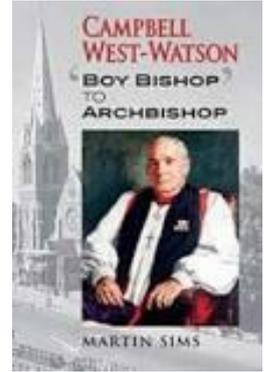


## **Campbell West-Watson, - 'Boy Bishop' to Archbishop**

Title: Campbell West-Watson 'Boy Bishop' to Archbishop  
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### **Book Reviewer: Allan Davidson**

These notes are adapted from Allan Davidson's speech at Selwyn Library, Auckland, 16 March 2016, of the launch of Martin Sims' biography: **Campbell West-Watson 'Boy Bishop' to Archbishop**

It is a great delight to be associated with this book launch. I first 'met' Archbishop Campbell West-Watson in Colin Brown's book, *Forty Years On: A History of the National Council of Churches in New Zealand 1941-1981* (1981). West-Watson was an impressive ecumenical leader in New Zealand. He chaired the first meeting of the National Council of Churches on 2 April 1941 and was very supportive of its first major action, the Campaign for Christian Order. The Campaign aimed to bring Christian principles to bear on New Zealand society as it looked forward to the world beyond war.

West-Watson was part of a notable group of denominational church leaders in Christchurch who developed personal friendships. They included M.A. Rugby Pratt (Methodist), L.A. North (Baptist) and the Presbyterian minister Alan Watson of St Paul's Church who was sometimes referred to as 'East Watson'.

As bishop of Christchurch from 1926, West-Watson drew attention to the growing international ecumenical movement and the need for the church to take seriously the social implications of the gospel for its national, political, and social life. He stressed the need for unity among the churches and prepared his diocese for ecumenical engagement.

In 1940 West-Watson became Primate. Not only did he have to lead the church in the context of global warfare but also in the face of some of his Episcopal colleagues who were less than sympathetic to the ecumenical spirit which both Archbishop West-Watson, and the Archbishop of Canterbury at the time, William Temple exemplified.

In 1950, a very different Archbishop of Canterbury visited New Zealand and Christchurch to help lead the centennial celebrations associated with the founding of Canterbury. That was the 'Headmaster Archbishop', Geoffrey Fisher. He commented in his diary on each of the New Zealand bishops, writing what almost amounted to a school report on each of them. West-Watson was one of the few to receive a favourable report: 'A lovely person – a joy – getting forgetful and fussy, but intellect still first rate and a heart of gold.'

While there is much more to West-Watson's life than his ecumenical commitment, unity was a theme which pervaded his ministry. The journey of the young 'Boy Bishop' (as he was unkindly labelled) when he was consecrated in 1909 as Bishop of Barrow-in-Furness in the Carlisle Diocese until his retirement in 1951 as Primate and Archbishop of New Zealand spanned two world wars and the depression. Like Bishop George Augustus Selwyn, who was also consecrated at the age of 32 (but never referred to as a 'Boy Bishop'!), West-Watson uniquely gave Episcopal leadership in both England and New Zealand.

When he died in 1953 West-Watson was described in the obituary which appeared in the *Times* as 'a man of great approachability and unaffected goodness'.

Martin Sims is to be congratulated for producing this biography of his grandfather. The access Martin had to family archives and memories enriched his Master of Philosophy thesis about West-Watson on which this publication is based. I commend the book to you.