



Rutherford Waddell was born in Ballyrone, County Down, Ireland, probably sometime between

1850 and 1852. His father was the Reverend Hugh Waddell, a Presbyterian minister; his mother, Jean Reid, was the sister of Thomas Mayne Reid, a famous writer of adventure stories. Rutherford's mother died when he was small and he was brought up by an aunt. He was educated at a national school where the teacher was brutal; Waddell regarded the years as wasted. At the age of 14 he became a draper's apprentice in Banbridge for four years, after which he decided to follow the calling of his father and older brother, Hugh, in the ministry. He graduated MA from Queen's University in Ireland in October 1875 and also studied at the Presbyterian Theological College, Belfast, from 1874 to 1876. On 27 January 1877, at Dublin, he married Kathleen Maud Ashton Newman. They were to have one daughter, Muriel Alice Newman, who was born on 28 April 1882.

Rejected both for missionary service in Syria and by an Irish congregation, Waddell accepted an invitation to join the ministry of the Canterbury Presbyterian Church Extension Association. He sailed with his young wife to Lyttelton, New Zealand, on the *Piako*, arriving in May 1877. After a short supply ministry at St Paul's Church in Christchurch, he was inducted to the charge of Prebbleton and Lincoln on 25 September 1877. Called to the flourishing new charge of St Andrew's Church in Walker Street (Carroll Street), Dunedin, Waddell was inducted on 18 April 1879 to minister to about 300 members, including many of Dunedin's leading citizens.

Suspect because of his radical belief that the Christian gospel should be actively interpreted through social justice, Waddell soon won the confidence of the congregation and exercised wide influence through his writing and commitment to civic affairs. In 1888 he was one of the founders of the Dunedin and Suburban Reserves Conservation Society and in 1888 and 1889 an early supporter of technical education. In the parish at the Walker Street mission hall, which opened in 1888, he set up a savings bank, a free library and the first free kindergarten (1889). He also developed a wide range of literary, religious and educational societies, along with a cricket club, gymnasium, and debating and mutual improvement societies. Waddell was deeply committed to overseas missions; the congregation supported three missionaries as well as providing a spiritual home for many students for the ministry.

Waddell played a leading part in exposing sweated labour in Dunedin (he himself had worked long hours for nothing as a draper's apprentice in Banbridge). In October 1888 he delivered a sermon at St Andrew's Church on the 'sin of cheapness', arguing that a lust for bargains was forcing prices down to a point where wages fell below subsistence level. In November he took the matter to the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Otago and Southland and a motion was passed deploring the existence of sweating in New Zealand. The press took up the matter and revealed cases of sweating in Dunedin. His blend of prophetic passion and skilful use of the press and public meetings led in 1890 to a royal commission on sweating on which he served. Its recommendations were an important part of the foundation for the social legislation of the 1890s. Waddell believed that trade unions were an essential part of reform: he became the first president of the Tailoresses' Union of New Zealand from 11 July 1889. He was also actively involved in temperance reform, the Bible in schools movement and was one of the main supporters of the First Offenders' Probation Act 1886, a pioneering penal reform.

Lightly built and with a slight speech impediment, Waddell became one of the country's most notable preachers, whose sermons were published in their thousands. He pushed himself to his physical limits and had to take sick leave in 1882, 1886, 1902 and 1913. The last years of his ministry were hampered by severe deafness. He retired in 1919, after a remarkable career. Kathleen Waddell became a chronic invalid and died in Seacliff Mental Hospital on 7 September 1920.

Rutherford Waddell married Christabel Duncan at Melbourne on 3 December 1923. He stayed intellectually vital during his last years; in 1929 he was first president of a fellowship of New Zealand writers. Despite illness he continued to hunt, fish and enjoy golf. He died in Dunedin on 16 April 1932, survived by his wife, and is buried in Dunedin's Southern Cemetery.

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