“THE WAIAPU SAINT OF OLD”

A RE-EVALUATION OF WILLIAM COLENSO’S

LEGACY AND THEOLOGY

IN

THE WAIAPU DIOCESE

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“The Waiapu Saint of old”

A Re-evaluation of William Colenso’s Legacy and Theology

In The Waiapu Diocese

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Abstract:

The Reverend William Colenso F.R.S., F.L.S is acknowledged as an important, controversial and deeply uncomfortable figure in the history of the Anglican Diocese of Waiapu. Waiapu is a diocese that now prides itself on progressiveness and liberality. The church considers Colenso’s civic, scientific and political achievements to be the redeeming features of this conservative, legalistic and overbearing evangelical, who became a great hypocrite through an illicit sexual relationship with a Māori “girl”. In 1852 Colenso was dismissed from the church and the Church Missionary Society, and was deprived of Holy Orders. Forty years later he was restored as a deacon. Historians have acknowledged, in varying degrees, the nature of Colenso’s personal faith but the development of his theology, churchmanship and reactions to the changes in the church between 1852 and 1892 have not been sufficiently chronicled. The path by which he came to re-gain the respect of the church and be restored to its favour also has not been comprehensively explored, nor has this journey been fully understood by the diocese he came to re-enter over a century ago. This thesis will examine the ecclesiastical politics and rehabilitation of William Colenso as an Anglican minister. It will also analyse the way in which his academic and civic work informed the development of his churchmanship and theology, and how his new understandings sat in the wider Anglican context and were received in the Diocese of Waiapu.
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In particular, I would like to extend my gratitude to trade unionist and teacher, Steve Farrow, for his assistance with this project from its inception.

My thanks to my family for their encouragement, despite their deep suspicion of anything remotely academic, and my grandmother, Winnifred Walker’s help in decoding 19th century cursive.

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William Colenso was born in Penzance, Cornwall, on the 11th of November, 1811. He completed a six-year apprenticeship as a printer and bookbinder at St Ives. Eventually Colenso was employed at Richard Watts Ltd in London, who happened to be the printers for the Church Missionary Society. As a young man Colenso attended church almost every day, but did not align himself directly with the Church of England, identifying more as a non-conforming evangelical and Wesleyan.

Colenso applied to the Church Missionary Society to become the printer for the New Zealand Mission and arrived in the Bay of Islands with his printing press in 1834. Ten years later, in 1844, he married Elizabeth Fairburn. In the same year he was ordained deacon and moved to Hawke’s Bay to work as a missionary. He was dismissed by Bishop George Augustus Selwyn from the church and the Church Missionary Society for adultery in 1852 after fathering a child to his Māori housekeeper, Ripeka.

When settlers began to occupy Napier, Colenso re-invented himself as a politician in the Provincial Government and later as a member of the House of Representatives for the Hawke’s Bay seat. His interest in botany grew into a passion for science, prompting him to establish the Hawke’s Bay Philosophical Society in 1874. Colenso also served as a Schools’ Inspector. As one of the country’s leading botanists and as a scientist he was held in high regard and was made a Fellow of the Royal Society. He wrote hundreds of letters to newspaper editors on various issues and thousands of personal letters. As an explorer in the 1830s he was the first Pakeha to traverse many parts of the North Island. He even planted the country’s first stone fruit orchard.

Forty years after he was dismissed from the church he was reinstated and worked as Vicar of Woodville and as a freelance cleric in his eighties until his death in 1899. William and
Elizabeth Colenso separated in 1852, and never saw each other again. No family member came to his funeral. A local paper reported, “In Mr. Colenso’s death a lone and solitary figure has passed away.”¹ The funeral was of a significant size with settlers from all classes, who were outnumbered by the substantial number of Māori present. While no family attended, his son, Latty, came over from England to organise his estate, and his daughter’s tombstone in Otaki reads, “…the daughter of the late Rev. William Colenso.”² His funeral was conducted by the Dean and Bishop of Waiapu, and he received many newspaper obituaries. These tributes do not seem to line up with the image of a discarded and fallen churchman, suggesting that Colenso’s legacy in the late nineteenth century differed to that of the one presented in 20th century histories and by the church; “…the colony mourns the loss of a distinguished scientist, a brilliant scholar, and a sturdy pioneer. The deceased gentleman has helped to frame the destiny of New Zealand, and when the history of this fair Colony comes to be written the name of William Colenso will stand out boldly amongst the foremost of our pioneers.”³

The complexities of the interpersonal relationships, ecclesiastical politics, deposition, reconciliation and theological development of Colenso will be explored in the context of these research questions:

[1]: What were the mechanics of Colenso’s dismissal and readmission to the church, and what problems, such as, class, churchmanship/theology and personal conflict informed this, and what part did these factors play in his initial difficulty in getting ordained?

[2]: How had Colenso’s theology changed over the period of his exile (1852-1892), and what documents display this? Did Colenso form

² Fanny Simcox’s Head Stone, Otaki NZ.
a civic or scientific theology through his work in science, politics and education during those years?

[3]: How did Colenso respond to the changes in the church and theology between 1852 and 1892, and what was the response of others in the church to his readmission?

[4]: What was Colenso’s attitude to the behaviour and culture of Māori, and how did this change as a result of his reconsideration of his theology?

[5]: How was Colenso’s legacy understood in the 20th century in the Diocese of Waiapu, and how has it been received in recent times?

Chapter one is an examination of historiography, and how the historical literature has represented and informed Colenso’s legacy. A significant part of this chapter will deal with the 1948 biography of William Colenso, written by notable regional historians, A.G. Bagnall and G.C. Peterson, William Colenso: His Life and Journeys. This publication is the most comprehensive work that has been published on Colenso. This chapter will also gauge the representation of Colenso’s legacy and theology in the histories that the Anglican Church has commissioned.

Chapter two is an exploration of Colenso’s early relationships with Bishop Selwyn, Henry Williams and William Williams, covering the dynamics of these relationships and the role they played through Colenso’s career. This chapter will also take a closer look at Colenso’s later relationship with William Williams, and the part that science, botany and the Hawke’s Bay Philosophical Institute played in the mending of their friendship.

Chapter three offers a more in-depth analysis of the ecclesiastical political landscape in the Bay of Islands in the 1830s and 1840s. This chapter also looks at Colenso’s dismissal in 1852, and the role Selwyn’s theology and disregard for Colenso played in this decision. As a young man Colenso was abrasive and tactless. However, over time, he developed better situational awareness, and this was part of his engagement in ecclesiastical politics. With increasing success, Colenso curated his image and
positioned himself, particularly in the Philosophical Society, in such a way as to aid his ambition to be restored to Holy Orders.

Chapter four shows how any real progress for this goal of restoration did not begin until Edward Craig Stuart became the second Bishop of Waiapu (after William Williams). Bishop Stuart’s nature and friendship with Colenso is also discussed. This chapter unpacks the way in which Colenso was received back into the church. This was a complex process, comprising three stages spanning at least five years. This chapter also acknowledges the role that the second generation of the Williams family played in the completion of Colenso’s reconciliation with the church.

Chapter five deals with Colenso’s shifting attitudes to scholarship, theology and churchmanship; noting significant changes of opinion on various issues, and how publicly he defended each new standpoint. William Colenso’s adoption of the controversial theological scholarship of his cousin, Bishop John Colenso, is discussed, as is the timeframe in which William Colenso adopted these principles of biblical scholarship, and when the church received them also. Colenso, the wider Anglican Church and the Diocese of Waiapu’s attitudes to various issues in the late 19th century are compared and contrasted.

Chapter six addresses Colenso’s attitude to and involvement with Māori issues. Colenso’s reconsideration of judgement, as part of his theological development is discussed here, in contrast to the Government’s persecution of various Māori figures in the 19th century (who Colenso defended). Colenso was outspoken in his concerns about the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840. He was also openly critical of land sales in Hawke’s Bay and the Wairarapa in the 1850s. His defence of Māori figures, such as Te Kooti and Kereopa Te Rau are examined in the context of his desire to end the land wars.

Chapter seven contains the current understanding of William Colenso’s legacy in the Diocese of Waiapu. This is mostly an examination of oral history, and marks the ways in which the diocese
has re-engaged with this past story of theirs over the last 60-70 years.

My interest in William Colenso was first inspired by Karl Peterson, my history teacher at Taradale High School. While I failed to gain any qualifications at secondary school, history was the one subject I did pass. This was well before the contemporary scholarship on Colenso had gained any traction, but it was clear to me then, that somehow there was more to the story. For Christmas 2011, my father sent me a copy of Peter Wells’ book The Hungry Heart: Journeys With William Colenso. This publication was beautifully bound and printed; however, with regard to its engagement with Colenso’s relationship with the church, it left more to be desired. In the last year of my B.A. at Victoria, John Bluck suggested to me that some work on Colenso in a Waiapu context would make a good M.A. topic, and I was inclined to agree.
Chapter 1:

Historiography and Literature Review

The events that marked the 200th anniversary of the birth of William Colenso came to express the significant contemporary interest in the life and work of this man of intriguing character, integral to the formation of New Zealand society and the Anglican Church therein. Of the commemorations and publications that marked this bicentenary, The Colenso Society (a group of scholars focused on Colenso research), which had been formed in the previous year and The Colenso Project (a group of researchers who are digitising Colenso’s papers), demonstrated this desire to know more of Colenso. 2011 saw the launch of two sizeable books: Peter Wells’ *The Hungry Heart: Journeys With William Colenso*, a contemporary biography, and Ian St George’s compilation of Colenso’s newspaper presence, *Give Your Thoughts Life: William Colenso’s Letters to the Editor*. Dr. St George also released a revised edition of Bagnall and Peterson’s 1948 biography of Colenso in 2012. This Literature Review will examine Colenso’s representation in New Zealand’s historical narrative, and will also explore the way in which his legacy has been represented in the church that he served at various points in his life and how that representation has changed.

One of the events that took place during the 200th anniversary commemorations was the launch of Wells’ book. In its blurb, this publication gives an outstandingly positive description of this odd character with a quiet nod to the controversies that surrounded him. The blurb ends with, “The time has come to welcome Colenso back.”4 This work, at the outset, suggests it will re-instate the forgotten legacy of the Rev. William Colenso, putting things right, yet one of the predominant themes in this biography of Colenso is Wells’ argument that Colenso was a psycho-sexual deviant and that his insatiable libido is what drove his religious endeavours rather than a personal faith. Wells also concludes that the faith that Colenso

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did have, was simply a symptom of a psychiatric delusion. Examples of his argument regarding the motivation of Colenso’s sex drive, other than the chapters that he dedicates to it, are scattered throughout the text in sentences such as, “After all, in 1834 he [Colenso] was only twenty-three, he was away from his home and parents, he was a strong-feeling, randy young man”,\(^5\) and that, “…all that sexual energy had to go somewhere”.\(^6\) Wells makes a number of unsubstantiated claims about Colenso, and in placing him in the New Zealand missionary context quotes Tama Iti’s description of the missionaries’ legacy as, “white motherfuckers, rapists of the land”.\(^7\)

In the conclusion of his work, Wells states that he has, “fetishized”\(^8\) parts of the Colenso story only addressing, “which parts of [his] writing [he] felt were more important… in collecting and creating [his] own version of Colenso.”\(^9\) Wells’ description of Colenso’s dismissal from the church and the Church Missionary Society takes a similar approach to the pages that A.G. Bagnall dedicates to the topic, quoting from the same primary source documents. It is significant that Wells’ book does not sufficiently chronicle Colenso’s re-admission to Holy Orders at the end of his life, only making passing reference that he was allowed to preach again later on. This then is a largely unhelpful text as there is no contrast and comparison for his theology and clerical rehabilitation, other than commenting on Colenso’s bitterness in his public life outside the church.

The historical record that followed Colenso’s death reveals, it could be argued, a saint not yet sanctified. The Revised Common Lectionary of the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia, lists feast days, liturgical seasons and the appropriate days on which saints are to be remembered. It has a supplementary volume, For all the Saints, that provides detailed biographies and collects (short liturgical prayers) regarding the saints who are to be remembered. This lectionary and biographical index includes

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\(^5\) Ibid, 50.
\(^6\) Ibid.
\(^7\) Ibid, 45.
\(^8\) Ibid, 408.
\(^9\) Ibid.
saints and martyrs of New Zealand and the South Pacific, the local historical heroes whose lives and example helped form and reform the church in this Province and Metropolitan. William Colenso is not mentioned in either of these publications; his absence has been noticed by some contemporary clergy.\textsuperscript{10} His wife, Elizabeth Fairburn, who in her own right was a significant figure, also does not feature. \textit{For All the Saints} does include collects of those whom the church has remembered with favour, who warred with Colenso, and could find little respect for him, such as:

\textbf{Archdeacon Henry Williams [Te Wiremu]}

"Jesus, prince of peace, 
accept our praise and thanks 
for Te Wiremu the peacemaker; 
give us his discipline 
and his respect for people 
different from himself".\textsuperscript{11}

\textbf{George Augustus Selwyn}

"Almighty God, 
you called George Augustus Selwyn 
to be bishop of the church in New Zealand 
and to lay a firm foundation for its life; 
grant that, building on his labours 
and encouraged by his gifts of heart, hand and mind, 
we too may extend your kingdom, 
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."\textsuperscript{12}

These mighty figures, whose legacies are etched into the liturgical rhythms of the church they helped establish, seem to have the opposite historical representation to Colenso. What Colenso did

\textsuperscript{10} Interviews with J. Bluck, W. Bennett/ J. Bluck’s Colenso sermon, [Appendix ii].
\textsuperscript{11} Booth, K. \textit{For All the Saints: the Anglican Church in Aotearoa, New Zealand and Polynesia.} General Synod, 1996, 262.
\textsuperscript{12} Ibid, 100.
wrong is held in the church’s mind, whereas churchmen such as the Williams and Selwyn are remembered by what they did right.\textsuperscript{13}

The 1887 book by H. Jacobs, Colonial Church Histories: The Church Province of New Zealand: containing the dioceses of Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, Nelson, Waiapu, Wellington, and Melanesia. only talks about Colenso in his early years as the missionary printer and his ordination to the diaconate. His fall from grace is absent.\textsuperscript{14} This work was published before Colenso was received back into the Anglican Church in the 1890s.

W.P. Morrell, an Otago and Oxford academic wrote The Anglican Church in New Zealand: A History in 1973. This project was commissioned and published by the Anglican Church. Colenso’s work at his mission station, his dismissal and the reason for his “grievous mistake” are summed up in a few lines and Morrell concludes that Colenso was bored and therefore entered into a liaison with a young Māori woman.\textsuperscript{15} Colenso receives only a brief reference in 1957 by Morrell for his work as a printer, in a sentence that recalls other men of the missionary press.\textsuperscript{16} This comment is still greater than his 1935 history New Zealand that makes no mention of Colenso.\textsuperscript{17} Colenso’s legacy in the joint biographies of William and Leonard Williams, written by Leonard’s eldest son (F.W. Williams), is stated as, “Mr Colenso had fallen grievously.”\textsuperscript{18} The detail however, in this publication, is an improvement on what he had previously written on the subject of Colenso.

Two of the histories written about the Diocese of Waiapu include, Waiapu: A Story of A Diocese published in 1960 by Watson

\begin{itemize}
\item Jacobs, H, Colonial Church Histories: The Church Province of New Zealand. (S.P.C.K., 1887).
\item Williams. F. W. Through Ninety Years 1826-1916: Life and Work Among the Maoris in New Zealand, Notes of the Lives of William and Leonard Williams, First and Third Bishops of Waiapu. (Wellington: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1931), 129.
\end{itemize}
Rosevear and the work edited by John Bluck The Gift Endures: A New History of the Waiapu Diocese, published in 2009. Rosevear’s book has similar emphases and conclusions as Morrell’s work and looks as if it informed Morrell’s book 18 years later. In contrast to Wells and Morrell, Colenso’s re-admission to Holy Orders is discussed in Rosevear’s book, as it is in the 2009 history edited by Bluck. In Bluck’s work, Colenso’s reconciliation is emphasised. Overall the church, which Colenso served at various points in his life and whose life was defined by it, does not seem to remember him with any fondness. His legacy is summed up in the timeline that is compiled at the end of Bluck’s publication: “William Colenso, dismissed by Selwyn for adultery”.

Aileen Anderson was the Parish Archivist at Waiapu Cathedral in the 1960s, and during her tenure researched William Colenso. She wrote a biographical paper on Colenso which was published by the Hawke’s Bay and East Coast Art Society in 1961. While she was working on this manuscript, she sent a draft to Watson Rosevear to aid his research when he was writing the Waiapu Diocesan history, which he lost and so had to be sent another. He wrote to her in 1961 thanking her as her work, “certainly helped to make a worthwhile chapter, which added to the interest and value to the book.” Though no reference of Anderson was given in the Waiapu Diocesan History. Rosevear was the Vicar of Taupo and Examining Chaplain to the Bishop of Waiapu when he wrote his history. The book was well received and has a good reputation. It served as the standard history for the diocese for 49 years. Rosevear later became Suffragan Bishop of Wellington from 1981-1987.

G.H. Scholefield, in 1940 edited A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. Scholefield served as Parliamentary and Dominion

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21 Letter to A. Anderson from W.J.W. Rosevear, 29 June 1961, Parish Archive of the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist.
librarian. In his entry on Colenso, Scholefield gives a detailed, accurate and positive summary of his family, life and work. However, while accurate in describing his pursuits, the absence of certain details manipulates the account. For example, Colenso’s dismissal from the church and Church Missionary Society is not mentioned. Colenso and Elizabeth separated in 1852, never to see each other again. At the end of this entry their marriage is mentioned, yet in such a way as to imply that their separation never occurred. While the overall narrative of Scholefield’s entry, by its omission of certain details, is somewhat incorrect, Scholefield’s portrayal of Colenso in such a positive way make this contribution unique for its time.

While Scholefield’s entry was selective, Alan Mulgan left even more out. In 1922 Mulgan, along with his co-author, A.W. Shrimpton, wrote Maori and Pakeha: A History of New Zealand. Colenso, in this work, is acknowledged as a cleric, with the use of the title, ‘Rev.’, but is only referenced for his contribution, along with Yate and Williams, for the translation the New Testament.

The 1925 unpublished history of the Diocese of Waiapu by Bishop W.J. Simkin similarly avoids the controversies surrounding Colenso, but this work will be assessed more fully in chapter 4. A History of the Diocese of Waiapu was also written in 1916 by J.B. Fielder, but never published, and this manuscript has been lost.

25 Scholefield, G.H. A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography. (Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1940), 168.
Bagnall and Peterson’s 1948 history:

Of the publications that have added to the growing Colenso narrative, one work towers above the rest and, as a complete biography, has yet to be surpassed. This work, *William Colenso: His Life and Journeys*, was published in the weeks before Christmas 1948 and was written by A.G. Bagnall, who was chief librarian at the Alexander Turnbull Library, and G.C. Peterson, a Palmerston North solicitor. While this work remains a credible source nearly 70 years after its publication, the biggest hurdle for Bagnall and Peterson seemed to be getting their manuscript published rather than its research. Bagnall and Peterson had hoped their work would be published by the New Zealand University Press, but their submission to that organisation was unsuccessful. A letter from J.C. Beaglehole, in his capacity as chair of the New Zealand University Press states, “The board of management of the New Zealand University Press has considered the typescript of *The Life of William Colenso* by yourself and Mr G.C. Peterson, but I regret to say, finds itself unable to undertake its publication... [to be reconsidered this manuscript needs to go through]... a thorough process of revision and rewriting, reshaping in fact...”

After their rejection by the New Zealand University Press, Bagnall and Peterson wrote to Reed’s Publishing House. They received a positive response from A.W. Reed, who was keen to publish their work, should the board be in agreement. The board was not in agreement. There were two members of the board who proved particularly difficult: Guy Scholefield and Alan Mulgan. A.W. Reed even came to admit the difficulty which Scholefield and Mulgan were causing in stifling the process. Reed said in a letter, “There is no doubt that the Dr.[Scholefield] is the cause of the trouble... I don’t for a moment think he actually read the book, only glanced at it and came across something he did not like and became prejudiced against it... I have wasted my time over Mulgan because I think he and

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Scholefield, who are in close touch, have talked about it”.30 Reed went on in the letter to talk about how upset he was with the behaviour of the committee and that if they did not “get their act together”31 stern words would need to be had.32

A.W. Reed attempted to navigate around the significant objection to the manuscript by appointing Professor Arnold Wall to write an independent report on the manuscript so that a third party suggestion to the committee might help things along. Wall’s report was positive overall, but critical about the length of the book. He suggested that the biography finish with Colenso’s dismissal from the church, excluding his later life from 1852 onward.33 While the committee agreed in principle to the stylistic revisions of the Wall report, real progress was yet to be made. Eventually an offer of publication was given, but Bagnall and Peterson were not happy with it.

Bagnall and Peterson enlisted the assistance of one of their supporters, Ormond Wilson, who was able to apply leverage to the publishers. A.W. Reed wrote to Bagnall informing him that Wilson was, “Well and truly on the warpath”,34 and that, “... owing to pressure applied by Mr Wilson, a special meeting of the committee [would] have to be held as soon as possible”,35 concluding that, “Mr Wilson’s intervention [had] everyone on their toes”.36 Correspondence was sent between Wilson and Peterson and Wilson and Bagnall where process, details, and frustrations were expressed. A reassuring letter was sent to Bagnall from Wilson assuring him that progress would soon occur. Wilson’s success in the matter is reported in a letter to Peterson from Reed informing him of the immediate publication of their manuscript. This letter formally amended the previous offer with which the authors were not impressed and that

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
34 Letter from A.W. Reed to G.C. Peterson, 14 October 1948, Bagnall Papers, Alexander Turnbull, 88-103-1/7.
36 Ibid.
had catalysed Wilson’s involvement. In his amended offer Reed said, “... we will not require any payment from you. We shall reduce the retail price to 30/-, and pay you a royalty of three shillings on each copy sold. I hope this will be in accordance with your wishes”.

A compromise made in the publication agreement was that John Pascoe’s original layout of the book would be disregarded. Upset by this, Pascoe wrote to Reed informing him that he would subsequently withdraw permission to use a photograph for which he held the copyright (used in the publication). A letter was sent back apologising for the rejection, but justifying the decision and assuring him that such decisions were simply part of the nature of publishing. This correspondence was found in Bagnall’s papers with a pencilled note at the top reading “Baggie, please read and destroy, John”. John Pascoe would later serve as the secretary of The Historic Places Trust; Bagnall, Wilson and Beaglehole would also be on the board. In his autobiography, Wilson stated that he did not wish to embarrass any living person, “except John Beaglehole,” who he described as capable but, “discriminatory.” Wilson also noted that Graham Bagnall was a fine scholar. Though Beaglehole had objected to the publication of Bagnall’s book, he did authorise the Colenso Memorial, organised and dedicated by Bishop Lesser at Awatoto. Bagnall, it should also be noted, coined the phrase for Beaglehole’s honours class as, “the Beaglehole Kindergarten.”

Among this collection of Bagnall’s correspondence regarding the publication of his work there is a significant amount of fan mail of those who had read the book. All correspondents were overwhelmingly positive and included many letters from academics and people of note, the most entertaining of which is a handwritten note from J.C. Beaglehole. As part of the final proposal from Reeds the

38 Letter from A.W. Reed to J. Pascoe, 12 April 1949, Bagnall Papers, Alexander Turnbull, 88-103-1/7.
40 Ibid, 176.
number of free copies for the authors was increased, and delivered
to various recipients by the publisher. One such recipient, as
requested by Bagnall, was Beaglehole. In his letter to Bagnall
Beaglehole thanked him for his free copy, said that his family had
been enamoured with the book over the Christmas break, and
congratulated him on such a fine publication. He lamented, “It is a
shame we couldn’t have worked something out at the New Zealand
University Press”. It should be noted that this later letter from
Beaglehole, unlike his first, used the Victoria College letterhead,
not that of the New Zealand University Press.

Ten years previously, A.W. Reed had completed and revised a
manuscript initially begun by his aunt Isabel Reed: *George Augustus
Selwyn: Pioneer Bishop of New Zealand*. In this work much of the
missionary activity at the time of Selwyn’s arrival is discussed, as
well as his visitation to Ahuriri and Colenso’s mission station at
Waitangi (HB), yet Colenso receives no direct mention. Colenso is
included indirectly when Reed makes reference to him when discussing
how well Selwyn endured hazardous bush travel that, “... was
characteristic of the Bishop (and of the East Coast missionaries
too)”. Likewise, when he gives the account of Selwyn meeting
converts of Colenso, his acknowledgement of him is non-descript, “...Selwyn found... Christian natives who welcomed him gladly. Only once
before had they been visited by a missionary.” It is worth noting
then the great enthusiasm that Reed had for publishing a biography
of Colenso, when his own history had excluded him. Colenso was not
the only missionary excluded from this work. While heroes such as
the Williams brothers, Brown and Hadfield are venerated, Colenso,
Yate and Kendall are invisible. In 1945 A.H. Reed’s wrote, *The
Story of New Zealand*, only makes passing reference to Colenso as an
explorer and printer.

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42 Letter from J.C. Beaglehole to A.G. Bagnall, 3 January 1949,
Bagnall Papers, Turnbull, 88-103-1/7.
43 Reed. A.W, *George Augustus Selwyn: Pioneer Bishop of New Zealand*.
(Manchester: Pickering & Inglis, 1939), 40.
44 Ibid, 41.
Reed), 266-7.
After the Reeds published Bagnall and Peterson’s biography, their outlook on the presence of Colenso in New Zealand’s historical narrative changed. In the year that followed the 1948 biography, A.W. Reed wrote and published *The Maori and His First Printed Books*. This publication is mainly dedicated to the history of the first books by William Colenso, printed in Māori. Adjacent to the title page is a portrait of the elderly printer, captioned, “William Colenso: The Pioneer Printer of New Zealand”. While this work is focused on the early history of printing in New Zealand, it also credits, in part, the success of Christian conversion to the early printers.

It should also be noted that the publication that A.H. Reed wrote ten years after Bagnall and Peterson’s biography, offered a different representation of Colenso. This book, *The Story of Hawke’s Bay*, not only dedicates an entire chapter to Colenso, but references to his influence are scattered throughout the entire book. What also appears in almost all chapters, is reference to Bagnall and Peterson’s biography, “…this story is revealed by Bagnall and Peterson in William Colenso…” Reed’s book presents Colenso as an honourable and respectable man, “William Colenso merits something more than a passing mention in the creation of Hawke’s Bay… When he died at his home in Milton Road, Napier… he might as well have been called the Father of Hawke’s Bay”. Ending his chapter on Colenso, in which he tells of Colenso’s full ecclesiastical restoration and homecoming, Reed concludes, “But who can read the story of Colenso’s life and doubt that he was essentially a good man…”

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48 Ibid, 22.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid, 80.
Chapter 2:

Selwyn, the Williams family and Colenso

A man of his time and station, G.A. Selwyn came to be a successful churchman in England, after 28 years as Bishop of New Zealand. Selwyn’s social station was above the Williams family and significantly higher than many of the ordinands who experienced his episcopate. Along with his childhood class-mates in the early 19th century, Selwyn became the first in a long tradition of the exportation of classically trained, Oxbridge Etonians to New Zealand bishoprics, a practice which did not cease until the 1970s.

As a Victorian Bishop, Selwyn was very aware of his place in the social strata, aware too of those beneath. Much like the impracticality of what the first wave of settlers expected from their surrounds, equally impractical were the expectations of Bishop Selwyn of his prospective ordinands. While Holy Orders in the Church of England remained a vocation for the educated, Selwyn was not in principle opposed to, “the ordination of men of the lower orders of society”. This was because, as Warren Limbrick argues, Selwyn thought that the, “educated gentleman did not always make the best colonial parson”. A life of hardship back home in England might serve as preparation for a life of hardship in the New Zealand mission. Just as Christ chose his apostles from the poor, “so every peasant in the country” should have a clerical relative. Selwyn also had confidence that the Church of England had provided a suitable framework to prepare men from all social orders. He wrote, “We have the best materials for the formation of a plebeian ministry that were ever posed by any nation... a peasantry who have grown up

54 Ibid, 38.
55 Ibid.
56 Ibid.
under the fostering care of the parochial church system”. Yet while Selwyn was able to recognise the ecclesiastical potential of the non-Oxbridge/Etonian, a similar standard of education was expected of these “plebeians”. “Clerical education [for Selwyn] was incomplete without the biblical languages of Greek and Hebrew, yet he failed to make provision for such instruction - as William Colenso found to his cost”. While St Augustine’s College in Canterbury served as a good training school for working-class missionary hopefuls, the expectation of a classical education continued in New Zealand, though the ordinands at Selwyn’s disposal had little opportunity to fulfil such requirements.

When the freshly consecrated Bishop Selwyn arrived in New Zealand in 1842, it is surprising that there was little concern over his appointment, not only because he was to be a High-Church shepherd to a flock of staunch, Low-Church evangelical missionaries, but also because his appointment had completely bypassed the Church Missionary Society (CMS). As Peter Wells puts it, “The fashionably Anglo-Catholic Bishop Augustus Selwyn swept into New Zealand with his chaplains and long candles”. On the subject of churchmanship Wells is mistaken, as it was too early for Selwyn to have been an Anglo-Catholic. Selwyn did have contact with members of the Oxford Movement, however, he was “traditional High-Church,” and “the High Church orthodoxy fostered in Selwyn’s early years remained with him through his life, and his foundational theological convictions did not change.” As Jon Williams puts it, “Because the Bishop was a High Church person, that means, not ceremonial--- as you know, but means a strong view about the authority, tradition, and--- ethos of the church.” Any concern that did exist was soon put to rest when it became apparent to Henry Williams that his visions and plans for the mission in New Zealand were to be fully endorsed by his new

57 Ibid.
58 Ibid, 83.
61 Davidson, Christianity in Aotearoa: A History of Church and Society in New Zealand. 29.
Bishop.64 "The Bishop and I have had very much conversation and upon all points, so far, we have fully agreed. He appears not only to be the head of the church in the country, but also the head of the mission, which is quite in accordance with our views."65 Many of the CMS staff were quite pleased with their new Pihopa.66 Perhaps the authoritarian nature of Selwyn’s churchmanship appealed to Henry’s officer class military background. The biographers who would come to write of Selwyn’s life, such as J.H. Evans, H.W Tucker and G.H. Curteis, as well as the Church Province of New Zealand, would come to memorialise this pioneer Bishop as a true prince of the church. Limbrick identifies this biographical perspective as a practical difficulty for the modern historian, as for so long only Selwyn’s personal papers served as the primary source evidence.67

Some missionaries (and later historians and New Zealand Anglicans), were impressed by the young and promising Bishop. Colenso however, was not. As Bagnall put it, "Colenso, however, refused to fall so readily under the spell of the Bishop’s persuasive and forceful personality".68 Yet before they had the opportunity to meet, Selwyn had been informed of Colenso’s dissenting, anti-High-Church reputation by Broughton, first Church of England Bishop of Australia,69 who had a similar class, academic and churchmanship background as Selwyn.

Selwyn and Colenso’s first meeting took place during the official welcoming reception for the new Bishop in the parlour of Henry Williams’ home at Paihia in 1842. Selwyn’s first impression of Colenso was not a desirable one. While the afternoon’s program in the parlour was progressing, the Rev. R. Burrows picked a fight with Colenso. Loud enough so that Selwyn could hear, Burrows began to question Colenso’s fierce opposition to the Roman Catholic Missionaries, "The R.C. Priests don’t like your new tract at all;
they say the conversation is all lies, and they have been up at my house demanding the authority for it.”70 Theological and territorial arguments had arisen between Colenso and the Roman Catholics which had lead him to publish a pamphlet, on the missionary printing press but independent from the mission, regarding the theology he so strongly opposed, entitled A Tract (No.3) Against the Errors of the Church of Rome. While other missionaries agreed with Colenso’s argument against the Roman Catholics, Bishop Selwyn immediately and fiercely condemned Colenso’s actions and “...spoke strongly against such freelance writings by a ‘layman’.”71 What Colenso encountered in that first meeting, it could be argued, was immensely unsettling for an aspiring priest and missionary. “George Augustus Selwyn had many qualities which made him admired and respected... but also a force of will which in the face of opposition invoked a despotic and overbearing attitude.”72 Paul Reeves acknowledged the sometimes difficult nature of Selwyn, quoting, “...as William Williams put it ‘when once he has taken up an opinion it is no easy task to remove him from it’”.73

These are the conditions in which Colenso found himself being presented for ordination: already offside with the Bishop, and falling outside of the expectation of the Ordinary with regard to education. Colenso, as printer, was lacking a classical education and adequate knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. Being fluent in Māori, as he was, did not seem to count for much. While Davis was accepted to be ordained as a priest, Colenso and his contemporaries Chapman, Hamlin and Mathews were only accepted to the diaconate. In correspondence between Selwyn and Venn, quoted by J.H. Evans in Churchman Militant, and W.P. Morrell in The Anglican Church in New Zealand: A History; the Bishop would not, “admit anyone to priest’s orders without a competent knowledge of the Greek Testament”,74 a

71 Ibid.
72 Bagnall & Peterson, William Colenso: His Life and Journeys, 147.
skill Selwyn had himself mastered as a youth. While priestly ordination was off limits for those whose understanding of the original languages of scripture was inadequate, Selwyn considered knowledge of the Māori language to be enough to become a deacon; “I will consider proficiency in the native language, and the visible signs of a blessing upon their exertion among the natives, as a qualification for deacon’s orders...” Colenso’s bilingual abilities aided his cause in this regard. Yet the strict approach that Selwyn enforced with his requirements for ordination that restricted the aspirations of Pakeha lay Catechists, also hindered Māori, “…this policy postponed for many years the ordination of Maoris, even to the diaconate.”

Colenso found himself restricted by the expectations of a churchman acting on his prejudices, but his life and ministry in New Zealand would be defined by another group of churchmen, the Williams family. Colenso’s falling out with the Church and his reinstatement, it could be argued, began and ended with the Williams. As a prominent missionary family in the Bay of Islands during Colenso’s time there, the Williams came to follow him to the place that would eventually become the Diocese of Waiapu, and became a prominent episcopal family.

Before their introduction in Paihia, the Williams’ earlier life in England was not dissimilar to Colenso’s. Both were from merchant class/industrial backgrounds and aligned themselves with the dissenting, non-conformist tradition, bordering on Unitarian. However, while commoners, Henry and William Williams were somewhat better positioned than Colenso, being in the merchant class. Their father, who had married well, was a hosier/lace manufacturer who died during their youth. It was when their sister married a cousin, Edward Garrard Marsh, a strong evangelical Church of England

75 Reed. A.W, George Augustus Selwyn: Pioneer Bishop of New Zealand. (Manchester: Pickering & Inglis LTD, 1939), 36.
77 Evans, J.H. Churchman Militant: George Augustus Selwyn Bishop of New Zealand and Lichfield, 75.
clergyman, that the family themselves joined the Church of England. Colenso attended church most days and was also at the Methodist end of the spectrum. Yet for Colenso and the Williams brothers to join the established church was not an uncommon action for 19th century evangelicals. Many evangelicals joined the Church of England, seeing protestant denominational division less important than the common goal, seeing too the value of what the established church could achieve. Similar patterns of the migration of churchmanship happened within the Church of Scotland around the same time.

Henry and William Williams were of the generation who, through the church, classical education and the Royal Navy, were able to maintain and strengthen their station. Colenso, on the other hand, by becoming a printer, though skilled, found himself undesirably positioned in the English class system. Finding himself in such a station caused him problems later on. While of a similar station at birth, the success to which the Williams brothers had socially maintained and elevated meant that when they met this common Cornishman, they were able to differentiate themselves immediately. The young William Colenso, early after his arrival in the Bay of Islands had upset Henry Williams by offering some suggestions as to how he might improve the mission, which was forward behaviour for a printer. Colenso had little authority to make such recommendations, which was poor judgement on his part, given Henry’s background as a Naval Officer. The Williams class barrier was most clearly demonstrated when Colenso asked Henry for permission to marry one of his daughters. The answer was “no.” Henry denied Colenso’s proposal on the basis that he was the wrong class to marry into the Williams family. However, as Colenso noted, his unsuccessful proposal followed a recent falling out with Henry Williams. As L.M. Rogers argues, “Colenso’s estimate of [Henry] Williams’ character was almost an estimate of his own, so that it is one of the miracles of

80 Ibid.
81 Ibid.
83 Interview with Pricilla Williams. October 2015.
the time that the two should have managed eight years together.” In his own words Colenso described Henry Williams as “… a strict disciplinarian… his Royal Navy training… he always retained and not infrequently and unpleasantly showed.” There too seemed to be the suspicion that Colenso might be trying to elevate himself by the same means that the Williams had, through marriage and ordination in the Church of England.

Colenso did marry, but the decision as to whom was not to be determined by his own autonomy, or that of Henry Williams, but by Bishop Selwyn. Once Colenso had served the CMS in New Zealand for a period of seven years, he applied for sabbatical leave to go back to England, with the intention of finding a wife in his hometown of Cornwall. His request for leave was declined, on the basis that there were sufficient missionary daughters at his disposal. Selwyn eventually decided that Elizabeth Fairburn would make a suitable wife. If Colenso had been granted the customary leave, as A.H. Reed argued, “how different might have been the years to come, what suffering two worthy people might have been saved”.

William Williams and the Hawke’s Bay Philosophical Society/Institute:

William Colenso’s relationship with William Williams was far more pleasant than his relationship with Henry. William Williams was not as big of a fan of Selwyn as his brother was, “[he] went to listen to a lecture of Selwyn’s at St John’s College, and he thought he had a lot to say, rather too much.” During the period of Colenso’s dismissal (though they were his closest neighbours at Turanga, after the Wairoa Mission), William and Jane were on a visit to England when all fell apart in the early 1850s. Between the time of Colenso’s dismissal and William’s relocation to Napier it seems

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88 Interview with the Rev. J.S. Williams, August, 2016.
the controversy came between them. They shared common interests and in the years that followed William Williams becoming Colenso’s Bishop (1867), and his involvement in the Philosophical Society/Institute (1874), they rekindled their friendship. Perhaps the fact that William Williams was in England at the time of Colenso’s dismissal meant that there was limited bitterness between them as there was no immediate fallout. This relationship however, had limitations. Because of the politics of his family and his generation of churchmen’s regard for Colenso, Williams could not be seen to be too close to him, let alone give him a licence. While there were clashes with the man who would ordain him (Selwyn), and Henry Williams, who was collated as an Archdeacon in the same service, it was William Williams who pressured Selwyn to ordain Colenso, preached at his ordination, and provided Colenso with a character reference recommending him for Holy Orders.

"... William Colenso of St John’s College in New Zealand, hath declared to us his intention of offering himself as a candidate for the sacred office of a deacon, and ... hath requested of us letters testimonial of his good life and conversation ... [he] hath been personally known to us ... [and] we have had ... opportunities of observing his conduct, that during the whole time we verily believe that he lived piously, soberly and honestly, nor have we ... heard anything to the contrary thereof, nor hath he at any time, as far as we know or believe held, written or taught anything contrary to the doctrine or discipline of the United Church of England and Ireland... [we] believe his moral conduct [makes him]... worthy to be admitted to the sacred order of deacons..."

Two aspects of this character reference written in William’s hand make it remarkable. Firstly; one of the signatories is the same Rev. R. Burrows, who had picked a fight with Colenso at their first meeting with Selwyn. Secondly; it is a marker against which we can measure William Williams’ shifting attitude to Colenso. In 1844,

90 Bagnall & Peterson. William Colenso: His Life and Journeys, 178.
91 Ibid, 180.
Williams was a great supporter of Colenso, yet when he came to write his memoirs in 1867, as Paul Goldsmith puts it, “...Williams had attempted to erase Colenso from New Zealand Missionary History...”\(^93\) In William’s memoir, *Christianity Among the New Zealanders*, he fails to mention Colenso at all, even with regard to his contribution as a missionary printer.\(^94\) Colenso acknowledged his absence from Williams’ book in his own historical work on the period, in which he includes the contribution made by him, that was ignored in *Christianity Among the New Zealanders*.\(^95\)

When Colenso helped found the Hawke’s Bay Philosophical Society in 1874 (which late became known as the Hawke’s Bay Philosophical Institute), he appointed William Williams as chair. Once the Society was established, Colenso outweighed all of his contemporaries in the society with the amount of research and papers that paraded in front of it. With Colenso and Williams being of a similar station at birth (though Williams somewhat higher to begin with), their lives could be considered as similar. However, William went off to Oxford, and Colenso went to work. Colenso was initially excluded from Holy Orders on the basis of his absence of higher education; it seems he spent the years of his exile, in full view of his new Bishop, trying to prove his intellectual capacity. As Colenso broke new academic ground before the Society and its chair, his friendship with Bishop Williams was re-established.

When William Williams was on his death bed in 1878, he requested that Colenso come to his side. When Colenso arrived at the house to see his friend, Jane Williams would not let him in.\(^96\) Some members of the Williams family recall that this was because of the disdain she (and the other women of the family) held for Colenso for the mistakes of his past, yet a predominant recollection is that he was of the wrong class to be associating with the Williams in the first place. There are variations of the story within the family as to whether Colenso visited the house before or after Williams’

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\(^94\) Ibid.
\(^95\) *William Colenso: His Life and Journeys*, 418. / Colenso, W, *Fifty Years Ago*, 33.*
\(^96\) Interview with Sheila & Pricilla Williams, October 2015.
death,\textsuperscript{97} or whether it was by William’s invitation or by Colenso’s initiative.\textsuperscript{98} According to Bagnall and Peterson, “[Colenso] had called at Hukarere to see the dying Bishop, but they would not admit him.”\textsuperscript{99} Jane maintained her strong ill feeling toward Colenso. When she had got wind of Colenso’s intentions to marry Henry and Marianne’s daughter in the early 1840s, she wrote to Marianne, saying, “I am sorry she did not give her presuming admirer [Colenso] a good rebuff for I am sure he deserved it. He is such an ignorant empty-headed young man, I should be quite grieved for her to have a predilection for him.”\textsuperscript{100}

Jon Williams reflected, “His story of being refused to see William, I’ve always found to be the most dreadful story, awful! The version I’ve heard is that he came and asked to see William and was turned away---But, he still walked in William’s funeral [procession], and spoke of him as ‘my friend’, Colenso did.”\textsuperscript{101}

Bishop Williams had a deep interest in botany and science, this gave him and Colenso much to discuss and bond over. Colenso came to prove himself as a botanist and natural scientist and was appointed as a Fellow of the Royal Society. The Philosophical Society was formed in 1874 and while it has changed and been reinvented over the years, still exists. Today it is known as the MTG Trust, and its archive holds a number of Colenso’s papers. Colenso is the only person singled out in the Trust’s brief online description of its 19th century history, “[Colenso was a]...missionary, explorer and botanist, a freewheeling politician and controversialist, he transcended his skills in botany and natural history to be recognised as a man of real intellectual distinction. He was a central figure in the Philosophical Society...”\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{98} Interview with the Rev. J.S. Williams, August 2016.
\textsuperscript{99} Bagnall & Peterson, William Colenso: His Life and Journeys, 418.
\textsuperscript{100} Davis. G. The Shield of Faith: The Life and Times of Henry and Marianne Williams. 114.
\textsuperscript{101} Interview with the Rev. J.S. Williams, August 2016.
Colenso was not the only victim of the disdain of Selwyn or the Williams’. Charles Ray came out with Selwyn in 1842, and was Chaplain on the boat. He was slowly discarded, because he was in financial trouble and the Williams wives did not like his wife. Selwyn sent Ray to Nelson and was soon upset by him as Ray took leave without giving notice. Subsequently he was exiled to Rangatukia, and died there. Though he was from an adequate social order, was well educated and did not do anything wrong (unlike Colenso), the premature end of his career demonstrates the danger of those who got on the wrong side of Selwyn or the Williams.103

In summary, the dynamics of class, ecclesiastical and family politics made it difficult to manoeuvre the religious landscape, leaving little room for error. For a young man who did not have the social, let along cultural skills to get on with more distinguished Englishmen, and working in such close proximity with so few, meant that mistakes and conflicts were difficult to negotiate. Regardless of how foolish or young Colenso may have been, Selwyn and Henry Williams were difficult to work for or with, as Charles Ray found. As the New Zealand settler population flourished, and missionary activity morphed into an ecclesiastical province in its own right, Colenso’s forbearance, with the Williams in particular, over many years may have come to yield the grace with which the second generation of the family would come to show him in his last decade. With regard to Colenso’s early relationship with the churchmen of the New Zealand Mission, it seems that a combination of factors, long before his dismissal, made Colenso an outsider. Not only did he fail to fit the moulds of class and education, but he never sought to impress or improve his relationship with Henry Williams or Selwyn, though this required remarkable skill from anyone. His tact and smoother politicking would come later, but the fact he stayed working for the CMS for as long as he did is remarkable. It might then be argued that he had enough cunning to remain. Henry Williams and Bishop Selwyn had a disdain for Colenso and had sufficient influence to ensure that Colenso would never see reconciliation in their lifetimes, and it seems their ill feeling towards him continued to echo though the church for the decade that followed their deaths. In the end, for these venerated and upstanding

churchmen, there were some sins that could not be forgiven. However, Colenso’s deposition by Selwyn, and judgement by the Williams in 1852, though harsh, was not out of character with their churchmanship. This point will be examined further in the next chapter.
Chapter 3:

The Ecclesiastical Politics of Colenso

William Colenso was a passionate, dissenting evangelical who attended church most days in England. The importance and validity of his personal faith is not only significant, it seems it drove and inspired all his endeavours, sometimes to his detriment. Peter Wells suggests this was symptomatic of underlying psychiatric issues. In Paihia, Colenso was an outspoken and opinionated young man who entered all manner of arguments without hesitation. His personality was abrasive, and he had no problem with directly criticizing his superiors, of this there is no question. As John Bluck put it, "There are few figures in our New Zealand history that have been recorded in such unflattering terms as William. Normally, the historians tread carefully with personality profiles, giving the benefit of the doubt... The usually constrained NZ Dictionary of Biography calls him bitter, vindictive, judgemental, intolerant, haughty, overbearing and humourless." The young Colenso lacked the tact required for church politics, but this would come later. However socially inept Colenso was, he favourably positioned himself at the start of his career which aided his advancement. Further, after his dismissal Colenso carefully curated his image, and sought to prove himself to the churchmen of his generation, that they might see fit to reinstate him to Holy Orders. This chapter investigates the evolution and growing involvement in church politics to which Colenso in all of his incarnations involved himself.

The first stage of Colenso's political engagement in establishing his career was the firm he decided to work for after his six-year printing apprenticeship at St Ives. This was Richard Watts Limited in London. It could be argued that he was motivated to work for Richard Watts because it was the publishing house for the Church Missionary Society. From this position Colenso then offered

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himself as a printer for the CMS Mission to New Zealand. In his letter of application he outlined his suitability for the role that comprised of his practical skills and personal faith. “As a printer I feel myself competent for ‘press and case’ in the common routine of the trade... as a book-binder, knowing that art also... Aware of the value of the religion of Christ, whatever else is, or may be in my power, I wholly dedicate myself to carry forward the cause of the cross.”

Stage one of Colenso’s strategy proved successful. The second stage, his transition from missionary printer to missionary and priest, proved to be more difficult.

Colenso’s protest at the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi damaged his reputation with the establishment in 1840s New Zealand. Yet his jubilee publication in 1890 of the events he witnessed and was involved in may have aided his restoration to Holy Orders. Colenso asked Hobson, according to his own history, “...is it your opinion that these natives understand the articles of the treaty which they are now called upon to sign?” Hobson replied by stating that if they did not know what they were about to agree to, “... it is no fault of mine.” Claudia Orange argues that “Colenso refused to be so easily dismissed”, as he then said, “... still, I think they ought to know somewhat of it to constitute its legality... some chiefs [have] no idea whatever as to the purport of the treaty.” It was generally agreed that while the true nature of the treaty might not be fully understood, that Māori should heed the advice of their missionaries, with Colenso concluding, “…but at the same time the missionaries should explain the thing in all its bearings to the Natives, so that it should be their own very act and deed.”

107 Ibid, 33.
108 Ibid.
109 Ibid.
to make Māori fully cognisant". Colenso would later, upon reviewing treaty signatories, critically highlight that "...not many chiefs of first rank..." had signed.

This was not the first objection by a religious figure or by Colenso. The first had come from Bishop Pompallier (with considerably more status than Colenso). Bishop Pompallier understood the transition New Zealand was undergoing in becoming a British colony and wanted provision to be made for the religious rights of those whose beliefs and practices existed outside of the established Church of England. His concerns were added to by Colenso's first interjection, that such a provision should not just be made for Roman Catholics, but also for Māori Ritenga practice. Colenso’s intervention was not an endorsement of traditional Māori belief, but an expression of Colenso’s anti-Catholic sentiments. The second interjection came late in the proceedings. As Orange argues, “Colenso was steeling himself to intervene.” With the speed at which the meeting was advancing, Colenso was found to be immensely agitated at the correctness of the proceedings. While he was preparing himself, Colenso was hoping that one of his other contemporaries would raise the issue of Māori understanding of the treaty with Hobson. Yet as time pressed on, no challenge was made and thus he was compelled to make his own interjection.

In Judy Ward’s exploration of William Colenso’s work as an historian, she examined his 1890 book regarding the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, that he revised from his notes 50 years after the 1840 event, and sought the reason for his revision of his portrayal of Henry Williams in the jubilee history, compared with his original manuscript. This may have been, Ward argues, “to garner favour with Canon Samuel Williams, the third son of Henry Williams; and obtain a seat on the Anglican Synod.” While Samuel Williams

111 Ibid, 61.
112 Ibid, 46.
113 Ibid.
114 Ibid, 59.
was an integral part of Colenso’s reintegration in the Waiapu Diocese, the Williams legacy was far more entrenched than his influence alone. Five years later, in 1895, the other prominent Williams archdeacon in Waiapu, Leonard Williams, became the Bishop of Waiapu as his father had been from 1859 to 1876. Colenso’s revision of his manuscript for its jubilee publication would be influenced by his efforts to return to Holy Orders. Colenso’s jubilee history of the treaty was part of a much larger effort involving various other aspects of the church and his public life. The publication of this book however, happened after Bishop Stuart had given him a licence as a lay reader and preacher, so it should be noted that Colenso revised his notes during this period of clerical probation.

Colenso had compromised his position with the senior figure of the New Zealand Mission, Henry Williams, with whom he had not made a good impression. He also lacked the educational background required by his Bishop. Colenso’s road to ordination therefore, was not as smooth as he might have hoped. On the grounds of the absence of Colenso’s theological education and adequate knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, the Bishop rejected his request for ordination outright. Through some encouragement and compromise on both Bishop Selwyn’s and Colenso’s part, this decision was overturned. Selwyn was encouraged by William Williams, and had pressure from other missionaries not to refuse Colenso’s application for ordination again.116 This offer of ordination however, was made on the condition that Colenso marry Elizabeth Fairburn.

When Selwyn came to be Bishop of New Zealand in 1842, there was a double-up in authority for those who served the Church Missionary Society. Not only had Selwyn’s appointment to New Zealand been made independent of consultation with the Church Missionary Society, he then expected his episcopal authority to override its jurisdiction. Such authority included the right to decide where missionary priests would be placed. Selwyn sought to regulate the situation in his favour by requiring clergy to sign a document ceding authority to him in this regard, “Colenso, for instance, was

116 Bagnall & Peterson, William Colenso: His Life and Journeys, 178.
told that his ordination depended on this promise.”

In a heated debate in the Bishop’s study at Te Waimate Mission station the night before Colenso’s ordination, their conversation ended by Selwyn giving Colenso an ultimatum, that if he did not accept the Bishop’s demands he would not be ordained. William Williams encouraged Colenso to sign the agreement. Colenso agreed to Selwyn’s conditions. On the day after his ordination just before he departed for Hawke’s Bay to begin his mission, as Colenso recalled, “I told the Bp. ... on going to take my leave of him conscience to tell him ‘that I had nothing to thank him for.’” After his ordination and marriage, the Colensos relocated to Hawke’s Bay where William worked as a missionary deacon in a substantial area which stretched from Napier to Taupo, south across the Ruahine ranges to the Manawatu Gorge and back up the coast to Napier.

In May 1851 Ripeka, a young Māori woman whom the Colensos had brought with them from Te Waimate in 1844, bore a son, Wiremu. Colenso was the father. The following February Ripeka was determined to take the child and relocate to Patangata. Colenso refused to allow her to leave with the child. As a result, and out of revenge Ripeka disclosed the matter to local chiefs, who used it as ammunition for a later dispute, subsequently informing Bishop Selwyn.

Once it was discovered that he had sired Ripeka’s child, Colenso was uncertain of his fate. He entered a period of damage control, trying to retain what he could of his career. Firstly, he wrote to Selwyn, explaining the situation and suggested that though he be an unworthy sinner, his vocation was to the church and he thought he should remain in the mission.

“...And now, my Lord, in conclusion allow me to hope for your attentive consideration of the whole case – my prayer is, and shall be, that you may be entirely guided in your judgment by

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119 Letter of William Colenso to Selwyn. 7 September, 1852.
Him “unto whom all hearts be open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid” to do that alone which shall be for the advancement of His Glory and the good of His Church, and the welfare of the people, for I have this confidence in you that if I must deem myself little worthy of great things you will not deem me deserving of utter ruin.

And am, my Lord,
Your unworthy servant and deacon,
William Colenso.”

Selwyn dismissed Colenso and deprived him of Holy Orders. Colenso was surprised by the Bishop’s decision, and deemed it to be unfair. In December 1852, he wrote to the Church Missionary Society back in England, “just to inform you of the present situation of myself and my flock”. Colenso went on to talk about the unexpected arrival of the Rev. James Hamlin (Missionary deacon of Wairoa) with a package from Bishop Selwyn. It contained, “[A] definitive judgement against me prohibiting me from performing my ministerial duty and revoking his license…”. Colenso describes this as a “…most harsh, most hurried judgment of the Bishop’s”, going on to explain his alleged mistreatment at the hands of Selwyn. In particular he went into detail about a significant breach of trust that he felt, on the Bishop’s part. When Colenso wrote to Selwyn enclosing his detailed confession about his extramarital affair, Selwyn then circulated the letter to other clergy, “...all of whom, had I been present... I should have challenged as being prejudiced against me.”

In this letter, Colenso also requests that the CMS: “defer answering the Bishop’s communications... until you shall have received my explanatory letter which will follow at an early date.” When Hamlin arrived with Selwyn’s correspondence, he informed Colenso

120 Ibid.
121 Letter from William Colenso to the secretaries, Church Mission House, Salisbury Gardens, London. 4 December 1852, A.G. Bagnall Collection, Alexander Turnbull, 89-249-7/12.
122 Ibid, 1.
123 Ibid.
124 Ibid, 2.
125 Ibid, 5.
that the Bishop had written to Archdeacon Hadfield and Samuel Williams and that they were to take charge of the Ahuriri Mission Station. Colenso then asked Hamlin if he could inform the teachers and chiefs of the Ahuriri Mission, which took place on a Wednesday afternoon. Reacting to the news it was noted “…their feeling oratory flowed till dark.” The way that Colenso carefully managed the emotions of those of the mission is indicative of his obedience to the Bishop’s instructions, despite his disagreement with them.

In exercising his judgement with regard to dismissing Colenso, Selwyn’s decision may have had more to do with the punishment of his fallen servant (in maintaining standards of clerical behaviour), than the souls of the mission station he was forced to leave. The care of the mission was handed over to Samuel Williams. Selwyn wrote to him saying, “My dear Samuel, I have directed to be forwarded to you a licence to the charge of the Ahuriri District… God… enable you to repair the evils which have fallen upon [them]…”

A.H. Reed argued that the “Native Teachers” were so “indignant and full of sorrow”, it might have been better for Colenso to have remained. They likened his dismissal from the CMS and the proposal that he leave the district as “if he had died.” In response to the news from the Bishop that Hamlin had brought them, they responded, “…wouldst thou and thy Bishop come here to remove his dead body? And now that he is dead [ministerially], cut down by thee and thy Bishop, will you attempt to remove him? No, no. Leave his body here that we may daily look at him—still our father, still our friend, whom thou sayest we may no longer hear.”

Colenso was devastated by Selwyn’s decision to depose him, and seemed genuinely surprised by it. Even if he did not get on with Colenso, as noted in the previous chapter, Selwyn’s decision was not inconsistent with his theology or churchmanship. Selwyn always remained a High-Churchman. The Tractarians that emerged from the High-Church during the Oxford Movement, increasingly downplayed the

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126 Ibid, 4.
127 Reed. A.H, The Story of Hawke’s Bay, 94.
128 Selwyn to S. Williams 30 December 1853.
importance of the Thirty-Nine Articles (or The Articles of Religion). Those (like Selwyn) who remained faithful to what became the Old-High-Church (or Orthodox High-Church), defended the Thirty-Nine Articles, and advocated for their retention in the Book of Common Prayer. Shortly before Colenso’s ordination in 1844, Selwyn required him to write an essay on certain aspect of theology including the whole of the Thirty-Nine Articles, much to Colenso’s displeasure, given his disagreement on the High-Church notion of Baptismal Regeneration. Colenso’s dismissal by Selwyn was justified by article XXVI Of the Unworthiness of the Ministers, which hinders not the effect of the Sacrament. The contents of this article are summarised well by its title, even though a minister may be a sinner, their transgressions do not change the effect of the sacraments they administer. However, the latter part of the article states, “Nevertheless, it appertaineth to the discipline of the Church, that inquiry be made of evil Ministers, and that they be accused by those that have knowledge of their offences; and finally, being found guilty, by just judgment be deposed.” Therefore, despite Bishop Selwyn’s strong disregard for Colenso, his judgement was in accordance with his ecclesiastical values.

While his long apprenticeship at St Ives equipped Colenso with the practical skills needed to become a successful printer and binder, his career as a politician of the Provincial Council and General Assembly would prepare him for greater competence as an ecclesiastical politician. It could be argued that Colenso attempted to strategically manoeuvre within his role to make better provision for himself. Colenso served the Hawke’s Bay Province as the Schools Inspector, but before he held that position he put a motion to the Provincial Council, “Mr. Colenso to move in committee of supply---That His Honour The Superintendent be requested to increase the sum already on the estimates of (25) for an Inspector of Schools to (at least) 100 per annum, so as to have the duty efficiently performed

131 Ibid.
132 Bagnall & Peterson, William Colenso: His Life and Journeys. 179.
by a suitable person."

Though still early in his secular political career, much like his church beginnings in Paihia, his perceived ambition was visible to all, whereby the motion failed. A latter amendment that followed (below) also failed.

Mr. Rhodes moved, as an amendment—that £100 for trained schoolmasters be inserted in lieu of £25 for Inspector of Schools.

Mr. Colenso moved, as a further amendment, the following:—For an efficient and suitable Inspector of Schools, £100.

On a division being called for, Council divided.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ayes.</th>
<th>Noes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Messrs. Colenso, Dolbel.</td>
<td>Messrs. McLean, Rhodes, Lambert, Wilkinson, Tiffin,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Amendment negatived, and original item stood upon the Estimates.

Inspector of Schools ... ... ... £25

While Colenso’s interests may have been conflicted, it was a fair point to make. £25 would have been an inadequate salary for anyone in the mid-19th century. What could also be argued is that the politicking that can be seen in the early Provincial records shows Colenso seeking to preserve his reputation. It could be compared with the damage control that he attempted with his unsuccessful letter to the Church Missionary Society in England at the time of his dismissal. In 1852 one such occasion is the defamation he accuses Rhodes of during a meeting where the nature of Colenso’s attempts to become a Justice of the Peace were discussed. Again it was not at all out of order for Colenso to seek the removal of slanderous comments from the record that were based on hearsay.

During the discussion, Mr. Colenso requested that the following expression made by Mr. Rhodes be taken down by the Clerk:

"That he could bring in a gentleman who had told him that Mr. Colenso had almost gone down on his knees in asking to be appointed a Justice of the Peace."

Report adopted.


135 Ibid, 50.
In the late-1850s, Colenso, considering his future prospects in the Anglican Church to be bleak, dreamed up a new idea: he would start his own church. He moved, unsuccessfully, to the Provincial Council that land should be purchased and a non-sectarian church be built. Colenso offered his own money to aid the project and to serve the church as its minister and preacher.\(^{137}\) The land proposed was instead bought by the Methodist Church, and is now the site of Trinity Methodist.

Because of his nature and the various jobs and positions he held, Colenso was frequently in the public eye in Napier. One of the main ways in which his presence was manifest was via the many letters he wrote to the editor. These letters were so numerous that Ian St George was able to publish a sizeable book using only some of them. As Dr St George states, in his introduction of Give your thoughts life: William Colenso’s Letters to the editor, “The examples of Colenso’s public letters in this book were initially identified by searching all those newspapers available on the National Library’s “Papers Past” using the search word “Colenso”.”\(^{138}\)

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\(^{136}\) Province of Hawke’s Bay New Zealand, Votes & Proceedings of the Provincial Council of Hawke’s Bay. 1865—Session IX. (Napier: James Wood, 1886), 51. Napier Public Library.

\(^{137}\) Reed. The Story of Hawke’s Bay. 1958, 111.

\(^{138}\) St George, I. Give Your Thoughts Life: William Colenso’s Letters to the Editor. (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2011), 12.

\(^{139}\) Daily Telegraph, Issue 9806, 4 July 1900, 8.
In these letters to the editor, Colenso wrote defending the church during the period immediately before he was readmitted back into it. Various senior figures were making controversial decisions regarding the church that displeased some. One such person was so disgruntled that he/she vented their frustrations in a letter to the editor. This correspondent, who contributed many letters, also wished to remain anonymous, writing under the alias “Parishioner”. To all the letters that “Parishioner” wrote criticizing the actions of the church, especially those that criticised Dean Hovell and Bishop Stuart, Colenso leapt to the church’s aid, in a very public manner, and rebutted all arguments posed.

Colenso’s public correspondence shows affection for the church, even though he was excluded completely from its ministry. Though such letters of criticism from “Parishioner” continued after his reinstatement, Colenso continued to respond to them. It might be considered that Colenso’s defence of the church in these letters was a way of positioning himself favourably with the churchmen whom he was defending. This suggests his warming to the institution after some years of bitterness. When Dean Hovell was a young priest at St John’s before it became a pro-cathedral or a cathedral, Colenso had described Hovell in the Hawke’s Bay Herald, as a young man who was ignorant of ecclesiastical law.140

In the 1860s, even earlier than when Colenso was defending the church in the press, he displayed an act of generosity towards the church that cast him into the outer darkness. When Colenso eventually left the mission site at Waitangi (Awatoto) by court order, there were a few items that he took with him, because he did not know what to do with them. One such item was the bell for the mission, which he took to his new cottage that he built on Scinde Island (Bluff Hill). There it sat in his possession for some years. In 1858 the first Christian worship service for settlers was held in Napier and by the mid-1860s a church dedicated to St John the Evangelist was built and consecrated by the Bishop of Wellington. In this remote outpost this new parish church lacked one thing, a bell.

Colenso wrote to the CMS in London to inform them that he was still in possession of a bell belonging to them, and requested a valuation of it so that he might remunerate them for it. Once the debt for the bell was settled, Colenso donated it to St John’s and a small bell tower was added where the chancel joins the nave, along with an extended chancel, porch and new transept. Colenso became a parishioner and pew holder of this new church. The bell now resides at Ormond Chapel on Napier Terrace.

Colenso continued, particularly during the period of his exile, to become broadly more aware of the importance of how he presented himself, growing more tactful with age (with many exceptions). However, there were two topics of dissent that he would not reform: his attitudes to Selwyn and Māori. Heather Levey argues that Colenso never attempted to get on the right side of Selwyn, even for his own advancement. As he did in the 1840s, so too in later life, irrespective of what the church thought, he would not withdraw his support for Māori.

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142 (I discovered the location of this bell by climbing every bell tower in the district) Ormond Chapel is a church in the cathedral parish and the date and bell maker match Colenso’s original mission bell.
143 St John’s Church Napier, 1862 & 1870. H.B. Art Gallery and Museum, & Cathedral Archive.
144 Levey, H. William Colenso 1844-1884. MA Thesis, Auckland University [Supervised by Judith Binney], 1983
Chapter 4:

Colenso’s Readmission to the Church

When Colenso was eventually restored to Holy Orders in 1892, it was the end of a biblically proportioned exile. Suitable then was the text he took for one of his sermons:145 “And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.”146

While it is true that Colenso’s reconciliation with the church only came after the deaths of the Williams’ brothers and Selwyn, it was both Samuel and Leonard Williams (the second generation), who were responsible for Colenso’s full restoration as a member of Synod. Leonard Williams, as the third Bishop of Waiapu, inherited Colenso as a licenced cleric under his authority after he was reinstated by Bishop Stuart in 1892. Colenso’s politicking may have been vain labour, as his reconciliation came long after the deaths of the men to whom he was trying to prove himself, instead coming with the next generation of churchmen. Positioning himself in the Philosophical Society/Institute had fostered a friendship with William Williams, but it failed to help his cause. When Edward Craig Stuart succeeded him as Bishop of Waiapu he joined the Society, and was impressed by and befriended Colenso which catalysed a conversation about his re-entry into the church in the late 1880s.147

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145 Holy Trinity Woodville Offertory Book. 2 July 1892–30 June 1904.
146 King James Bible, Deuteronomy 8:2.
147 Bagnall & Peterson, William Colenso, 434.
Colenso’s Anglican rehabilitation happened in three stages:

[1]

1889

Bishop Stuart licensed Colenso as a Lay Reader/Preacher (normally someone who is not ordained but has permission to either lead worship, read the lessons (bible readings) or preach).

[2]

1892

Bishop Stuart restores Colenso to the order of deacons in the church. Colenso is licenced as a deacon, and becomes the first Vicar of Woodville.

[3]

1894

The Waiapu Synod, under the direction of Commissary and Bishop-Elect Leonard Williams, with the successful passing of a motion, seconded by Samuel Williams, Colenso is invited to be a full voting member of Synod.

To understand the controversial re-instatement of Colenso as a deacon in the Waiapu Diocese, we have to understand the Bishop who re-instated him. The Right Reverend Edward Craig Stuart offered a somewhat different style of leadership from William Williams, and given his absence from the early days of the New Zealand mission, was somewhat distanced from the general attitude to Colenso from the old guard. Given the controversy surrounding Colenso’s dismissal, and the cantankerous nature of his character, what Bishop, irrespective of warm feelings or personal friendship, would restore him to Holy Orders? Bishop Stuart viewed the See of Waiapu as a
transitional role until he could return to the mission field. Stuart had been based in India for many years. Upon the deterioration of his health, he was, in a way, medically retired from missionary work. The attraction for Stuart to take up the See of Waiapu could have been that it had been established as a missionary diocese only 17 years previously, discarding its originally intended name "The Missionary Diocese of Turanga". However, it was during his tenure that the diocese established a more formal governance structure: appointing the first Dean, canons, and establishing two archdeaconries and a cathedral chapter, as well as consecrating a newly built Cathedral.

While his episcopate lasted seventeen years, in a traditional sense he did not fill the profile of a churchman of such a high office. He lacked the stern authority of a Bishop, and also abandoned the pomposity of the role. An able man whose heart was really in the mission field, his granddaughter described him as a poor preacher and not in any way handsome. As a successive Bishop of Waiapu would tell, "Stuart once said, 'I may be plain, but you should see my brother Alec in Sydney', 'but', went on the narrator 'I knew Alec too, and he always said 'I may be ugly as sin but, by God, you should see my brother Ned in New Zealand'".

Despite these flaws, Scott describes Stuart as, "A gentle, kindly man with unfailing sympathy for all humanity, [with] an excellent sense of humour and quick wit". Indeed, he is presented as a man tolerant of everyone. Stuart’s home in Napier (Bishop’s Court) on Napier Terrace had a staff of three: two sisters, who were both Roman Catholic and Gustave who was a committed Salvationist. Stuart’s granddaughters often marched with Gustave, who played in the Salvation Army band. When such actions were criticised as

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151 Ibid, 32.
inappropriate for granddaughters of an Anglican Bishop, Stuart
responded, “Better ardent Salvationists than lukewarm Anglicans”.\footnote{Ibid, 31.}

Gustave, the Salvationist, was rescued by Bishop Stuart while
in transit from one of his pastoral visits. Stuart was on horseback
in the bush between Opotiki and Gisborne when he heard the faint
sound of a clarinet. The Bishop and his daughter, who was
accompanying him, ventured through the bush towards this faint and
peculiar sound. They discovered Gustave, an exhausted Finnish
sailor, who had deserted his ship and was using what little strength
he had left to attract help through the sound of his clarinet. He
had been trying to make his way cross country from Gisborne but
lacked provision to do so. Bishop Stuart got him to a settler’s
house, gave him five pounds and offered him a job in Napier, which
he took, arriving a week later.

While a man of generosity and kindness, Stuart has also been
described as, “A man of liberal leanings”.\footnote{Grant, S.W. The Resurrection and The Life: A Centennial History of The Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist 1886–1986 Diocese of Waiapu, Napier, New Zealand. 14.} One of the significant reforms he worked towards during his time as Bishop was to make
provision for women to serve in the governing structures of the
church, specifically on vestries and Synods. The passing of the
Women’s Franchise Bill in 1893 perhaps could have given him hope
that the church might progress in a similar direction, but it would
not be so during his tenure. Stuart even presented the matter at
General Synod in 1894, but without success. In the year that
followed his resignation from the episcopate, the Waiapu Synod moved
and passed in principle a resolution to reaffirm their desire to
allow women to serve as members of Synod and hold governance
positions at parish level.\footnote{Proceedings of the Second Session of the Thirteenth Synod of the Diocese of Waiapu, N.Z. Held at Napier, September, 1895. Together With the Resolutions, Reports, Accounts, And Other Synodical Documents. (Napier: Dinwiddie, Walker & Co., Limited, 1895).} Yet, it would not be until 25 years
later that women would have the right to have a seat at Synod, and

\footnote{\[152\] Ib\d, 31.}
not until 1922 that Mrs. H. Munro became the first woman member of Synod in the Waiapu diocese.\textsuperscript{155}

Bishop’s Court in Napier was next door to Colenso’s house and paddocks. Colenso was a friend of Bishop Stuart’s daughter and allowed her children free rein of his extensive property as their playground, given that the rest of the area on Bluff hill (Scinde Island) was now a densely populated residential area. In exchange for this use of his property, the girls were required to pay Mr. Colenso a formal visit each Saturday morning. As Scott recalls of these occasions, “His was a kind and venerable figure with long white hair falling over his velvet collar of the dark blue cloak he invariably wore. He was extremely kind and welcoming to us, and his house keeper... produced glasses of lemon syrup and small cakes... it [was] one of the few occasions... [we] were on our best behaviour”.\textsuperscript{156}

Edward Craig Stuart was the ideal churchman Colenso needed, kind, generous, liberal and unambitious. As a former and future evangelical missionary, he had an understanding of the work Colenso had done and his passion for it. While maintaining his post as Bishop of Waiapu for seventeen years, his heart was still set on returning to a mission field overseas, which he eventually did, relocating to Persia in 1894. As Stuart had not positioned himself in the usual way that an ecclesiastic politician might, it could be argued that he had the agency to act with more freedom without political consequence than his episcopal contemporaries or predecessor. It was, however, a significant risk that Stuart took when he re-instated Colenso, even though it was executed cautiously. He did after all have to prove himself as a lay reader. What also may have aided Colenso’s cause, other than the friendship he and his new Bishop formed in the philosophical institute, was that Colenso had held the same uncompromising passion and energy for missionary work that Stuart had, a drive that prompted the Bishop back into this work in his sixties.

\textsuperscript{155} Waiapu diocesan year book. (Napier: Diocese of Waiapu, 1922).
\textsuperscript{156} Scott. M, Days That Have Been: An Autobiography. 27.
Colenso’s reinstatement happened in three phases. Before he was restored to Holy Orders, he was given a licence as a lay reader, to preach and lead worship throughout the Archdeaconry of Hawke’s Bay. This might be seen as a period of probation. After he had proved himself as a licensed layman, Colenso might get the opportunity to become a restored licensed cleric. In the late-1880s he preached regularly and read lessons at the Cathedral, St Augustine’s, St Andrew’s and All Saint’s in Napier. He even preached on Christmas day in St John’s Cathedral in 1889.\textsuperscript{157}

Colenso was doubtful that the second phase might ever come and was suspicious when it finally did. This was due, in part, to the Bishop avoiding scheduled meetings for such discussion, “Dear W Colenso, I very much regret that I am unable to attend the meeting this evening, at which I had fully meant to be present. Yours very truly, Edward. C. Waipu”.\textsuperscript{158} Other letters include the repeated rescheduling of planned meetings.\textsuperscript{159} When word came from the Bishop in the form of a letter and the proposal of a clerical licence, Colenso wrote to Emily Hill in disbelief, “I have found the Bp’s letter and it is … I now propose going to town tomorrow to show letter to the Dean, as he seemed to me, to be too much inclined to doubt the efficiency of the Bp’s paper-i.e. Licence…”\textsuperscript{160} Colenso had, in the 1860s, been critical of Hovell (who was now the Dean), but it appears from his letters and diaries that they became good friends; he wrote to, visited and entertained him often. They came to know each other from their many years at St. John’s church/cathedral.\textsuperscript{161}

\textsuperscript{157} Colenso. W, Diary entry 25 December 1899: Diary of William Colenso 1890. MTG Trust Archive, [55080], 2. / All Saints Anglican Parish Taradale, Service Register 1880-1913. \textsuperscript{158} Letter from Bishop Stuart to Colenso, 13 June 1881. MTG Trust Archive, [66196]. \textsuperscript{159} Letter from Bishop Stuart to Colenso, 8 January 1881. Colenso Papers, MTG Trust Archive, [18206]. \textsuperscript{160} Letter from Colenso to Mrs E. Hill, 23 [month missing] 1891. MTG Trust Archive, VN [57787], Mss/50 (b) a-d. \textsuperscript{161} Colenso Papers/ Diaries & Personal Correspondence. MTG Trust Archive.
Woodville became a parochial district in 1889, but it did not
have a resident vicar until Colenso was permanently based there in
1892. Colenso was reinstated by Bishop Stuart when he was well
into his seventies and he was used as a clerical reliever during
times of interregnum or when clergy were sick in the Hawke’s Bay
Archdeaconry. Bishop Stuart said in his presidential address to
the Waiapu Synod in 1891, “... I have to express my grateful thanks to
my venerable friend Mr Colenso for the “ready mind” with which he
has given his gracious and efficient services, shrinking from no
fatigue or exposure even in the most inclement of weather, when he
could help a brother clergyman and minister to the flock.” Colenso
was by this time an old man, yet as Bishop Stuart highlighted in his
presidential address, regardless of his age, health or the weather,
Colenso pressed on in the work with which the church had entrusted
him. In a letter to Andrew Luff, Colenso told of his poor health
from recent travels, and how due to his suffering from lumbago he
was too unwell to travel in a carriage, let alone move at all.
“But”, writes Colenso, “stern duty impelled me on - for I had
consented to take the duty here in the cathedral on the 1st of
January (mg.) and at St. Augustine’s in the evening, and on that the
Dean’s wife and family had all gone to Kuri-Papanga & there was no
one here to aid! I had three to four wretched days of it! -but was
enabled on the dreaded 1st to take both duties: and then I had also
previously agreed with Rev. C.L. Tuke to take his ch. Duty at
Taradale on the 8th of January... I have been very busy (3 more Sundays
at Taradale)”.

When Colenso’s time as Vicar of Woodville ended in 1893, the
vestry agreed to the appointment of the Rev. J.C. Eccles as his
successor. A new vicarage had just been completed and it appeared

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163 Ibid.
164 Bishop Stuart’s Presidential Address to Synod, [The Address].
Proceedings of the First Session of the Twelfth Synod of the Diocese
of Waiapu, N.Z. Held at Napier, September, 1891. Together With the
Resolutions, Reports, Accounts, and other Synodical Documents.
(Napier, New Zealand: Dinwiddie, Walker & Co, Limited, Tennyson
Street, 1891), 5.
165 Letter from Colenso to A. Luff. Tuesday February 21, 1893.
166 Changes in the clergy: Bishop Stuart’s Presidential Address,
Proceedings of the Third Session of the Twelfth Synod of the Diocese
of Waiapu, N.Z. Held at Napier, September, 1893. Together With the
Resolutions, Reports, Accounts, and other Synodical
to be convenient timing for all. Colenso had had enough of the climate, "I do not like to reside in Wdv., too low & wet for me". The move was particularly timely for Eccles, as after 17 years as the Incumbent of Waipawa, he had fallen out with the parish over a proposed subdivision of it to create a new parochial district. However after his appointment at Woodville was announced, the vestry of Waipawa pointed out to Eccles that he was required to give three months’ notice before he could end his time there. Colenso stayed an additional three months in Woodville so that Eccles would finish his term. During this additional period which Colenso took on, he was not paid, agreeing to continue in the role at his own expense.

In the 1891 Synod, Colenso is recorded as an officiating minister at Woodville. The following year, he is listed in the Synod record as, "Officiating Minister [Unattached]", yet until 1894 was not a member of the Synod itself. While Colenso had been fully licenced and was praised by the Bishop in his presidential address to Synod in 1891, he never received summons from the Bishop to attend. This was peculiar, as it was the right of any clergyman licenced to the diocese to have a seat at the Diocesan Synod. Henry St Hill, with some difficulty, was able to get hold of the rubric of the General Synod, which confirmed Colenso’s right to be there. What follows is the third stage of Colenso’s Anglican rehabilitation: The Rev. Robertshawe sought the leave of Synod, suspending the appropriate standing orders, to move a motion from the floor without notice, that Colenso be received as a full member of Synod. These


169 Ibid.
efforts would eventually succeed, as Colenso reported in a letter to R.C. Harding,

“I suppose you will have known the results of the Synod: Archdn. L.W. being Bp.-elect. During the past winter, Hill, having got hold of the vol. "Report General Synod, w. Constittn. & Rules of the Provlnl. Ch.", he found, that I, as a licensed Cl., was entitled to a seat in Synod, but to make it sure, H. wrote (a case) to Bp. Cowie actg. Primate, & Bp. C. in reply, said, [he told Eccles the same when in Auckld.] "I had", referring H. to the same Canon, containing it. So H. on Synod opening brought up the matter, but President (Archr. L.W.) would not allow it; much talk (pub. & priv.) folld., & in the evg. the 2 Archdns. came to Hill & sd. "How much they should like to see me there w. them, but under the proviso cl.", & I had told H., I would not accept it.—Howr. next day at meeting, Can. St. H. propd. & Archd. S.W. secd.—a Resolution invitg. me, & Fielder was sent up w. it—I told F. I wod. not go thither, save as my right.—but Robertshawe, Eccles, & others, also came & I gave way to them, & went, and certainly was very well recd. Bp. elect came down to entrance to receive me, with a hearty shake hand & kind words (!!!) folld. by S.W. & the Canons, & the Dean, & the Parsons, & some of the older identity lay—Newton, Shirley, St. Hill, &c. & so I remd. till close—x.15 p.m.—I give you this in full: I expect to go to Woodville after mid. of month. I am keeping well, but feeling sudden change, cold S., yesty. & to-day. Hope you & yours are well

Believe me yours truly, W. Colenso.”

Once received, with the exception of 1896 when he was ill, Colenso remained an active member of the Waiapu Synod until 1898.

By 1894 Colenso had gained enough trust to be involved in worship at the cathedral in his new capacity as a licenced cleric. While he had become a regular and trusted preacher and worship leader as a licenced Lay Reader, it seems in the second phase of his re-entry to the church, in Holy Orders, he had to start all over again, in that he again had to earn his place at the cathedral. In a service to celebrate the success that the cathedral had had in raising funds to put a substantial dent in the debt the community had accumulated in building the cathedral, Colenso was asked to read the lessons for the service. The details of the service received an enormous and highly detailed account in the Hawke’s Bay Herald, which included Colenso’s involvement in the service.

Colenso seems to have been so pleased with his involvement, that he bought eleven copies of the paper and posted them to various friends and family, including his son, Latty, and Bishop Stuart,\(^\text{175}\) who by this time had been succeeded as Bishop of Waiapu and moved to Persia.

In an interview with Charles Elliot Fox, of the Melanesian Mission, toward the end of his life, he recalled his schooling at Napier Boys High School. He said, "The old man used to preach every Sunday; Colenso, and we Church of England boys, we had to go to the old cathedral".\(^\text{176}\)

In the end, Colenso’s death in 1899 would come to reveal the respect that he held for the diocese which emerged around him and defined him by the many years set apart from it and his last years in it. His death too would come to show the respect the diocese did have for him. The turnout to the graveside service was significant and comprised a vast cross-section of the population, with substantial representation from local Māori. The service was conducted by Dean Hovell, whose actions (that were criticised by "Parishioner") had been defended in local newspapers so passionately by Colenso, and was assisted by the Bishop of Waiapu, Leonard Williams. Following his death, “The Rev. T. A. Cato, preaching at the cathedral last night from the text 'It is finished,' made feeling reference to the death of the late Rev. William Colenso… He

\(^\text{174}\) Hawke's Bay Herald, Volume XXX, Issue 10059, 29 July 1895, 3
\(^\text{175}\) Colenso, W. Notes of tasks to do, double sided piece of paper in private ownership, digitised by the Colenso Project. eColenso Volume 4 Number 8 August 2013.
referred to Mr Colenso as an early pioneer of the colony, and one
who had gone through many trials and vicissitudes, with exemplary
patience and forbearance."\textsuperscript{177} At the end of the service the organist
played the \textit{Death March} from \textit{Saul}, and all remained standing in the
long silence that followed.\textsuperscript{178}

Much of Colenso’s estate went to establishing local welfare
benefits for the poorest families in Napier and in Penzance,
Cornwall. Some monies established other trusts and scholarships, for
children to be educated at state schools. His bequest to the church,
it might be noted, offers some intriguing insights:

\begin{center}
\textbf{£100 is be-
queathed to the Anglican Church, Wood-
ville, to be devoted to the completion of
the chancel in memory of Bishop Stuart;
his theological works to the Waiapu Diocesan
Library, as well as a complete
subscriber’s set of the “Transactions
of the New Zealand Institute,” and the
MSS. of the “Census of the Maori Popu-
lion of Hawke’s Bay and Neighbor-
hood,” as taken at the request of the
Bishop of New Zealand in 1845.}
\end{center}

A more detailed extract of Colenso’s will was read at Synod,
under the report for the Diocesan Library, “I give and bequeath to
my friend Dean Hovell, of Napier, in trust for the Waiapu Diocesan
library, fifty volumes of books (Theological and Ecclesiastical
works)”.\textsuperscript{180} It appears that this collection of books were burnt to
ashes in the fire and earthquake of 1931, even though the Synod of

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{177} \textit{The late Mr Colenso.} Hawke’s Bay Herald, Volume XXXIV, Issue
11147, 13 February 1899, 3. Retrieved from papers past:
http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-
bin/paperspast?a=d&c=HBH18990213.2.10&srpos=1&e=-------10-
-1----0William+colenso+the+dean--
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{180} Report of the Cathedral Chapter. Proceedings of the Third Session
of the Fourteenth Synod of the Diocese of Waiapu, N.Z. Held at
Napier, September, 1899. Together With the Resolutions, Reports,
Accounts, and other Synodical Documents. (Napier, New Zealand:
\end{footnotes}
1899 had sought to make provision for their preservation from such circumstances, “The necessity for a suitable and fire-proof building for the valuable collection of books now under the control of the Chapter becomes more and more a matter of urgent importance”.

While the Dean of Waiapu showed his respect for Colenso by conducting his funeral service, Colenso showed his gratitude for Bishop Stuart by ensuring a memorial chancel was completed. A significant nod was also made to the church at Woodville, which sent a wreath with the inscription, “In token of loving remembrance.” The church at Woodville, Holy Trinity, was relocated and a chancel in memory of Bishop Stuart was completed in 1901.

In the late 1880s the New Zealand Painter Gottfried Lindauer arrived in Napier to paint a series of portraits of local leaders and Kaumatua. Colenso was one such subject. When the paintings were completed all were hung in the Cathedral. One painting was excluded from the collection in the cathedral: Colenso’s. The portraits were commissioned before Colenso was restored to Holy Orders, but Colenso’s portrait would never join the rest of the collection, being hung instead on the wall of the Hawke’s Bay Philosophical Society. Consequently it is the only portrait of the collection that survives, as the rest were lost in the 1931 earthquake and fire which destroyed the cathedral. A catastrophic event prophesied somewhat by Samuel Williams “…Sam said if you build it with brick it will fall down… not in my life time, but in yours.”

A plaque on the west wall of the cathedral was erected after Colenso’s death. It was also destroyed in the earthquake and fire. It read:

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181 Ibid.
182 Hawke’s Bay Herald, Volume XXXIV, Issue 11147, 13 February 1899, 3.
185 Interview with Dr, Charles Eliot Fox 1878-1977, 12 Apr 1975.
In Memory of

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The

Rev. William Colenso. FRS.

Born at Penzance England
Nov. 17, 1811
Landed in New Zealand
Dec. 30, 1834
Died at Napier, Feb. 10, 1899.

He was New Zealand’s first Printer
And published the New Testament
In Māori in Dec. 1837.

He came to reside in Hawke’s Bay
As a missionary
In 1844

As a Scientist and Philanthropist
His name will ever be honourably
Associated
With the worthies of his adopted country

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185 Memorial Plaque to William Colenso in Waiapu cathedral, 1899-1931.
It could be argued that there is a clear message in the plaque. While acknowledging his missionary activity, the title ‘Rev.’ and the notable work he achieved as the missionary printer, the words “As a Scientist and Philanthropist his name will ever be associated With the worthies of his adopted country”, 186 standing in a cathedral, it could be argued, implies that as a vicar and missionary he was not respected by the worthies of his adopted denomination. This memorial was shattered when the Cathedral was destroyed, and was never replaced. A photo of this memorial is in a family photo album of an early Waipawa settler, Edward Bibby. Bibby was a member of the Philosophical Institute and also a close friend of Colenso. 187

The call for this memorial came from the Diocesan Synod following Colenso’s death,

“On the opening of Synod... The Rev. E. Robertshawe moved,--
“That Synod desires to place on record its deep sense of loss at the death of the Rev. W. Colenso, F.R.S., whose kindliness and liberality endeared him to all classes of the community.”-The motion was seconded by the Very Rev. the Dean and supported by his lordship the President... Mr. Simcox suggested it would be fitting that a memorial to his name be placed in the cathedral, a proposal which met with approval from subsequent speakers.—Mr. Hill read an extract of a letter from Sir. J. Hooker, showing the highest esteem and personal friendship for Mr. Colenso as a scientist, philanthropist, and Christian.—The members of Synod stood while the motion was put and carried. “188

The context in which the cathedral memorial was planned gives a more welcoming subtext than the final wording that was presented. If the word 'Christian' had been added to the memorial following the words “As a Scientist and Philanthropist...”, as they do in the summary of Hooker’s letter, the representation of his legacy may

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186 Ibid.
187 Colenso. W, Diary entry 16 Jan 1890: Diary of William Colenso 1890. MTG Trust Archive, [55080],
have differed somewhat. Whereby declaring that as Scientist, Philanthropist and as a Christian, His name will ever be honourably associated with the worthies of his adopted country.

A.H. Reed argues that the memorial tablet in the cathedral was a rare tribute, not received by many and a symbol of the respect the church did have for Colenso. Though a civic centennial history of the Province of Hawke’s Bay and not a church history, A.H. Reed in 1958 expresses the forgiveness and reconciliation that Colenso received, summarising, “though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down... this man fell, and rose again... after years was given the right hand of fellowship and reconciliation by two successive bishops of Waiapu...”

What seems to be the case, with regard to Colenso’s readmission and reconciliation, is that though he failed to win the hearts of the first generation of churchmen, Henry Williams, Selwyn, etc., he did achieve the acceptance and respect by the second generation of churchmen, Bishop Stuart, Leonard Williams, Samuel Williams, Dean Hovell and Waiapu clergy. Then what seems to have happened is that the historical narrative did not comprehensively document this, so that the generation of churchmen who emerged in the 20th century only had the biographies of the Williams and Selwyn to go by, subsequently eroding the reputation Colenso had forged in the church.

One such churchman, who represents the attitude of this generation of 20th century churchmen, was Bishop W. Simkin. Simkin was Bishop of Auckland from 1940-1960, and this is the role with which he is most commonly associated, although he spent many years in the Diocese of Waiapu preceding his elevation to the episcopate. He arrived in the diocese in 1911, serving as Vicar of Wairoa. In 1918 Simkin was appointed as Registrar of the Diocese and private secretary and Chaplain to the Bishop. The following year he also became the Archdeacon of Hawke’s Bay. Simkin did not hold Colenso in high regard and in 1925 he wrote The Founding of the Church in the

Diocese of Waiapu. This manuscript was never published, and only two carbon copies exist. This manuscript expresses clearly Colenso’s legacy in the church at the time, but much like Scholefield’s 1940 entry in the dictionary of New Zealand Biography, Simkin omits completely the adultery and dismissal. Simkin claims that Colenso “retired” from his work, “…Colenso carried on the work until the year 1852… From the time of his arrival until his retirement he worked alone in this large district…”.190 He mentions his death in 1899, noting that it took place some 40 years after his association with the mission ended. Simkin briefly acknowledges Colenso’s achievements outside his 19 years with the CMS, but in no greater detail than a passing sentence that dismisses their relevance, “His work in connection with the introduction of printing, together with his achievements as a scientist, do not concern the present narrative”.191 This diocesan history deliberately covers up the scandal and shame that surrounded Colenso’s dismissal, as it is implied that Colenso was never dismissed, and perhaps just took early retirement or voluntary redundancy. While Colenso’s later legacy in the Diocese of Waiapu in the last decade of his life died with that generation of clerics, the churchmen of the 20th century had two approaches to dealing with this historical figure. Either he was portrayed as a villain, or his misdeeds were hidden from view, as has been shown in Simkin’s text and Scholefield’s entry.

191 Ibid, 90.
Chapter 5:

"An Aged Minister Of Religion, And A Fervent Disciple Of Nature"

Colenso’s Shifting Theology

When Colenso arrived in the Bay of Islands with most of his printing press, he was one of few Pakeha in the country. While the Pakeha population would come to equal that of Māori 14 years after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, his ministry in Hawke’s Bay in the 1890s was far different from that of the 1840s. His first house of worship in Napier was a raupo chapel, his last was a neo-gothic colonial cathedral. The dynamics of ministry had shifted radically by the time Colenso re-entered the church. The theology of conversion to an indigenous population yet to be assimilated needed to be different from the spirituality provided for homesick Pakeha settlers.

As a young man Colenso registered as a church member of the Wesleyan Society, and those who recalled his early sermons in Hawke’s Bay in the 1840s (according to the corporate memory of the William’s family) described his message and style of preaching as, “All hellfire and damnation.” The young missionary had a literalistic and legalistic view of scripture; perhaps the very reason he had become a missionary was in response to the words, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel”.

The last sermons that Colenso was reported to have preached to Māori in the Wairarapa, were along this legalistic/literalistic line, regarding adultery and sexual purity. When his own sins were exposed, this damaged his reputation, particularly due to the content of his most recent sermons. These sermons alluded to his supressed guilt for his sins that were not yet revealed, and mark

193 Interview with the Rev. J.S. Williams (Great Grandson of William Leonard Williams), August, 2016.
194 Mark 16:15, King James Bible.
where his theology was in the early 1850s. He did not live up to the high standards he set in place for Māori or himself. Selwyn aside, it seems Colenso was his own harshest judge. The guilt he felt for his adulterous relationship was immense, so much so that he became a recluse for the five years that followed his dismissal. "... I have sinned grievously against God... My many, many bitter nights and days of weeping and praying tell me another tale... I wait, Sir, my Master’s pleasure, to see, perhaps, his kind vindication of his poor, despised and much injured servant."  This chapter will explore the evolution of Colenso’s theology and churchmanship. Colenso shifted from being a staunch (originally non-conformist) evangelical, with a literalistic view on scripture and a legalistic approach to the enforcement of its principles, and became instead a scholarly Broad-Church Anglican ahead of his time. Colenso’s humbling, exile and response to changes in the church when he returned will also be examined.

The first three Bishops of Waiapu who served during Colenso’s time, had all been evangelical missionaries. Subsequently, the diocese in that period would remain Low-Church/Evangelical. The general churchmanship that has developed in the Diocese of Waiapu in recent decades is Low-Church-Liberal. This is a rare combination, given that the usual contemporary couplings are Low-Church-Conservative/Evangelical, High-Church-Liberal, and (in the English tradition) High-Church-Conservative. As noted by Michael Godfrey, “Waiapu is unique, insofar as it holds a strong liberal theology, while at the same time is distinctively Low-Church in its worship. The combination of the two certainly does not exist in Australia, and would be rare in the wider communion”.  As former Bishop of Waiapu John Bluck describes it,

“Waiapu, out of all the dioceses was the most church party free. I think that the evangelical, simple Low-Church beginning evolved into an unadorned simple, in the best sense of the word, practical kind of spirit of churchmanship, that wasn’t really defined by high or low, but rather being defined by being practical and appropriate for the place and the circumstance, and I think it is that sense of simplicity and pragmatism that shaped churchmanship

195 Reed. The Story of Hawke’s Bay. 1958, 80.
196 Interview with the Dean of Waiapu, Dr. M.J.H. Godfrey. December 2015.
rather than theological arguments of high or low ... Waiapu is unique in that sense.”

The combination of theology and churchmanship that has developed in the Diocese of Waiapu is similar to the style of churchmanship that Colenso himself developed by the time he was licenced within it. While Colenso remained Low-Church in his worship, he did “creep up the candle” just a little, as after his reinstatement, he began wearing vestments, which he borrowed from St. Augustine’s. However, it is unlikely that the vestments he wore would have been anything more than a cassock and surplice, which were acceptable in the Low-Church Anglican tradition. Colenso’s theology and churchmanship became Broad and liberal leaning, he had in a sense, become a more modern Anglican. This brand of churchmanship and theology preceded the church’s own development, and that of the Diocese of Waiapu.

Colenso and the Sabbath:

Sabbath observance in New Zealand had its roots, so argued Laurie Guy, in the Anglican group The Lord’s Day Observance Society, which was established in England in 1831. The Sabbatarian impress on New Zealand society would continue to grow through the 19th and 20th centuries and became enshrined in law. Such legislation included, The Police Offences Act 1884 (section 16), restricting Sunday trading, and The Masters and Apprentices Act 1885, requiring provision for apprentices to be able to attend Divine Service at least once on a Sunday. William Yate recalled the Sabbath observance in the CMS mission in the 1830s and how they had expected local Māori to follow this custom. Yate also commented that the principle of the Sabbath was the first aspect of Christianity that Māori adopted. W.H. Oliver noted that Sabbath was kept by East

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197 Interview with the 14th Bishop of Waiapu 2002-08, J. Bluck. 14 July, 2016.
200 Ibid, 7.
Coast Māori as early as 1834, and Reweti T. Kohere commented its continued strong observance over a century later. Sabbath observance was of primary importance to Presbyterian Scottish settlers who considered it, “a touchstone of the Christian community…” A by-product of the Scottish reformation, Sabbath observance became a stricter 24 hour principle at the end of the 16th century. In the late 1860s, the Dunedin & Southland Presbyterian Synod was concerned enough about the settler population following the Sabbath that they established The Committee on the State of Religion and Sabbath Observance. This committee reported to the Synod in 1868 describing the, “appalling extent to which the Sabbath was being desecrated.”

In 1878 Colenso published: Tracts for the times No.1: On The Sabbath. This was in direct protest to the strict and literalistic teachings of the church. In particular, this work was in response to a sermon printed in the Hawke’s Bay Herald on September 9th 1878 by the Rev. D. Sidey, a Presbyterian minister, entitled: Sabbath Observance. In his theological unpacking of the practice of keeping the Sabbath, Colenso divided his argument into the Old Testament and the New Testament and compared Christian observance to Jewish observance. In the first part of his argument he highlighted the two main texts within the Old Testament that were the authority on the Sabbath and its observance. (Exodus 20): “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested on the seventh day: therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.” And (Deuteronomy 5:15): “And remember that thou was a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God commanded thee out of thence through a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm:

206 Ibid, 314.
therefore the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath day.”

Colenso’s argument then referenced the works of his cousin, Bishop John Colenso (formerly Bishop of Natal), who by this time had published six out of his seven volumes on the Pentateuch, which were some of the first and most controversial attempts at biblical criticism in the 19th century. In examining these two biblical texts, William stated, “Both statements are equally said to be the very words of God, and to have been engraved on stone... Did Moses really write those five books called the Pentateuch? ... It is highly doubtful, the book of Deuteronomy [certainly] was not.”210 If the authorship of this part of the Old Testament was not divinely dictated from God, but a work of Man, should it be taken as a literal and absolute order? As well as challenging the authorship and authority of the Pentateuch (as his cousin Bishop Colenso had), William Colenso went on to argue that the death penalty for breaking the Sabbath in Exodus 31:15, and in Numbers 15, could not have come from, “The ever Blessed God.”211 William Colenso’s argument about the authorship of the Pentateuch was criticised by Sidey in a subsequent letter to the editor.212

Colenso’s argument on Sabbath observance in the New Testament was in two parts, the first point he made was that Jesus held a fairly liberal view as to how the Sabbath should be treated. Secondly, Colenso argued that Sunday should be a day of recreation and enjoyment. This second point detailed the importance of family, rest and the appreciation of the beauty of the world around us at a different pace and that people should not get caught up in legalistic rule-following that contradicts the very point of a Sabbath rest. Colenso likened the extreme Sabbatarian practices of local Christians in the region to those of the Pharisees of the first century.

209 Ibid.
210 Ibid.
211 Ibid.
This work of dissent from the literalism to which he himself had originally subscribed, demonstrates Colenso’s marked shift in his theology. Colenso had, in earlier years, been a stricter observer of the Sabbath, enforcing it among the Māori of his Mission. Later in life he would view his Sabbath excursions into nature with a poetic romanticism, recalling from one Sunday in the bush besides a freshwater spring, that “...everything was so delightful cool and still, fit emblem for the Sabbath; it literally was a, “Calm and secure retreat of sacred silence, rest’s eternal seat”.”

While spending some time in Dannevirke, Colenso found himself offended by the preaching of the resident Presbyterian Minister, who was firm in his instruction with regard to the observance of the Sabbath. Colenso responded with various letters to the Editor. One such letter (to the Bush Advocate) was in reference to a young man who was accidentally killed while pigeon shooting on a Sunday afternoon and entitled *Keep Holy the Sabbath Day*, reading, “I read also in your paper of "a boy named Christian Harden, sixteen years old, having being shot at Mauriceville..." Was it any consolation to him in his dying moments, or to his poor sorrowing parents that he had met his fate while breaking God’s command?”

With regard to the Sabbath, Colenso’s theological understanding departed from that of the mainstream. The Presbyterians with whom he argued were literalists, and this literalism and strict Sabbatarian observance was also common place in Anglicanism. The acceptance of biblical criticism (of the ilk of Bishop John Colenso) did not occur until 1887 at its earliest, only becoming common place by 1895. Some English academics supported biblical criticism before this period, and had to be diplomatic about their theological inclinations. Charles Gore, who taught at Cuddesdon Theological College and Pusey House Oxford before becoming Bishop, agreed with the paradigm shift that biblical criticism brought, and said in 1880, “I hope someday to be able to say this

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publicly."\(^{216}\) What Colenso’s criticism of Sabbath observance then suggests, is that he was ahead of the mainstream Anglican Church theologically, by at least a decade.

In the 1890s Waiapu continued to uphold strict Sabbath observance. A motion brought to Synod in 1897 led Waiapu to pass a resolution in which they condemned a recent trend of playing sport on a Sunday, and called on all Christians to abstain from such behaviour.\(^{217}\) Colenso, as he argued in his work on the Sabbath, thought that Sunday should be for rest and enjoyment, though he himself did not have much time to do so, as his extensive interests and work gave him little time after hours. As he said to the Philosophical Institute, "The powerful and active enemy of science, and of general learning are too great a love of holidays and idleness."\(^{218}\) Perhaps the change in Colenso’s attitude to Sunday activities was in response to a vocation of making the best use of the time and talents given to him.

**Colenso and Temperance:**

It is difficult to place Colenso in the context of the Anglican Church’s view of alcohol, with respect to temperance and prohibition issues, because the church itself was divided. It was a hot topic in the 1890s, with the passing of the *Alcoholic Liquors Sale Control Act 1893*. This gave various districts the choice to decide whether or not to be "wet" or "dry".\(^{219}\) Waiapu supported the

\(^{216}\) Ibid.


\(^{218}\) Hawke’s Bay Philosophical Institute, Anniversary Address by the president, William Colenso, F.R.S. F.L.S. ect. Delivered to Members of the Society at the Opening Meeting of the Session 1888-89. (Napier: R.C. Harding Hastings Street, 1888), 2.

Colenso’s view, while it changed, is clear. The way his views of alcohol shifted, and his theological defence of his later position is in line with my argument about the reformation of his theology. In the early days of the New Zealand Mission there was no doubt of his temperance leanings, particularly given that Colenso helped established the first temperance society in New Zealand in 1836. He wrote and printed, “...with my own hands the report of the meeting (the same being the first book in English printed in New Zealand).” Colenso, in 1896, wrote to the editor in defence of his position against prohibitionist and minister of the small Free Methodist Church, John Hosking. Hosking’s letter in the Hawke’s Bay Herald was in firm support of total prohibition, with theological justifications. By this time Colenso was not of that opinion at all. His opinions on temperance had been strong. Although The New Zealand Temperance Society called for the sobriety of New Zealand, and to bring an end to drunkenness, they only called for a ban of distilled spirits and required its members to vow not to consume such forms of alcohol. Colenso moved a motion at the Temperance Society’s first meeting to highlight the conviction that, “Temperance Societies are founded upon Christian principles.” While Colenso was never a total prohibitionist, he argued that current members of temperance movements had become too extreme, it is clear that his convictions had later relaxed. Colenso’s main response to Hosking’s letter was by way of challenging its theology.

“John Hosking says (of wine):- “the Hebrew word Yayin denotes intoxicating wine. This class of drink is invariably condemned; it is prohibited.” (The italics are J.H.’s) “I

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222 Ibid.
224 Ibid, 7.
find (sic) the word Yayin so used 120 times in the Old Testament.” I agree with John Hosking, in Yayin “denoting intoxicating (or fermented) wine,” but my position will be to show that Yayin is neither condemned nor prohibited.”

At the Waiapu Diocesan Synod of 1897, a committee was established to examine in depth the issue of alcohol, named: The Waiapu Committee on Temperance Reform. The chairman of this group was the Dean of Waiapu, De Berdt Hovell, and the committee also included T.J. Wills, Cannon Webb and Mr. Thornton. Hovell and Webb were friends and supporters of Colenso and had supported his restoration to Holy Orders and to Synod, and were part of the delegation which went from Synod to Colenso’s house to welcome him. Wills, who was Vicar of Ormondville, was a significant figure among those calling for total prohibition, and author of Bishop Nevill’s Mistake.

The Waiapu Committee on Temperance Reform returned to Synod the following year to present the report on their findings. The report was an investigation of the correlation of health, crime and economics with the sale and consumption of alcohol. It included the various options of amending alcohol legislation, such as; The Gothenburg System, High Licence (high tax) and No-Licence (total prohibition). The end of the report contained a case study on the benefits of prohibition since its introduction in Clutha which was voted in by the largely Presbyterian population. Colenso criticised the trend among Presbyterians of becoming teetotallers, describing it as, “A new fad, (a thing unknown even by name to their forefathers).” The Clutha case study showed the committee’s support of prohibition, as it included data comparing the crime rate before and after the introduction of No-Licence. The result was: crimes committed pre-prohibition: 301, post-prohibition: 90,

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225 Colenso to the Editor, H.B.H. Prohibition and the Clergy.
226 Wills. T.J, The Liquor Problem; or, the Work of Two Anglican Synods Reviews... (Christchurch: T.E. Fraser, 1899), i-iii.
227 Bagnall & Peterson, William Colenso, .
concluding, “These figures need no comment.”230 The report argued that the other options it presented were invalid, such as the Gothenburg System, which they noted, had been condemned by the Church of England’s Convocation of the Province of Canterbury.231 At the end of Wills’ publication on the work the committee had done he states, “In the name of all that is sacred, good and pure, we plead with our fellow colonists to vote “No-Licence”.”232

This report was presented to the Waiapu Synod in 1898. The Synod was grateful for the work of the committee and the report was subsequently published in the proceedings of that session. The report along with the motion of reception was tabled without debate until 1899.233 The Synod of 1898 where the report was first presented was the last Synod that Colenso attended before his death. It was a meeting in which he spoke about various issues with his usual style and passion, but in the debate on temperance, he did not get the opportunity. Given the report was presented by his allies in an institution he had waited so long to re-enter, it may have been a relief not to have debated it with them.

In 1899, after Colenso’s death, the Waiapu Diocesan Synod officially supported No-Licence,234 while at the same time the Diocese of Dunedin considered the No-Licence movement to be “irrational”.235 Three years earlier, when Bishop Nevill addressed the 1896 Dunedin Synod, he argued that prohibition would be demoralising for two reasons: firstly, that total prohibition would catalyse a greater evil by those attempting to illegally navigate around such legislation, secondly, he advocated for the free will of Christian people in determining their own purity, without legislation, although he did not believe there should be more

230 Wills. T.J, The Liquor Problem; or, the Work of Two Anglican Synods Reviews..., 14.
opportunity for temptation by loosening current laws.236 While prohibitionists abhorred Bishop Nevill, as A.R. Grigg argues, Nevill, “…was, however, opposed to the present system of sale of liquor, and argued for the abolition of hotel bars.”237 Nevill’s position was later echoed by Presbyterian theologian and academic William Salmond.238 A prohibitionist motion was defeated outright at the Auckland Anglican Synod of 1914.239

The Anglican Diocese of Dunedin, which was established in a predominantly Presbyterian Scottish settlement, differentiated themselves by becoming far more Anglo-Catholic/High Church. Those of the High Church persuasion were among the Christians most opposed to prohibition, though with many individual exceptions.240 John Stenhouse argues that it was the Anglican and Catholic vote that prevented total prohibition following the First World War,241 and Grigg argues that the view of the wider New Zealand Anglican Church on the matter was in line with that of Bishop Nevill. The Anglican Church overall was opposed to prohibition, though there were dioceses, such as Waiaiapu, who strongly supported it. Some Waiaiapu churchmen, such as T.J. Wills, were extreme in their views. At the 1893 Synod, Wills moved, “That it be recommended to the clergy of this diocese to make use of unfermented wine at the celebration of Holy Communion,” however this motion was withdrawn.242

239 Ibid, 147.
240 Grigg, Prohibition, the Church and Labour: A Program of Social Reform, 1890-1914., 144.
Waiapu’s temperance endorsement might have had something to do with their ardent support of the Women’s Franchise Bill 1893, and the goals of the suffragettes of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, an organisation that had a strong presence in the diocese. While generally against prohibition, parts of the Anglican Church continued to make moves toward an anti-alcohol stance, including the General Synod of 1922, which stated, “That this Synod expresses its strong conviction, that it is the bounden duty of Christian people, unless they are prepared to vote for total prohibition, to find some other drastic remedy for an evil which is shaping the morals and efficiency of the country.” Given the attitude Colenso had towards prohibition later on and this position being a party line of the High-Church, it could evidence an increasing church party tolerance.

Colenso’s opposition of those with teetotaling tendencies is not only clear in his criticism of conservative Presbyterians but in his own consumption of alcohol. The standard order he made for shipment from England included:

- >20-30 dozen Guinness’ extra foreign stout, pints, bottled by Burke of Dublin...
- >2-3 Doz. Good old port, @ £4-£5
- >2 Doz. Sherry (mild, pale) @ £3-£4.

As he wrote in a letter to Luff in 1887, “when I am out of order, I take a glass of that port w[ine].” Colenso concluded his argument with John Hosking by stating, “...I consider alcohol as one of the choicest gifts of God to man;...[I place] it together [with] the printing press in the very van of all his blessings.”

Colenso’s shifting position on alcohol was from a specifically protestant evangelical perspective to a wider held Anglican one. The

245 Ibid, 106.
246 The Twenty Second General Synod of the Church Province of New Zealand, (commonly called the Church of England), 1922.
Diocese of Waiapu’s stance however, reflected its evangelical perspective. This aspect of Colenso’s Anglican rehabilitation is the development of his own beliefs that had progressed from his earlier conviction, but in the period and church which he now found himself, his new views were not controversial, but in the wider Anglican mainstream. His stance on alcohol in the Diocese of Waiapu however, was an exception to this in his local context.

Colenso, “maintained for himself a Christian faith but abandoned the literalism that he once held”. While acknowledging the retention of his faith, Paul Goldsmith argues that through Colenso’s involvement in the Philosophical Institute with science and particularly botany, this work replaced the primacy of his faith, “As a missionary, Colenso had been a passionate exponent of religion. When one looks for an area where Colenso showed similar zeal in his later life, science stood in the place of religion”. “Colenso was not content, however, merely to practice natural science. The promotion of it became his new mission”. Goldsmith even likens Colenso’s positive review of Darwin’s Naturalists Voyage to replacing the Bible.

Rather than science replacing religion or becoming his new “mission”, I would argue that it instead catalysed the significant shift in Colenso’s theological understanding. From his academic position, that was independent from the church, he had the mana and separation from which he could criticize the church from a position of authority and relative safety. Colenso’s main criticism of the church in the later part of his life, so Goldsmith argues, was that it was not progressive enough and was stifling the natural progress of society.

Colenso’s transition to this new and broader theology was a far cry from the dissenting evangelical tradition that had formed him in his youth, though he remained Low-Church in his worship and

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251 Ibid, 142.
252 Ibid, 143.
253 Ibid.
embraced a spirit of dissent. One of the last significant papers that he published at the end of his life was, *Certain Errors of the Church of Rome*. At the outset it seems to echo the sentiments Colenso held in the Bay of Islands and even suggests that if his theology did change, it may not have changed much at all. When the Roman Catholic missionaries arrived in Hawke’s Bay Colenso refused to engage with them other than in debate.\(^{254}\)

The contents of *Certain Errors of the Church of Rome* are consistent with his theological redevelopment. The main basis for this criticism of the Roman Catholic Church, much like his views of the Presbyterian position on alcohol and Sabbath observance, is that he thought that they were too backward in their thinking, outlining their role in the slowing of progress. S.R. Goldstone argued that Colenso’s, “dislike for the Church of Rome approached the point of obsession.”\(^{255}\) As a born-again scientist, Colenso was outraged at the hostility the Roman Catholic Church had to the questioning of science. While Colenso’s theology may have changed significantly, his regard for the Church of Rome did not.

After his publication regarding the flaws he saw in the Catholic Church, he wrote a letter to the editor of the *Hawke’s Bay Herald*, in response to an article detailing a sermon given by the Roman Catholic Archbishop, at St. Patrick’s Church in South Dunedin. Archbishop Redwood proclaimed in his sermon, “We live in an age of adulteration. If ever there was a century remarkable for its adulteration it is this nineteenth century with all its boastings.”\(^{256}\) Colenso expressed in his response, that perhaps this interest in adulteration might lead the Archbishop back to the, “greatest adulteration, namely, the Church of Rome.”\(^{257}\) His argument includes the accusation that their tradition departed from the teachings of the early church, and in quoting from (Mark: 7), in


\(^{256}\) Colenso to the editor H.B.H, *This to Thy Right Eye Philip. Hawke’s Bay Herald*. Volume XXXIII, Issue 11034. 1 October, 1898. [https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/HBH18981001.2.40.1](https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/HBH18981001.2.40.1)

\(^{257}\) Ibid.
which the gospeller warns of Isaiah’s prophesy of the hypocrites who, “make void the word of God by [their] own tradition.” What offends Colenso is not so much the content of their theology, but their proclamation of it. This stance is peculiar, because though he never had time for their views, he at least, as a former evangelist, might have had empathy for their mission.

As Colenso’s theology broadened, he seemed to become less tolerant of some traditions as he grew older. However, the denominational groups he grew most weary of were those at the extreme literalist end, who upheld the old understandings without question or scholarship. It was the Roman Catholics, Seventh Day Adventists, and teetotalling/Sabbatarian Presbyterians with whom he took issue. It was the pushing of their agendas that appalled Colenso the most, and why he was so short with them in his old cantankerous way, particularly in his arguments against them in his letters to the editor.

The Seventh Day Adventists received an equal amount of criticism as Roman Catholics did from Colenso, who described them as, “wretched men... the lowest and worst sect of falsely-called ‘Christians’ known to me.” While Colenso was in total disagreement with the teaching of such groups, his hostility to them in the application of their teaching, was out of concern for those who would receive and be persuaded by their doctrine. Colenso describes them as, “wretched spawn,” who were numerous and persistent in their teachings in Hawke’s Bay after their arrival in 1888. He was concerned for the locals who, in his opinion were so easily, “galled and cheated in matters of religion,” Such false teachers, “lead astray the simple, the quiet, and the unwary.”

258 Ibid.
261 This to Thy Right Eye Philip. Hawke’s Bay Herald. 1 October, 1898.
262 Ibid.
263 Seventh Day Adventists. Hawke’s Bay Herald. 7 April, 1892.
Colenso’s shift in focus from religion to science did not entail a move away from God. As Colenso said, “He who sees from the end to the beginning... has borne with me and all my many failings... he will never forsake me.” Scientific and botanical engagement for Colenso was the way in which he found God through the wonders of nature, seeing Him in a new and more glorious light. Colenso’s engagement in the Philosophical Institute, was the way by which he could prove his intellectual worth to the church, came to have two practical outcomes. The Philosophical Institute was the path by which Colenso came to find and experience God through a new way of understanding, and served as a road back into the church by the membership and friendship of the second Bishop of Waiapu, Edward Craig Stuart.

In a paper that he read before the Philosophical Institute in 1878, Colenso gave his account of his crossing of the Ruahine ranges. Like many of his academic papers, particularly his botanical ones, just about every paragraph is followed by a verse of quoted poetry. When Colenso made his long and arduous journeys on foot through the North Island, most of the luggage he took with him included multiple volumes of poetry. His bush diaries include verses of whatever poet he was reading on the day, and which situations brought certain poems to mind. Later in life Colenso put aside the bitterness and pessimism he held for the church and reengaged with the optimism and beauty of the world and of the eminence of God in nature in the poetry that he loved throughout his life. As he grew to be inspired by nature and science and how they intertwined with his personal faith that also grew in mystery and wonder. In this Paper to the Institute, Colenso quotes from Longfellow,

"Ye who love the haunts of nature
love the shadow of the forest
love the wind among the branches
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Ye whose hearts are fresh and simple,
who have faith in God and nature;
who believe, that in all ages
every human heart is human,

that even in savage bosoms
there are longings, yearnings, strivings
for the good they comprehend not,
that the foolish hands and helpless,
groping blindly in the darkness,
touch God's right hand in that darkness,
and are lifted up and strengthened;
listen to this simple story.265

When these papers were reprinted in 1884 Bishop Stuart ordered
two copies.266 In particular this line should be noted from this poem
that he uses, "[ye] who have faith in God and nature."267

Colenso was influenced by the romanticism of the poetry he
read, Longfellow being his favourite poet. This embrace of
romanticism had an impact on the aesthetics of his theology; yet his
scientific and educational activities also had a substantial impact
on his theological development and understanding. While preparing
scientific papers for the Philosophical Institute, for a time, as
has been noted, he served as Schools’ Inspector. As a man with a
great thirst for knowledge, he was passionate about the education of
others, both in schooling and the church. He was of the mind, that
teachers and office bearers of the church should be literate in
natural science, "I have generally indicated that (in my opinion)
our clergy, and our principal teachers should be much more active in
natural history and scientific matters. But then to do so
efficiently they must themselves have a love for such things".268

265 In Memorium: An Account of Visits to, And Crossing Over The
Ruahine Mountain Range, Hawke’s Bay, NZ. And of The Natural History
of That Region; Performed on 1845- 1847, Cum Muitis Aliie. In Two
Papers Read Before The Philosophical Institute, 1878: With
Additional and Copious Notes. W. Colenso F.R.S. ect. Member and Hon
Secretary of The Society. Published in 1884, The Daily Telegraph.
266 The Philosophical Institute, Publication Orders. MTG Trust.
267 In Memorium.
268 Hawke’s Bay Philosophical Institute, Anniversary Address by the
president, William Colenso, F.R.S. F.L.S. ect. Delivered to Members
of the Society at the Opening Meeting of the Session 1888-89.
(Napier: R.C. Harding Hastings Street, 1888), 2. F
Colenso spent his first Christmas day in New Zealand with Charles Darwin in 1835, and was impressed by the young naturalist. It had been seven years since Colenso had been dismissed when Darwin’s theory of evolution was published. It seems, overall, that Colenso did shift from being a nonconformist evangelical, who just happened to be employed by the missionary branch of the Church of England, to accepting a Broad-Church position on most principles of the Anglican Church by the time of his re-admission.

Colenso was a man who derived great pleasure from argument and debate and this aspect of his character never seemed to change. What did alter were the positions he argued. It was not enough for Colenso to be liberated by the new understanding he had of the world around him and the world beyond him, he had to argue tooth and nail with others that they too might be liberated as he had been.

Colenso on the Bible in Schools:

In 1877 the Education Act was passed, handing over the responsibility of the provision of education to the new central Government and recently established Hawke’s Bay Education Board. Colenso had served as Inspector of Schools under the old model for the Provincial Council which had been abolished in 1876. While the passing of the Hawke’s Bay Education Act 1873 had given schooling in the region a firmer structure, it was the Education Act 1877 that provided compulsory and secular education to children up until standard six. The 1877 General Synod requested that parliament modify the proposed secular system they were about to implement. Waiapu Synod, in 1879 agreed to petition the government to make provision for religious education in state schools. Furthermore, at the next General Synod, in 1880, the Diocese of Waiapu implored

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the support of the whole Church Province of New Zealand. The Dioceses of Auckland and Dunedin had passed similar resolutions at their Synods. In 1899, a motion to the Waiapu Synod was passed, that expressed their desire for the Education Act to be amended so that the Bible would be read every morning in state schools and the Lord’s Prayer recited by all students.273

In 1880 a proposal was petitioned by a protestant lobby group, for the daily reading of the Bible in schools without note or comment. The following Sunday, the Vicars of St. John’s Napier, St. Thomas’ Meeanee and All Saint’s Taradale (Waiapu diocese) all preached in support of this proposal.274 A copy of the petition for the reading of the Bible in schools, along with a letter of support for the petition was published in the Hawke’s Bay Herald on the 7th of June, 1880. Colenso, disturbed by this, wrote to the editor with regard to these two items saying, “I regret to see them both”.275

If the petition was to be brought to a public meeting, Colenso stated that he would have attended to speak had he been permitted,

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275 Ibid.
277 Colenso to the editor of the Hawke’s Bay Herald. The Bible in Schools. 7 June 1880.
Colenso had a lot to say on the matter, as was shown in his extensive letter. The first issue he raised, seems to be an ecumenical one. As it was the (shorter) Protestant Bible that was to be read daily in schools, what provision was to be made for the Roman Catholic and Jewish students? What concerned Colenso about the reading of the Bible in state schools was that under the proposal he was criticising, the Protestant Bible was to be read without note or comment, “Anything more bald more wretched in the way of training the youth I can scarcely conceive (and, please bear in mind, that I write from long practice and experience in the matter)”. While Colenso advocated for the retention of the secular nature of the education system, established by the Education Act 1877, his concern for the reading of the Bible in schools, was that there were to be no questions asked by students, nor any commentary to contextualise the scripture being read.

Colenso argued that the approach given in the proposal was inconsistent with the educational structure in which it would exist. This inconsistency was that the Bible would be read in the same day that subjects such as science, history, and geography would be taught using modern language and ideas that would be accompanied with many questions and comments from teachers who were competent in these fields. These were subjects he himself had introduced to the curriculum as Schools Inspector. Not only did he establish such modern subjects, but he is credited as having, “introduced ideas well in advance of his time.” The Bible on the other hand would be read in an old language and without the same engagement as these subjects. He went on to question the motive for the presentation of the scriptures without any additional scholarship or explanation. Colenso gave four possible reasons as to why those proposing the reading of the Bible in schools did not want it to be read with any question or comment:

278 Ibid.
279 Ibid.
280 Hill. E, Between Rivers, 57.
[1]. Perhaps too many awkward questions might arise? If such question were addressed with the “traditional answers”, these answers would be in direct contradiction with the “truths” taught in other subjects of the school’s curriculum. Subsequently even the students would see these contradictions.

[2]. “Because of the incompetence of the teacher to answer them competently?”. 282

[3]. The sectarianism of the teacher might prevent them from answering the questions thoroughly?

[4]. “Because the bible is the word of God-?”. 283

Colenso suggested that his critics (supporters of the proposal) would be most comfortable with his last question, that the reading of the Bible required no supplementary commentary or material as it is in itself the word of God. He then challenged this in two ways, firstly by asking why the Bible should be so hurried in its reading. Secondly, he argued that surely the way to honour and give true reverence to scripture should be by giving it sufficient scholarship and understanding, not merely accepting it as is, where is.

In this letter, Colenso was condemning the narrow view that some theologically literalistic Christians held on scripture and its interpretation, a theological framework and understanding he himself once held. Colenso also warned of the dangers of teaching such backward dogma to children and that if the Bible was to be taught (not that he supported this in the secular education system), there would need to be some dissemination of theology. This letter extensively and clearly shows the academic and hermeneutical approach that Colenso attached to his evolving theological understanding, along with his scientific knowledge.

While the Diocese of Waiapu and the wider Church Province of New Zealand had endorsed the reinstatement of religious instruction

282 Colenso to the Editor, The Bible in Schools.
283 Ibid.
in schools and clergy within the Hawke’s Bay Archdeaconry endorsed the proposal, *The Bible in Schools*, such thoughts were not only opposed by Colenso, but by a number of the parishioners of St John’s Napier (the church Colenso attended). At the request of these dissenting voices, the editor of the *Hawke’s Bay Herald* published: “Mr. Hovell [Vicar of St. John’s] adduced statements to prove that neither Jews nor Roman Catholics objected to the Bible being introduced into the public schools, and urged that only atheists and heathen really opposed it. We are requested to state that a number of members of Mr. Hovell’s church intend to take steps to show that they totally dissent from his views, and that ‘atheists’ and ‘heathen’ are not the only objectors to State religious teaching.”

**Bishop John Colenso:**

William Colenso’s cousin, John Colenso, who was the Bishop of Natal, argued A.L. Rowse, was equally as controversial as he was. While John was of a higher class and educated at Cambridge, he and William had much in common. They were both strong supporters of the indigenous populations they ministered to, and both were abhorred by their respective Primates. In 1862, Bishop Colenso released the first part of his book *The Pentateuch and the Book of Joshua Critically Examined*. In this book Bishop Colenso put forth the idea that, “the historical existence of Moses [was] doubtful and that Joshua [was] certainly a mythical character.” All seven parts of Bishop Colenso’s book were published by 1879. John Rogerson argued that while this level of scholarship was already present in Germany, this was the first English attempt at seriously questioning the way in which the Bible, in particular the Old Testament, was read. Bishop Colenso’s completed *Pentateuch* argued Rogerson, was one of the, “most original British contributions to biblical criticism in the nineteenth century.” Bishop Colenso’s thesis went on to identify the Old Testament as the literature of ancient Jewish

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284 Colenso to the editor of the HBH. *St John’s Napier*. 1868.
287 Ibid.
290 Ibid.
mythology, with its, "folk tales... contradictions and impossibilities, exaggerations and mistakes as to a number of dates, sequences or events, like any other ancient literature, Greek or Roman."  

However, there were English examples of biblical criticism well before Bishop Colenso, notably Milman. Henry Hart Milman published *History of the Jews* in 1829. This too questioned the contemporary understanding of the Old Testament. Milman received much criticism for his work, though not as much as Bishop Colenso, as his work was history rather than theology. The repercussions of Bishop Colenso’s work were so great that in 1864 he was deposed by the Metropolitan Bishop of Cape Town and two years later received a sentence of excommunication. The church’s response to Colenso’s successful appeal to the Privy Council regarding his deposition catalysed the first Lambeth Conference. Milman did not entirely agree with Bishop Colenso’s work, but felt he had been treated unfairly. The Bishop of Oxford, Samuel Wilberforce, led the episcopal campaign against Bishop Colenso. Selwyn also did not hold high regard for Bishop Colenso, accusing him in a sermon at Cambridge, as having, “by lawless criticism... disturbed the faith of thousands.”

The theological writings of Bishop Colenso had been controversial, though they did not remain so for long. What is evident in William Colenso’s argument about the reading of the Bible in Schools proposal, is that he had come to accept the ideas put forth by his cousin. Bishop Colenso received an enormous amount of

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294 Wand, *History of the Modern Church*, 224.
297 Wand, *History of the Modern Church*, 223.
criticism early on from some evangelicals, and his argument would not have sat well with William as a younger man. William Colenso embraced these new understandings that were more in line with his academic, scientific world view. He encouraged others to do so, and the thought of ignoring this progress and teaching the old understandings to children, by way of the compulsory reading of the scriptures without scholarly note, question or comment in schools, was simply unacceptable to him. As noted earlier, Colenso referenced Bishop Colenso in his work *On The Sabbath*, and his support of his cousin’s work, evidences the shift in his view of the Bible, as demonstrated in his argument on the reading of the Bible in state schools. As noted With Colenso’s Sabbath argument, his criticism of the Bible in Schools proposal in 1880, places him several years ahead of the acceptance of biblical criticism by the Anglican and other protestant churches.

**Colenso on the Theory of Evolution:**

In the last year of his life, one of the battles that Colenso fought in the press was his ardent defence of the theory of evolution. By 1898 this position was not out of place among the ranks of the clergy, nor had it been for the preceding decade. 298 The Church of England in the 19th century was the most comfortable with the theory of evolution. It was controversial at first, when Charles Darwin published *The Origin of Species* in 1859. In the 1860s Darwin’s work was still new and it was, “not yet agreed that he had established a universal principle”. 299 The most outspoken and high profile critic of Darwin’s work in the period following the release of his book was Bishop Samuel Wilberforce (who was the Bishop who led the episcopal campaign against Bishop John Colenso after the Privy Council’s decision). He reviewed the book in the *Quarterly*, “and believed he had demolished its argument, an argument which seemed to him atheistical in tendency and unsound in reason”. 300 He took on Huxley in that famous Oxford debate. When he asked Huxley which of his grandparents was the ape from which he descended, he was met with the response from Huxley that he would rather be

300 Ibid, 224.
descended from an ape than a Bishop. According to L. Guy the impact of Darwin’s theory on the Christian community was at first traumatic.\(^{301}\) However, Anglicans and mainline Protestants would soon receive evolution with ease. While the first Bishop of Wellington, Charles Abraham, rejected evolution, by the 1880s Anglicans would have little issue with it.\(^{302}\) Much like the emancipation of science from religion at the time of the Reformation, so too was the theory of evolution held as a scientific truth, “not objectionable... from the two creation stories in Genesis i. and ii., ...[retaining] their value... as symbolic rather than historical.”\(^{303}\)

It would appear that Colenso had no time or sympathy for the leanings of Christian literalists in his final years. Colenso entered into a debate with what would be a dissenting voice in the thinking Christian population, an anonymous letter to the editor writing under the alias “Tadpole”. While Colenso had it as a rule not to respond to anonymous letters, it was a rule he broke often; “Tadpole” wrote to the editor of the Hawke’s Bay Herald stating, “Sir, kindly grant me a line or two on this Evolution question. Haeckel, John Stuart Mill, Huxley, Tyndall, Darwin, and Spencer, leading Evolutionists, were (and are) infidels.”\(^{304}\) Colenso, expressing his enlightened passion for science, defended the evolutionary standpoint and suggested that the alias the writer of the original letter had chosen, “Tadpole”, was appropriate, “Because a tadpole just emerged from the spawn of a frog and living in its proper home, the mud marsh or stream, cannot possibly have any elevated ideas, or know much of the world beyond its ken.”\(^{305}\) He went on in his argument to refer to his opponent as, “this dweller in mud...”\(^{306}\) and other such ways demonstrating the resurgence of the tactless, cantankerous personality that had defined him as a younger man.

\(^{301}\) Guy, Shaping Godzone. 19.
\(^{304}\) Colenso to the Editor, H.B.H. Evolution and Huxley, No. 1. Hawke’s Bay Herald, 7 October, 1898.
\(^{305}\) Ibid.
\(^{306}\) Ibid.
Colenso, in a supplementary letter to the editor, continuing in his argument with “Tadpole”, referenced the time he spent with Darwin 63 years previously, and his respect for the man and support of his findings, “…and possessing his able published works, and holding and supporting the great truths set forth in them.”307 In a paper he published in the 1860s On the Maori Races of New Zealand, Colenso noted the natural selection he claimed to have observed in Māori. Māori women, he noted, would have 12 or 13 children, but only the few strongest would survive, giving a stronger race.308 This paper was referenced by Stenhouse as evidence of Colenso exploring what was put forth by Darwin in The Origin of Species. However, Stenhouse argues, “Colenso’s enthusiasm for natural selection must not mislead us. He remained ambivalent about evolution on religious grounds until the end of his life.”309 Yet Colenso’s support of Darwin’s theory, in his own writing, seems absolute, “…there is no sane person who now believes that the world was made in six solar days; or that the trees and the plants were created before there was any sunlight; or that all the fishes and birds were created previously to all quadrupeds and reptiles; or a multitude of other details which have been inferred from regarding the first chapter of Genesis as a scientific document instead of regarding it as a religious revelation.”310

These letters show the reformation of Colenso’s own theology as more “enlightened,” academic and even scientific. He claimed he had recognised what he thought to be natural selection among Māori in the 1860s,311 and through his reception of biblical criticism, that disestablished the scientific authority of the Old Testament, he was able to accept the concept of evolution as a man of religion and science. The intersection of Colenso’s two loves, religion and science, his old spirit of evangelism that was transferred to

307 Colenso to the editor H.B.H. Evolution and Huxley, No. 2. 8 October, 1898.
310 Colenso to the editor, Evolution and Huxley, No. 2.
311 Colenso, On The Maori Races of New Zealand. 7.
science, as was his hunger for fierce and public debate are expressed in these letters. Though ecumenically minded, in a Protestant way, he appeared to have an equal disdain for Seventh Day Adventists and Roman Catholics, who he felt were legalistic and anti-scientific. Fuelled by his newfound abhorrence for “archaic” theology, he was even more repulsed by what he considered to be narrow-minded literalists.

Colenso, as has been discussed, through his study and work in natural science came to understand God in a different way. It seems his new appreciation of science revised his foundational understanding of the scriptures and the theological conclusions such theological structures supported. The scientific truths that Colenso came to know through his work became incompatible with the old understandings he had. For Colenso, this meant that he either needed to abandon his religious convictions, or reform them substantially. He chose the latter. When he came to review his faith and theological understanding, Colenso approached the process with the same academic disposition that he had employed in natural science. This more scholarly approach, it could be argued, can be credited with Colenso’s shift in his opinion of the interpretation of scripture, and his alignment to a theological framework that the Anglican mainstream would later also occupy. Colenso’s personal reformation could also be attributed not only to the academic mindset he obtained while trying to prove his worth to the church in the Philosophical Institute; but by his humbling and humiliation at the sin and excommunication that placed him on the outside of the church.

With Colenso’s shift to a more academic approach to theology as early as the 1870s, surely the question must be asked, was Selwyn right? If Colenso had received an adequate theological education, he might have been a different man from the beginning of his ministry and that ministry may have been more fruitful and even qualified him to become a priest. But right as Bishop Selwyn may have been in the necessity for a rigorous theological education, no provision was ever made for this to be possible for Colenso or his contemporaries who shared this predicament. While Colenso’s arguments in this chapter are mainly late 19th century issues, he came to embrace the
controversial works of biblical criticism in the 1860s, which Selwyn himself (at the time) opposed as a mounting attack on orthodoxy. Colenso’s academic theological redevelopment did not turn him into a clone of the educated churchman like those who surrounded him in his early life in New Zealand, because the Williams’ remained evangelical and Selwyn a traditional High-Churchman.

Colenso’s theology and churchmanship held an unusual mix of various convictions and traditions, and in the reformation of his own faith there were many things that remained. He continued to be, on the whole, Low-Church, though with some adjustments, including his adoption of wearing vestments. He remained a passionate preacher and lived to argue, though with a different message. He developed a passion for science that he preached with the same enthusiasm. He became more aligned with the establishment of the church, but never lost his dissenting nature, and was quick to make comment where he saw fit. He kept the same passion, zeal and work ethic that he had as a missionary and explorer as he later did as a scientist and Anglican minister, despite the distances he had to travel and his advanced years. He retained the strong social justice convictions of the evangelical movement in England, and it was these convictions that saw his commitment to the welfare and rights of Māori as a continuing theme throughout his life in New Zealand. He became more diplomatic and a far more diligent ecclesiastical politician. However, in later life, it was his commitment to Māori that was the exception to his new-found tact. He would not side with the church if their actions or inaction were hindering the welfare of Māori. Colenso’s shift in theology, political position, legacy and memory are also tied up in his relationship with Māori, and will be explored in more detail in the next chapter. Despite all the change and growth of his own character, world view and evolving theology, Colenso’s faith remained, and as it did in the beginning, continued to motivate and drive him in all his endeavours, be they academic, civic or religious. It seems then, it was not his libido that inspired his pursuits, as Peter Wells suggests, nor was his faith a delusion of psychiatric disturbance.

Colenso’s scientific academic approach to theology meant that he embraced the cutting edge of biblical criticism long before the
Anglican Church came to terms with it. His application of biblical criticism is evident in his arguments on Sabbath observance, the Bible in Schools, and the theory of evolution. It would appear that on these issues (and from a position of biblical critique), as had been suggested, that Colenso was at least ten to fifteen years ahead of the rest of the Anglican church. He appears also to have been many decades ahead of the church with regard to Māori. Colenso’s theology did change substantially, and while it is true that the general views of the church matched Colenso’s, by the time he returned to Holy Orders in the 1890s, it would appear on these matters, that Colenso had arrived there first.

What also needs to be noted is the enduring evangelical nature of the Diocese of Waiapu in the 19th century. While the Anglican Church in a general sense had come to accept biblical critique, was more relaxed about alcohol, Sabbath observance, and less obsessed about religious education in state schools, Waiapu was not. It took at least another twenty years after the turn of the century for the diocese to enter into the mainstream. Therefore, not only was Colenso ahead of his time, Waiapu was behind.

In his final address to the Hawke’s Bay Philosophical Institute, he highlighted the importance of making use of the time and talents given to each person, and offered parting advice and words of wisdom to the next generation. But what is relevant and intriguing about this address, is his articulation of his dual vocation, religion and science, and how the two are bound in his identity, “I, as an aged minister of religion, and a fervent disciple of nature, and with increasing convictions of the truth (soon to be realised).” The inspiration of nature and the study of science, which led to the re-formation of his theology, came to inspire him to discover and know more fully, new truths of the world around him and of the God within and beyond him. His passion was such that the ignorant teachings of others, no matter how well intentioned, invoked Colenso’s dissenting and abrasive, argumentative attitude. Therefore, it seems his stances on various issues may not necessarily be anti-ecumenical, but anti-literalist.

312 Colenso. W, Farewell address to the Hawke’s Bay Philosophical Institute. 1898. MTG Trust.
Colenso’s intellectual liberation, and the retention and reformation of his faith are aptly noted in his opening quotation in his book On The Sabbath, “Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free- Jesus”\textsuperscript{313}

\textsuperscript{313} Colenso, On The Sabbath, i.
Chapter 6: Māori Affairs

Colenso’s relationship with Māori formed a significant part of his life and character. His views on the affairs of Māori did not always line up with that of the colonial government or the church. The way in which Māori received, fought with and respected Colenso is significant. This chapter will explore Colenso’s engagement with various Māori issues and how such views set him apart from the church and government, as well as giving a significant marker to the way his theology shifted.

Colenso’s engagement with Māori, other than the overarching ministry that he offered to them as a missionary and printer, can be divided into four issues:

> The Treaty (as has been discussed in chapter 2)
> Land sales
> The Land Wars
> His views on culture and the actions of Māori activist/ spiritual leaders. (i.e.) How he came to challenge the settler reaction against Kereopa and Te Kooti and his encouragement of others to understand the context in which Volkner’s death and the Matawhero Massacre took place.

Heather Levey argued that Colenso thought that, “Māoris were like little children”, and that Bagnall and Peterson’s 1948 biography inadequately explained Colenso’s relationship with Māori. She claims that they did not go into sufficient depth and that, “...any interpretation they gave reflected their negative view of traditional Māori society... like Colenso, they did not question their own cultural values”. Yet Colenso’s thoughts and actions, with

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315 Ibid.
regard to land rights, cultural preservation, and even respect for the Māori language, tell a different story. Even Levey admits that his attitudes to land sales were out of the ordinary.

While opinion is divided on the motivation for his dissent at the signing of the treaty, Colenso’s protest at Waitangi receives significant note in contemporary scholarship. What receives less attention is his views on land sales and the wars that arose from such issues. A substantial part of Colenso’s mission in Hawke’s Bay and Wairarapa was not so much the cure of souls, as the retention of land, despite Government pressure. Colenso was unwavering in his approach with the rules he set Māori for how they were to treat the ownership and sale of their land, in an almost anti-colonial/colonial way. His advice was:

“[1] Not to sell their lands in the Wairarapa.
[2] Not to lease their land beyond 21 years.
[3] Not to lease the whole of their good grazing land, but to retain some, and use it, and get into the way of grazing cattle, growing wheat, and breading sheep etc…
[4] Not to lease it in very large blocks—such as 10 miles of good pasture land to one person.”

These instructions were strict, as was his expectation of the piety of his followers in the 1840s. He was, after all, a hard-line uncompromising evangelical during his missionary days and some of his followers railed against him because of this. It is not surprising that many felt disenfranchised when they learnt of his adultery, as he had preached so fiercely against it. With land, Colenso stood his ground, both in convincing Māori to hold on to it and in resisting the government. When Donald McLean arrived in Hawke’s Bay to begin land purchases, he was met with resistance from Māori and was perplexed as to why Māori were hesitant.

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316 Ibid, Appendix, Journeys 1843-46 p 1/7 18 September 1846, 96.
The New Zealand Company wanted to establish a sizable Anglican settlement in Hawke’s Bay. The Wakefields managed to gain the support of the colonial secretary, Alfred Domett. Domett informed Colenso that the Government would make an annual payment of £25 to each prominent chief in the district if the deal went ahead, and encouraged Colenso to use his influence to persuade Māori. Colenso was appalled by this and responded to Domett stating, “... and I regret, deeply regret, to have to say, that I cannot conscientiously aid or assist or in any way use an influence which I may possess over the native chiefs to prevail upon them to alienate the whole of their lands to the Crown, or to accept any ‘reserves’ for themselves”. Later on Colenso would buy and sell land, though as Elizabeth Hill argues, “he did not profit for himself in land, but bought or leased from the Government only what he needed, and then not until sales became legal”.

According to Jon Williams, “When [Colenso] was in parliament [he] was onside with the repudiators... there were a group of people who found it politically advantageous to side with some of the Māori protests about settlers’ behaviour in acquiring land. [They] wanted to say that some of the deals that had been done they would not accept as valid.”

In the 1873 Hawke’s Bay Native Lands Alienation Commission, 301 complaints were bought by Māori. Colenso was the only person to have been a member of the Hawke’s Bay Provincial Council not to have a formal complaint brought against him. However, this does not necessarily mean, as Hill suggests, that he did not profit from land. In 1870 the Taradale Block was sold to Colenso. He paid £4 an

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319 Ibid.
Two years later Colenso sold the block for £11 an acre. Although it was the laying of a road to Napier that increased the land value, Colenso walked away with a profit of £1890. While the land value had increased by the introduction of a road, the Provincial Council’s use of a toll bar on it, and an extensive fence around the toll to stop commuters riding around it was highly unpopular. At a public meeting in 1871, Colenso stated that the use of toll bars for new roads was not a policy when he was a Provincial Councillor. He suggested to his supporters, that they, "should blacken their faces and go out to Awatoto some night, tie up the Toll-man, root up the whole thing, gate, fence and all and throw it into the sea."

Peter Wells’ book, The Hungry Heart, was largely unhelpful in understanding Colenso’s Anglican politics and theological formation. However, Wells’ publication three years later, Journey to a Hanging: The Events That Set New Zealand Race Relations Back by a Century, has been valuable in interpreting Colenso’s position on the Land Wars. This position is framed by Wells in his telling of the story of Colenso’s defence of Kereopa Te Rau, who was convicted of the murder of the Rev. Carl Volkner at Opotiki.

It was the Hauhau murder of Volkner that had prompted William Williams to relocate to Napier, after Kereopa Te Rau had arrived at his mission station holding Volkner’s eye-less head (according to Wells), which was followed by the battle of Waerenga-a-hika. Volkner was suspected to be a government spy by local and Hauhau Māori. Upon his return from a northern visit, he was lynched outside his church and decapitated. His eyes were removed and eaten. His blood was drained and consumed by those present. Much like the later Massacre at Matawhero there was public outcry and fear from the settler population. Retribution was to be had in the execution of four Māori, who included Mokomoko and Kereopa Te Rau.

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326 Ibid.
Colenso opposed Kereopa’s execution in his usual dissenting way, an opinion that stood out from the Anglican Church which was silent on the issue. The Anglican Church has since revised its understanding of Volkner’s death, including acknowledging that Mokomoko had no involvement.\(^{327}\) In 1871 Colenso released his publication *Fiat Justitia*, (let justice be done) arguing the case against Kereopa’s execution. Colenso, along with Mary Joseph Aubert and William Williams, though separately, visited, counselled and defended Kereopa. As well as trying to save his life, they also sought to save his soul. Aubert and Colenso felt Kereopa’s conviction was unfair, whereas William Williams argued that he was guilty. Williams, while trying to convert Kereopa, also encouraged him to admit responsibility. None of the attempts on Williams, Colenso or Aubert’s part was successful, and Kereopa maintained his Hauhau faith until the end.\(^{328}\)

Colenso was initially outraged at Volkner’s murder, but he came to change his mind about the context in which it happened, and who was held responsible. He felt it was unjust that the crime of so many was pinned onto one scapegoat and that other perpetrators were given immunity by the presiding magistrate in exchange for the evidence they gave at the trial. However, the main reason that Colenso sought to defend him was that Pakeha wanted vengeance and he felt that Māori had been through enough. If this execution went ahead it would only be more fuel on the fire, and perpetuate the Land Wars. Alas, the execution went ahead on the 5th of January 1872 and the Land Wars continued. Kereopa was pardoned in 2014 for his role in Volkner’s death as part of Ngāti Rangiwewehi’s settlement at the Waitangi Tribunal.\(^{329}\)

Another notable Māori figure that Colenso defended publicly, as well as seeking private organisation to protect, was Te Kooti. At


the battle of Waerenga-a-hika, Te Kooti had been arrested and was imprisoned without trial. Most of those who were arrested were the Hauhau who had occupied the Waerenga-a-hika pa on the 22nd of November 1865.\footnote{Crosby. R, \textit{Gilbert Mair: Te Kooti's Nemesis}. (Auckland: Reeds, 2004), 64.} Te Kooti on the other hand was an ordination candidate studying at the mission’s training school, and fighting on the side of the government, yet he was implicated also. Te Kooti and Hauhau prisoners served their sentence on the Chatham Islands. Following his imprisonment, and with the fear and suspicion that was associated with the Hauhau movement as a consequence of Volkner’s death, came the battle of Omarunui near Taradale.\footnote{Pollock. K, \textit{Hawke's Bay region - European settlement}, (Te Ara - the Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, updated 16-Nov-2012), \url{http://www.TeAra.govt.nz/en/artwork/23897/omarunui-1866}} The Hauhau occupation of Omarunui terrified settlers, to the point that they were evacuated to Meeanee.\footnote{Gordon. J. & Spence. S, \textit{Taradale: the Story of a Village 1844-2000}. (Napier: Brebner Print Ltd., 2000), 12.} In 1866 Colonel George Whitmore marched 200 men from Napier to the Hauhau settlement on the banks of the Tutaekuri at midnight on the 11th of October 1866.\footnote{Belich. J, \textit{The New Zealand Wars: And the Victorian Interpretation of Racial Conflict}. (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1986), 210.} The following morning the troops advanced as the Pai-Marire prayer service began, during which the soldiers surrounded the settlement on two sides\footnote{Sketch of Ōmarunui pā, Tāmaki Pātaka Kōrero, Sir George Grey Special Collections, NZ Map 3744, Auckland Public Library.} and shot until any resistance ceased.\footnote{Cowan. J, \textit{The New Zealand Wars: A History Of The Māori Campaigns And The Pioneering Period: Volume II: The Hauhau Wars}, (1864–72). (Wellington: R.E. Owen, 1956), 140.} Of those Māori who survived, 58 wounded were taken prisoner and also deported to the Chathams.\footnote{Binney, J. \textit{Redemption Songs: A Life of Te Kooti Arikirangi Te Turuki}. (Auckland: Auckland University Press & Bridgett Williams Books, 1995), 56.}

While resident on the Chathams, Te Kooti had a vision of the Archangel Gabriel, and formed the Ringatu Faith.\footnote{Ibid.} Those Hauhau imprisoned with Te Kooti became followers of him and his new religion.\footnote{McLintock. A.H, ed. \textit{Ringatu}, An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand. Vol. 2. (Wellington: R.E. Owen, Government Printer, 1966), 458-9.} When they managed to escape they took control of the schooner Rifleman, and were able to make their way back to Poverty Bay, thereafter committing the Matawhero massacre, where 60 were...
killed. Colenso was appalled, as all settlers were, at the massacre at Matawhero, but like Volkner’s murder he encouraged others to understand that this was a result of injustice and the continuation of a war that should be stopped.

In his support of Te Kooti, Colenso called upon the Government to cease its military campaign against him in The Ureweras. Colenso published his hopes for an end to the wars in the Hawke’s Bay Herald, “... to this end let us all (Governor, Government and people) be determined to do two things: 1.- To do justice; 2- To acknowledge error.” In 1869 he defended Te Kooti, just as he did Kereopa, not condoning their actions, but acknowledging the circumstances and additional factors within the context in which they did their wrong. As Wells argues, with regard to Colenso’s defence of Kereopa, “Colenso was arguing for a sense of context, but also on the grounds of Christian charity”. His judgement of them is far more gracious than the mainstream of the Government or the church in this regard. Perhaps after being subject to so harsh a judgement, without all factors being considered, he had fellow feeling for Te Kooti. Just as he argued to save Kereopa, Colenso also did not see how the retribution the government sought for Te Kooti’s crimes would help end the wars. If Te Kooti was to be judged without compromise, what of the injustice that he and his followers had endured at the hands of the government? Who was to provide their justice and retribution? With his two-fold summons, ‘to do justice [and] to acknowledge error’, Colenso proposed what should be done:

https://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/newspapers/HBH18830228.2.15  
342 Wells, A Journey to a Hanging, 209.
In order to this:—

I. Let the war be immediately and everywhere stopped.

II. Let a truce be proclaimed.

III. Let an accredited messenger be sent from the Governor to the Maori King Tawhiao (not as King, but as the acknowledged head of many great tribes), to ask his aid towards making peace; and from him to the various Hauhau leaders; and a similar messenger to the Chiefs of the principal friendly Maori tribes. The basis of such peace to be:—1. A general amnesty. 2. The return of all (nominally) confiscated lands, subject to certain conditions; such as, on the one side, all useful surveys and substantial improvements to be repaid; on the other, certain spots which it is necessary should be ceded to be paid for. 3. Common freedom to all religions however (to us) absurd.

IV. Let Peace Commissioners be appointed from both sides, and a place be mutually arranged for their meeting.

V. Let powers be given to them to settle equitably our difficulties, and all great vexed questions.

Colenso also sought the aid of Donald McLean to try to organise a way for Te Kooti to escape to the Waikato.344

Colenso, Judgement, Sin and Māori:

Colenso, it could be argued, always held some concern for the welfare of Māori, which was evident from his remarks at the signing of the Treaty, and his defence of Kereopa and Te Kooti. Yet in the early days of his mission in Hawke’s Bay, he was very strict about

343 Colenso to the Editor H.B.H., A Word About Te Kooti.
344 Wells, A Journey to a Hanging, 173.
the behaviour he expected from his followers. His standards of sexual purity have already been discussed, but other standards included their conduct in church, and how often they attended. Concern arose from those Māori who worked with him at the mission, that his behavioural and spiritual expectations of Māori where too high, and that he was demanding too much of them too soon. His failure to live up to these high expectations would seriously damage his reputation and credibility among Māori, and Colenso’s harsh judgment of them was reciprocated to him by some chiefs.

For Colenso to be not just defending, but calling for a greater consideration of circumstances, with regard to Kereopa and Te Kooti, shows two things. First, that Colenso, after being so harshly judged himself because of his infidelity, dismissal and years exiled from the church had a greater empathy from being on the receiving end of such judgement. Secondly, this is another significant marker in measuring the shift in his theology. He no longer held the strict judgments of a less accommodating, more conservative religious thinker.

The judgement that Colenso received, from Selwyn and the wider church, at the time and in the century and a half that has followed, was rigid. But there was more to his sin than simply falling grievously or other simplistic explanations given by Morrell and Wells. Like the sins of Kereopa and Te Kooti, perhaps Colenso’s sin should be framed in the context in which it happened.

>He had no choice in his marriage partner.

It was a rule of the CMS to fund passage for unmarried missionaries to return home to marry after seven years of service. This sabbatical leave was refused to Colenso. Colenso was advised by Selwyn that there were plenty of eligible missionary daughters, but when he sought to marry one of Henry William’s daughters, he was refused. Colenso was then required to marry Elizabeth Fairburn, as a condition of his ordination.345

>His relationship with Elizabeth had broken down.

After their last child was born, William and Elizabeth Colenso's physical relationship ceased. Still married, they were separated as a couple although they continued to work together professionally. There were several years from the time of this physical separation before Colenso and Ripeka began their secret relationship.

>The age of Ripeka

By some historical accounts, and in corporate memory, Ripeka is described as a “girl”. However, she was an adult and had a husband.\(^{346}\) While considered an inappropriate relationship, there does not seem to be any evidence to suggest that their sexual relationship was not consensual. W.P. Morrell’s *The Anglican Church in New Zealand: A History*, W.H. Oliver’s *The Story of New Zealand*, and Colenso’s passage in *The 1966 Encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, all describe Ripeka as a “girl”. For the period in which these secondary sources were written, the use of the term “girl” to describe an indigenous woman, while condescending, would have been more acceptable (in the mid-20\(^{th}\) century) than in the present day. This past linguistic habit present in older secondary material has caused some confusion. Ripeka was also described as a “girl” in David MacKay’s entry in the 1990 *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*.

In the context therefore, Colenso’s sin might be understood differently, in the present, if not in Victorian times. In the same way that Colenso suggested the actions of Kereopa and Te Kooti be approached with contextual understanding and the grace of Christian charity perhaps he too might be seen in a different light. Colenso’s shift in the graciousness of his approach to sin and understanding, it could be argued, may have been catalysed by his own experience of being judged. While Colenso’s scientific and academic pursuits aided a more scholarly approach to his theology, it seems the harsh judgment he received, that did not take into account the context of his sin, came to be the cause of his development of a more empathetic and gracious theological approach to the sin of others.

\(^{346}\) Letter of William Colenso to Selwyn. 7 September, 1852.
that did not exist in his early days. This empathy and grace, which he added to his already strong position of the welfare of Māori, informed and aided his causes for them in later years, which may have helped repair his reputation with them.

In Colenso’s mission to Māori in the 1840s, he came to impart his own zealous faith. What did annoy Māori about Colenso was that he was only a deacon, and as he was not a priest he could not offer them Holy Communion. Because of this some referred to him as a “Half Priest”.347 Those to whom he ministered to in the Wairarapa held such a high regard for the Lord’s Supper, that they would walk over the ranges to Foxton to receive Communion from Archdeacon Hadfield.348

When Colenso died, the large number of local Māori at his funeral signified the respect they held for him. Before his death Colenso was given the account of an old chief who while on his death bed, told those who had gathered around him how the missionary Colenso had brought, “the new riches of faith” to him.349 Riches that this chief insisted that the next generation hold on to. He told them of Colenso’s coming:

“Yes we heard of that white man; we heard of his going over to Patea; we heard of his going up the East Coast; all over to the Turakirae. I disbelieved his coming but ... we waited, expecting. He came; he emerged from the long forest. I sat in his cloth house, I tasted his new food, heard him talk Maori. My heart bounded within me; I listened; I ate his words. I listened and he told me about God and his Son, Jesus Christ, and of peace and reconciliation and of a loving father’s home beyond the stars. I, too, drank from his calabash. I was refreshed with his water; and he gave me a book as well as words. And I laid hold of the new riches for me, and for you, and we have it now. Hold fast to the new riches...”350

350 Ibid.
Colenso’s commitment to Māori is a value that never changed. From his protest at the signing of the treaty of Waitangi, to land sales in Hawke’s Bay and Wairarapa, and the defence of Kereopa and Te Kooti, Māori and their welfare remained a priority for Colenso. However, his attitude toward them and their culture did change over time. As a missionary he sought to cure their souls, and in doing what he could to stop the land wars, he also sought to save their lives. Colenso was a harsh judge of heathen and sinful behaviour early on, but as he himself was humbled, he came to have a more gracious attitude to sin and the context in which it occurs. This was seen in his defence of men whose actions had not been committed alone or in isolation, but were the product of greater and ongoing injustices to Māori. The actions of many were being pinned on these two men, and Colenso could see how their persecution would not solve any of the problems the country faced. His graciousness towards Māori shows an aspect of his changing theology that was not academic, scientific or reasoned, but welled from the personal experience of receiving unfair and harsh judgement.
Chapter 7:

Corporate Memory in the Diocese of Waiapu

The interest in William Colenso as an historical figure has grown over the past 5 years, but perhaps the people best qualified to articulate Colenso’s legacy in the eyes of the church, are those from within the Diocese of Waiapu. The written histories of the diocese have already been covered, and within the last 60 years the acknowledgement of Colenso and the complexities of his story have grown. This chapter will present primarily an examination of oral history, as Colenso’s memory is understood by past and present office bearers in the Diocese of Waiapu.

Within the diocese Colenso occupies a place of importance, though mainly focused on his early work. In 2008, when the 15th Bishop of Waiapu, David Cappel-Rice, was consecrated and enthroned, he was presented with a stone from the Makaroro River by the Diocesan staff. As they presented the stone to him they said, “This stone comes from high on the Ruahine Ranges, from the path pioneered by William Colenso as he walked from Hawke’s Bay to inland Patea to spread the Gospel message. May this stone remind you of the courage and persistence of those who have gone before us to build up the church.” At the back of the order of service a more detailed account of Colenso’s journeys from 1847 to 1852 is given. As in the wider church province, Colenso is remembered for his substantial work as a printer, and later missionary, but his story stops in 1852 (the year of his dismissal).

351 Diocese of Waiapu, Service of Consecration and Enthronement of David Cappel-Rice as the Fifteenth Bishop of Waiapu, Held on Saturday & June 2008 11am at Waiapu Cathedral of St John the Evangelist Napier, 18. W. Walker’s papers, Greenmeadows.
352 Ibid, 27.
In 2006, the diocese embarked on a year of pilgrimage. This comprised twelve walking pilgrimages to engage with Waiapu’s past. The publication that documented these journeys, released in the following year was *Waiapu Pilgrimages: Stories that haunt and bind us*. The first was to Rangitukia where a forgotten Waiapu saint was rediscovered, Piri Taumata-a-kura, a Māori evangelist who had brought the gospel to East Cape and as far as Gisborne before William Williams’s arrival. The last pilgrimage at Woodville also commemorated a forgotten saint, but a saint forgotten more deliberately. He was, “...erased from Waiapu’s memory and dismissed as a missionary for unacceptable behaviour”,354 according to this account. The last task of the pilgrimage was to dedicate a memorial plaque in the grounds of Holy Trinity Anglican Church Woodville.

The act of dedicating a plaque to Colenso was the second attempt in 50 years for the Diocese of Waiapu to engage in a form of public recognition of Colenso. In the 1950s the then Bishop of Waiapu, Norman Lesser, dedicated a memorial plaque at Colenso’s mission station at Waitangi (Awatoto). This memorial was a civic memorial, but blessed by Bishop Lesser. As his daughter, Elizabeth Paterson recalls from the occasion, “I remember it was not a terribly pleasant day, and I can remember my father saying, what a very cold and miserable and windswept place it would be to live and build a house and try to bring up a family...”.355

355 Interview with Elizabeth Paterson, June 17, 2016.
This publication, *Waiapu Pilgrimages: Stories that Haunt and Bind Us*, given the material found in the research of this thesis, has some factual errors. Like the 2009 diocesan history it states that Colenso was reinstated by Leonard Williams in 1892, three years before Williams became Bishop. The diocesan history also states that he was given permission to officiate in 1889 and was given a seat at Synod in 1890. These publications describe his conservative uncompromising, theological views, but do not explore his later theological development, and state that he was a man, “... unlovable in his time”. Yet these errors are helpful in understanding the misunderstood legacy of Colenso, and how Waiapu has begun to address this past story of theirs. If ecclesiastical biographers did remember Colenso, it was only for the flaws in his character and the controversies that surrounded him. Anglicans trying to make sense of Colenso, and only being presented with negativity, have found it easier to vilify or ignor the difficult parts of the narrative. Those

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356 Colenso Memorial marking the sight of his mission station, Awatoto, Napier. Dedicated by the Bishop of Waiapu N.A. Lesser.
of the old guard of the diocese, who have sat with this story for some decades, offer a more honest approach.

When the Woodville pilgrimage took place on the 19th of November 2006, the Anglican parish, with the help of an historian and the printing skills of a funeral director, produced an order of service for the dedication of the Colenso memorial that included a brief biography. The five page biography is generous, though not without its errors, including the information that not only was Colenso received back into the church, but was ordained as a priest "in the Anglican Communion", which is the only document I have found that suggests he was ordained to the priesthood. However, there is no evidence to suggest that Colenso ever became a priest.

The memorial that was dedicated read:

WILLIAM COLENSO
F.R.S.
MISSIONARY EXPLORER BOTANIST
FIRST VICAR OF WOODVILLE
1894
GRATEFULLY REMEMBERED
WAIAPU DIOCESAN PILGRIMAGE
2006

As John Bluck recalls from the 12th and final pilgrimage at Woodville, "I remember... the Woodville people didn’t know much about it, it wasn’t as if this was their story that they had been treasuring, and wanting to share; it wasn’t like that at all, we had to work on reclaiming that story together as a diocese and as a parish, but the impact of the day was pretty strong, there was a good crowd of people, so the word had got out and then there was this remarkable intervention, when we were blessing the cairn out on the lawn... and I said that it’s sad we don’t have any members of the Colenso extended family to be able to invite to this day, because we

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358 Waiapu Pilgrimage to Woodville #12. Order of Service.
haven’t been able to make any connections, and this guy stepped out of the crowd, was he a great grandson?, he was a funeral director from Marton… it was very dramatic, there we were standing under umbrellas in the rain in this crowd of people, around this memorial as I’m blessing it, and me saying what a shame it is that there are no family present, and then all of a sudden someone says, 'wait a minute, I’m here’, it was a great moment."360

A former Cathedral parish archivist, A. Anderson, organised a series of events to mark the sesquicentenary of Colenso’s birth. Fifty years later another program was planned to mark the bicentenary by the MTG Trust. It was during this bicentennial that Peter Wells’ book, The Hungry Heart, was released, accompanied by an academic conference, the dedication of a portrait, and a service of commemoration in Waiapu’s Cathedral of St John the Evangelist. John Bluck preached at this event, and the transcript of his sermon is located in appendix (ii).

John Bluck was ordained to priest’s orders in 1971 by Bishop Reeves. Bluck served as a curate in Gisborne before leaving the diocese. In 2002 he returned as Diocesan Bishop. As he recalls from setting out on that pilgrimage year, “in my collective memory of the diocese, growing up there, coming back there, being ordained there, I had never heard of him, there was no connection to him in any of the memory I have of him [Colenso]… that was one of the motivating forces of our year of pilgrimage, - to restore - names like Colenso, to give them the respect that was long overdue. We didn’t only do it with Colenso, but Colenso was the notable- recipient of that recognition. That was why we went on pilgrimage to go to those places and dig up these stories. And the only person that had ever, had ever done that before, since Leonard Williams… was Norman Lesser.”361

William Bennett was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Lesser in 1964 and served the entirety of his ministry, with the

360 Interview with the 14th Bishop of Waiapu 2002-08, John Bluck. 14 July, 2016.
361 Ibid.
exception of a year, in the diocese of Waiapu. One of Bennett’s contributions to the diocese is as a hymn writer. (Some of the hymns he has written for the diocese include:

> The 2005 (for 2006) Waiapu pilgrimages hymn: We Praise the Waiapu Saints of old

> The 2008 Sesquicentenary hymn: God You Call Our Name.

> The 1996 Diocesan hymn: Jesus of the Eastern Sky).

Recently Bennett composed a hymn to Colenso. Yet Colenso was one of the ‘Waiapu saints of old’ who was kept in mind when the pilgrimage hymn was written. These hymns show the contribution that Colenso made to the church, as well as acknowledging his abrasive personality and the controversies that surrounded him. The Colenso hymn, as well as representing the general understanding of his legacy in the church, it also suggests that Colenso was misunderstood, just as his legacy has been.

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<tr>
<td>When the call to serve is heeded, you, O Lord, know who we are; you have seen our inner being, like Colenso’s muted star.</td>
<td>We praise the Waiapu saints of old</td>
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<tr>
<td>He was flawed, but came with purpose, multi-gifted in his life; energetic, controversial, often stirring pain and strife.</td>
<td>Their faith, their single minded love,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yet his legacy endures in his journeys through the land; everywhere he shared the message, preached that all may understand.</td>
<td>Stories brave and journeys long,</td>
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<tr>
<td>Throughout time God brings surprises, calls the weak and calls the strong; give us purpose where we falter, let us sing the gospel song.</td>
<td>They shared the message of Christ our Lord,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Alleluia, Alleluia!</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Te rongopai, te ara hou,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Alleluia, Alleluia!</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>te aroha, te mamae roa.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Alleluia, Alleluia!</td>
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<td></td>
<td>They have sowed the seeds of faith,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Alleluia, Alleluia!</td>
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<td></td>
<td>so we rejoice to share Christ’s hope.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Alleluia, Alleluia!</td>
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<td>We are the pilgrims of our age,</td>
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Praise to God for all who labour by their love, unseen, unknown; they are servants of the Master, they are seen by Christ alone.

Alleluia, Alleluia!
we are the bearers of good news.
Alleluia, Alleluia!
Let us walk where others walked,
Alleluia, Alleluia!
now firm in faith, in Christ our Lord.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

The Colenso hymn addresses Colenso’s misunderstood and flawed character, but acknowledges the flaws in all people and that through the ages God, “Calls the weak and calls the strong”.363 Despite the misunderstanding of him, and the undesirable parts of his character, “yet his legacy endures”.364 The hymn also suggests that Colenso and others, even if their efforts went un-thanked or unknown, that there is some consolation in God’s acknowledgment. However, Bennett does state that he thinks, “There is a new appreciation for what Colenso achieved.”365

This hymn fits within the current historical narrative of the church, particularly by acknowledging his faults. Perhaps, like the account of the Woodville pilgrimage, he is here portrayed as ‘unlovable in his time’, but the contribution he made despite his sin and difficult nature is what makes him acceptable. More prevalent though is the theme of misunderstanding and the possibility that there may be something more to the story. Here again there is a progression of the narrative. Unlike the histories given by Bishop Simkin and G.H. Scholefield, where all controversy is avoided and ignored, and church historians who paint a harsh picture by detailing Colenso’s sin, Bennett’s hymn provides a middle ground. As Bennett reflects, “There wasn’t much mention of him at all; all we know was that he was a figure of the past, and it’s only in the last… 20 years that we have figured out more… the monument at

364 Ibid.
365 Interview with the Rev. William Bennett, 16 July 2016.
Awatoto alerted us, but I think that he was forgotten by the church for a long while.”

Jon S. Williams has been a priest in the Waiapu diocese since 1984. He is the great grandson of William Leonard Williams and has held a strong interest in the history of the diocese. Williams produced a booklet for the Waiapu pilgrims of 2006 that contained detailed biographical information about the historical figures they were remembering. In this publication Williams provides two pages on Colenso’s life. This brief biography credits Leonard Williams as the instigator of Colenso’s reconciliation with the church. While it does not mention Bishop Stuart’s role in the matter, what Williams says is not incorrect, “In 1894, when Leonard Williams was Bishop, a delegation was sent to invite Colenso to re-join the Synod…” A delegation was sent, as has been mentioned in a letter from Colenso to Coupland-Harding, a portion of which was quoted in Bagnall & Peterson’s biography, (though Leonard William was Bishop-elect and acting president of the Synod). Yet this was only Colenso’s readmission to Synod, not the church. While Paterson recalled her father, Bishop Lesser, blessing the Colenso memorial on the site of the old mission, Williams credits Lesser’s contribution to the organisation of the memorial, “After WW2 Bishop Lesser was instrumental in setting up the memorial at Awatoto, affirming and celebrating his huge contribution as a missionary and a citizen”.

At the end of his entry on Colenso, Williams points to further reading in Bagnall & Peterson’s William Colenso, but advises that David Mackay’s entry in The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography is more accessible. His evaluation of Mackay’s entry should be noted, as Williams states that it is, “...somewhat harsh in its assessment”.

In 1993 Williams preached a sermon on Colenso at the Cathedral of St John the Evangelist. In this sermon he talked about the

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366 Ibid.
368 Ibid.
369 Ibid.
difficulties Colenso faced in trying to get ordained. He examined the scandal and fall out from his dismissal from the CMS and the church. He did recall Bishop Lesser’s dedication of the memorial at Awatoto, and how this recognised Colenso’s, “good standing in the church.”

Williams described him as the champion of the underdog, and how the injustice he received from the church gave him sympathy with unfairness afflicted on others.

The Waiapu diocese has made significant steps in reclaiming Colenso, and revising his legacy. As noted, this began with Bishop Lesser in the 1950s, and continued in 2006, with the pilgrimage year, and again as part of the bicentennial celebrations in 2011. As noted, Waiapu has had difficulty in engaging with Colenso, as the ecclesiastical biographers of the first generation of churchmen, and the histories those churchmen themselves wrote, either portrayed him negatively or completely erased him. While the second generation of churchmen, (Samuel and Leonard Williams) would receive Colenso, the churchmen who emerged after their deaths, would lose this narrative. The way the historic literature remembered Colenso before Bagnall and Peterson’s biography in 1948, was either limited or non-existent. Up until the 1931 earthquake that destroyed the cathedral, clergy and office bearers of the diocese would have been confronted by Colesno’s memorial tablet on the west wall of the cathedral as they processed down the aisle at diocesan Synods and ordinations. The absence of this physical reminder, as well as the lack of any biographical literature until the late 1940s, contributed to this Waiapu saint slipping into obscurity, being noted only for the scandal that defined his life, and which he and the church overcame. The Church also seems to be unaware of Colenso’s theological development, or the way in which his churchmanship came into the mainstream of a tradition that had yet to be fully accepted by the diocese at large.

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Conclusion:

This thesis has examined the legacy and theology of William Colenso. The common assumption, it appears, is that when Colenso returned to the church, after 40 years in the ecclesiastical wilderness, he picked up where he left off. Colenso, it has been assumed, as a fiery evangelist from the golden age of colonial missionary work, continued his new ministry in the 1890s in a similar vein. The reason for this interpretation is multifaceted. Firstly, this is the result of the early ecclesiastical historical narrative. Unfortunately for Colenso, the men of the early mission, with whom he did not get on, happened to be the figures who the Anglican church in this country venerated as its pioneering heroes: Bishop Selwyn, Henry Williams and to a certain extent, particularly in the Waiapu Diocese, William Williams.

The biographers whose job it was to scribe the legacies of these men, came to publish the low regard these men had for Colenso, or leave him out completely, as was the case when William Williams wrote his autobiography in 1867. Colenso’s readmission to the church was an act of graciousness and humility, and the mana he came to hold in the diocese in his final decade is remarkable. Because of the gap in the historical narrative, Colenso’s legacy faded with the generation who had come to respect him. The next wave of Waiapu churchmen who emerged in the 20th century, who wrote history, such as Bishop Simkin, were not quite sure what to do with Colenso. The only aspect of life that survived the passage of time, for some decades, was the scandal of his deposition. Secular historians continued in a similar way. In 1931 Doris Pow wrote her M.A. history thesis of Colenso’s life, but it was not until 1948, with the publication of Bagnall and Peterson’s biography that a comprehensive account was given.

Another reason why Colenso may have been misunderstood in the church is because of his argumentative nature. His abrasive personality did not necessarily change, he just learnt when and how to control it. But because of the despotic attitude he could have when in full flight of debate, it would be easy to connect this to
his old fiery days of evangelism. Colenso’s theology and churchmanship, as this thesis has explored, did change substantially. This was catalysed by work he dedicated to natural science and botany in The Hawke’s Bay Philosophical Institute. While he held a passion for this academic work, it was a way in which he could show the church (as William Williams occupied the chair of the Institute from 1874) that he was intellectually competent. Colenso had initially been rejected for ordination, and was restricted from advancing from deacon to priest, on the basis of his absence of a classical education and competent knowledge of Greek and Hebrew. The Philosophical Institute, was the way in which he could prove his academic worth, and facilitate his re-entry to Holy Orders. This was not successful with the first Bishop of Waipu (William Williams), but it was with his successor, Edward Craig Stuart, and the third Bishop, Leonard Williams, who would complete the process of his full readmission.

Colenso worked hard to prove himself at the Institute. Subsequently he became the scholar that he was presenting himself as. Falling in love with science, Colenso’s world view was revolutionised. Through science he came to understand the world around him in a completely different way, and drew increasing energy from his unfolding intellectual enlightenment and liberation. This academic awakening channelled the great energy and passion he had for his missionary work. But what about his faith? How could he reconcile the retention of his religious convictions alongside Darwinism? Particularly given the brand of Christian he was.

Fortunately for Colenso, his cousin, the Bishop of Natal, was hard at work and had released his first volumes of his work on the Pentateuch. This controversial and ground breaking work on biblical criticism, the first by the likes of an Englishman, rocked the Anglican world. While it was not the best career move for Bishop Colenso, it provided the framework for William, by which he could be a man of faith and science. William Colenso’s adoption of the work meant his shift in understanding of the Bible, which in turn changed his attitude to issues such as Sabbath observance, and meant he could receive the theory of evolution with ease.
The acceptance of the theory of evolution and the reaction of biblical criticism would become commonplace among Anglicans and other mainline Protestants from as early as the late 1880s, and Colenso’s endorsement of church principles at the end of his life would make him a mainstream Anglican. However this thesis shows evidence of Colenso’s acceptance of biblical criticism as early as the 1860s and 1870s. Therefore, while Colenso was a Broad-Church mainstream Anglican at the end of his life, through his scholarship he was able to come to these places of understanding well before the church. What has also been noted is that the Diocese of Waiapu remained twenty years behind the general thrust of Anglicanism on matters of alcohol, the Bible in schools, and Sabbath observance, until at least the 1920s.

Colenso also had a strong commitment to Māori interests that spanned the entirety of his life in New Zealand. However, his approach did change after his dismissal in 1852. He had always advocated for their welfare, but been a strict judge on their moral conduct. After Colenso was humbled through his dismissal, his attitude to sin and the context in which it takes place changed and evidence of this is seen in the Māori figures he defended. Colenso urged settlers not to seek utu on Kereopa Te Rau and Te Kooti. Just as he had been so harshly judged, he called for understanding of context and the grace of Christian charity.

William Colenso was certainly a formidable character, but the nature of his complexity means that he should not just be generalised. For in generalising him, as many have done, his contributions have been overlooked. In his lifetime Colenso was fully reconciled with church; his exclusion from it defined his life. It seems there was a great silver lining in Colenso’s dismissal and exile, as it was in his endeavours in response to this exclusion that formed his life and theology in the late 19th century.

There may come a time when the Anglican church will admire Colenso for who he was and what he stood for. Perhaps one day his legacy in the Diocese of Waiapu will also be re-habilitated, and given the mana he once held.
Appendix:

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Bishops during Colenso’s life in New Zealand, 1834-1899:

1834: Colenso arrives in New Zealand

1834-1842 > No Bishop, but H. Williams is the senior missionary of the New Zealand Mission.

1842-1858 > Bishop G.A. Selwyn. - 1st (and only) Bishop of New Zealand.

1843: Colenso Arrives in Hawke’s Bay

[Dioecese of Wellington Established: 1858, subdividing the North Island]

1858-1869 > Bishop C. Abraham. - 1st Bishop of Wellington.

[Dioecese of Waiapu established 1859, William Williams becomes Bishop. Williams relocates to Napier in 1867 after fears of Pai-marie attack in Wairenga-a-hika. Williams remains Bishop of Waiapu though not living in the diocese and becomes co-agitator Bishop of Wellington with responsibly for the north of the diocese (Hawke’s Bay). 1869, boundaries of the Waiapu Diocese are redefined to include Hawke’s Bay.]

1869-1876 > Bishop W. Williams. - 1st Bishop of Waiapu.

1878-1894 > Bishop C.E. Stuart. - 2nd Bishop of Waiapu.

1895-1899 > Bishop W.L. Williams. - 3rd Bishop of Waiapu.
With the greatest respect to any of his relatives present tonight, I’m not sure, even if I had the chance, that I would enjoy actually meeting William Colenso. There are few figures in our New Zealand history that have been recorded in such unflattering terms as William. Normally, the historians tread carefully with personality profiles, giving the benefit of the doubt. Not so with our man. The usually constrained NZ Dictionary of Biography calls him bitter, vindictive, judgemental, intolerant, haughty, overbearing and humourless. And that’s just for starters. I’m fascinated with this man and his enormous achievement. But I’m not sure I’d like to meet Mr Colenso. But I did, in a manner of speaking, one wet Sunday morning in Woodville, back in the days when I was your bishop, a lifetime ago, and in one retrospective sense his bishop, I suppose. Thank God I never had to be Mr Colenso’s bishop face to face. There we were standing in the rain outside the church, blessing a stone cairn that had been erected on the lawn to honour William’s ministry in the parish of Woodville. After 40 years of exile from the church he loved, Bishop Leonard Williams had given him a job, after Bishop Stuart before him had restored a licence to William. Brave men, both of them, to reinstate a firebrand as incendiary as William. I blessed the stone and said a few words about how sad it was that none of William’s family were present. His wife Elizabeth and son Ridley Latimer left the diocese after the scandal of William’s affair with the housekeeper Ripeka, and never returned. And Wiremu, his child with Ripeka, also disappeared from the record, or so I said innocently, but rather stupidly as it turned out. Because out of the sodden congregation, stepped Mike Pehi, a funeral director from Ashhurst. Well, as a matter of fact, he told us, I’m William Colenso’s great great grandson. Suddenly Colenso the man was right there with us. We’d spent a year of pilgrimage bumping into him, and walking through his story at every stage, including wading in his footsteps up the river bed of the Ngahuroro from where he made his
epic journeys over the Ruahine ranges. We’d given stones from that river bed to confirmation and baptismal candidates, Colenso the missionary, the evangelist, the man of faith was reclaiming a place to stand in Waiapu, but on that wet Woodville morning, through his grandson’s living, breathing intervention, William Colenso was uncomfortably present in our midst. I shouldn’t have been surprised. The whole lesson of the Waiapu Pilgrimage Year was that the stories that made us who we are as a diocese don’t go away. They live on, even when we lose track of them. When we went to Rangitukia at the start of the year, the elders said well it’s about time you came back and reconnected with your history. And when we went to Maungapohatu, and stood outside Rua Kenana’s house, the elders said the mountain is smiling because you’ve come back. Time and again the stories came alive when we rediscovered and retold them, and the people of those stories, our forebears in the faith, surrounded us on every side, a cloud of witnesses watching as we stood in bush clearings and marae and churches, some of them unlit and overgrown and neglected. And in one place, on the edge of a village that once held 2000 people where William Williams regularly held services, and taught and baptised and confirmed, we stood on the edge of the road, looking out at an empty hillside, but knowing we were not alone, as surely as we knew on that Woodville morning that William was still around. Not everyone would agree of course, that he is worth remembering. The compilers of For All The Saints, our official Anglican dictionary of saints to honour each day of the church’s year, don’t have a listing for Colenso. There is Clement of Alexandria, just before the space he should fill, and Columba of Iona, just after, but no word of William. Is that because of his extra marital infidelity, or his bad manners. What kept him exiled for 40 years, and saw him slide from being the church’s most zealous and committed missionary, to the cleric that bishops loved to avoid? We will never know, but luckily you don’t have to be a nice guy to join the communion of saints. The cloud of witnesses is full of people who you wouldn’t want to marry, or even have dinner with, but who lived out the faith of Jesus Christ with such intensity, such passion, such courage, such bloody minded endurance that their legacy endures forever. William Colenso is one of those, especially the bloody minded endurance part. He walked the length and breadth of the North Island, on journeys that took up to five months at a time, enduring impossible hardships, achieving feats of exploration, botanical discovery, and always gospel preaching and teaching that
have never been equalled since. One Colenso travelling on foot would make ten contemporary clergy in four wheel drives redundant overnight. But he made it hard for the church to appreciate him. Not only because of his improper and unbecoming conduct, and his often offensive manner. William was an unlovely bundle of contradiction - the volatile man who was also the careful master printer, the dogmatic exaggerator who was also the meticulous scientific researcher and recorder, the judgemental puritan who was also the passionate lover, the harsh critic of Māori who was also their champion for justice, the isolated recluse who wrote 700 or 800 letters a year to an international circle of admirers. Out of the muddle of all that, no wonder it took the diocese 40 years to forgive him, and another 100 years to honour him. As we should, however belatedly. Because Colenso was in fact forging a legacy of huge importance for this church and this nation. He was working out a theology, a way of understanding how God works in the world, that he never got around to articulating. He simply lived it, and left it for us to make sense of it and value it. The scientific community especially those with botanic interests has done that ahead of the church, the academic community of historic, literary, typographic, political and geographic interests is getting on board. Hopefully the church community, especially now that we respect Māori and Pakeha tikanga to each make their own valuations, is hopefully catching up on Colenso’s legacy. And just what is this theology that Colenso quarried through his lifetime? I haven’t seen it written down anywhere yet, certainly not in his own religious writing which is overloaded with sin and guilt, damnation and personal redemption language. 3 Ironically, he sounded otherworldly in his preaching, but his preoccupation was with the things of this world in their smallest and most precise detail. He stuffed botanical specimens down his shirt front so he catalogue them for the world, he detailed the intricacies of Māori vocabulary and grammar, he audited the accounts of province and nation and argued over the last penny, he fought the runholders and speculators over the legal details of their land purchases from Māori. In all these crusades he was driven by a passion for justice and truth and transparency, and a reverence for creation in all its awesome complexity and beauty. Listen to these words from Bagnall’s biography of Colenso, describing the last days of his life: “So in the evening (of his life) the memories became shadows.. with the brown sheen of kakas shaking the snow from the kowhai as they swung under the yellow flowers, the shingle
tugging surf grating against the boom of its fall at Palliser (Bay). The sweep of the hard fans of piupiu against his legs in the open beech (forest), the earthy smell of a red trodden tarn edge on a hot summer afternoon; the call of the sea mocking him home. This is a man who knew that God had been crafting the creation from the first morning and seeing that it was good. A man who saw and treasured its beauty, loved and savoured its every detail, every nuance, and spent his life trying to record and measure and understand it and make it work as God intended. He did that as the most unlikely of God’s servants. Afflicted, perplexed, outcast and persecuted (however deserved you might think that exile might have been), struck down, always dying so that the life of Jesus might be made more visible in his mortal flesh. This most miserable and broken of men is the one whose memory endures long after so many good and decent people whose lives of restraint and caution are long forgotten. It’s Colenso the outrageous, the ambitious, the man of impossible expectations that we remember. Paul tells us that God puts his treasures in clay jars, fragile, often dropped, easily broken. No one more so than William Colenso. And no one who better demonstrates the gospel invitation, when all is lost and broken, when you have exhausted your worthiness and usefulness, even your self respect, to start all over again. The story of our church is full of disappointment and failures, people who let us down, plans that come to nothing, relationships that turned sour and curdled. But it is equally full of stories of people who dig themselves out of that despair and make a new start and claim a new future because they believe God will empower us to do that, if we dare to ask. Colenso asked, and turned the ruin of a life into a whole series of great achievements. That’s the best part of the legacy he leaves us. He didn’t plan it that way. He’d be surprised to see us embracing him tonight. He didn’t, couldn’t see the way God continued to use his life and still continues to do so. Colenso would be the last to know that the seed he sowed finally fell on good ground and bore fruit. He’d be amazed to think we are part of his harvest as the people of God called Waiapu. Colenso’s harvest. God’s harvest. 100 fold.
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