated knowledge, brilliant ingenuity, and strategic planning toward their planned goals in order to design new, synthetic metabolic pathways and add to the genetic code. To put it another way, they made evolution 'happen'.

As you probably know, some scientists who espouse an atheist agenda would argue that life could originate and develop through natural processes, with no need for an intelligent creator. But clearly, this experiment did not reinforce that argument. It was not an undirected process. Neither was it a lucky coincidence or blind luck. It required precise methods and procedures intelligently thought out and expertly executed. These scientists have shown that modifying even the simplest life form needs the involvement of an intelligent agent directing the process.

So, far from showing that life does not need a Creator, this experiment actually reinforces the conviction of a need for a Creator's involvement



in the origin and development of life. This experiment won't put an end to the 'Creation versus Evolution' debate. That controversy can never be determined by the data collected by scientific experiment. Those results must be interpreted on the basis of philosophical or theological assumptions established on some other grounds. And of course, little intelligent discussion can take place while one side is trying to knock the other out of the ring.

But in the meanwhile, we are coming to understand more and more about the beautiful and intricate processes that are involved with the phenomenon we call life.

Both science and religion should approach the questions of the development of life with humility. We still have much to learn, and the more that we do learn about life, the question should not be whether or not a Creator was involved, but rather, was there *any* part of this wonderful process that did *not* need the involvement of a Creator?

This is a transcript of the weekly 'Speaking of Life' radio programme by Joseph Tkach, president of Grace Communion International. For more information visit www.gci.org.

Letting Others Go **FREE**

By James Henderson

Slavery has been in the news recently.

'Human trafficking', as slavery is often called, is on the rise, even in 2014. There have been some sensational cases highlighted in Europe. It is estimated that up to 100,000 girls in India go missing each year. It has also been in the news this year due to the release of the movie, '12 Years a Slave', the story of man who was abducted and forced into slavery in the nineteenth century.

Some years ago I visited one of the infamous slave castles along the coast of Western Africa (see accompanying photos). There slaves were 'stored' prior to being shipped into servitude to the New World (America) and to other places. It was a brilliantly sunny day, and everything seemed right with the world. As my friend Gabriel and I entered

the gates, children were playing in a carefree way, and street vendors tried to sell us richly colored cloths and African souvenirs—it was just like walking into a typical Ghanaian market. I was not prepared for what lay ahead.

The sun was so bright, making everything look clear and the white stone whiter, masking the horrors of the past. We went down to the windowless slave quarters where captives were locked away in appalling squalour, while up above them the governor and his guests were wined and dined; we saw the black holes where offenders were kept prior to execution; we promenaded along the ramparts with the cannons facing seaward; and we visited the women's quarters where mothers and daughters had huddled together in abject misery, in fear of rape, death, and disease. Then we walked silently to the 'Door of No Return': once slaves passed through this dark heavy door

they boarded the ships, never to return to Africa. Some say that even today the sharks follow the same trails of the slave ships, as if instinctively waiting for their human prey to be cast overboard.

Slavery was not new to Africa. The Arab slave trade had been in place for centuries before then, and the Africans themselves had also been guilty of selling each other into bondage. But this was much worse by degree. The obscene estimates are that, during the three centuries of the European slave trade, more than eleven million Africans were taken from their homeland to be slaves in 'civilized' societies.

The ghosts in my mind cried out as I imagined the screams of the women being mistreated callously by the guards, of the old people being beaten to death because they had outlived their commercial usefulness, of the helpless children snatched



violently from their parents, and of the young men whose spirits were broken by the whippings, the torture, and by the hopelessness of it all. In my mind's eye I could see the slaves crushed together in the dark chambers without natural light and sanitation, frightened, sobbing, praying to gods that did not deliver. I could see them walking slowly to the Door of No Return, some being dragged and kicked there, and then the door closes and they are gone forever from their roots.

'I'm sorry', I thought. In a way, because of man's inhumanity to man, I did all this. The reality is that I am still capable of doing it. In fact, I believe all of us, no matter what ethnic or gender background, are capable of enslaving and mistreating others. We can all be tyrants: in the home, at work, wherever. Do you suppress your wife, your husband, your children, those around you? Left to our own devices, chances are each of us is able to be cruel and dangerous to others.

As I went back into the main courtyard I saw a woman, who turned out to be an African American. She was crying uncontrollably. She looked up and glanced at me, and I felt accused—doubly accused, as I am white and male. Suddenly I became defensive. I wanted to tell her: 'I didn't do this. I didn't put my fellow men into servile chains and exploit the women sexually. I didn't do it. I was not even born'. The woman stared at me, no words, and I tried to look away, but couldn't. Maybe this was her grief for a people lost, and I was intruding. 'I DIDN'T DO IT!' I screamed in my head.

For some reason I thought of Jesus. The Bible implies that Jesus took on the guilt of our evil, and not once did he say: 'I didn't do it'. Protesting my innocence was not the point. Feeling sorrow for the suffering that men who looked like me caused, and can still cause, is the point. I didn't do it but I could have, and there but for the grace of God goes all of humankind.

The Christian view is that grace is to do with realising that the dark potential of our human nature is covered by the sacrifice of Christ. Change in the human condition is possible because of grace.

Probably all of us would like to think that collectively we have learned the lesson of slavery in the same way that lessons could have been learned about genocide. Sadly, history indicates that we don't learn these lessons. Genocide is still with us; and slavery has not gone. Why not? The reason is that we do not change. Without spiritual transformation men and women may progress technologically, scientifically, and politically, but human nature does not change.

You have probably gathered that I do not believe in the innate goodness of human beings. I don't. No one is good, actually. Only God is good.

The only way out of our wretchedness is to participate in God's goodness through Christ.

I believe in the goodness of God, and it is only through turning to God and by His intervention in history that a general reversal in our rush to self-destruction can be realised.

Specifically, however, a change in our—yours and mine—human nature is possible now. It is possible right now by turning to Jesus Christ and by acknowledging how he saves us from ourselves; on a personal level accept his transforming grace. That would make a difference in this callous world—to have another Christ-like being walk in it.

James Henderson is Director of Grace Communion International in the UK and Europe. This article was first published in the January 2014 issue of *Because* magazine (www.because.uk.com).



The Door of No Return

Words Can Break Your



By Lianne Trevarthen

Cyber-bullying—attacking vulnerable people on the internet—has been in the news recently.

Not only young people, but adults too, are surprisingly good at using words to cast slurs and fling insults online. Their targets take the comments so seriously that some even think of taking their own lives. The tragic death in February of Charlotte Dawson, internationally renowned New Zealand-born fashion model and TV celebrity who championed campaigns against cyber-bullying and internet trolling, has prompted sympathy and renewed calls to address cyber-bullying through legal reform.

A recent study estimated that every day 10,000 tweets on Twitter are racist, although of those, it was considered that 70% are not written in a hateful or prejudicial way. Think-tank Demos, which conducted a global study of tweets from a nine-day period, estimated fewer than a hundred tweets were directed at individuals or had any violent intent.

But does a view of a nine-day period of tweets give a true view of the problem? What about social media where the messages disappear soon after they are sent? No trace

remains of the message, but the damage has been done.

Celebrities report that they are increasingly becoming targets for online hate mail. Previously postal threats and insults could be managed by publicists and by secretaries, but nowadays, social media frequently bypasses intermediaries. Celebrities can face short-term or prolonged attacks prompted by a recent appearance or comment they have made. Less known is the frequency or type of bullying that happens to average people and businesses, although a 2013 Law Commission report found one in ten New Zealanders have experienced harmful communications on the internet, while other research showed 20 per cent of secondary school students had experienced cyber bullying in some form.

Proposed laws against cyber-bullying will impose penalties for those hiding behind a computer or phone if their comments amount to harassment or cause harm. Yet a law is unlikely to totally change behaviour. Much cyber abuse is anonymous and difficult to trace. Targets of bullying may not report the slurs or try to ignore them, but still be affected emotionally. Psychologist Niki Harre, Associate Professor at Auckland University, comments: '...what we're recognising more and more is sticks and stones may break your bones but words can break your heart—these things do cause real damage'.

It's not just governments that need to confront or prevent cyber-bullying: individuals and organisations need policies and procedures for dealing with cyber communications. Businesses also need to be aware of what their staff may

be saying to customers or potential clients. They need to have policies on acceptable use of social media, what is not okay to put online, and how to deal with insults and attacks on their business. If they don't, they risk endorsing bullying, damaging their reputation, or falling victim to reputational attacks.

The Bible has much to say about the harm of words and slander, encouraging us to speak (and therefore tweet!) good things. Here are a few:

Do not use harmful words, but only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those who hear you.¹

Rash language cuts and maims, but there is healing in the words of the wise.²

But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.³

May my spoken words and unspoken thoughts be pleasing even to you, O Lord my Rock and my Redeemer.⁴

Let's be aware of the harm that words can do, vigilant to address bullying in any form, encouraging respectful communication by our example.

Notes

- ¹ Ephesians 4:29 (Good News Translation)
- ² Proverbs 12:18 (The Message)
- ³ Colossians 3:8 (New International Version)
- ⁴ Psalm 19:14 (The Living Bible)

Lianne Trevarthen is a complaint handler for a bank in Auckland, married with four adult children and is website manager for Grace Communion International Auckland (gci-auckland.org.nz)

Social Media Commandments

1. Thou shall treat people online as you'd like to be treated.
2. Thou shall give respect and expect respect.
3. Thou shall BE NICE.



The Incredible, Wonderful, Amazing... You!

By Berni Dymet

I think sometimes we take ourselves for granted. We don't really realise how incredible we are. And not just ourselves...we also take others for granted.

So, here are a couple of amazing facts about each one of us that you may not know that are *totally amazing*.

Fact # 1 – Your DNA

The first one has to do with your DNA. It's the code on which all your physical attributes are written.

Your DNA is a double strand of specialised protein that is replicated precisely, exactly, identically in every cell in your body. It's your genetic thumbprint, if you will. Your DNA is what makes you absolutely unique—unless you are one of those very rare people with an identical twin.

So let me ask you: if you were able to string every strand of DNA in your body together end to end, how far do you think it would reach?

From Kolkata (Calcutta) to Delhi perhaps, about 1500 kilometres? That's rather a long way for our DNA to stretch, isn't it? But no, all the DNA strands in your body stretch further than that.

What about from Sydney to London? Now that is a long way. That's about 17,000 kilometres. Is it that far? No, your DNA stretches further still.

What about ten times around the equator: 400,000 kilometres? Well, actually no, that's still way too short. Well, what next?

How about to the moon and back ten times? That's almost four million kilometres. Nope. Still not far enough.

Okay, let's try the distance to the sun and back: 300 million kilometres. This is getting exciting isn't it? But no, that's still not far enough. Your DNA, if we could string every strand of it in your body end to end, would reach much, much farther than that. Here's the simple mathematics.

Each cell in your body has around two metres of DNA—now isn't that surprising! (How does all that DNA fit into such a tiny cell?)—and you have around 100 trillion cells in your body. So if we multiply the two metres by 100 trillion, we get 200 trillion metres, or 200 billion kilometres of DNA. How far is 200 billion kilometres?

Well, to be precise, it's 667 trips to the sun and back.

Isn't that completely amazing? And here's a second fact about you.

Fact # 2 – What You're Worth

What do you think is the going market price for all the elements in your body?

If you could value the potassium and the iron and the water and the oxygen and the sodium and all the other elements that make up your body at today's prices, how much would you be worth?



Well, the answer is somewhere between \$1.50 and \$2.50 US. When we just look at our physical components, we're not worth much are we?

But when I bring those two amazing facts together, here's the conclusion I come to: you and I are totally, totally amazing.

With only a couple of dollars' worth of material, you and I are made up of complex, intricate, genetic material that will stretch 667 round trips to the sun. Any way you look at that reality, it's just completely mind blowing.

If you set out to drive the distance of those 667 round trips to the sun in a car at 100 kph without stopping, do you know how long that would take you? Just under 230,000 years.

Do you get the picture? You really are amazing!

Our value isn't in the raw materials that make up our bodies. Our value is who we become when those elements are arranged in a very special way. Not only are you and I physically amazing, but we are emotionally and spiritually amazing. We each have unique skills and gifts that very few people around us have.

Now I know what you're thinking: you've lived with those skills and gifts all your life, and so you think they're nothing special.

But...

perhaps you're able to sing or draw, I can't do either of those things. Perhaps you have a great engineering mind, or perhaps you have a gentleness and kindness and concern for other people that the rest of us don't quite have.

So, let me just leave you with this vital fact about yourself. You are truly an amazing person. And it doesn't matter what the world or society or other people say or think. We each have a unique gift or ability in life. We are each amazing.

So, can I please encourage you, implore you, to wake up to your unique talents and abilities, and please, don't waste them. You have so much potential to live an amazing life. Please don't get to the end of your life just to discover that you wasted it.

Remember, you are one of a kind—totally amazing.

For it was you (God) who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.¹

Notes

¹ Psalm 139:13

Berni Dymet is the CEO of the global media ministry Christianityworks. His radio messages are heard by tens of millions of listeners around the globe each week.

NOAH movie: Courage, Faith, Hope

By Rusty Wright

How would you feel if you thought you heard God telling you he was going to destroy every living thing on earth with a great flood?

Except he wanted you to build a boat to survive the tumult with a few relatives and a slew of creatures.

Would you jump at the challenge? Run and hide? Ask—as Bill Cosby did in his classic comedy routine portraying Noah—'Right! Who is this really?'

Perhaps you'll sense how the biblical Noah felt. Paramount Pictures and director/co-writer Darren Aronofsky brought Noah to the big screen in North America and worldwide in 2014. The cast includes Russell Crowe in the title role, Jennifer Connelly, Emma Watson, and Anthony Hopkins.

With breathtaking cinematography, this film imagines some intense struggles for Noah and his family. We see sorrow for lost masses, interpersonal conflicts, and practical realities of living on a creature-packed craft.

Taking Liberties

Paramount says Noah's story 'inspired' the film, but that 'artistic license has been taken.' Too much license, feel some. I'm reminded of TV's iconic psychiatrist Frasier Crane, concerned that an employee was 'taking far too much liberty with the liberty-taking!' Readers of the biblical Noah story won't find there, for instance, the film's multi-armed fallen angels, its pronounced environmentalist message, or hordes of people fighting to board the ark.

The biblical account is short—mostly Genesis ch. 6–9—with little detail about ark life. So, yes, the filmmakers took liberties...many. Aronofsky recently told *The Atlantic* he views the story 'as poetry and myth and legend'

that helps us understand the world and ourselves.

But the essential framework of the biblical flood story—human evil, divine judgment, hope, and salvation—remains in Noah. Consider these facets of that story and their modern implications.

Human Evil, Divine Judgment

Genesis says humanity was a mess: 'The Lord observed the extent of human wickedness on the earth, and he saw that everything they thought or imagined was consistently and totally evil. ... It broke his heart'.¹

Human corruption prompted him to 'destroy every living thing'. But 'Noah was a righteous man...[who] walked in close fellowship with God'.² God told him to build a large boat, specifying precise dimensions and design.

Filmmakers took pains to follow biblical specs for their ark. The production designer had many ideas for the ark's appearance, but Aronofsky, who is Jewish, insisted: 'No, the measurements are right there'.

Salvation, Hope, Promise

Noah built his ark and took aboard his wife, their three sons with their wives, plus pairs of animals, birds, and crawling creatures. Elaborate computer-generated imagery portrays the animals for film.

Rain poured, underground water erupted, and floodwaters covered the earth. Every human, bird and land animal not in the ark perished. The waters receded, the earth dried, and the ark inhabitants disembarked. God promised never again to destroy the earth by flood, offering the rainbow as a pledge reminder.



Faith, Future

If you attend the film, I suggest reading the biblical account (Genesis ch. 6–9) first, then again after the screening. Noah's story has much for a 21st-century audience, including two nuggets about faith and the future.

The New Testament lauds Noah for his faith. He was not perfect. 'Wickedness is...in all of us', he tells his wife in the film. His own drunkenness—depicted in the film—led to embarrassment and family conflict. But his faith in God mattered. I came to faith as a skeptical university student. It has made all the difference in my life.

Concerning the future, Jesus indicated his second coming would be 'like it was in Noah's day' with people carrying on their routines and unaware of impending peril. 'You also must be ready all the time', he continued, 'for the Son of Man will come when least expected'.³

I want to be ready.

Notes

¹ Genesis 6:5–6

² Genesis 6:9

³ Matthew 24:37, 42

Rusty Wright is an author and lecturer who has spoken on six continents. He holds Bachelor of Science (psychology) and Master of Theology degrees from Duke and Oxford universities, respectively. www.RustyWright.com

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