

eColenso

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A lecture at Woodville

The *Woodville Examiner* of 16 May 1890 reported

LECTURE.

A lecture was given by the Rev W. Colenso in aid of the funds of the Public Library on Tuesday evening in Bickerton's Hall. There was a good attendance. His Worship the Mayor presided and briefly introduced the lecturer, who delivered a most interesting discourse on "The Proverbs and Proverbial Sayings of the Ancient Maories." The Rev gentleman said the proverbs of a nation represented its wit, genius, and wisdom. There were 200,000 proverbs among the nations of Europe alone. He referred to the prevalence of proverbs amongst the early and barbarous nations and instanced their great use in the Scriptures. In the case of the New Zealander the great value of proverbs and proverbial sayings appeared in the oratory in which these natives excelled. The lecturer had collected from 1200 to 1400 Maori proverbs, and had good reason to believe there were many which had been lost and many never known to Europeans. The lecturer pointed out the high class of thought and the wide range of subjects which these proverbs covered. Many of them referred to their ancestors, and to plants and animals long since extinct. He had obtained eight ancient proverbs regarding the moa, which carried them far back into the night of history. These proverbs of the ancient Maoris largely inculcated

industry, perseverance, and the moral qualities generally, and were denunciatory of idleness, selfishness, inhospitality, and vice. The ancient Maories were a highly moral people and the present race was quite different. They had inherited the vices of their forefathers without their virtues and had also adopted the vices incident to civilization. The rev. gentleman concluded his lecture with numerous instances of Maori proverbs, some of which caused much amusement.

On the motion of Mr Haggan a hearty vote of thanks was passed to the lecturer. An enjoyable concert then took place, embracing the following items:—Song, "True Till Death," by Mr Pike; flute solo, "Pou Pourri," by Mr G. T. Hall; solo, "Fading Away," Miss Sowry; glee, "Home Sweet Home," by the Hall family which was enthusiastically encored, and they responded with "On who will o'er the Downs with me," song, "Big Ben," by Mr Seabright; solo, "Spring Memories," Mrs Walsh; song, "Good Company," Mr Pike.

Mr Hall expressed the thanks of the Library committee to those ladies and gentlemen who had kindly assisted in the entertainment.

Colenso's diary and his letters to Coupland Harding of 12 and 14 May 1890 refer to the journey by train to Dannevirke, then Woodville for the lecture. Rain fell persistently. Perhaps more interestingly though, three pages of notepaper tipped in to a volume of printed work (ATL P 919.31 COL 1871–1901) show his physical and mental preparation for the lecture.

Bring:—

Ink, Notep., Blotting do.
Seeds, Arthropodium cirrh.

thick new Trowsers. Nt. Sht.
new Socks, Drawers, Shirt,

Natal Sermons, 2 vols.

his thick vol. on Jews, &c.

Perowne, vol. I. Luther's Sermons

Stanley's Xn. Hist.

Hooker's B. Flora—last sm. ed.

Author's Copy on Ferns (for Lecture)

? Alford's Eng. 2 vols (Saywell's).

sm. needle & cotton

flat file for teeth

Quinine

2, 3, Copies Mao. Lex. paper, for Webb, &c.

Ditto Ty. Waitangi

See, in Dicty., gramm.¹ terms used by me
in my Paper on Mao. Proverbs, &c.

Bring:—

Ink, Notep., Blotting &c.

Seeds, Arthropodium cirrh. (Rengarenga seeds, which he often gave as a gift)

thick new trowsers. Nt. Sht.

new Socks, Drawers, shirt,

Natal Sermons, 2 vols. (by his cousin, Bishop JW Colenso, Natal)

his thick vol. on Jews, &c. (Lectures on the Pentateuch and the Moabite Stone by JW Colenso)

Perowne, vol I. Luther's Sermons (J. J. Stewart Perowne The Book of Psalms, a New Translation with Introductions and Notes, Explanatory and Critical)

Stanley's Xn. Hist. (Arthur Penrhyn Stanley Christian Institutions Essays on Ecclesiastical Subjects)

Hooker's B. Flora—last sm. ed. (British Flora)

Author's copy on Ferns (for Lecture) *over (see next page)

? Alford's Eng. 2 vols (Saywell's). (Perhaps Henry Alford. A Plea for the Queen's English; Stray Notes on Speaking and Spelling and William Saywell ... What Reformation Is Necessary to Prevent Popery and to Avert God's Judgments from the Nation.

sm. needle & cotton

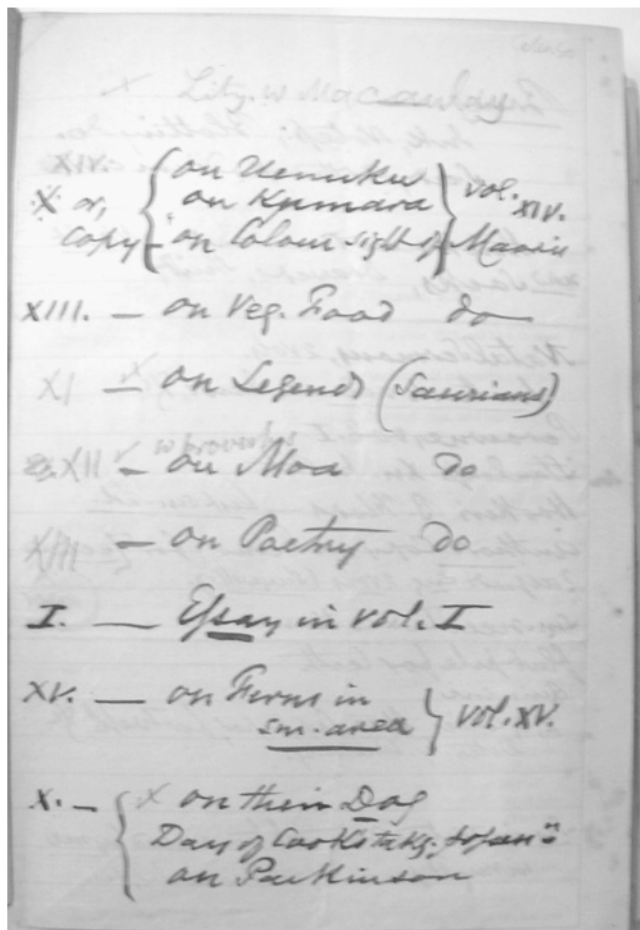
flat file for teeth (???—of a saw one might hope)

Quinine (for the flu)

2, 3, Copies Mao. Lex. paper, for Webb, &c (His Maori Lexicon; Rev. AS Webb of Woodville)

Ditto Ty. Waitangi (His Treaty of Waitangi booklet)

See, in Dicty., gramm.¹ terms used by me in my Paper on "Mao. Proverbs," &c. (His 1879 Trans. NZ I paper Contributions towards a better Knowledge of the Maori Race).



Lity. w. Macaulay (His *Three Literary Papers* referring to Macaulay's New Zealander in the ruins of London)

- XIV { on Uenuku }
 * or, { on Kumara } vol. XIV.
 Copy — { on Colour sight of Maoris }
 XIII. — on Veg. Food do.
 XI — on Legends (Saurians)
 XII — on Moa do.
 XIII — on Poetry do.
 I. — Essay in vol. I
 XV. — on Ferns in sm. area } vol. XV.
 X. — { on their Dog
 Day of Cook's takg. possess.
 on Parkinson

(These all refer to
 Colenso's *Transactions*
 papers which he was
 intending to quote in
 his lecture at
 Woodville).

Preliminary.—

1. To Gent. of Press (reporters) if any present: as spk. in at least 2 langs. will gladly look over copy—or revise proof, till 2 tomorrow.
2. Hope some Mao. Scholars present:— shall give twice Mao. words.
3. Note, diffce. in Dialects:— nouns.
4. If requested—to make clear, will give a prov., or its meaning twice.

In looking at "Woodv. Ex."—curious coincidence
2 advts. togr. of 2 entertainments 2 nights follg.,
should meet here in this inland Bush town
for the first time: almost ^{of ea. other} opposite!—

1. Modern, ^{physical}, height of civilization: showing
agility of body & mastery over horses, &c.—
(Yet the ^{ancient} Gks., Egyptians, & Assyrs., excelled in Chariot
driving, & had their Chariot-races.)

2. Ancient, intellectual, yet from a Bar-
barian people

* * * Those of you present who enjoyed
the performances last night at the
Circus, will, I trust, be equally pleased.

Preliminary.—

1. To Gent. of Press (reporters) if any present: as spk. in (at least) 2 langs. will gladly look over "Copy"—or revise proof, till 2 tomorrow.
2. Hope some Mao. Scholars present:— shall give twice Mao. Words.
3. Note, diffce. in dialects:— nouns.
4. If requested—to make clear, will give a prov., or its meaning twice.

EA Haggen, editor of the
Woodville Examiner, was
present.

prov = proverb

In looking at "Woodv. Ex."—curious coincidence
2 advts. togr. of 2 entertainments 2 nights follg.,
should meet here in this inland Bush town
for the first time: almost opposite ^{of ea. other}!—

1. Modern, ^{physical}, height of civilization: showing
agility of body & mastery over horses, &c.—
(Yet the ^{ancient} Gks., Egyptians, & Assyrs., excelled in Chariot
driving, & had their Chariot-races:)

2. Ancient, intellectual, yet from a Bar-
barian people

* * * Those of you present who enjoyed
the performances last night at the
Circus, will, I trust, be equally pleased.

Wirth's circus and
Colenso's lecture were
mentioned in the
Woodville Examiner in the
same column—see next
page—and here Colenso
contrasts their attributes....

Wirth's celebrated **Circus** arrived yesterday. The **Circus** is located on the allotment adjoining the **Star Hotel**. There should be a big crowd to witness the show to-night.

As some apprehension appears to exist as to the state of the lower part of the school by some who have not really read the report, we would point out that, besides the infant room proper, Mrs Bowden had charge of standard 1 and the upper preparatory. In the former, a class of 40, only one failed; in the latter, 22 out of 34 obtained a pass equal to standard 1. This is the best work ever done in this department of the school. In the infant room more work has really been done, but to attain to the high standard required by the Inspector it is necessary that a mistress shall have sole charge of the room. This will be possible if the attendance is regular enough this quarter to secure a second mistress. It is in the interests of parents, then, to see to this.

A sitting of the Land Court was held here this morning to deal with a portion of the Mangatainoko Block. Judge Trimble presided and Captain Butler, for the Government asked that the Government interest in the land under consideration be defined. Owing to the absence of one of the parties the Court had to be adjourned.

The Borough Council invite applications for the office of poundkeeper.

We remind our readers of the lecture to be given to-morrow night by the Rev. W. Colenso in Bickerton's Hall. The subject is an interesting one and the rev. gentleman knows how to deal with it.

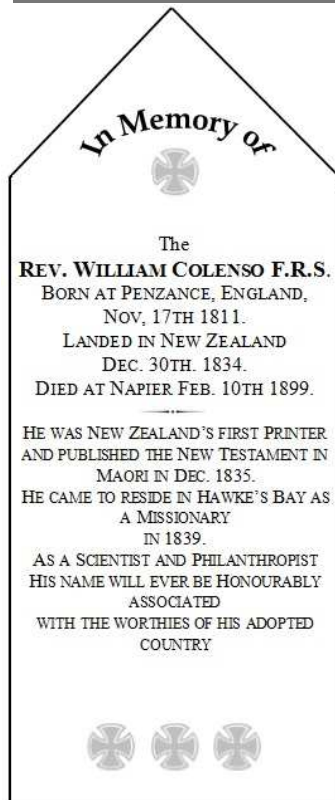
Friday 9	Wet! Left N. by 7.20 train, in rain (Governor & Lady travelling same time, separate Carriage). Arrived well at Dannevirke,—rain. Wrote Luff, Rotorua, in reply,—re Ferns, &c.
Saturday 10	Wet! Left for Woodville Received, on arrival, <i>kind</i> telegram from the Bp. also a letter from Mr. Webb (reply) Heavy rain at Woodville: wrote to Mr. Bold, reply.
Sunday 11	Cold, cloudy, raw. Mg. service, preached, Phil. II. 5: congn. about 40. Evg. service, preached, Mk. XI. 22: congn. about 50. <i>very attentive</i> , but ch. <i>very cold!!</i> — At night, wrote a note of thanks to the Bishop.
Monday 12	Wet, <i>very cold</i> snow on the neighbouring hills. Wrote (<i>privately</i>) to Capt. Russell, Col. Secretary <i>re</i> Mao. Lexicon, to Webb, to Adams, Waipawa, to R.C. Harding; to Robertshawe; to F. Reader.
Tuesday 13	Fine. Wrote to Hamuera, enclosing £1., advance At night gave a Lecture in Bickerton's Hall— “Maori proverbs & proverbial sayings,” good attendance, but a <i>wretched bad</i> light for my reading!! persevered for 1½ hours and was well-received.—
Wednesday 14	Wet. Called on Rev. R. Stewart. Mr. Burnett, Churchwarden, called, enqd. as to <i>pay</i> , &c. to me, which I refused. Afternoon returned to Dannevirke Wrote to R.C. Harding

The Rev. Mr Colenso will conduct services at the English church here for a time, and the Rev. Mr Webb will afterwards do so until other arrangements are made.

On the motion of Mr Florance, seconded by Mr Burnett, a hearty vote of thanks was passed to Rev. W. Colenso, F.R.S., for the valuable help he has freely rendered in conducting the church services during the past 4 months at considerable pecuniary loss and great personal inconvenience to himself. The Bishop in speaking to the motion expressed his sense of the great obligation he was under to Mr Colenso for his services more especially as without his assistance it would have been impossible to maintain more than fortnightly services during the last 4 months.

Votes of thanks were also passed to Rev. A. S. Webb for his services;

The cathedral memorial tablet



At the Church of England Diocesan Synod on 26 September 1899,

The Rev. E. Robertshawe moved,— “That this Synod desires to place on record its deep sense of loss in 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, the Revs. F. E. T. Simcox and J. C. Eccles, and by Messrs H. Burnett and H. Hill, each of whom added some tribute to the memory of the late Mr Colenso, and testified to the far reaching and unostentatious nature of his generosity. —Mr Simcox suggested it would be fitting that a memorial to his name should 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 the Synod stood while the motion was put and carried.

That afternoon Henry Hill moved,

That a committee be appointed to provide for the erection of a tablet in the Cathedral

to the memory of the late Rev. William Colenso, F.R.S., the committee to consist of the Very Rev. the Dean, C. H. Edwards, W. Wood, and the mover ; (b) that application be made to the Cathedral Chapter for permission to place such tablet in the Cathedral.

On 5 October 1901 the *Herald* recorded that the report of the Colenso memorial committee was accepted by the Synod. I can find no record of the placement of the tablet.

The William Colenso memorial tablet in the wall of the old St John's cathedral was destroyed in the 1931 Napier earthquake and has not been replaced.

We think it should be.

1877: ON THE NAPIER ELECTION

The "People's William" came out in good form yesterday, and made a stump speech full of fun, of the kind which always amuses a Hastings audience. Unfortunately, an amusing speech is not always a convincing one. Mr Colenso said of the other candidates, "Let the boys play." We say of him, "Let the old man stop at home." The electors know what is good for him better than he does himself, and despite his own positive assurances to the contrary the voting on Thursday will secure for him that leisure to which he is so well entitled, and leave him free to proceed with the compilation of the Maori Lexicon. The electors as a whole do not favor geology as a study, and a fossil politician stands no chance.

—*Te Wananga* 10 February 1877

The editor of *Te Wananga* (and probably author of this) was John White 1826–1891, former secretary to Governor Grey and Native Land Court interpreter. In 1871, to Colenso's astonishment, he had offered to *sell* Colenso a list of 150 te reo words for the *Lexicon*. Later he was appointed to write an official Maori history, in six volumes 1887–1890: *The ancient history of the Maori, his mythology and traditions*. Colenso wrote to Hector in 1880, "... he is a terrible fellow for romancing, & running off to antipodal extremes; utterly devoid of clear & sober judgment, or of making any thing approaching to a reasonable deduction. Indeed, he firmly believes all the Bible says, for he has more than once told me so:—ergo.—"

"The longer I live the more difficult I find it,—to fall in w. persons who are able—competent—to draw reasonable, unprejudiced, deductions. Education, alone, won't give it,—nor will Experience. A man with an untrammelled mind is rare,—generally all have so much to unlearn—first."

William Colenso to Andrew Luff
19 July 1878.

Like many highly intelligent people he reached conclusions quickly, so was regarded by other people as overbearing.

—*Christopher Merrett*
(of Bishop JW Colenso)

"Colenso Hill"

The *Auckland Star* of 11 January 1939 carried the last mention of Colenso Hill that I can find: when and why was the name dropped?

Mr. and Mrs. F. D. Logan, of Colenso Hill, Napier, are holiday visitors to Auckland.

Colenso & Bidwill

The *Hawke's Bay Herald* of 10 February 1891 reported a meeting of the Hawke's Bay Philosophical Institute at which Rev. William Colenso exhibited two interesting specimens,

The first was a specimen of the bloom of *Crinum Asiaticum*, concerning which these was quite a history to tell. Its introduction was due to Mr Bidwell, whose name is well known to botanists, and who was the first European to ascend Tongariro. He visited Mr Colenso at the Bay of Islands some 54 or 55 years ago, and on his return to Australia he sent over a number of seeds and bulbs. Of these only two tubers of *Crinum* grew, and when Mr Colenso came to Hawke's Bay he brought these with him, and for 25 years watched and waited to see them bloom, but in vain. At last his patience was rewarded by a fine spike of bloom, and since then the plants have year after year sent up flower stems. The exhibit was much admired.

Crinum asiaticum is the spider lily and Colenso referred to this event in his letters—to Harding, 5 February 1891,

I have a fine Australian plant now here in my garden, sent me from Sydney by B. on his return:—it was 25 years w. me before it flow-



Image by Drew Avery - Poison Bulb (*Crinum asiaticum*)
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=8923029>

ered, but since, it has flowered every year! The tuber, when sent, was of the size of a small walnut,—now it is as big as a man's head.—

... and again, on 27 March 1893,

A handsome bulbous plant B. sent me (w. many others, seeds, &c.) is now flg. in my garden: I kept it 25 yrs. before it flowd.—now, & for many years, it flowers regy. every year.

Colenso first heard of Bidwill in 1939; he wrote to Alan Cunningham on 27 May,

A Mr Bidwell (?) who has been some time botanizing at the Southward has ascended (so Fame says) to the top of Tongariro, and has gained several plants new to science; he is now in the Thames; I intend to look out for him, on his appearance in the Bay of Islds.

He wrote again to Cunningham on 12 July, after Bidwill had visited him,

Ere this I suppose you have seen Mr Bidwell, who remained one night under my roof – he has somewhat new from the Southd., but deals somewhat in the Marvellous. However I found him very communicative and obliging; he gave me several native seeds which I have carefully sown, so that tho I may not be permitted to tread the “cloud capt” summit of Tongariro, yet I may have the pleasure of rearing Alpine plants in the Bay of Islds.

In 1847 Bidwill became Superintendent of the botanical gardens in Sydney, later Commissioner for Crown Lands, but died

at 38 in 1853, after having been lost in the bush. Rewa Glenn wrote,

He was an ardent botanist; he had discovered many new plants and collected rare seeds. To the *Gardeners' Chronicle* he contributed many interesting papers on horticultural subjects, including hybridising, his specialty. As we have seen he was the first to make a collection of alpine plants in our country.

He and Colenso corresponded—Colenso wrote to JD Hooker on 17 May 1843, “*I have heard that Bidwill is married*” and on 28 August 1854, *By the bye did I ever tell you that Bidwell had told me, on his last visit to N.Z. that he had brought from N.S.W. a quantity of Seeds & had scattered them in suitable localities wherever he went! for which I blamed him. Poor fellow! he too is gone.*

Colenso had for years wanted a copy of Bidwill's *Rambles in New Zealand*; to RC Harding 5 February 1891,

I much wanted (Bidwell's ascent of Tongariro) but failed: I knew B., he

stopped at my house on his return jy. w. his plants. Should you ever notice B's book,—try to get it—it is a small one,—

25 March 1891: *Do you know, if a copy of “Bidwell's Rambles in N.Z.,” is in any Liby. at Wgn.?*

16 March 1893: *When an oppy. offers, I should like you to look into a vol. in Gen Assy. Liby. (supposing you can do so.)—viz. “Bidwells ascent of Tongariro”, &c—near the end, perhaps; as he staid at my house on his return, & I took him off to his vessel on his leaving N.Z. I should like to know what he says, (if anything) of the Bay Islands, my spns., and me. (My emphasis).*

27 March 1893: *I thank you, trebly, for your very prompt research re Bidwell's book, &c. His omissions (?) evidently help to clear—he says (your Ms.) “Arrived at Bay Islands 5. Feby. 1839”—and from Deiffenbach's wk. I copy,—“March 2/39” as the day of his ascending Tongariro, so that it was after (some time in Apl. or in May, perhaps) that he was w. me in the Bay, as we went over his collns. togr., & I took him off, to the vessel in which he ret'd. to Sydney.*

(It was after 27 May 1839—see above).



John Carne Bidwill 1815–1853 ▲

▼ The bog pine *Halocarpus bidwillii*, photograph by Mike Lusk.



A dangerous and, indeed, perilous (*sic*) undertaking...

Henry Hill related Bidwill's account of his ascent of Ngauruhoe in a paper read before the Hawke's Bay Philosophical Institute on 10 August 1891 and published in *Trans. N.Z. Inst* 1891; 24: 603,

Mountain ascended, 2nd and 3rd March, 1839.—"When I arose in the morning I was astonished to see the mountain around covered with snow except the cone, which was invisible. The natives said the mountain had been making a noise in the night, which at the time I thought was only fancy. As I was toiling over a steep hill I heard a noise which caused me to look up, and saw the mountain was in a state of eruption: a thick column of black smoke rose up for some distance, and then spread out like a mushroom. The noise, which was very loud, and not unlike that of a steam-engine, lasted for half an hour, and then ceased after two or three sudden interruptions.... I could see no fire, nor do I believe that the eruption was anything more than hot water and steam, although from the density of the latter it looked like very black smoke. I toiled on to the top of the hill, and was much disappointed at the other side of it: instead of being like what I had ascended, there was a precipice with a large stream of water at the bottom (Mangatepopo)..... As I progressed toward the cone I arrived at another stream of lava so fresh that it looked as if it had been ejected but yesterday.... I had no idea of the meaning of a sea of rocks until I crossed them: the edges of the stony billows were so sharp that it was difficult to cross them without cutting one's clothes into shreds.... I at last arrived at the cone. Ther., 65° in sun; bar., 25¹⁴/₂₀ in. The cone is entirely composed of loose cinders.... After I had ascended about two-thirds of the way I got into what appeared a watercourse. It was lucky for me another eruption did not take place while I was in it, or I should have infallibly been boiled to death, as I afterwards found out it led to the lowest part of the crater, and, from indubitable proofs, that a stream of hot mud and water had been running there during the time I saw the smoke from the top. The crater was the most terrible abyss I ever looked into or imagined. The rocks overhung it on all sides, and it was not possible to see above 10 yards into it from the quantity of steam which it was constantly dis-

charging. From the distance I measured along its edge I imagine it is at least a quarter of a mile in diameter, and is very deep. The stones I threw in which I could hear strike the bottom did not do so in less than seven or eight seconds; but the greater part I could not hear. It was impossible to get to the inside of the crater, as all the sides I saw were, if not quite precipitous, actually overhanging, so as to make it very disagreeable to look over them.... I did not stay at the top so long as I could have wished, because I heard a strange noise coming out of the crater, which I thought betokened another eruption."

The following is Mr. Dyson's account as taken from Hochstetter, p. 372, *et seq.* (ascent made March, 1851): "The crater is nearly circular, ... and I should think it was 600 yards in diameter. The lip of the crater was sharp. Outside there was almost nothing but loose cinders and ashes; inside the crater there were large overhanging rocks of a pale-yellow colour, evidently produced by the sublimation of sulphur. The lip of the crater is not of equal height all round—the south is the highest, and the north, where I stood, the lowest. There was no possible way of descending the crater. I stretched out my neck and looked down the fearful abyss which lay gaping before me; but my sight was obstructed by large clouds of steam or vapour, and I do not think I saw 30ft. down. I dropped into the crater several large stones, and it made me shudder to hear some of them rebounding from rock to rock."

What makes these accounts more interesting and valuable is the fact that both Mr. Bidwill and Mr. Dyson were personally known to my respected and valued friend the Rev. William Colenso, F.R.S.—who, I am pleased to say, is present with us to-night—at whose house, curiously, each traveller stayed on his return from the mountain. To me the circumstance is doubly interesting, because, when relating my own experiences to Mr. Colenso, I had no notion whatever that he had heard almost a similar story nearly fifty years before—indeed, years before I was born—and this from the very men who succeeded in what at that time was a dangerous and, indeed, perilous undertaking.

I can find no information on Henry Dyson, second to climb Ngauruhoe—and Colenso has recorded nothing of his 1851 visit—Ed



"Rua Pahu and Tongariro", engraving (JJ Merrett del., L Haghe lith.) from Dieffenbach's *Travels*

John William Colenso: human rights activist?*

by Christopher Merrett

DURING November 2003 the Anglican Diocese of Natal marked its 150th anniversary. Inevitably many of the celebrations focused on its first bishop, John William Colenso (1818–1883), who lived at the Ekukhanyeni mission just outside Pietermaritzburg for thirty years. It is a remarkable fact that this city, although consistently the butt of jokes about “sleepy hollow”, has significant links with towering intellectual figures such as Colenso and Alan Paton and, more remotely, with Mohandas Gandhi.

Colenso’s life and work is not simply one of historical interest, but of direct relevance to the modern world. He was a product, of course, of his age, that of imperialism. His greatest flaw, perhaps, was that he supported it and explained its deficiencies and crimes as the result of human failings rather than the system itself. Nevertheless, he may be considered a forefather of South Africa’s post-liberation Constitution and a distant patron of the civil rights groups that played such a key role in South Africa after the Soweto Uprising.

The bishop’s belief in worthiness and godliness revealed in all humanity was not reflected in the South African body politic until the post-apartheid Constitution was unveiled and universal suffrage

achieved. His Victorian opponents, with their pessimistic view of humankind and their belief in religious and racial superiority, created a frame of mind that led straight down a path to the tragedy of apartheid. The exploited and dispossessed were conquered, heathen and black. He preached mercy, humility and justice and his belief, and actions based on it, was a warning to (and about) those who regard themselves as specially chosen. History is replete with outrages based on exclusivity and the zealotry that it encourages. Colenso’s riposte was humanism and universalism.

His view of the world and opposition to dogma were a fundamental challenge to the power structures and social order of the day. The reaction of the church authorities was to try him for heresy, a taste of the political trials for treason that were to come in South Africa. As a mathematician and theologian living in an age of significant scientific discovery he married logic with courage and pointed out that some of what appears in the Old Testament could not possibly be the literal truth. For this he was deprived of his bishopric and excommunicated in a rigged trial arranged by his opponents, a laughable travesty of justice.

The logical consequence of his religious belief and personal experiences was to become involved in colonial politics. In 1874 he protested against the treatment of Chief Langaibalele and the Hlubi, drawing attention to the importance of the rule of law and principles of justice, qualities starkly lacking in the grubby little colony of Natal.

* *From the Thornveld* December 12, 2017 / Reflections on the Rainbow Nation; first published in *The Witness* on 6 January 2004 and entitled “Confronting tyranny”. <http://www.fromthethornveld.co.za/1-john-william-colenso-human-rights-activist/>

For his pains he earned the enmity of the colonists and the abuse of the authorities in an attempt to discredit him. In this, the press of the day played a dishonourable part. Colenso achieved some success – censure of the Natal government and the recall of Lieutenant-Governor Benjamin Pine – but in the long run he failed to prevent the dismemberment of the Zulu kingdom. After the Anglo-Zulu War he acted as spokesperson for King Cetshwayo and his meticulous collecting and reading of documents was a key factor in establishing the truth and countering government propaganda.

Historical caution prevents us seeing Colenso, the ascetic nineteenth century clergyman and imperialist, as one of Pietermaritzburg's first human rights campaigners. What he would have made of the culture of the liberation movement in the Emergency years of the 1980s is an intriguing question, but almost certainly he would have enjoyed a spell as an involuntary guest of the security police. This eminent Victorian was a thoroughly modern man, unafraid to confront the powerful with uncomfortable truth. For this he suffered at the hands of a legal system that lacked any semblance of justice, a political trial designed to re-establish the authority of power. The consequences, and an ongoing campaign of vilification from all quarters, amounted to systematic censorship. His response was research and documentation and the establishment of an effective channel of communication with the world outside Natal.

Colenso was a prophetic figure in the historical sense. His courageous communication of his viewpoint was rewarded by outrageous victimisation and the obstruction of his message. To this he responded with a spirited promotion of what he regarded as truth in defence of justice and moral authority, its effectiveness compounded by his contacts in England. This was a pattern that was to be repeated almost exactly during the years of the Emergency. It may not be possible to link directly the Victorian imperialist churchman with the anti-apartheid

movement of the late twentieth century, but there is little doubt that he acted as a role model for confrontation with abusive power and tyranny. Yet his only secular memorial in Pietermaritzburg is a suburb named Sobantu.

A surprising amount of this could be paraphrased and said of his cousin, Rev William Colenso in New Zealand—Ed.

He was a product, of course, of his age, that of imperialism. His greatest flaw, perhaps, was that he supported it and explained its deficiencies and crimes as the result of human failings rather than the system itself.

His belief in worthiness and godliness revealed in all humanity was not reflected in the New Zealand body politic. His Victorian opponents, with their pessimistic view of humankind and their belief in religious and racial superiority.... The exploited and dispossessed were conquered, heathen and black. He preached mercy, humility and justice and his belief, and actions based on it, was a warning to (and about) those who regard themselves as specially chosen.

His view of the world and opposition to dogma were a fundamental challenge to the power structures and social order of the day. The reaction of the authorities was to try him for illegal occupation of Maori land.... he was found guilty in a rigged trial arranged by his opponents, a laughable travesty of justice.

The logical consequence of his religious belief and personal experiences was to become involved in colonial politics.

William Colenso typescript rejected

Among the AG Bagnall papers in the Alexander Turnbull Library is a letter from JC Beaglehole as Chairman of the Board of Management of the N.Z. University Press, dated 21 October 1947,

Dear Mr. Bagnall

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. Petersen, but, I regret to say, finds itself unable to undertake its publication.

In saying this I do not want to be taken as being entirely condemnatory. On the contrary, the readers' reports made to the Board praise highly the material you and Mr. Petersen have assembled, and the very great fundamental interest of the story you have to tell. The Board, while declining the book in its present form, would certainly be prepared to reconsider it if it underwent a thorough process of revision and rewriting.

I enclose a copy of one of the reports made to the Board. After thinking myself over the typescript a good deal, and (I assure you) sympathetically, I have come to the conclusion that what it should have now is the "thorough process of revision and rewriting" - reshaping, in fact - under one hand, (I do not rule out the necessity of final approval from the other collaborator.)

I very much hope you will not be discouraged from giving this new treatment to what I feel is potentially a biography of the highest value.

Yours very truly

The letter did enclose a (mercifully) unsigned but savage critique, ending with the words, "I have made some pages of notes as I read and can make these available".

Whether Bagnall and Petersen did avail themselves of these pages of notes is lost from the record and the next we read is a handwritten note from Beaglehole to Bagnall dated 3 January 1949,

Dear Bagnall,

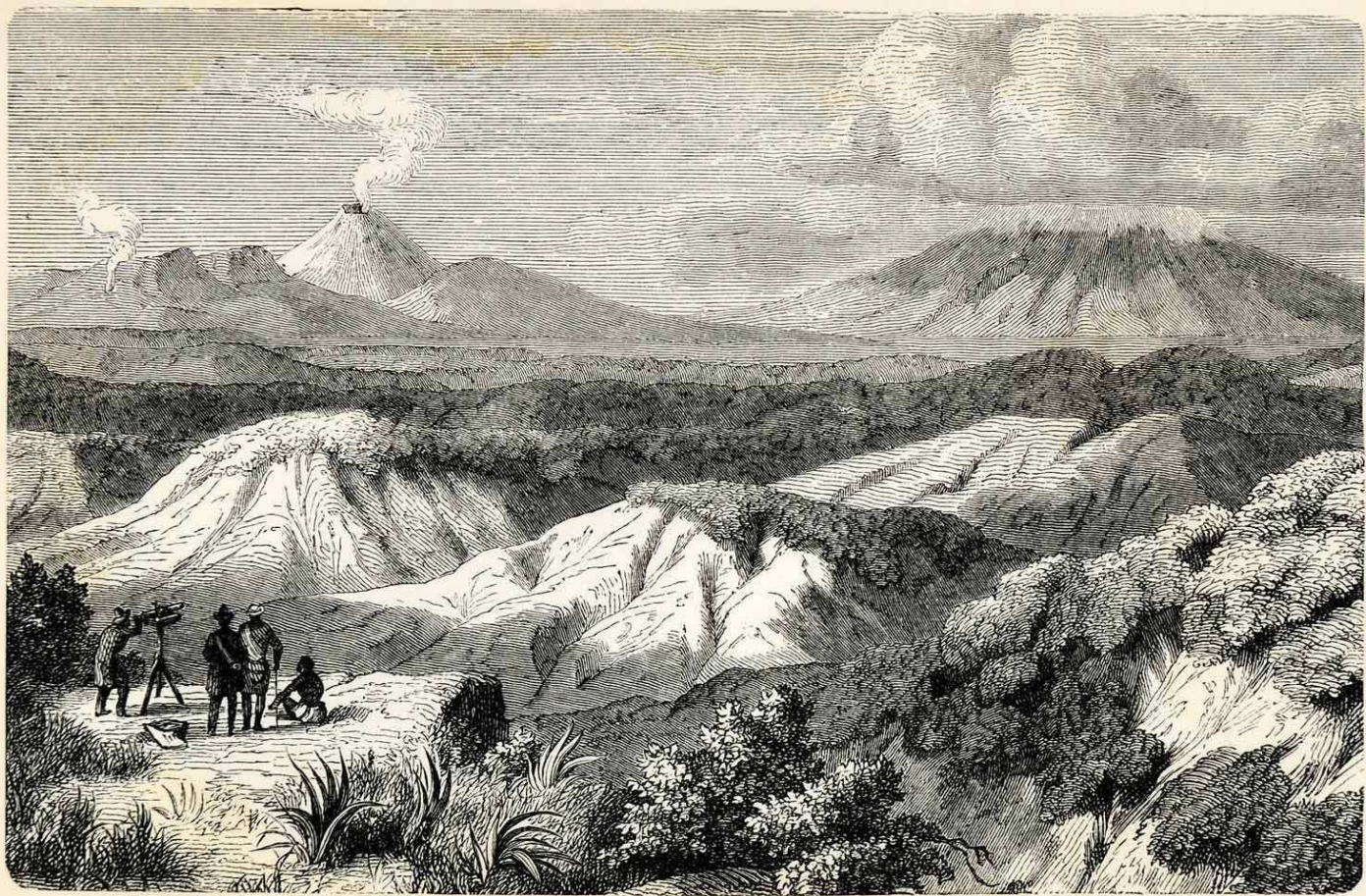
It was very good of you to give me a copy of your Colenso, & I thank you very much. I can't give you any further impression of the book, as my wife seized it when I brought it home, & has been reading it ever since.

I'm sorry you didn't feel able to do more to it & re-submit it to the Univ. Press - but then its publication would certainly have been delayed a good deal. And I will say one thing about Reed - he does get the stuff out. I hope it sells well.

Yours sincerely

"My wife has been reading it"? "I hope it sells well"? "I will say one thing"? "I'm sorry you didn't feel able to do more to it"? "Reed does get the stuff (stuff?!!) out"?

Condescending academic arrogance.



1879 wood engraving: Ruapehu and Tongariro, New Zealand

Further wanderings with William Colenso

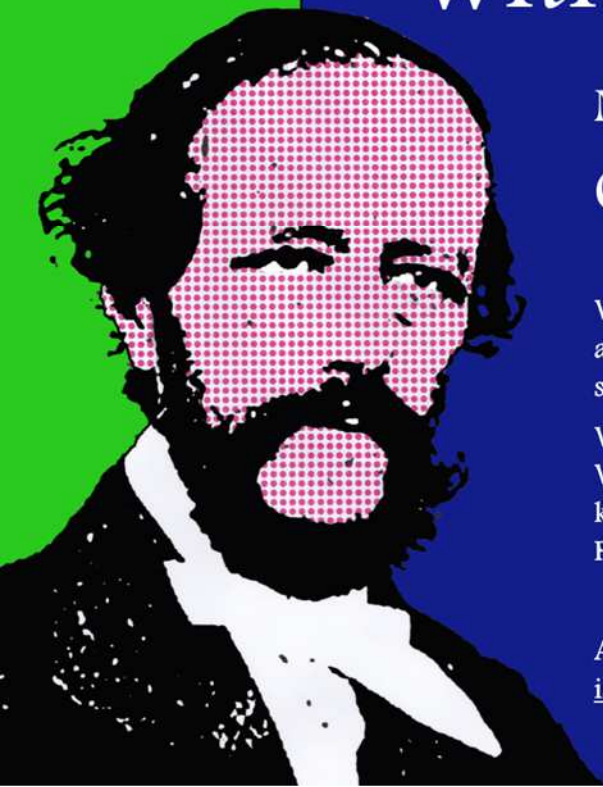
Napier 22–24 February 2019

Call for papers

William Colenso was a nineteenth century printer, preacher, explorer, linguist, avid reader, churchman, writer, politician and more, at a time when multi-specialists were fervidly examining this new and fascinating country.

We invite papers on any subject related to the life, times or interests of William Colenso – in other words, on any topic related to nineteenth century knowledge – for a conference to be held at MTG Hawke's Bay from 22 to 24 February 2019.

An abstract of fewer than 200 words should be sent to Ian St George at istge@yahoo.co.nz before 1 November 2018.



Colenso's no. 57

By Clem Earp

In the first substantial collection of plants sent by Colenso to Sir William Hooker, dated 20 July 1841, the specimens were numbered so that Colenso might refer to them in an accompanying letter.

The numbers do not form a complete sequence in the letter. For example, no. 111 and no. 112, although referred to in passing at the very end of the letter, do not form part of the sequence, and we have no idea at the present time as to what they were.

In most cases, those actually mentioned in the letter have some type of identification, even if it is just 'small plant' (although usually he is more specific, and often hazarding a guess as to family, genus or even species).

There are a few where the mention is restricted to just the locality. One such is no. 57, which has only the note: 'From a ravine, near Waitangi Cataract, Bay of Islands, 1840'.¹ As to what the plant was, there is no indication.

Recently, while searching for the location of other items from the same shipment, I came across no. 57 in the collection of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh (RBGE). In 1841, Hooker was at Glasgow University, and it appears that although he took most of his herbarium with him when he later went to Kew, some specimens from that early shipment were left behind at Glasgow University, and much later still were transferred to Edinburgh.

The specimens are currently on the same sheet as a specimen of *Hy-*

menophyllum cuneatum, a Chilean fern, and indeed the whole sheet appears in the RBGE online catalogue as '*Hymenophyllum cuneatum* var. *rariforme*'. Most specimens on the sheet, (the others being a group labelled as *Hymenophyllum cuneatum* from Chiloé, a large island very close to the Chilean mainland), are correctly labelled as *Hymenophyllum rarum*, and are stated to come from New Zealand and to have been collected by Colenso. One group of them has the additional locality: 'Waitangi Cataract. Bay of Islands. New Zealand'. This contains almost precisely the wording in Colenso's letter for no. 57, which does not appear elsewhere in Colenso's letters, and we must therefore consider the mystery solved.

A search of the RBGE catalogue for *Hymenophyllum rarum* will not, however, bring up this herbarium sheet; rather, as stated above, you have to search for it under a different name. I'll attempt to unravel the complex history which resulted in this situation. Those uninterested in such minutiae had better look away now!

The name game

The species *Hymenophyllum rarum* was named by Robert Brown in 1810, and based on a Tasmanian fern.² Brown's fern descriptions were very terse, so that botanists familiar only with what he had published might easily conflate his species with others.

Similar New Zealand plants were named *Hymenophyllum semibivale* by Sir William Hooker in 1831,³ based on plants collected by Archibald Menzies in Dusky Sound in 1791.

Also in 1810, Willdenow described a species *Hymenophyllum fumaroides* collected by Bory de Saint-Vincent from the Mascarene Islands

1. I.M. St George (2009), p. 146.

2. Brown (1810), p. 159.

3. Hooker & Greville (1831), t. 83.

in the Indian Ocean.⁴ The range of this species was extended to Brazil by Kaulfuss⁵ and (probably validly) the African continent, South Africa in particular, by Gustav Kunze.⁶

The species *Hymenophyllum cuneatum* was named by Kunze in 1837,⁷ and based on plants from the archipelago of Juan Fernández in the southeast Pacific 670 km from Chile. He gave a lengthy description, including the charming phrase ‘stipes ... seta porcina crassior’ (stipes as thick as a hog’s bristle). Even given Brown’s terse description, *H. rarum* is different, having bipinnate lanceolate fronds while those of *H. cuneatum* were described as ovate and tripinnate to bipinnate. Kunze explicitly listed ways in which *H. cuneatum* was different from *H. fumarioides*.

Colenso entered the name game when he named the New Zealand fern *Hymenophyllum imbricatum*.⁸ His cited specimens were not from the ‘Waitangi Cataract’ but from Pātāua on the Pacific Coast east of Whangārei. Unfortunately, the name had already been used by another author, so cannot be used for the New Zealand plants, which according to recent studies seem to differ from the Australian species and even from the plants growing in Dusky Sound.⁹

The players are now all named, and it only remains to assemble them. This was done by Sir William Hooker himself, who placed all the above species into *Hymenophyllum rarum*, which at a single stroke became a circum-polar species found in Australia, New Zealand, South America, Africa and even Ceylon.¹⁰

Needless to say, such an authoritative publication could not fail to be followed by other authors, such as Cheeseman in his *Manual of the New Zealand Flora*. Even when Christensen & Skottsberg as recently as the 1950s revised some of the old determinations, so that the Juan Fernández and South American forms previously known as *H. rarum* now became *H. cuneatum* var. *rariforme*, they still added Tasmania,

New Zealand and South Africa as possible localities (with queries) for their new taxon.¹¹ South American botanists do not now recognise var. *rariforme* as distinct from its species *cuneatum*, which they consider to be restricted to Juan Fernández and South America.¹² And by 1960, every Australian and New Zealand reference textbook had restricted *H. rarum* to the Australasian regions only.

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4. Willdenow (1810), p. 526.

5. Kaulfuss (1824), p. 269. The Brazilian specimens were sterile, and should not have been used.

6. Kunze (1836), p. 75.

7. Kunze (1837), p. 50.

8. Colenso (1845), p. 187.

9. Brownsey & Perrie (2016), p. 49.

10. Hooker (1846), p. 101.

11. Christensen & Skottsberg (1953), p. 8.

12. See, e.g., C. Larsen, M. Ponce & A. Scatagliini, 2013. Revisión de las especies de *Hymenophyllum* (Hymenophyllaceae) del sur de Argentina y Chile, <http://dx.doi.org/10.4067/S0717-66432013000200009>

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Figure: Colenso's collection of *Hymenophyllum rarum* from Waitangi, downloaded from <http://data.rbge.org.uk/herb/E00420031>, courtesy Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh.

