



HopeProject
nz

200 Years of the Gospel in Aotearoa

The New Zealand Story

— then & now —



Booklet #2 of 5

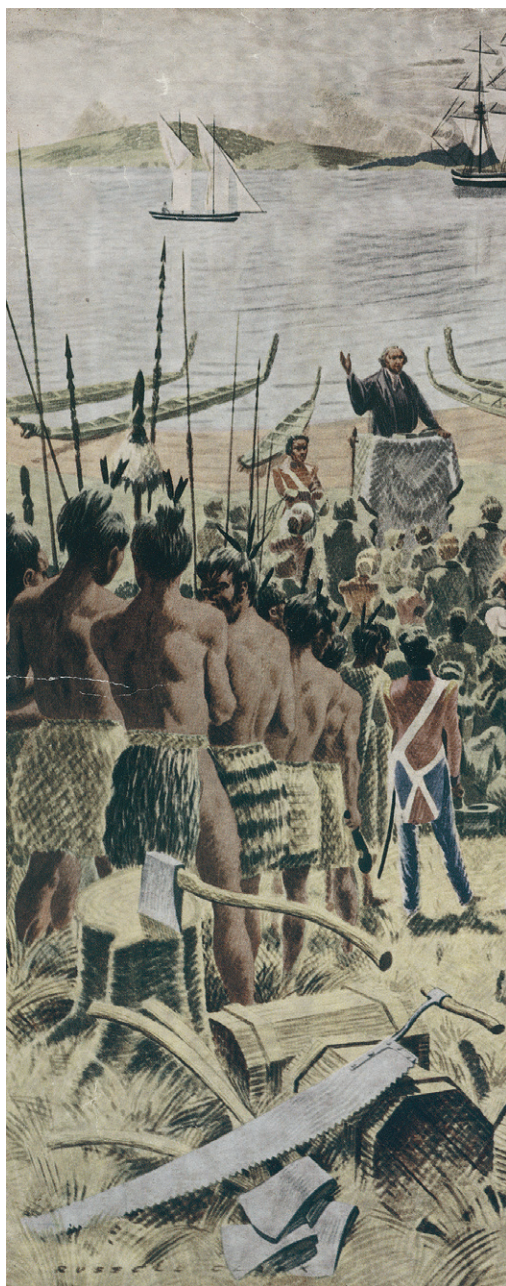
PART ONE

A BRIEF HISTORY OF EARLY CHRISTIANITY IN NEW ZEALAND

The Maori response to the Gospel

For a number of years, the Maori response to the Christian message was limited. The first baptised convert, Christian Rangī, was not until 1826, twelve years after the gospel was first preached. Yet, while the beginnings were slow, in the 1830's Christianity among Maori began to take off like wildfire. By the 1850's more than half of all Maori had embraced Christianity. This is a part of our history that some people are reluctant to acknowledge.

What caused Maori to embrace Christian faith? Maori believed in many different gods (atua) or spirits in nature, but some Maori at least appeared to have a belief in a supreme god called Io. As such, the concept of a creator wasn't completely new. It also helped that many of our early missionaries were good examples of Christian living. While all missionaries made mistakes, they also cared for Maori who became struck down by sicknesses





for which they had no immunity; they intervened in battles — directly risking their lives; they attempted to stand up to the crime, drunkenness and land-grabbing of the (other) Europeans who came; they travelled widely under the most extreme difficulties and dangers. Missionaries frequently earned the respect of Maori. They were markedly different to many of the the whalers, sealers, and traders who had also come to New Zealand.

However, the results of following Jesus were the most powerful advertisement. The Christian message of love, forgiveness, and understanding of right and wrong, made sense. Dr Rangi Nicholson (Ngati Raukawa) explains how the Christian teaching on love for all your neighbours was a revolutionary concept for Maori. Christianity offered an honourable 'out' from utu (revenge). When Maori embraced faith in Jesus, along with the principles of love and forgiveness, they were moved to put aside such practices as slavery, war, cannibalism and utu. The changes were dramatic, and the benefits were clear. This is the best explanation for what happened next, when the Christian message was spread throughout the length of Aotearoa by Maori themselves, well ahead of the missionaries. By the 1840s there were about 36 Church Missionary Society missionaries in New Zealand — but over 200 Maori evangelists.

From our history:

Oihi Bay (Rangihoua) — our first bicultural meeting place

This was the place of New Zealand firsts. Maori working alongside Europeans to benefit from new friendships; the first school (which was also bilingual, with both Maori and Pakeha children); the development of the written Maori language; new agricultural methods (ploughing, crops, metal tools); the farming of newly introduced animals including horses sheep and cattle; new building methods, new trade skills, and the births of the first European babies in New Zealand. They grew up alongside their new Maori friends as the first bicultural, bilingual New Zealanders.

A MORE 'HOLISTIC' WORLDVIEW THAN MOST HAVE BEEN AWARE OF

A common criticism of Christian mission work is that the goal is only to see conversions. This was not true of our early missionaries. While the gospel of peace was certainly the central message, their efforts were broader, and not contingent upon Maori conversion.

As an example, Marsden gave considerable efforts to introducing Maori to the farming of new crops like wheat, the management of newly introduced stock (like horses, sheep, cattle), and to a great many other practical skills such as carpentry, brick making, nail making, blacksmithing and cloth manufacture.

MISSIONARY EFFORTS TO SAFEGUARD MAORI CULTURE, WITH A MODERATING INFLUENCE

Duncan Roper explains to early missionaries, how overtly barbarous features of Maori custom such as cannibalism, warfare and utu were not regarded as an intrinsic part of Maori culture, but rather as symptoms of our fallen human nature. Missionaries viewed the drunkenness and whoring of Europeans at Russell in the same way. While the early missionaries certainly made mistakes, contrary to some modern criticism, mission policy was not to obliterate Maori culture, but to moderate its more violent or cruel excesses with Biblical Christianity. Sadly, this was not the view held by the colonial forces.

There are many stories from our nation's early bi-cultural history that have not been told. Currently our nation's Christian heritage is little known, and thus little valued. Making such stories known can help to change this.

For more see...

DVD:

Te Rongopai: 200 Years of the Gospel in New Zealand, 1814-2014

A DVD documentary written and narrated by Dr Stuart Lange. Available from nzchristiannetwork.org.nz/te-rongopai-dvd/

CHILDREN'S STORIES:

The Chronicles of Paki — SERIES I & II

This first series of five illustrated stories (for ages 8+) tells of the coming of the gospel to Aotearoa, and its early influence. The second series tells of its spread at the hands of both Maori and missionaries, and the significant implications of this. The third series will be about the Treaty of Waitangi. Available from BigBookPublishing.co.nz

BOOKS:

There are many, including 'Bible and Treaty' by Keith Newman, and 'The Years Before Waitangi' by Patricia Baldwin.

HERITAGE Q&A VIDEOS ONLINE:

At HopeProject.co.nz click on 'Christian hope' and you will find the 'Heritage Q&A' series of concise video answers to some important questions about Christian faith in our roots as a nation.

Acknowledgements: In writing these historical summaries, Dave Mann acknowledges the use of numerous historical sources, and the suggestions on some aspects by historian Dr. Stuart Lange.

PART TWO

THE EFFECTIVE 21ST CENTURY WITNESS

The power of our story

Did you know that about 70% of people claim to have had a spiritual experience of some kind? While our culture is not keen on religious beliefs that claim to exclusively hold the truth, we are still a highly spiritual people. This makes the telling of spiritual stories a great door opener for deeper conversations about spiritual things.

WHAT IS YOUR STORY?

We all have a story. We all chose to believe in and follow Jesus for a reason. Something happened. Something convinced us. Something turned our hearts. And



hopefully a few things changed in our lives as a result. Explaining this is your key spiritual story — though not your only one. We all have *many* stories, and so long as we're not 'preaching', people enjoy well-told stories!

WHAT IS STORY TELLING?

However, story-telling is a broader art than just the telling of our spiritual stories (our testimonies). Jesus was a master-communicator, and told stories about all sorts of things from the natural world, using them as illustrations of spiritual things. There is an art to story-telling. Caleb Leadership Ministries have a short course on this very topic called 'Confident Communicators'. Their director, Rex Booth, also presented a session about this at our previous Hope Project 'Engage Conferences' — contact us for the DVD. Good stories start with a sentence that sets the scene, explaining the where, when and who — preferably in one sentence. With the listener now visualising where and when the story takes place, and who is involved, the storyteller then tells a story about one thing, concisely stated, with interesting details building to a punchline (the climax). The story can then be turned to good use as a communication tool by concluding with a sentence that begins with the words, 'What I learnt was...'. All done and dusted within two minutes, the listener is engaged, and the point effectively communicated. However, if it's all done and dusted in four minutes, the listener is probably thinking of something else already, has interrupted to change the topic, or has left and you've not noticed. It is an art which Jesus modelled for us, and can be very effective in communication during your work coffee break or in a café or kitchen with a friend.

Some tips:

Bill Hybels in his small group series, 'Walk across the room', makes a few points (with humour) about sharing your spiritual story.

To tell a bad story consider learning in the following areas:

1. Long-winded stories (Lesson: Don't talk too much. Get to the point).
2. Fuzzy stories (Lesson: Be specific. What actually happened?).
3. Superiority stories (Lesson: Make God's help the focus, not yourself).
4. Religionese stories (Lesson: Avoid Christian jargon).
5. Weird God-stories (Lesson: Telling about particularly strange spiritual experiences can be counter-productive to the goal of encouraging people to consider the person of Christ).

STORIES CAN BE POWERFUL IF THEY'RE TOLD RIGHT.

1. What were you like before your spiritual experiences?
2. What was the experience?
3. How did that change you?

Keep it honest and humble, clear and concise.

In summary: We are called to make disciples. It goes without saying that this means we're going to need to engage people in conversations about spiritual things at some point! How could you do that in our post-Christian and sceptical culture? Stories of spiritual experiences are common ground, and stories of all sorts are interesting. This makes this a powerful tool — if you know how to use it.

To do: Why not think through how you could most effectively share your spiritual story, and then think of a couple of stories of embarrassing or funny incidents which you could make a positive point from, similar to how Jesus communicated?

Also, how about asking your work-mates or friends if they've ever had a spiritual experience? You might be surprised what they say and the great conversation it opens up!

For more see...

VIDEO EQUIPPING: 'Because we care' — the video series

These 'Equipping for members' videos can be found via the 'Resources' page at AllTogether.co.nz
— Videos 2 and 3 are about telling our stories.

FOR THE PULPIT AND SMALL GROUP

At AllTogether.co.nz/resources/sermons-studies there is a 6-part sermon series (with studies) for the lead-up to the Hope Project.
— The third message and study are about telling our stories.

TO READ AND STUDY: 'Walk across the room' by Bill Hybels

A four-session DVD based small group course. Find it at a Christian bookshop near you.

PART THREE

CLOSING ENCOURAGEMENT

Are you getting ready?

At Easter 2016 the Hope Project is going to create an opportunity we could use to initiate many conversations about spiritual things. The question is, what are we going to make of the opportunity?

In 1 Peter 3:5 Peter encourages us to 'always be ready to give the reason for the hope we have in Christ...' One way we can do this is by being always ready to tell our spiritual story in a simple and concise manner!

Beyond this, a broader conversation will come as the result of asking questions of others — not of our talking. We can ask people if they've every had a spiritual experience and, so long as there is trust in the conversation, we might be surprised to discover how many have. If we listen, and are wise in how we respond, this could help open up conversations about things we've otherwise struggled to talk with them about. However, if they suspect we will be judgmental or critical of their experiences, or push our own views too forcefully, the conversation will quickly end.

ADDRESSING THE FEAR ISSUE

Many Christians are nervous of talking about Jesus with others because they don't want to come across as pushy. Some fear their words might even put the other person off. How can we communicate without being misunderstood? We do well to look at Jesus. Consider that Jesus believed sex outside of marriage and dishonesty with money were sins, yet was still able to relate to the likes of the prostitutes and tax-collectors so well that he was nicknamed by the Pharisees as 'a friend of sinners'. How did he disagree with them without leaving them feeling judged? It's called grace, and its companion is called communication skills — and we need them to be effective witnesses in our culture today!



Let's not start by talking, but by asking questions. To communicate a point, why not tell a story instead of stating what you believe to be true? Then ask them a question, and listen to their story, because it's about dialogue — not monologue!

A conversation is like a game of tennis. If both people aren't hitting the ball then there is no conversation! If we can learn to play 'tennis' in our conversations, using stories and questions, we'll soon discover just how easy a conversation about spiritual things with a New Zealander can be. Encouraging people to consider faith is not difficult if the relational opportunity is there, the manner graceful and good questions are asked.

This update is one of a series of five. There might be benefit in keeping it so you can review its content at another time.

Back cover picture: Jack Morgan, Marsden's first preaching at Oihi Bay, 1814. Auckland, Weekly News, 1964. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, N.Z. Used with permission.

Painting on front cover and pages 2-3: Clark, Russell Stuart 1905-1966. Samuel Marsden's service at Oihi Bay, 1814. Ref: B-077-006. Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington. Used with permission.

WORKSHEET

1. What were you like before your spiritual experiences?
2. What was the experience?
3. How did that change you?

Practise telling this story. Keep it really simple, and keep it short.

WHAT IS NEEDED NOW?

As a reminder

1. Please pray for the Hope Project, that God will use it to draw many to investigate and better understand the Christian faith.
2. Please give generously. The needs are significant, but if we all give a bit, the project can easily be covered.
3. Please prepare yourself for the conversations.



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This booklet was written by Dave Mann, the Hope Project Coordinator,
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