

**GOD'S OWN SILENCE?
AN ANALYSIS OF NEW
ZEALAND HISTORIANS'
TREATMENT OF THE
EVANGELICAL
BACKGROUND TO THE
TREATY OF WAITANGI¹**

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INTRODUCTION

In his article “God’s Own Silence” John Stenhouse has contended that New Zealand history has been secularised and the religious impact sidelined.² In this thesis he is not alone. Other historians such as Ian Breward, Peter Lineham and Allan Davidson have also noted this tendency. Davidson dubs it our “religious myopia.” Stenhouse, quoting from Breward, notes that “General histories have also mostly ‘written out, marginalised or trivialised’ religion.”³

In this article I put that theory to the test by examining an area of New Zealand history in which religious influence is hard to ignore – the evangelical humanitarian impulses behind that defining moment of our history, the Treaty of Waitangi.

Stenhouse claims that where recognisable religious figures appear in our history, rather than ignoring them, our general histories commonly paint them in a negative light. The particular brand of negative light reserved for the humanitarians is that they were “ineffectual”.⁴ In this article I examine some key general histories, along with a number of more specialised studies of the treaty and its background in order to analyse their treatment of the religious factors involved. Is the Christian influence ignored? Are the humanitarians treated as ineffectual?

EVANGELICALS AND THE TREATY OF WAITANGI

Firstly, let us begin with an overview of the history of the connection between evangelicals and the Treaty. Evangelicalism affected the Treaty through three groups of people: the Missionaries, the Aborigines Protection Society and the Christian

officials working in the Colonial office.⁵ In this article I am focusing upon the Colonial Office officials.

Evangelical beliefs were one of the motivations behind the Treaty of Waitangi. After slavery had been abolished in 1833, evangelicals turned their attention to other injustices. One of the most pressing issues they identified was the British abuse of native peoples in the colonies, thus the Aborigines Protection Society was born in 1837.⁶

Evangelicals were in a strong position to influence British policy. Both the Secretary of State for the Colonies (1835–1839), Lord Glenelg, and the Colonial Undersecretary (1836–1847), Sir James Stephen, had a strong evangelical faith that impacted upon their work in the British Colonial Office. These two men were Evangelical thoroughbreds, both being sons of prominent members of the Clapham Sect. Lord Glenelg was the son of Charles Grant. Sir James Stephen was the son of James Stephen, close friend and brother-in-law to William Wilberforce.

This article will focus upon Sir James Stephen, who as the chief civil servant

in the Colonial Office had the most impact upon the Treaty. Raised at Clapham, Stephen adopted the faith of his father. His Christianity was not merely the moralistic public form of faith common in the Victorian era, but true to evangelicalism was a faith of personal experience. His son, Leslie, observed that he always spoke of Christ with a deep reverence combined with personal affection.⁷ Stephen’s faith was also ascetic in nature; it is said that he once had a cigar and he found it so pleasurable he never had another!⁸ He deeply admired the Clapham Sect, but managed to avoid the narrowness of many of his contemporary evangelicals, among whom he was an object of suspicion due to his doubts about the doctrine of eternal damnation. Even in his choice

EVANGELICAL BELIEFS WERE ONE OF THE MOTIVATIONS BEHIND THE TREATY OF WAITANGI

2 John Stenhouse, “God’s Own Silence: Secular Nationalism, Christianity and the Writing of New Zealand History,” *New Zealand Journal of History* 38, no. 1 (2004): 52–71.

3 Ibid., 52. I. Breward, “Religion and New Zealand Society”, *New Zealand Journal of History*, 13, no. 2 (1979), 138–48, quotation on 139; Peter Lineham, “Religion”, in Colin Davis and Peter Lineham, eds, *The Future of the Past: Themes in New Zealand History* (Palmerston North: Massey University, 1991), 3–28; Allan K. Davidson, “New Zealand History and Religious Myopia”, in Susan Emilsen and William W. Emilsen, eds, *Mapping the Landscape: Essays in Australian and New Zealand Christianity*, Festschrift in Honour of Professor Ian Breward (New York: Peter Lang, 2000), 205–21.

4 Ibid.

5 McKenzie’s article gives a good summary of the Christian influences on the Treaty. Peter McKenzie, “Public Christianity and Te Tiriti O Waitangi: How the ‘Clapham Sect’ Reached down under,” *Stimulus: The New Zealand Journal of Christian Thought & Practice* 18, no. 4 (November 2010): 23–31.

6 The evangelicals were not the only Christian group who had a humanitarian concern for slaves and native peoples. In particular mention should also be made of Quakers and Congregationalists. However, for the purposes of this article I will focus on the particular work of the evangelical humanitarians.

7 Leslie Stephen, *The Life of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen* (Charleston, SC: Bibliolife, 2009); A claim that is also backed up by his daughter Emelia who wrote of his “profound and devout reverence”. Caroline Emelia Stephen and James Stephen, *The Right Honourable James Stephen: Letters, With Biographical Notes* (London: Forgotten Books, 2015), viii.

8 Kenneth N. Bell and W.P. Morell, eds., *Select Documents on British Colonial Policy 1830–1860*, 1968, xxii.

of marriage partner Stephen showed his fealty to Clapham; his wife was Jane Catherine Venn, daughter of the rector of Clapham. Perhaps one of the most telling tributes to his faith comes from the unlikely source John Stuart Mill who stated, "If all the English Evangelicals were like him, I think I should attend their Exeter Hall meetings myself, and subscribe to their charities."⁹

Following in his father's footsteps, Stephen chose a law career. He deliberately chose to work in the Colonial Office so he could continue the fight against slavery.¹⁰ He wrote to his cousin in 1829, "The last ten years of my life have been very busy ones, devoted not exclusively but mainly to promoting, as far as was compatible with the duties of my office, the extinction of slavery."¹¹ A letter to Sir T. F. Buxton also reveals Stephen's humanitarian motivations. "When I look on the last 24 years of my life, all of which have been passed either in the Colonial Office or in a close official connection with it, I cannot but be thankful for the innumerable opportunities which have been afforded me of contributing to the mitigation, if not the prevention, of the cruel wrongs which our country has inflicted on so large a portion of the human race... so long as I retain my position, may this right hand forget its cunning if I am faithless to the cause to which your life and the lives of our departed friends have been devoted"¹² His role in the office gradually grew from his appointment as Counsel in 1813, a job which over the years took more and more of his time. In 1834 he became Assistant Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, and finally from 1836–1847 he was the permanent Under-Secretary, a role with a great deal of influence. As Counsel he had the opportunity to play a key part in the victory of the Abolitionists, as he was called on to draw up the Slavery Abolition Act passed in 1833. His duties as Undersecretary were extensive and required an intimate knowledge of the intricate details of the

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disparate colonies and their legislation. However, Sir James' talents were well matched with his position. His "encyclopaedic memory",¹³ capacity for work, and love of efficiency made him very successful.¹⁴ One historian has claimed that, "Few men in a similar position have served the British Empire so well and merited praise to such a degree as he did."¹⁵ This service to Empire was rewarded with a Knighthood and membership of the Privy Council.

A subject of some debate amongst historians of the Colonial Office is the extent of Stephen's influence upon colonial policy.¹⁶ His contemporaries considered his influence to be considerable, his enemies, resenting this, called him "Mr. Oversecretary", "King Stephen" and "Mr. Mother Country". His son Fitzjames claimed, "it would perhaps be difficult to mention any man of his generation who could claim the title of a *legislator* with more justice than Sir James Stephen" (emphasis added) while Stephen's friend and colleague Henry

Taylor stated that Stephen "virtually governed the British Empire."¹⁷ While this no doubt overstates the case, there was some truth to the statement. The Colonial Office had a huge

volume of work to handle and, given that the position of Secretary of State for War and the Colonies was a political appointment that changed frequently, it was natural that Stephen was heavily leaned upon for advice. However, he did not have the power to make the decisions, only to advise and enact the decisions of his superiors, many of which also had to gain the approval of Treasury. James Fitzjames Stephen said of his father, "Though great weight was attached to Sir James Stephen's opinion and advice by his official superiors, and though he held strong opinions of his own upon the subjects which came before him, he had no real authority... he was constantly obliged to take part in measures which he

9 Ibid., xxxi.

10 In a letter to Henry Taylor in 1833 Stephen wrote, "Above all, I have enjoyed the satisfaction of knowing that my exertions have been contributing to the success of an object of extreme importance to the happiness of mankind, for which my father, and my connections and friends have been living almost exclusively." Stephen and Stephen, *The Right Honourable James Stephen: Letters, With Biographical Notes*, 34; Wilbert R. Shenk, "The Legacy of James Stephen," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 35, no. 4 (October 2011): 219; Paul Knaplund, "Sir James Stephen: The Friend of the Negroes," *The Journal of Negro History* 35, no. 4 (1950): 368, doi:10.2307/2715524.

11 Stephen and Stephen, *The Right Honourable James Stephen: Letters, With Biographical Notes*, 16.

12 Ibid., 45–46.

13 Noel Annan, *Leslie Stephen: His Thought and Character in Relation to His Time* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1952), 8.

14 Paul Knaplund, "Mr. Oversecretary Stephen," *The Journal of Modern History* 1, no. 1 (1929): 44; Bell and Morell, *Select Documents on British Colonial Policy 1830–1860*, xx; Henry Taylor, *Autobiography of Henry Taylor 1800–1875*, vol. 1 1800–1844 (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1885), 140–1, 233, <https://archive.org/stream/autobiographyhe05taylgoog#page/n12/mode/2up>.

15 Knaplund, "Mr. Oversecretary Stephen," 43.

16 Richard Ely, "From Sect to Church: Sir James Stephen's Theology of Empire," *Journal of Religious History* 19, no. 1 (June 1, 1995): 75–77, doi:10.1111/j.1467-9809.1995.tb00246.x; Helen Taft Manning, "Who Ran the British Empire 1830–1850?," *Journal of British Studies* 5, no. 1 (1965): 88–121.

17 Taylor, *Autobiography of Henry Taylor 1800–1875*, 1 1800–1844, 233.

regretted, and of which he disapproved.”¹⁸ However, of significance for this article is Manning’s claim that the period of Stephen’s strongest influence was during Lord Glenelg’s administration (1835–1839), precisely when British policy on New Zealand was being decided.¹⁹

It was Stephen’s clear conviction, in line with evangelical doctrine, that all are equal, and he worked hard to improve and protect the position of weak and oppressed peoples. He stated, “Unrestrained power must and will be abused. The desire of wealth unless checked by precise and strict laws will engender oppression.”²⁰ He fought for racial equality and social justice in the British colonies.²¹

Initially the Aborigines Protection Society, Glenelg and Stephen were opposed to British colonisation in New Zealand, fearing it could only have negative impact upon the Māori. Indeed, previous experience of the American Indians and Australian Aborigines strongly supported this conclusion. However, by 1837 opinions on New Zealand were changing. Humanitarian support swung towards British intervention for two reasons. Firstly, the lawlessness of the British people who had already settled in New Zealand was becoming an issue, and secondly, fears of how Wakefield’s New Zealand Company would impact upon the Māori. By 1838 the humanitarians and the Colonial Office concluded that British colonization of New Zealand was the best way to ensure Māori rights would be upheld.

When Hobson sailed to New Zealand in 1839 with the mandate to secure a treaty between the British government and the Māori, it was under instructions written by James Stephen. In his position he obviously was not able to have complete free reign and worked within the constraints of the various bodies he reported to. However, he did have a remarkable amount of scope and authority in the wording of the instructions. Glenelg had approved early drafts. By the time the instructions were finalised Lord Normanby had taken over Glenelg’s position, however, “the final instructions owed to him only their signature.”²² These served as the

basis for the Treaty of Waitangi. For this reason one historian has stated that the Treaty of Waitangi was “in its essence Stephen’s policy”.²³ Because of his Christian faith Stephen “saw his task as more than compassing British annexation. To him it was a humanitarian opportunity.”²⁴

A closer look at Hobson’s instructions reveals the evangelically motivated humanitarian impulse behind the Treaty. The fear was that without any form of law and order, New Zealand would undergo the same process of war and spoliation under which uncivilised tribes have almost invariably disappeared as often as they have been brought into the immediate vicinity of emigrants from the nations of Christendom. To mitigate, and if possible avert these disasters, and to rescue the emigrants themselves from the evils of a lawless state of society, it has been resolved to adopt the most effective measures for establishing amongst them a settled form of civil Government. To accomplish this design is the principal object of your mission.²⁵

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The rights of the Māori to their land and sovereignty were to be upheld and the Crown was not to seize land “unless the free intelligent consent of the natives, expressed according to their established usages, shall first be obtained.” It was envisioned that only the “waste lands” be bought by the Crown for resale to the settlers. Hobson was told that, it will be your duty to obtain by fair and equal contracts with the natives the cession to the Crown of such waste lands as may be progressively required for the occupation of settlers resorting to New Zealand. All such contracts should be made by yourself, through the intervention of an officer expressly appointed to watch over the interests of the aborigines as their protector.²⁶ And into the following paragraph: All dealings with the natives for their lands must be conducted on the same principles

18 “Biographical Notice”, in James Stephen, *Essays in Ecclesiastical Biography*, 5. Ed. (London, 1867), xiv.

19 Manning, “Who Ran the British Empire 1830–1850?,” 88.

20 Bell and Morell, *Select Documents on British Colonial Policy 1830–1860*, 376.

21 Knaplund, “Sir James Stephen,” 407.

22 Trevor Williams, “James Stephen and British Intervention in New Zealand, 1838–40,” *The Journal of Modern History* 13, no. 1 (March 1940): 25.

23 Trevor Williams, “James Stephen and British Intervention in New Zealand, 1838–40,” *The Journal of Modern History* 13, no. 1 (March 1940): 25; Buick confirms this stating, “Normanby’s instructions were mainly Stephen’s work” although he then notes two important aspects where his advice had been ignored. Thomas Lindsay Buick, *The Treaty of Waitangi: How New Zealand Became a British Colony*, 3rd ed. (Wellington: S & W Mackay, 1936), 70.

24 Williams, “James Stephen and British Intervention in New Zealand, 1838–40,” 31.

25 Buick, *The Treaty of Waitangi: How New Zealand Became a British Colony*, 71–2.

26 *Ibid.*, 74.

of sincerity, justice and good faith as must govern your transactions with them for the recognition of Her Majesty's sovereignty in the Islands. Nor is that all: they must not be permitted to enter into any contracts in which they might be ignorant and unintentional authors of injuries to themselves... The acquisition of land by the Crown for the future settlement of British subjects must be confined to such districts as the natives can alienate without distress or serious inconvenience to themselves.²⁷

Impressively for his day, Stephen, while still considering that the aim was to bring the British idea of civilisation to the Māori, in the meantime "they must be carefully defended in the observance of their own customs, so far as these are compatible with the universal maxims of humanity and morals."

NEW ZEALAND HISTORIANS' TREATMENT OF THE EVANGELICAL BACKGROUND TO THE TREATY

In looking at how this aspect of Christian impact has been treated by New Zealand historians I have tried to draw on some of the key historical works written on New Zealand history in general and the Treaty of Waitangi and its background. I have selected sixteen histories ranging in date from the late 19th to the early 21st century. Naturally, the general histories cannot be expected to give as much detail on the subject. However, no mention at all of the religious motivations behind the Treaty, our key founding document, might be taken to indicate a negligent or even biased approach to our history.

I have grouped works under three categories, based on how they have regarded the evangelical humanitarian background to the Treaty:

1. Those who are positive.
2. Those who largely ignored it.
3. Those who offer a nuanced criticism.

1. POSITIVE ABOUT EVANGELICAL IMPACT

I have put five histories in this category: J. C. Beaglehole's *New Zealand: A Short History* (1936),²⁸ Keith Sinclair's *A History of New Zealand* (1959),²⁹

²⁷ Ibid., 74-5.

²⁸ J. C. Beaglehole, *New Zealand: A Short History* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1936).

²⁹ Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*. (Harmondsworth, Middlesex; Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1959).

W. H. Oliver's *The Story of New Zealand* (1960),³⁰ Michael King's *The Penguin History of New Zealand* (2003)³¹ and TVNZ's *Frontier of Dreams* (2005)³²

Beaglehole calls Stephen "one of the greatest civil servants of the nineteenth century"³³ and notes the connection with the Clapham Sect. He is favourable about Stephen's humanitarian intentions and describes Hobson's instructions as being "of the most elevated character".³⁴

Sinclair clearly shows the evangelical influence behind the Treaty. He states that the instructions to Hobson "marked a new and noble beginning in British colonial policy. The history of New Zealand was to be distinguished from that of earlier settlement colonies; the fate of the Māori was to differ from that of the American Indian... for the new colony was being launched in an evangelical age. Imperialism and humanitarianism would henceforth march together."³⁵ He summarises with the following statement: "Though the acquisition

of sovereignty had been altogether a curious business, nevertheless British policy proceeded from an assumption which was unquestionably as just as it was unusual."³⁶

Oliver's history gives the evangelical humanitarians an important role in the decision to annex New Zealand. He sees the extreme evangelical position of a ban on all colonization as impractical, but praises the moderate humanitarian position of guardianship held by Stephen. He perceives the background to the Treaty as "an honest policy deliberately pursued."³⁷

In his very popular general history of New Zealand, Michael King highlights the fact that the Treaty instructions were deeply influenced by the evangelical religious beliefs of Colonial Office officials such as Glenelg and Stephen. "Their concern for the welfare of Māori was genuine and profound."³⁸ King's account is not without criticism. He agrees with Claudia Orange that Māori interests were moved down the priority list over time as policy

³⁰ W. H. Oliver, *The Story of New Zealand* (London: Faber and Faber, 1960).

³¹ Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand* (Auckland, N.Z.: Penguin Books, 2003).

³² Bronwyn Dalley and Gavin McLean, *Frontier of Dreams: The Story of New Zealand* (Auckland: Hodder Moa, 2006).

³³ Beaglehole, *New Zealand*, 20.

³⁴ Ibid., 24.

³⁵ Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, 67.

³⁶ Ibid., 71.

³⁷ Oliver, *The Story of New Zealand*, 51.

³⁸ King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, 157.

developed leading up to the Treaty. Nevertheless, overall the tone is positive and he declares that the Treaty was “in part a product of the most benevolent instincts of British humanitarianism.”³⁹

James Stephen is given a prominent place in *Frontier of Dreams*, where he is described as an influential actor in the fate of New Zealand. He is described in Claudia Orange’s chapter as “strongly evangelical and influenced by humanitarian ideals” and his intentions for fair treatment of the Māori are not called into question.⁴⁰ There is a mild critique of the final form of the instructions, for the same reasons as King noted above, but again the overall tone is positive about the Evangelical impact.⁴¹

2. EVANGELICAL IMPACT IGNORED

The following six works fall into this category: T. L. Buick’s *The Treaty of Waitangi* (first published 1914),⁴² *The Oxford History of New Zealand* (1981),⁴³ *An Illustrated History of New Zealand, 1820–1920: The People and the Land*,

Te Tangata Me Te Whenua (1990),⁴⁴ Ranginui Walker’s *Ka Whawhai Tonu Matou* (first published 1990), James Belich’s *Making Peoples* (1996)⁴⁵ and *The New Oxford History of New Zealand* (2009).⁴⁶

The Oxford History of New Zealand and *The People and the Land* do not mention James Stephen or evangelicalism at all. J. M. R. Owens in *The Oxford History* does mention the humanitarian intentions, but calls them into question.⁴⁷ Belich briefly mentions evangelical humanitarianism but does not link it to the Treaty instructions. He is quite cynical about the background to the Treaty and states that the Colonial Office officials were

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subject to the myths of empire and accepted the fatal impact thesis as justification for their interference.⁴⁸ Buick’s, much older, history of the Treaty has a lot of detail on the background to the Treaty, even quoting the entire instructions, but there is very little commentary offered. Evangelicalism is not mentioned. Similarly, Walker’s history, the only work among these studies written specifically from a Māori perspective, has a long paragraph about the instructions, but does not mention the evangelical humanitarian impulses behind it. Tony Ballantyne’s chapter in the *The New Oxford History of New Zealand* mentions Stephen briefly, but not his Christian faith. The role of evangelical humanitarianism is absent, although concern for the protection of Māori is acknowledged.⁴⁹

3. EVANGELICAL IMPACT CRITIQUED

Five histories gave a nuanced criticism of the evangelical background. Four out of the five are histories of the more specific time period and thus there is space for a more detailed analysis of the situation. William Pember Reeves, *The Long*

White Cloud: Ao Tea Roa (first published 1898),⁵⁰ Keith Sinclair, *The Origins of the Māori Wars* (1957),⁵¹ Peter Adams, *Fatal Necessity* (1977),⁵² Claudia Orange, *The Treaty of Waitangi* (1987),⁵³ Paul Moon and Peter Biggs, *The Treaty and its Times, the Illustrated History* (2004)⁵⁴

Reeves’ history is the oldest history examined in this study. He virtually ignores the evangelical impact and Stephen is not mentioned. However, Glenelg is described as not “fitted to be anything much more important than an irreproachable churchwarden.”⁵⁵ Reeves is very pro settler and is accordingly critical of the missionaries and Colonial

39 Ibid., 156.

40 Claudia Orange, “Flags and Nations” in Dalley and McLean, *Frontier of Dreams*.

41 Ibid., 100.

42 Buick, *The Treaty of Waitangi: How New Zealand Became a British Colony*.

43 W. H. Oliver and B. R. Williams, eds., *The Oxford History of New Zealand* (Oxford; Wellington; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University Press, 1981).

44 Judith Binney, Judith Bassett, and Erik Olssen, *An Illustrated History of New Zealand, 1820–1920: The People and the Land, Te Tangata Me Te Whenua* (Wellington, N.Z.: Allen and Unwin, 1990).

45 James Belich, *Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders, from Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1996).

46 Giselle Byrnes, ed., *The New Oxford History of New Zealand* (Melbourne: OUP Australia & New Zealand, 2009).

47 J. M. R. Owens, “New Zealand before Annexation,” in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. W. H. Oliver (Wellington: Oxford University, 1981), 53.

48 Belich, *Making Peoples*, 186.

49 Tony Ballantyne, “The State, Politics and Power, 1769–1893,” in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. Giselle Byrnes (Melbourne: OUP Australia & New Zealand, 2009), 103.

50 William Pember Reeves and Cecil J Wray, *The Long White Cloud: Ao Tea Roa* (Twickenham, England: Senate, 1998).

51 Keith Sinclair, *The Origins of the Māori Wars* (New Zealand U.P.; Cambridge U.P, 1957).

52 Peter Adams, *Fatal Necessity: British Intervention in New Zealand, 1830–1847* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1977).

53 Claudia Orange, *The Treaty of Waitangi* (Wellington; Winchester, Mass., USA: Allen & Unwin; Port Nicolson Press, with assistance from the Historical Publications Branch, Dept. of Internal Affairs, Wellington, 1987).

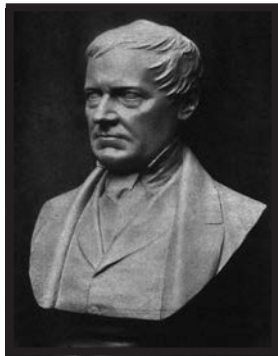
54 Paul Moon and Peter Biggs, *The Treaty and Its Times: The Illustrated History* (Auckland, N.Z.: Resource Books, 2004).

55 Reeves and Wray, *The Long White Cloud*, 143.

Office for their qualms and what he perceives as dithering over the issue.

Interestingly, Keith Sinclair now falls into a different category when he writes about the origins of the Māori wars. For Sinclair evangelical humanitarianism is a dominant influence behind the Treaty. However, he largely casts humanitarians as sincere, but ineffective with quotes such as “Pity and sentiment provided the initial dynamic of humanitarianism, and set a limit to its capabilities.”⁵⁶ Humanitarian was of little practical use according to Sinclair.

Adams’ 1977 history has the most detail about the background to the Treaty. Evangelical humanitarianism is shown as a significant influence over society and policy in the 1830’s. Stephen’s role is seen as pivotal and Adams includes a picture of Stephen’s bust (see below).



On the one hand he has some positive

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things to say such as, “undoubtedly sincere concern showed itself in the making of

Colonial Office policy towards NZ. There is no question that a humanitarian desire to protect the Māoris from the impact of the expanding European frontier in the antipodes is one of the major reasons why the Colonial Office reluctantly accepted that Britain should intervene in NZ.”⁵⁷ But he also has a number of critiques, such as suggesting there was a deceptive element in the mix: “British intervention was intended to protect British subjects just as much as the Māoris if the need arose. The humanitarian motive was only half the story, but it was the half which Captain Hobson was instructed to emphasize and explain most carefully to the Māoris...”⁵⁸ He later explains that this disparity was probably not deliberate deception, just addressing statements to a particular audience.⁵⁹ Similarly, he portrays Hobson’s instructions to show “mildness, justice and perfect sincerity” as merely a way to get around

the possible mistrust by Māori of a treaty that might seem to disadvantage them.⁶⁰

Adams sees a mixture of Imperialistic and humanitarian motives behind British policy. “Since British intervention in New Zealand was necessary anyway, Britain may as well utilize the admitted potential of New Zealand as an area for European settlement.”⁶¹ The various drafts of the Treaty instructions are traced. The policy became less favourable to Māori as the drafts developed. For example, the annexation of the whole of New Zealand received its first mention only in the final instructions.⁶²

Claudia Orange’s history of the treaty is a well-known and significant work on the subject. She mentions that Glenelg was an evangelical humanitarian and that this was why gaining Māori consent was important to him.⁶³ However, her overall view on Hobson’s instructions is that they were “deceptive”. While the instructions “tried to argue

that a balance was being held in fulfilling Britain’s duty towards the Māori as well as to her own subjects, the official insistence upon the upholding of

Māori rights is deceptive, for along the trail of decision-making those rights had already been severely restricted.” While previous drafts of the instructions had made space for Māori involvement in government and administrative structure, none of this appeared in the final instructions. “No longer were they considering a Māori New Zealand in which a place had to be found for British intruders, but a settler New Zealand in which a place had to be found for Māori.”⁶⁴

The Treaty and its Times, the Illustrated History is quite positive about Stephen and labels him a “committed evangelical Christian.”⁶⁵ Some errors about Stephen left me a bit sceptical about the historical accuracy of the book.⁶⁶ The authors take a similar view to Orange in their critique of the instructions. “The instructions unmistakably asserted the common law right of Māori to their land and each chief’s sovereign status within his

60 Ibid., 157–8.

61 Ibid., 156.

62 Ibid., 154.

63 Orange, *The Treaty of Waitangi*, 25–6.

64 Ibid., 31.

65 Moon and Biggs, *The Treaty and Its Times*, 129.

66 Sir James Stephen and his father are confused as Sir James Stephen is described as a friend and contemporary of William Wilberforce. The picture of Sir James Stephen is actually of his son James Fitzjames Stephen.

56 Sinclair, *The Origins of the Māori Wars*, 23.

57 Adams, *Fatal Necessity*, 165.

58 Ibid., 59.

59 Ibid., 167.

territory, but then followed on with a series of qualifications which, bit by bit, chipped away at this defence of Māori rights.⁶⁷ They also mentioned that the instructions required the free and intelligent consent of Māori, but that this was undermined by the mention of inducements.⁶⁸

CONCLUSIONS

Of the sixteen works examined, five are positive about the evangelical background to the Treaty, six largely ignore it, and five offer a nuanced criticism. Thus, about thirty percent ignore the Christian roots of the Treaty of Waitangi. This is perhaps not so high a figure as Stenhouse's claim would lead us to expect. These raw figures, however, need further consideration. Interestingly, no trends emerged based around publishing dates of the histories. Each category had a range of dates from quite early histories to those published this century.

One might have assumed that some reduction or omission of the Evangelical background is inevitable in the general histories, given the pressure to be selective of material. However this does not reflect a clear pattern. All works which portray the Evangelical influence in a more or less positive light are themselves general histories. The specialised histories clearly have space for a greater depth of analysis. Four of the five more critical works are specific works on the Treaty, but even in this category none of the historians were highly critical and most agreed that the humanitarian motives were sincere. However, the theory that often the humanitarians are cast as "ineffective" largely holds up.

Christian historians must not fall into the trap of creating our own biased version of history. We must be wary of dismissing the "ineffective humanitarian" charge merely because we do not like how it reflects upon our faith positions. It is of course difficult to determine quite how to gauge effectiveness. Is it fair, for instance, to judge James Stephen for what happened after the Treaty? What more could he have done in his position to protect the Māori? How can we evaluate someone's intentions?

The conclusion that the Treaty instructions were "deceptive" is perhaps going too far. However, it is undeniable that over time one can see in the various drafts that the priority of protecting Māori rights was gradually eroded. It is likely that Stephen's humanitarian ideals appear to be at the forefront of the early drafts, and were watered down

as the instructions received input from various government bodies. Such is political process. Many factors had to be taken into consideration, and how New Zealand was to become one nation with settler and Māori had to be considered. It seems like a hard balance to strike between being a sincere humanitarian who prioritises Māori rights, while at the same time avoiding the charge of being impractical and ineffective! The historians have put the humanitarians between a rock and a hard place.

Christians who were concerned for the rights of Māori have had a key voice in our history. They were not infallible and are as open as anyone to the critique of historians. James Stephen, for instance did all within his power to live up to the Christian humanitarian ideals he professed. He was, nevertheless, constrained by the limits of his position as a civil servant. Whether these rendered him and others "ineffective" is a matter for historical interpretation and thus, inevitably subject to

historians' preferences and biases. The same biases are likely to explain both omissions and inclusions of religious factors in

interpreting the history of Aotearoa New Zealand. This study suggests that an anti-religion bias can be found in some historiography, but that it is not systemic and certainly not hegemonic. In any case, in telling and retelling the story, historians have the solutions in their own hands.

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IS IT FAIR, FOR INSTANCE, TO JUDGE JAMES STEPHEN FOR WHAT HAPPENED AFTER THE TREATY?

67 Moon and Biggs, *The Treaty and Its Times*, 161.

68 *Ibid.*, 163.n