

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

Massey University Library  
New Zealand & Pacific Collection

THE CHURCH DEFENCE SOCIETY  
OF OTAGO AND SOUTHLAND, 1897.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of Master  
of Arts in History at Massey University.

Lawrence Harold Barber

1970

To the memory of Malcolm Wilson;

Presbyter, Moderator, and Ecumenist.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	IV	
ABBREVIATIONS	XIV	
GLOSSARY	XV	
CHAPTER I	Introductory: From Unity to Dissent.	1
II	From Dissent into Party.	14
III	"The Defenders."	38
IV	"Foes" Active and Passive.	67
V	Diversity in Unity.	93
EPILOGUE	The 1901 Parliamentary Debate.	106
APPENDIX A.	"A.C's" Editorial. <u>Christian Outlook</u> . 11 December, 1897.	114
APPENDIX B.	A Synopsis of Union Documents.	
(i)	The 1896 Basis.	116
(ii)	The 1897 Basis.	118
(iii)	The 1901 Agreement.	121
(iv)	The Presbyterian Church of New Zealand Act, 1901.	122
APPENDIX C.	Legal Opinions.	
(i)	The Chapman and MacGregor Opinions.	125
(ii)	Sir Robert Stout's Opinion.	127
APPENDIX D.	A Brief Discussion on Northern Church Attitudes to Union.	132
BIBLIOGRAPHY		139
MAP:	Presbyteries and Parishes in the Presbyterian Church of Otago and Southland, 1897.	Following XX

PREFACE

In recent years there has been a marked increase of interest in New Zealand church history and sectarian controversy. Research into the beliefs and behaviour of early European missionaries has occupied the research time of an increasing number of post-graduate students during the last five years and has resulted in such useful works as Judith Binney's published analysis of the beliefs and behaviour of Thomas Kendall<sup>1</sup> and John Owens' doctoral investigation of the Hokianga Wesleyans.<sup>2</sup> Hugh Laracy, in his portrayal of Bishop Moran,<sup>3</sup> P.S. O'Connor, through his racy description of Catholic - Protestant conflict,<sup>4</sup> and J. Mackey with his consideration of the development within New Zealand of a parochial school system,<sup>5</sup> have notably contributed to the history of the

1. Judith Binney, The Legacy of Guilt (Oxford, 1968).
2. John Owens, "The Coming of the Wesleyans to New Zealand, 1819-1840", Unpublished PhD thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1969.
3. Hugh Laracy, "The Life and Context of Bishop Patrick Moran," Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1964.
4. P.S. O'Connor, "Sectarian Conflict in New Zealand, 1911-1920", Political Science, 19 (i), July, 1967, pp. 3-16.
5. J. Mackey, "The Catholic Schools and the Denominational System of Education in Auckland. 1840-68", Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Auckland, 1960.

Roman Catholic Church. Research by P.F. McKimney<sup>6</sup> and K.G. Geard<sup>7</sup> into the nature of the New Zealand prohibition movement and Ian Breward's published monograph on Bible-in-Schools controversies<sup>8</sup> have made available analysis of socio-religious conflicts that divided New Zealanders from the late nineteenth century until well into the twentieth century. In the field of contemporary church history a symposium on religion in New Zealand including articles by J. Mols, J. Harre, and W.H. Oliver,<sup>9</sup> posed questions about present day New Zealand ecclesiastical life that cannot be satisfactorily answered without an awareness of the theological and sociological development of the New Zealand churches and sects.

Despite this recently renewed interest in ecclesiastical history, and the broad range of the research projects undertaken, (from a study of Ratana<sup>10</sup> to an examination of the history of the Church of the Latter Day Saints),<sup>11</sup> little interest has yet been shown in late

6. P.F. McKimney, "The Prohibition Movement in New Zealand, 1885-1894", unpublished M.A. Thesis, Auckland University, 1968.
7. K.J. Geard, "The Prohibition Movement, 1894-1914", unpublished M.A. Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, In Progress.
8. Ian Breward, Godless Schools? (Christchurch, 1967.)
9. W.H. Oliver, W. Merlin Davies, Lloyd G. Geering et al; Landfall, XX (1), March 1966, pp.4-59.
10. J. Henderson, Ratana New Plymouth, 1965.
11. Ian R. Barker, "The Connexion. The Mormon Church and The Maori People", unpublished B.A. Hons. Exercise, Victoria University of Wellington, 1967.

nineteenth century religious beliefs and even less in identifying and explaining dissent within the major churches. In this research exercise I cannot hope to bridge such an extensive gap in New Zealand ecclesiastical history, yet by selecting as my subject a religious controversy of 1897 and investigating the origins, principles, and prejudices of a party within a church, I have attempted to sink a few supporting pylons into the river-bed for future bridge builders to build upon.

The concern of this thesis is to explain the slow coalescing of a party of dissent within the Presbyterian Church of Otago and Southland. The focus of interest is the Church Defence Society of Otago and Southland, a league of Presbyterian churchmen constituted in November 1897 following a decision by the ruling Synod of the Otago and Southland Presbyterian Church to commit the Church to union with the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. An attempt is made to identify the "Church Defenders", to outline their arguments and those of their opponents, to explain their motives, to assess the importance of "non-theological factors" in the development of their point of view, and to give some reason for their failure to delay or destroy union negotiations in 1897. Use has been made of several documents hitherto little used in New Zealand historical studies. The Gibb Papers, the Rutherford Waddell Notebooks, and the parish archives of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Dunedin, have given

useful insight into the activities and opinions of two leading participants in the Otago Church struggle.

No mention of the Church Defence Society of Otago and Southland occurs in any histories of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. James Chisholm, an ardent "Southern Church" pro-unionist used eight pages in his 1898 history of the Church of Otago and Southland, Fifty Years Syne,<sup>12</sup> to present a bare account of the fifty preceding years movement to union. He applauded the "Northern Church" for its continuous accommodation of "Southern Church" sensitivity, but no attempt was made to identify this sensitivity and explain the behaviour of the anti-unionists. John Dickson, a Canterbury "Northern Churchman", in 1899 published his History of the New Zealand Presbyterian Church,<sup>13</sup> but gave only three pages to discuss union questions. Lest it be thought that the closeness of the culmination of union may have decided him to tread lightly on that tender spot notwithstanding his brevity he attacked "Southern Church" anti-union sentiment and argued: "As if to show how short-sighted those few spirits are who oppose the Union of the Northern and Southern Churches of New Zealand, a good deal of wooing between these communions has been going on across the Waitaki bridge. Not only have messages of love in the

12. James Chisholm, Fifty Years Syne. Dunedin, 1917.

13. John Dickson, History of the New Zealand Presbyterian Church, Dunedin, 1899.

form of church certificates, valid on both sides, and church resolutions, more or less gushing in sentiment, been passing between them, but frequent offers of marriage have been made by congregations on the one side and accepted on the other. Twenty-one pastors of Otago and Southland, being only flesh and blood like their fellows, have crossed the Waitaki in response to calls from the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand."<sup>14</sup>

Are twentieth-century New Zealand church historians any more objective in their treatment of Southern anti-union sentiment? The Very Rev. J.S. Murray in 1927 submitted for his M.A. degree a thesis entitled "The Union of the Northern and Southern Churches of The Presbyterian Church of New Zealand."<sup>15</sup> Mr. Murray is precise and painstaking in his delineation of the tortuous movement of the two churches towards union but he abstained from any attempt to explain the motivation of the conflicting parties. J.R. Elder, sometime Professor of History at Otago University, in his centennial History of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand<sup>16</sup> built on Murray's work, again with no attempt at interpretation, and with occasional confusions, a case in point being his failure to note that in 1897 not all Kirk sessions

14. John Dickson, p.380.

15. J.S. Murray, "The Union of the Northern and Southern Churches of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand" unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Otago, 1927.

16. J.R. Elder, The History of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1840-1940.

submitted returns in the referendum of sessions taken by the Synod. By far the most inadequate treatment of the union issue and its protagonists is in John Collie's, The Story of the Otago Free Church Settlement, (1948)<sup>16</sup> Professor Collie intruded quotations from hymns into his text and concluded with a sermon full of advice and warning for future ecumenical encounters. He pays too much attention to reminiscences and provides a disjointed picture of the movement towards union. His chapter on "Church Union" may be excellent preaching, but it is scarcely good history.

This assessment of previous historical accounts of the union struggle makes clear that no one has yet delved into the causes and occasions of the development of a conservative resistance to the union of the "Northern" and "Southern" churches. To embark on such a study is of course to see the world in an oyster, with the concomitant risk of descending to triviality. The arena within which the "Church defenders" and their "foes" fought was indeed small, and issues such as marriage to a deceased wife's sister may appear trivial and even ludicrous by present day judgement, yet a study of this miniscule neo-Disruption provides the historian with insights into the thought processes and value judgements of a significant group of New Zealand pioneers.

16. John Collie, The Story of the Otago Free Church Settlement. Dunedin, 1948.

To aid those readers who are unfamiliar with those peculiarly ecclesiastical and theological terms used by the protagonists a glossary has been included. Where the writer has the slightest doubt whether the general historian will be au fait with a reference from the field of specialised Church history he has added a clarifying footnote.

Three sets of documents have been appended to this thesis and their inclusion is justified by the numerous references made to them by the protagonists. "A.C.'s" editorial is reproduced in its entirety to identify Church Defence Society membership and to indicate the skill of his satire. The union documents are included to indicate the revisions demanded by the Southern Church and granted by the Northern Church between 1896 and 1901.

The conflicting Chapman-MacGregor and Stout legal opinions provide a precise and germinal presentation of arguments over the legality or illegality of any union that failed to maintain the doctrine and polity of the founding fathers; arguments produced ad nauseum by the contending parties throughout 1897.

The fourth appendix, "A Brief Discussion on Northern Church Attitudes to Union", is designed to give a necessary complement to the concentration in this thesis on the Southern Presbyterian Church's attitudes to union.

The writer gratefully acknowledges the help he has received from historians, theologians, and librarians,

in making available manuscripts and records, and in suggesting additions or laterations to the text. Especial thanks are extended to:

The Rev. Lloyd Bibby, M.A; Minister of St. Andrew's  
Church, Dunedin.

The Clerk of the Presbyterian Synod of Otago and  
Southland.

The Clerk of the Presbytery of Dunedin.

The General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of  
New Zealand.

Professor J.H. Jensen, M.A; Ph.D.

The Master, Principal, and Professors of Knox  
College, Dunedin.

Miss Margaret Rodger, M.A; Dip.N.Z.L.S; Reference  
Librarian, Massey University.

Dr. W.P.N. Tyler, M.A; Ph.D.

and to my supervisor, Professor W.H. Oliver, M.A;  
D.Phil.

PHOTOGRAPHS

1. R.R.M. Sutherland: A leading "Defender"  
facing p.15
2. William Bannerman: "Nestor of the anti-unionists"?  
facing p.27
3. William Will: "Venerable Moderator"  
facing p.34
4. Andrew Cameron: "A.C"?  
facing p.39
5. The Presbyterian Synod of Otago and Southland,  
1897 facing p.41
6. Rutherford Waddell: A "Passive" Defender.  
facing p.89
7. James Gibb: A D.D. to the Victor. facing p.105

These photographs were obtained by the Rev. Eric Ross, Librarian, Hewitson Library, Dunedin, and reproduced by the Hocken Library, University of Otago.

MAPS AND TABLES

- Map I            Showing the location of Presbyteries and parishes in the Church of Otago and Southland in 1897.    Facing XXI
- An explanation of the organisation of the Presbyterian Church of Otago and Southland. p.XXIII
- Table I          A Comparison of the voting of ministers and elders on Sutherland's anti-union motion at the 1897 Synod.    p.43.
- Table II         The location of parishes rejecting the 1897 union basis.     p.46.
- Table III        Showing the rural concentration of anti-union leadership.     p.48.
- Table IV        Showing universities and theological colleges attended by leading "Foes" and "Defenders". p.51.
- Table V         Indicating the dates of arrival of "Foes" and "Defenders" and the dates of ordination of New Zealand born or trained ministers. p.53.
- Table VI        Stipends paid to "A.C.'s" Foes and Defenders in the financial year ending 30 September, 1897.    p.55.
-

ABBREVIATIONS

<u>AJHR</u>	<u>Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives.</u>
<u>Assembly</u>	<u>Minutes of the Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.</u>
Gibb	The Gibb Papers Presbyterian Church Office, Wellington.
<u>ODT</u>	<u>The Otago Daily Times.</u>
<u>Outlook</u>	<u>The Christian Outlook.</u>
<u>Star</u>	<u>The Evening Star.</u>
Stout	The Stout Papers Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.
<u>Synod</u>	<u>Minutes of the Proceedings of the Presbyterian Synod of Otago and Southland.</u>
<u>Tablet</u>	<u>The New Zealand Tablet.</u>
<u>Yearbook</u>	<u>The New Zealand Official Yearbook.</u>

---

GLOSSARY

- Barrier Act      An act of the 1697 General Assembly of the Church of Scotland requiring that all proposals to make any important alteration to the constitution of the Church should first be sent to Presbyteries for their consideration, prior to a final decision by Assembly. In 1874, 1876 and again in 1878, the Presbyterian Church of Otago and Southland, not wishing to limit the powers of its Synod, refused to adopt a Barrier Act but agreed to submit contentious matters to inferior courts "under the principle of the Barrier Act."
- Declaratory Act      In 1879 the Scottish United Presbyterian Church passed an act relieving ministers from their obligation to subscribe to every item in the Westminster Confession. The Free Church of Scotland followed suit in 1892 in reaction to William Robertson Smith's deposition from the ministry, following a charge of heresy. The present formula signed by ministers and elders of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand is based on the Free Church Declaratory Act of 1892 and states that "the Presbyterian

Church of New Zealand holds as its subordinate standard the Westminster Confession of Faith, recognising liberty of opinion on such points as do not enter into the substance of the Faith..."

For a useful account of the place held by Declaratory acts in the Scottish Presbyterian tradition, see J.H.S. Burleigh, A Church History of Scotland. pp.366-384.

#### Disruption

On 18 May, 1843 the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the Rt.Rev.David Welsh, refused to constitute the General Assembly and instead read to ministers and elders a protest against state interference in the affairs of the Kirk. Welsh then led over 190 ministers and elders to Cannon-mills where they inaugurated the "Free Church of Scotland". The Disruption was occasioned by Parliament's refusal to give Presbyteries and congregations a veto in cases where patrons nominated unsuitable or unpopular ministers as parish ministers. The dissidents regarded the state's refusal to amend the law, and civil court judgements against the Assembly's claim to hold the right to

determine such conflicts within the Church, as infringements of the spiritual independence of the Kirk.

#### Erastianism

The principle that the State has ascendancy over the Church in ecclesiastical matters. This concept was named from the views of the sixteenth century Swiss theologian, Thomas Erastus.

#### Evangelicals

The Evangelical party in the Church of Scotland grew in popularity and size as it opposed the infringements of the 1690 re-establishment of the authority of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland by the Patronage Act of 1712; an act that allowed patrons to appoint their nominees to vacant charges with little attention to the will of the congregations. In the early nineteenth century the Evangelicals reached the peak of their popularity through leading resistance against civil court decisions that imposed unpopular ministers on unwilling congregations. By 1843 this party took one third of Scotland's Presbyterian ministers into the Free Church of Scotland. In opposition to Moderate teaching of the commonplaces of natural and rational theology and of

the prudential virtues, the Evangelicals laid emphasis on the traditional Calvinist doctrines of sin, grace, and redemption, and aimed at awakening in their hearers a deeper personal religious experience.

#### Moderates

The Moderate party dominated the life of the Church of Scotland in the second half of the eighteenth century. The designation "Moderate" was given to indicate a less rigid attitude to theology, and church discipline than held by their rivals, the Evangelicals. The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, p.910, summarises <sup>the</sup> Moderate emphases; "They sought to be friends of learning, culture, and order and emphasised morality rather than dogma. They were opposed to the abolition of lay patronage, insisting that Presbyteries should induct patrons' presentees acc. (sic) to the law of the land, whether the people called them or not...". See also: A.R. Vidler, The Church in an Age of Revolution, p.56f.

**Higher Criticism** This term refers to the critical study of the literary methods and sources used by the authors of the Biblical documents.

The term came into currency from its use ("Higher or Historical Criticism") by W. R. Smith in The Old Testament in the Jewish Church, London, 1881;p.105. Biblical literalists sometimes, (albeit improperly), refer to scholars who use this critical method as "Modernists". Scottish and New Zealand Presbyterians acknowledge the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as their supreme standards for determining faith and conduct. The Westminster documents are regarded as the subordinate standards of the church.

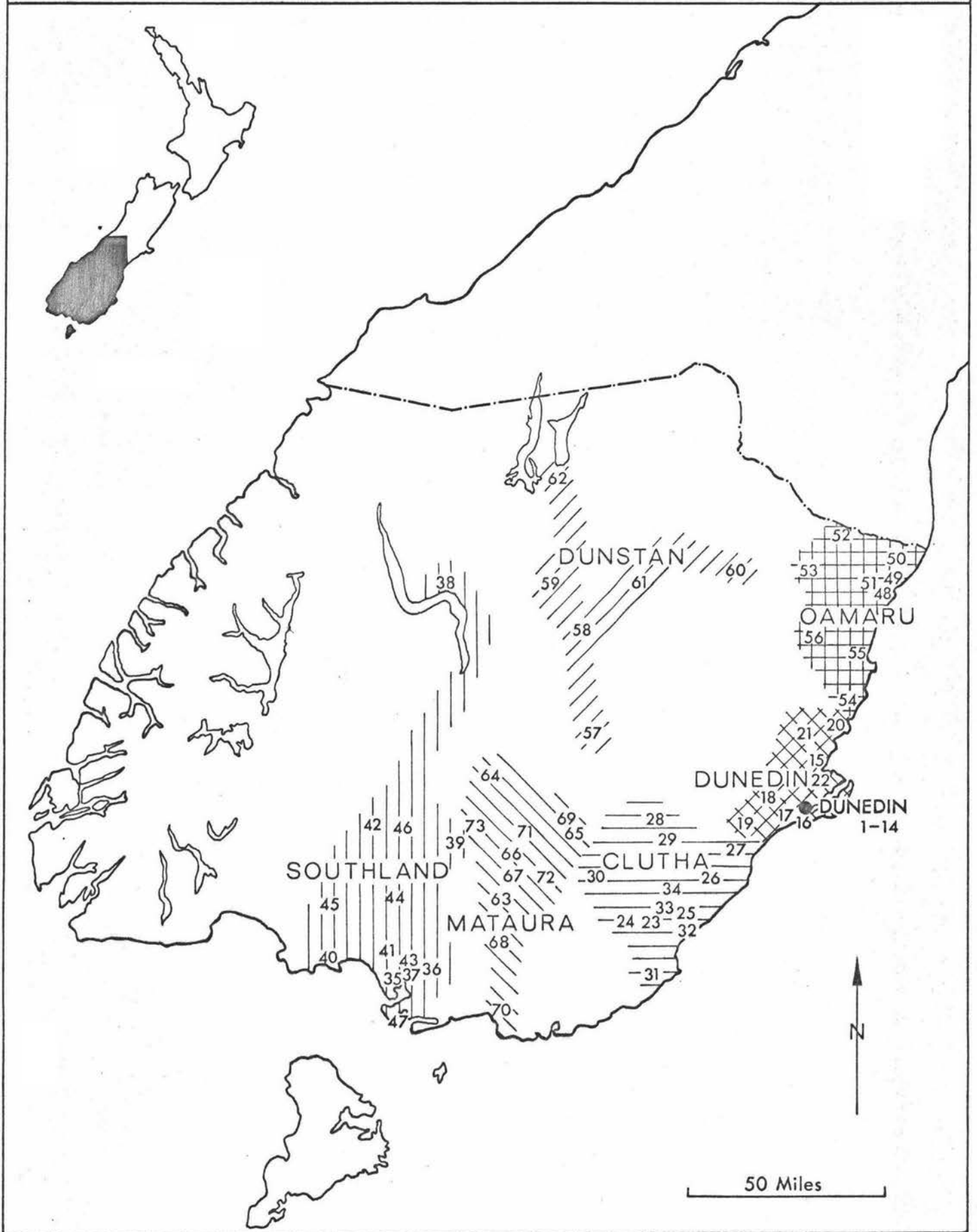
Westminster  
Standards

The Westminster  
Confession of  
Faith

Is a profession of Presbyterian orthodoxy written by a commission of the Westminster Assembly in 1643. This Synod, appointed by the Long Parliament to reform the English Church, approved a final draft of thirty three chapters. The Scottish General Assembly adopted the Confession on 27 August, 1647 and the Westminster Confession has since established itself as a definitive statement of Presbyterian doctrine in the English-speaking world.

- The Westminster Catechisms are the "Longer" and "Shorter" Catechisms once used for teaching in Presbyterian Parish churches and schools.
- The Westminster Directory was adopted by the Church of Scotland in 1649 as its official formula for public worship. It was originally prepared by the Westminster Assembly as a replacement for the Book of Common Prayer.
- Northern Church The popular designation for the pre-1901 Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. This church was constituted in 1862 and comprised all Presbyteries north of the Waitaki river.
- Southern Church The autonomous Presbyterian Church of Otago and Southland that existed prior to the 1901 union with the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.
- Sustentation Fund A central fund administered independently by both the Northern and Southern Churches to assure ministers of a basic minimum stipend. Parishes were assessed on the number of communicant members on their rolls to allow the subsidising of smaller and struggling parishes by larger and more consolidated charges.

# PRESBYTERIES AND PARISHES IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF OTAGO AND SOUTHLAND, 1897



PRESBYTERIES AND PARISHES IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OFOTAGO AND SOUTHLAND, 1897.Presbytery of Dunedin.City Parishes

1. First Church.
2. Knox Church.
3. St. Andrew's Church.
4. North Dunedin.
5. South Dunedin.
6. Mornington.
7. Anderson's Bay.
8. Kaikorai.
9. Green Island.
10. Caversham.
11. North East Valley.
12. Mosgiel.
13. Ravensbourne.
14. Chalmer's Church.

Rural Parishes.

15. Blueskin and Merton.
16. North East Harbour.
17. East Taieri.
18. North Taieri.
19. West Taieri.
20. Waikouaiti.
21. Strath Taieri.
22. Port Chalmers.

Presbytery of Clutha.Parishes.

23. Clutha.
24. Warepa and Kaihiku.
25. Inchclutha and Stirling.
26. Tokomairiro.
27. Waibola.
28. Lawrence.
29. Waitahuna.
30. Popotunoa.
31. Owaka.
32. Kaitangata.
33. Balclutha.
34. Lovell's Flat.

Presbytery of Southland.Parishes.

35. First Church, Invercargill.
36. Longbush.
37. St. Paul's, Invercargill.
38. Queenstown.
39. Limestone Plains.
40. Riverton.
41. Wallacetown.
42. Taringatura.
43. Waikiwi.
44. Winton.
45. Otautau.
46. Dipton.
47. Bluff.

Presbytery of Oamaru.Parishes.

48. St. Paul's Oamaru.
49. Columba.
50. PapaKaio.
51. Waiareka.
52. Upper Waitaki.
53. Otepopo.
54. Palmerston.
55. Hampden.
56. Macraes and Green Valley.

Presbytery of Dunstan.Parishes.

57. Teviot.
58. Alexandra and Clyde.
59. Cromwell.
60. Naseby.
61. Lauder.
62. Hawea and Wanaka.

Presbytery of Mataura.Parishes.

63. Mataura.
64. Waikaka.
65. Tapanui.
66. Knapdale.
67. Gore.
68. Wyndham.
69. Kelso.
70. Fortrose.
71. Waikaka.
72. Pukerau.
73. Riversdale.

EXPLANATORY NOTETHE SYNOD OF OTAGO AND SOUTHLAND

- The supreme court of the Church.
- Met in Dunedin yearly.
- A legislative, judicial and executive body.
- Made-up of equal numbers of ministers and elders elected by their Presbyteries.
- Presided over by an annually elected non-voting Moderator.

THE PRESBYTERIES.

- Six Presbyteries with executive and limited judicial powers
- Restricted to control of their district and subordinate to the Synod.
- Met monthly.
- Made-up of all ministers and one elder from each parish.
- Presided over by a non-voting Moderator, changed usually every six months.

KIRK SESSIONS.

- Local parish church courts.
- Seventy-three Sessions in the Synod area.
- Made-up of all elders. elected for life, and presided over by the Minister.
- Transmits overtures to Synod through Presbytery.
- Met at least monthly.

DEACON'S COURT.

- Local Parish court.
- Confined to property and financial matters.
- Subordinate to Kirk Session.
- Met at least monthly.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING.

- Made-up of all communicant members in parish.
  - Met at least annually.
  - Elects new elders and deacons.
  - Elects new minister.
  - Makes recommendations to Session.
-