George Johnston's Evangelistic Journey on the West Coast of the South Island 1884-5 (Part I)

ABSTRACT

George Johnston was a leading figure in early South Island Baptist life. He was the first evangelist for the Canterbury Association and subsequently minister at Invercargill. In 1884 he was commissioned by the fledgeling Baptist Union to undertake an evangelistic mission on the West Coast of the South Island. His vivid reports were published in the *NZ Baptist*. They record his journeys and his observations on places, people and the raw conditions of the new communities he encountered. The three reports published here are from the first months of the mission, in which Johnston travelled the length of the region. They have been edited only to the extent of adding paragraph breaks. Further reports will be published in the next issue of *Baptist Research*.

(*NZ Baptist*, Jan 1885, 3-4)

The West Coast Mission.

MR. JOHNSTON'S JOURNEY.

Your Missionary started for the 'Far West' on the 20th November. The day had anything but a promising aspect to begin with, nor did it improve, for when only two miles out of Christchurch, it began to drizzle; but with spirits aglow with the Master's call and the assurance of His approving smile, I held on my way for the next ten miles in the face of the blinding rain, which then subsided, and better weather and brighter prospects followed. During the day a few intermittent showers fell

occasionally, but not sufficient to affect the journey. Springfield was reached about 6.30 p.m., and both man and horse were glad the first day had been completed, forty miles, the only level road of any consequence in the course of the whole journey.

Having had a good night's rest, and leaving a few silent messengers for the benefit of those who should next occupy the 'prophet's chamber,' the second day's journey was commenced. The morning was deeply curtained in mist, but whilst the lazy mist lingered in rolls of ponderous obstinacy on the higher regions, the lower parts were brightened and animated all around by the sun's gladdening influence, and every lark seemed engaged to lend music to the balmy air; all nature seemed moved to don her brightest summer dress. Thoughts thick and fast chased each other like the mist, which now began to pass more quickly along the lower hills, and perhaps never before did such reverential awe pervade my mind as when on entering the Kowai Pass, I was arrested by a sight not soon to be forgotten. The sunny slopes of the lower hills lay just across the river, radiant with the morning sun, their tops cut off from view by the afore-mentioned mists or clouds, which appeared to be a halo of glory, being specially illuminated on their under edge, and higher up more dark and dense. But on looking higher up, oh! what a sight met my gaze! A rift in the cloud displayed a scene analogous only to the vision of the seer in the Isle of Patmos, when he saw heaven opened and the great white throne. There, before me (as if in closer proximity to me than the lower hills), stood in clear, bold relief, the snow-capped mountains, towering to an immense height, with their background of brightest azure, their outline specially distinct, and the whole lit up with a dazzling whiteness.

Following the coach track up the pass, which, by the way, is well made and kept throughout, the road is an unceasing change of up hill, down dale, through river beds, sometimes cut out of the mountain's side just wide enough for a single coach, but no room for another to pass, except in places. On one side, often hundreds of feet below, the gurgling stream sends up its doleful sound, whilst on the other are the overhanging cliffs, giving an

aspect of danger and insecurity which instinctively caused one to grasp the reins more tightly, and keep them well in hand. A horse of a lively, unmanageable disposition would certainly be a strain on the nerves I should not like to experience; but I was saved from such a fear, for with the greatest coolness my horse applied himself to every task assigned him, without the slightest sign of either rebellion or fear, although we passed along some giddy heights. Sometimes the way led through rivers which we crossed and recrossed, till I could not any longer keep count, but happily none of them were over knee-deep, although the rapidity of current was great in many instances. At other times the way was along the margin of a clear, still, silent lake, lying in calm retreat in the bosom of the mountains, which rose for many thousands of feet sheer from the water, with hoary beads and gigantic shoulders, as if to announce their parental guardianship and secure protection to the placid water they fondled in their lap. In such places a deathly stillness prevails, which is only broken by the sudden flight of a covey of paradise ducks, or other birds, startled at the approach of humanity to their almost unbroken solitudes, or by the bleat of some lonely sheep, which, as the mustering time draws near, suspect an encroachment upon their liberties. In the midst of such scenes, a reverential awe unbidden pervades the mind, and leads up from nature to nature's God; the human has been left behind, and the presence of the Creator is powerfully realised.

At one o'clock I reached Castle Hill, Mr. Butcher's accommodation house, where the inner man and horse were kindly attended to, and soon I had the pleasure of renewing old friendships, for it was found, on comparing notes, that the last time I met Mrs. Butcher was at a service four years ago at Woolston, where I returned thanks to the Giver of all good for her recovery after the birth of a daughter; and there at the table before me was the little four-year-old, with golden hair, bright blue eyes, and sunny smile. May the Lord grant that she may become one of his own bright jewels! Having had two hours' rest, and leaving a few tracts to be afterwards read at the sheep-station near by, I again went on my journey. The scenery

around Castle Hill is singular; fantastic blocks of freestone jut out of the hill sides, like some old castle or monastery, such as we have seen in the Home country.

At 6.30 I arrived at the 'Cass,' an accommodation sometimes called 'The half-way house,' being 75 miles from Christchurch. Here I found 'mine host' was an old shipmate, who paid me the compliment of having, after ten years' experience in New Zealand, renewed my youth to such an extent that I actually looked ten years younger than when I arrived. Having had a good night's rest and a substantial breakfast, I started from the 'Cass' at 8.30 a.m., and soon wound my way into the great watershed of the Waimakiriri, when scenery of quite a different stamp met my gaze. Here the dense bush begins, and is never lost sight of again for the remainder of the journey. I passed the Bealey about 9.30, and crossed the river, and began the ascent of 'Arthur's Pass,' when the scenery becomes bewildering in grandeur, the bush rising from the water's edge, the trees, great and grand below, gradually become less in stature as they climb the perpendicular mountain slopes towards the glaciers. Here, for the next twenty miles, the land of mountain and flood reaches its maximum of grandeur. Time utterly fails me to convey anything like an adequate conception of this extraordinary place ; but some idea can be gathered when I tell you that my horse and I ascended to a height of 3,700 feet before we could descend on what is called 'the other side.' At this height, in grand profusion the mountain lily adds its beauty to the scene, the leaf of which is something like a wine-glass (many of them larger) in shape, and holds itself upright to catch the rain or dew, and affords a good drink to the thirsty traveller. The flower is white, as are most of the wild flowers of this region.

Having reached the top of the Pass, and within a few minutes' climbing of the glaciers, which I did not venture, we rested for a little before we began the descent, and my horse had a nice feed of grass, which he seemed to enjoy even at that altitude. Looking down below over the edge of the road (just broad enough for a coach), away down nearly 2,000 feet below we catch sight of the road cut out of the side of the hill, and we

wondered how ever we were to get down there. However, we commenced the down grade, which, as far as I could calculate, would be on an average of 1 in 4, and then in serpentine form wormed our way into the bosom of this great chasm called the 'Otira Gorge.' Here the incessant din of falling water is deafening, and a wilder view could scarcely be imagined. The deep channels made, and the ponderous water-washed boulders, the rushing water demanding exit by every crevice, and the overhanging branches of great trees with ferns and under brushwood of all descriptions intertwined, united to overwhelm the senses, and fix one spell-bound in wonder, devotion, and praise.

At two o'clock I reached the 'Gorge' accommodation house, after having met with an inexorable toll man, who would not move the gate till I paid him half-a-crown. Having baited my horse here and got something to eat myself and a little rest, I went on through fifteen miles of most luxuriant bush, and arrived at 'Jackson's.' Being Saturday night, I put up there till Monday morning. I experienced very great kindness from mine host, who is a true Highlander. When I told him I should like to have service, he said he wished he had known sooner; but early next morning (although it was a wet morning) he sent down to his next neighbour, eight miles further down, and he came up and brought his family with him. Amongst other things, this head of the family asked me it I would baptise his baby, but I had to tell him 'it was not in my line.' I had a good opportunity to tell him my reasons why, which he seemed to understand if not appreciate. The service was held in the afternoon, about twenty old and young were present; it was well appreciated, being the first service ever held there, although at Taipo, eight miles further down, they have had several services, but two years have elapsed since the last one. I hope to be able to arrange for a service here occasionally.

On Monday morning I started at 7 o'clock, and passed through over thirty miles of continuous bush, baited my horse on the way, and passed through a digging township on the way called 'Blue Spur,' being the first I have visited. I felt not a little

curious. The primitive architecture was specially striking, but the general conformation of the township was puzzling; perhaps the best description would be summed up in the word 'chaos,' for it was nothing but clean washed heaps of stone, heaped up in all possible accidental and incidental shapes - I could not say which, for nothing that I could set my eyes upon (except the schoolhouse) bore either the marks of design or even intelligence. However, I believe that precious souls dwell in the midst of such scenes, and, God helping me, I hope some day to carry the grand transforming Gospel of Jesus Christ to this very place.

At 8 p.m. I arrived at Hokitika, got a paddock for my horse, and lodgings for myself. Though the journey was tedious, yet it was well relieved by scattering tracts by the way, and attempts to converse with the few stragglers met by me. Sometimes for ten miles together I would not meet a single individual. Having a few introductions, I soon got more, and already I have made not a few acquaintances, which will doubtless ripen into useful friendships. I have visited during the week the townships of Kanieri, Woodstock, and Rimu. On Tuesday last I addressed the Presbyterian Band of Hope, and yesterday I preached in the Wesleyan church. The service was 'duly advertised,' and will no doubt go far to introduce me to the 'regions beyond,' where will be my sphere of labour. I am making inquiries and planning arrangements for the work, which will be very difficult, for the people are careless, and the general mode of life is anything but hopeful; however, I go forth in the strength of the Lord, trusting to Him alone to open the way for me. I hope I shall have the fervent, believing, and persevering prayers of the Lord's people, which I earnestly solicit. To-morrow or next day I leave here for Greymouth, that I may know the state of affairs in that locality, and will visit the various townships on the way. As soon as I know what district will be best for me to labour in, I will settle on a centre and work from it.

December 1st, 1884
GEORGE JOHNSTON.

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(N.Z. Baptist, February 1885, 19-20)

Since my last report my time has been occupied in prospecting and 'laying out the claim,' which I find is rather extensive; but wherever I have been I have invariably 'struck gold,' some of these the 'excellent of the earth' genuine 'retort gold,' not amalgam or 'New Chum's gold,' but of ripe experience and the 'seven times purified.' Deprived as some of them are of the weekly sermon, on account of their location, they drink at the Fountain Head. I was not only refreshed but greatly stimulated through contact with them, especially as some of them stated that they believed my Mission was in answer to prayer, for they had long yearned and prayed for a reversal of the apathy and neglect which has been deeply felt in these outlying districts. Thus the prayers of the West Coast are blending with those of the East Coast. May the result be abundant fruit to our efforts to publish the glad tidings of great joy.

After reconnoitering in and around Hokitika for a week (during which time I made many friends, and gathered much valuable information regarding the West Coast), and furnished with seven letters of introduction to as many Christians in as many townships, and 'following the lead' northwards by way of the sea, I came to Arahura, at the mouth of a river of that name, a small scattered township principally inhabited by aboriginals, a few of whom I met, and whose interest was aroused when they found I was to speak to them, and with a merry grin peculiar to their race they sought to know of my affairs and where I was going. I hope some day to preach the Gospel to these few of a remnant of a fast decaying race. Eight miles from Hokitika I came to Staffordtown, a digging township, bearing the aspect of having seen better days, rather deserted in appearance, and severely primitive in its architecture. Passing on, I reached the next township, called Goldsborough, a second edition to Staffordtown, with slight variations. Eighteen miles from

Hokitika I came to what is evidently the largest digging township on the coast, Kumara. Here the scenery is very beautiful, the town being built on the top of the bank overlooking the river called the Teremakau, which is of considerable size, and of which the diggers tell many a sad tale of adventure with its treacherous waters, and of tragic scenes when some brave old mate, with swag on his head, in trying to cross has sunk to rise no more. Here the water supply, tail races, and works generally, are on a more gigantic scale than elsewhere that I have visited. I stayed at this place for the night, and on the following morning pursued my journey to Greymouth, passing through the townships of Greenstone, Marsden, and Welshman's, none of which are places of any consequence, but all have a small gold-mining population.

I found a number of Chinese on these diggings, a class I shall not be able to do much with, unless some friends will be kind enough to send me some Chinese Scriptures and tracts; only a very few of them can speak English. On these diggings, perhaps, we have as good an idea of a Chinaman at home as we are likely to meet with outside the 'Flowery Land.' I should like very much to do something amongst them, not only here, but, as they are in hundreds all over the coast, so far should I like to carry the Living Word to them.

Arriving at Greymouth, I soon found some kind friends, and got temporary lodgings for myself and horse. I then gave my horse a good week's spell, on account, of his back being sore with boils. This rather hindered me from getting about, yet I made the most of my time visiting, &c., and on the Sunday I preached in the Wesleyan church. During the following week I visited Brunnerton, and stayed several days, making many friends, and preparing the way for future operations. I hope to have a week's special meetings here shortly. I could not well have had any service here at that time, on account of the opening of the new Presbyterian church, which was to take place on the following Sunday. There is but one minister located here (Church of England). The population is nearly 2,000, almost all engaged in the coal mines. From Brunnerton I rode up the Grey

Valley to Nelson Creek, and from thence to No-town. On the Saturday I visited Maori Gully, a place whose palmy days are over, and from thence to Maori Creek, over the roughest track I have yet ridden; the way is a bridle track through the bush, at times descending into ravines and creeks, at others clambering round hill-sides and over tree roots and various kinds of natural obstacles; but my horse went as safe and sound as if he had been bred to it, although his back was frequently on a rather uncomfortably inclined plane.

Having reached 'the Creek,' after crossing creeks innumerable, I asked my way to a friend's house, to which friend I had a letter of introduction; but being misinformed in regard to distance, it took me several hours to find him out. I left my horse several times, on account of the precipitous nature of the road, to descend into creeks and clamber up the opposite banks on foot, fruitlessly inquired of a Chinaman, returned to the main road again, and returned a second time ; tried the doors of one or two huts, whose only fastening was a bit of string fastened to a primitive latch, indicating 'honesty' to be the diggers' 'policy,' without avail; and at last beginning to despair, I made the bush ring with 'cooees,' which were responded to after a bit by a distant voice, the direction of which I followed, when I found the mate of my friend, who told me he had just gone round another way. I was soon at home in this digger's hut, which is of the usual primitive kind. The 'billy' was immediately swung, whilst my horse, was turned into an enclosed garden, where he fared exceedingly well.

After refreshments, which were very welcome, not having broken fast since seven o'clock in the morning, now four in the afternoon, we arranged to go into the township, three and a-half miles off, on foot, and advertise the meetings for the Sunday. Here I had the opportunity of seeing a diggers' township on a midsummer Saturday evening, when all the creeks and gullies sent in their contingent for the week's supplies, and each store and dramshop seemed to be doing a 'roaring trade.' We stuck up a notice on a board at a public house, and told by word of mouth of the morrow's service, and then returned to my friend's

habitation, about as tired as ever I felt. My friend, who is a Baptist of the old school, made me thoroughly welcome, and told me of his almost only companions, the Bible and Bunyan's Pilgrim.

During the Sunday I visited several of the diggers' huts, and had some good opportunities of speaking for the Master. By the kindness of one of them who had the appendage (unusual for a digger) of a wife and a family, I was snugly put up for the several remaining nights I spent in this locality. In the evening we went to the service in the township, which was held in the Union church, a building reared by the inhabitants for Protestant services. The attendance was good, and the service seemed to be duly appreciated; several Christians thanked me at the close, and expressed a wish that I would soon be back. After investigating the mysteries of gold-digging on the Monday, and dropping a few seeds of truth by tract and word of mouth, I returned on the Tuesday to Greymouth, *via* Marsden and Paroa.

During the week I visited Paroa, and on the Saturday I visited almost every house in Cobden and Coal Creek. On the Sunday I held a service in the Cobden schoolroom, with an attendance of about 70. Although just across the water from Greymouth, I was told it is a considerable time since a service was held there before. During the week following this, having decided to make Greymouth my centre of operations, and having secured a house, I returned by steamer to Christchurch to bring over my family. I have chosen this centre principally for the following reasons: The Grey Valley is easily accessible from here, And contains a large neglected population; in and around Hokitika for a distance of 10 or miles each place is fairly well supplied; south of Hokitika has not a sufficient population to warrant the idea of exclusive occupation, such a large proportion of them being Catholics; and, besides, for travelling purposes, a good part is not safely accessible, except for a month or two after the New Year, when the snows of the mountains are at a minimum. I purpose going down in this direction soon after I return, when I shall endeavour to reach Jackson's Bay, some 200 miles south of Greymouth. The cost of living for man and beast is very high.

The population is very sparse and widely scattered. I speak now from hearsay, but I hope soon to write from personal observation and experience.

GEORGE JOHNSTON.
January 13th, 1885.

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(N.Z. Baptist April 1885, 49-50)

Having returned only yesterday from a 500-mile ride, over the roughest road it has been my lot to travel, I do not feel as if I can do justice to my report on this occasion; and as I have material enough to form a volume, instead of the space the Editor can afford, I must crave your indulgence, by asking you to receive a rough outline of my doings since the last report. Much of very interesting matter will necessarily be withheld, especially referring to personal dealing, which has formed the staple of my work for the Mission, and in which I am disposed to think my chief success lies.

On January 25th, I preached in the Presbyterian Church at Greymouth, and visited the Hospital. On February 1st, I commenced a week of special services at Brunnerton, three of them were held in the Presbyterian Church, and four of them in the Wesleyan Church. During the weeknight services I joined Temperance with the Gospel, and succeeded in getting 28 to sign the pledge. Intemperance is the great demoralising agent of the West Coast, and is crippling every religious agency at work. Nearly everybody drinks, though there are few drunkards in the general acceptation of the word. Yet the ruin and devastation of drink is unparalleled, so far as my experience goes. In these services I was assisted by the Rev. A. J. Jones, Church of England minister, on two evenings, and the Rev. J. Law, of Greymouth, one evening. The attendance at first was small, but gradually increased as the week went on, and a corresponding interest was apparent. I visited about 150 houses, and was well

received, and had many profitable conversations with the people, and left tracts at nearly every house. On the following Sunday I held a service at Maori Creek, which was well attended.

On February 12th, I left Greymouth, at 8 a.m., on my long journey south. I went by what is known as the beach road to Hokitika, a distance of 25 miles. The only incident worthy of remark, perhaps, was swimming my horse across the Teremakau River. It being the first occasion of my horse leaving *terra firma*, I was not a little anxious as to how he might behave in the water; and as I had eight such rivers to cross and re-cross before my return, I was not a little pleased to find him about as good at the water as a retriever dog. I might here say, that I could not have a better horse for my work. At Hokitika I got letters of introduction from Mr. D. W. Virtue (who is much interested in my work), which were very useful, they gave me, as it were, an open door to preach the Word. I arrived at Ross on the 14th, when I found I was advertised to preach in the Presbyterian Church on the morrow. The Church of England minister being unwell, and being the only resident minister, I had therefore nearly all the church-going people in the town. The building was quite full at night. I addressed the Sunday-school in the afternoon, and visited the Hospital. The friends here were kind and hospitable, and expressed their appreciation of the ministry of the Word.

On the Monday I visited several of the large claims in Ross, thereby getting access to the people, and gaining knowledge of their surrounding. On the Tuesday morning I left Ross, and after passing 'Donoghue's,' began tract distribution and personal conversation at each house, or rather hut, that I passed; and this, I would here remark, was my universal practice all the way to Jackson's Bay, so I need not make further reference to it. I crossed the Waitaha about mid-day, baited my horse, and continued my journey, which was through the bush all the way. I passed Duffer's Creek and Lake Ianthe, which is very beautiful - the waters calm and placid, the bush down to the water's edge, and, towering over all, at the south-east extremity, the

mountains, with hoary heads and granite shoulders. Passing, the way is often intersected by rugged beds of granite boulders, where mountain torrents gouge their channels, tearing up all vegetation as they force their way into the lake, or larger rivers beneath. At 6 p.m. I reached Hendes Ferry, a distance of 28 miles, where I put up for the night, but not to sleep, for notwithstanding mosquito curtains and every other precaution I could take, the mosquitoes soon found me out, and kept up their incessant buzz until daylight. After feeding and shoeing my horse (for the boulders of the river the previous evening had loosened them), I continued my journey, 18 miles, when I reached the Wataroa Ferry, got feed for self and horse, and pursued my way over a rough and at times picturesque country, until at dusk I reached Okarito, after a day's journey of 34 miles.

The following morning, at 5 a.m., in company with the mail man, I started down the coast, passing the notable three-mile and five-mile beaches, at one time the richest goldfield on the coast, where the Catholic priest has been known to receive £750 at a single collection; where thousands of people, like ants on a hill, gathered the 'golden sand.' But now, alas! half-a-dozen huts are all that remain of this El Dorado. Journeying on, running the gauntlet with the ponderous waves of the great Pacific, sometimes climbing along a broken ledge of nine to eighteen inches cut out of the side of a bluff, at other times running into quicksand, from which I was happily extricated after a few plunges of my faithful steed. Another time, fording a river, I got wet, and the strength of current proved all but too much for the horse's feet. Having reached Gillespie's Beach about one o'clock, I got a feed for horse and self, and left, in company with another mail man, and crossed several formidable rivers, but without any mishap, and at 8 p.m. arrived at Hunt's Beach, where I was comfortably put up for the night, having made 38 miles for the day.

Next morning I resumed my journey, which was similar to the day previous. I passed the Maori Pah, and left a few tracts, and arrived at Paringa, having done about twenty miles that day. Here I found the 'better half' of mine host, with her sons and

neighbours, out cattlehunting, who arrived home at dusk with the intelligence that they had caught 'sight' of their game, and hoped next morning to yard a wild bullock, and secure by the aid of a bullet the household beef for the next month or two. This is how they in great part do their butchering all down the coast. A great many wild cattle are roaming in the bush, and afford sport as well as food for the denizens of the far South. At the mouth of the Paringa River there are several men gold-mining, who are fast making their 'pile.' I saw one of them, and gave him tracts, telling of the 'gold well tried in the fire.' At Bruce Bay I got a companion in travel, the public vaccinator. We admirably suited each other, both having to call at every house – one to care for the body, the other for the soul.

Before resuming my journey, I had to get my horse re-shod, his shoes having been loosened by the tree-roots and boulders amongst the mountain torrents of the last seven miles which occupied four hours' hard travelling, there being only a foot track from the Mitahi to Paringa. When all was ready, we started on a forty miles ride, with not a living being on the way until our journey's end. We passed Paringa Lake, Blue River, Chasm Creek, and Copper Creek. At the latter place there is copper ore, but not worked, on account of its inaccessibility.

At this part the road reaches an altitude of 2,700 feet above the sea. A sight met the eye here which I must not fail to describe, however imperfectly. The road is along the mountain side; hundreds of feet below are deep ravines, from which rises the continuous weird and awe-inspiring sound of 'many waters'; obscured from sight by the dense bush, away in the back-ground, is a flat covered with bush, with silver winding rivers; and beyond all is the sea, which we at first took to be the sky. The sight was thrilling; everything seemed to be on such a gigantic scale, I should imagine that at least 50 miles of the ocean's surface right ahead was open to our view, whilst the flat was at 2,500 feet below us, and the mountain tops on either side were 8,000 or 4,000 feet more above us. A few deserted huts are all the works of civilisation we met with on this long road, which is very dangerous in some parts, through large landslips which

have completely blocked the road, the only passable parts being, in many instances, foot tracks cut out of the slips for the horses' feet. When we reached the flat it was growing dusk, and as the way was often along and across river beds, we began to despair of finding our destination, and were beginning to have grave doubts that we should have to 'camp out' for the night, when two men suddenly appeared on the scene, who told us we had eight miles to go yet, and that the ferryman would never think of taking us across at night. Here we were in a fix - Saturday night too - what was to be done? Mosquitoes in clouds, and no moon; all dark, and the men, with their guns and dogs and rough exterior as well as voice, were at first anything but inviting. But they were not wanting in the milk of human kindness, and though they were just on their way to an insignificant hut, preparatory to going out on the morrow (Sunday) on a cattle hunt, one of them returned with us to his hut, seven miles off, where he most hospitably entertained us (horses and all) until the morrow. I shall never forget 'following the leader' that night down and across rivers, through swamps and what not, until we reached the sea beach, when all at once I lost both of my companions; but, as I listened, over and above the roar of the sea, I could bear the patter of hoofs. My horse caught the infection, and he, too, had a good spin. I found that the two horses, having some mettle in them and a level beach, could not be held in, but I can tell you I felt lonely enough just then. The following morning we crossed the Haast River, the horses swimming, and spent the day reading and resting.

On the Monday morning we again pursued our journey, but were more fortunate in finding people on the way, although, in some instances, a good many miles intervened between neighbours. At Okuru we had the Okuru and Turnbull Rivers to cross. The ferryman is a very jovial man, but has been very unfortunate in having his whole establishment washed out to sea. He was very anxious that I should represent at the right source the necessity of better roads for the people of that district. To this I quite agree, and I have no doubt but if roads were made and kept in order, the population would vastly increase. Two

other large rivers were crossed, the Waitoto and the Arawata, and 25 miles from Haast we reached Jackson's Bay, where I was hospitably entertained at the residence of Mr McFarlane. On the Tuesday I gave my horse a rest, and started on foot to visit the settlement. There are only eight families, upon all of whom I called, and invited them to a service in the afternoon (several of them are Catholics). I had a congregation of eight, after walking eight miles to collect them. I walked back to the head of the Bay, and held another service, and, although only two families live there, yet, with the strangers, we mustered 14 or 16. I might here state that I was told that I was the only minister who had visited them for *ten years* and this applies to a coast line of 100 miles, which, however, includes only about 40 families at present, though it has much more thickly populated in former years. The Catholic Priest is the only visitor they have had who has sought their spiritual well-being. Mr. Porter, who was at one time a resident in the Bay, held services, but they have had none since then.

After leaving the Bay, I returned, expecting to reach Gillespie's Beach on the Friday night, in time to have a service which I promised the people on my return; but I got caught by the tide and did not get there till half-past eleven at night, so I had to disappoint the people. There is only one Protestant family here, and three single men. I had then to push on to reach Okarito on the Saturday night, preparatory to a service on the Sunday. This I held in the afternoon in the Courthouse, when about 20 assembled. This place has a very deserted appearance, there being the remains of a good-sized township, but there are only some six or eight Protestant families in the district. I was much disappointed by the sparseness of the population, there being, as far as I can judge (and I think I only missed about a dozen families, who were inaccessible or Catholics), not more than 250 families from Ross to Jackson's Bay, a distance of 180 miles.

When staying at Okarito I paid a visit to the Franz Josef Glacier and the hot springs, calling upon the people in the Lake Mapourika District as I went up. The glacier is a grand sight,

which I have not time or space to describe; but I must say a few words about the hot springs, which I had the pleasure to bathe in at 6 a.m.. The water has a strong mineral smell, and is so hot that I had to temper it with 16 buckets of cold water fresh from the glacier before I could venture in. A number of remarkable cures have been effected through these springs, especially in cases of rheumatism. I have no doubt but if some small capitalist could fit up a respectable establishment, this would become the grand sanatorium for the South Island.

I might here state that I wish to record my appreciation of the kindness I experienced at the hands of Captain Thomson and Mr. Patrick, who were very kind to me, and aided me much in my work; as also of the kindness of Mr. Gunn and Mr. Hende, of the Wataroa and Wanganui ferries, and others in Ross who were also very obliging. But for the great kindness of friends all the way, it would have been a very costly journey; as it was, it cost over £9, principally for horse expenses. I closed this effort by preaching twice at Ross on my return home, which I reached on March 10th, thankful for the wise Providence that had brought me safely back, and for the honour of being an ambassador of the Great King in such a region, and I trust that in the great day of reckoning this effort will bear fruit, to be acknowledged by the Lord of all.

George Johnston.
Greymouth, March llth, 1885.