El fin del Christiandad

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Off the Chilean coast lies the island of Chiloe, a rainy windswept place populated by farmers and fishing families and where a few tourists venture to experience the isolation of the Pacific island. Charles Darwin dropped by in 1835, traveling about by horse; sleeping under the stars, trees or shacks that he came upon; procuring his food from the locals where he could. In the town of Caylen he was told that he had reached 'el fin del Christiandad' and despite the mangled Spanish it is easy to translate this as 'the end of Christianity.' Perhaps the people of Caylen were anticipating the end of one of the world's great religions, if so their prophesy has failed to deliver. More likely they were referring to the idea that in 1835 Christianity had reached its geographical limit, there was, as far as they were concerned, no further settlements to which the word had spread.

If you look at a map there really were not many more places for Christianity to go. The mainland of what is today modern Chile was still unconquered land inhabited by the native Mapuche who had not, for the most part, embraced Christianity. There may have been a few Christians wandering about, those seeking to convert the natives or settlers who were beyond the borders of Chile, but these were few. The sentiment was that Christianity had reached the edge of the world. Chile of course is not the edge of the world, for if my grade school geography holds true, the world is round and one can continue indefinitely and never fall of the edge. Regardless Chile, in the minds of travelers of Darwin's time and now, was the edge of the world, there really is little more room to travel. There is Antarctica which holds the interest of the very few, and a few Islands of the south Pacific which are even more remote but if one continues to travel west they come upon New Zealand which I presume to be the other 'end of Christianity.'

Getting to Chile these days is a relatively easy prospect, a ten hour overnight flight from Toronto, however it is not a destination that is in the forefront of travel plans. It is where we have decided to go. Our friends, James and Wendy, had suggested a trip to Chile and Pat and I accepted. We planned ou trip in March when Canadian schools close for a week and panic sets in as parents are saddled with the responsibility of caring for their children. With four children in tow, Elysanne and Aurianne, and ours, Zoey and Zachary, we decided to take the tortuous ten hour overnight flight from Toronto to Santiago for a brief eight days in Chile. Getting there has not always been so easy.

The early days of sea travel from Europe to the Americas were decidedly horrid affairs. The stories of poor conditions, lack of food and fresh water and the ensuing illnesses are well known. The Spanish who came to Central and South America suffered miserably and in extreme conditions as many as two-thirds perished on the voyages, their bodies left to the sea.

These were hardy seafarers and soldiers however as the decades passed, others came to the new lands, traders, government functionaries, settlers and men of God and conditions did not much improve for the voyage. 'I being the oldest of Missionaries, had the advantage of a cabin, of about 6 foot long, and 3 abroad, but the rest of the Missionaries were forced to take up their quarters in the for-castle of the ship, exposed to the Injuries of the weather and air, and for an additional plague were constantly incommoded with the stench of hen's dung which were kept thereabouts, and of which ten commonly died in a day...and it being part of our daily employment to keep ourselves tolerably free from vermin.'

These are the recollections of Anthony Sepp a German Jesuit Father off to South America with forty four colleagues to persuade the natives of these new lands the value of the Christian faith. He sailed from Spain in 1691 with three ships bound for Buenos Aires with the three governors of Buenos Aires, Assumption and Cali, their wives and families as well as merchants, slaves, soldiers, seamen and others. The accommodations of the Governors and perhaps the wealthier merchants were probably better but for the slaves, soldiers and sailors, undoubtedly worse.

For the Father the conditions were bad enough, their beds too short to sleep, the rooms stuffy and dark as the windows were kept shut to keep out the waves. They were infested by mice and rats, ubiquitously the size of cats, as well had to deal with the smell of sheep and hogs on board. Those unfamiliar with the sea suffered from dysentery and vomiting. And it got worse. The food, supplied by the 'covetous Captain' was old bisket and a small amount of flesh, both full of maggots and a 'Pint of ill scented and corrupted water a day'. When rain came, the passengers used whatever they could, sheets, hats, vessels, to catch the fresh water from the skies. Sepp declared the voyage prosperous, there were no storms in which the crew claimed all to be lost, and except for a seaman, sick upon departure from Cadiz, there were no other losses at sea, except for the hogs

amongst who there was a pestilence. The hogs and the seaman were dispatched overboard, luckily for the seaman only after he died.

If one sailed to Panama then crossed the isthmus to the Pacific there were more seas to sail. Hipolito Ruiz departed Spain in 1777 to research the botany of Peru and Chile at the behest of the Spanish crown. He arrived in Peru via Panama and spent a number of years doing his research. In 1781 he left for Chile, again by sea on the 'Nuestra Senora de Bulen' a merchant ship on its way to Concepcion, in Chile, for wine and grain. Ruiz suffered the normal travails of the sea, heaving waves lead to the constant rolling and pitching of the ship, rainy seas coming through the hatchways, all this lead to seasickness for some of the passengers and constant fear for them all. 'When we went to eat, we had to do so holding ourselves with ropes, each one with his plates in the hand and confined to the cabins.'

For Hipolito Ruiz this was an unpleasant voyage but we must give him credit for not telling his readers that it was worse than it was. People unfamiliar with the sea can easily be convinced, by the crew or more seasoned passengers, that their survival was miraculous in such horrid conditions. Travelers, time and again, whether unwittingly or to enhance their story, have told their readers that but for the grace of God they would have perished. It is unfortunate we do not have the harrowing accounts from those who did perish at sea.

There were however some serious mishaps on the voyage, a calf was lost over board and was later, as food became tedious, missed. Regardless the poor calf's fate was sealed. A sailor, while the sails were hoisted was knocked into the sea and had to be rescued. But on Christmas morning around six am a passenger fell into the sea. The seas were rough and the passenger, 'not daring to go to the privy (the conditions were probably foul) he tried to move his bowels at one of the chainwales, from which he fell when the boat rolled.' Despite efforts to save the man, he was lost. It would be easy, after almost two hundred and fifty years to make light of the way the man perished, but for Ruiz it was apparently quite tragic for he thought to name the passenger, Baltaya, from Vizcaya, on his way to Concepcion to sell sugar. They spent forty two days traveling from Lima to Concepcion and made the return voyage two years later without problem

except for ‘the poor and scanty food served to us by the Captain of the vessel, but seasoned with jokes and witty stories.’

I would have enjoyed traveling with Hippolito Ruiz, he had a sense of humour and appreciated the food, or lack of it, as the loss of the calf caused him some grief. He was I think, also a compassionate man and gave the unfortunate Baltaya his only note to posterity.

The entire trip, from Europe to Chile, could have been made by sea, as the route to the south of the continent, by Cape Horn, had been known since the sixteenth century when Magellan rounded the continent but this was used mostly by explorers and researchers. Charles Darwin arrived in Chile via this route but he was a well provisioned researcher on his voyage around the world sharing the Captain’s quarters. Upon his arrival in Chile in 1835 he spent his time traveling about the country overland to Argentina and north to Peru.

Over the years the conditions of sea travel undoubtedly improved as the traveler was less often the hardy explorer and more frequently the settlers with a family or the casual traveler. In 1820 Peter Schmidtmeyer sailed from England with ten cabin passengers, not luxury mind you but certainly not steerage. But they traveled reasonably well ‘we had a fare almost sumptuous, which was highly agreeable to some of us, my messmates formed a cheerful society, and the daily occurrences of the wars on board were the subject of much conversation and interest.’ Even so sea travel from the early nineteenth century was not necessarily pleasant, Stuart Sutcliffe, who sailed a couple of years after Schmidtmeyer wrote of the ubiquitous sea sickness and bad food provided to steerage passengers from the ship’s allowance and the lack of bedding to which the passengers were accustomed.

By the 1850s, steamships were a common mode of sea travel shortening the trip and making for a smoother voyage. Mrs. George B Merwin wrote of the leisure she enjoyed on her return from Chile when the lack of wind put the vessel to a crawl in the Atlantic. ‘We brought our books and work to the deck, and under an awning which had been put up to screen us from the sun, watched the sailors painting and repairing the rigging. The demon of sea-sickness was laid for the time. Sky above and sea below

were deliciously blue; the slow sun rose and sank, the moon nightly poured her light upon the smooth and silent ocean, while the sailors sang their songs, and talked of every land. We ate and slept; we lived in our little lazy city of wooden walls, and knew nothing of the toil and turmoil of the great worlds to the east and west.' Such was the life for the wife and children of the US consul to Valparaiso in the 1850s, few, in their travels to and from Chile, could enjoy such an indolent life while at sea, most would have shared experiences similar to those of Anthony Sepp in the late seventeenth century.

The Incas of Peru were the first in memorable history to arrive in Chile by land. They came around 1450 and annexed central Chile into their expanding empire 'more by persuasion than bloodshed' according to Peter Schmidtmeyer, and stopping in the south at the Biobio river. They came across the Andes from the north and extended their Royal Road, rope bridges, tree covered paths in which one walked by the side of a mule to avoid being struck by low hanging branches, to bring the bounty of Chile to Cuzco.

When the Spanish conquered Peru in 1532 it would not have taken long to get wind of the land to the south and they quickly set out to explore and claim that land for themselves. In 1535 they made their first effort to enter Chile with five hundred and seventy Spaniards and fifteen thousand Peruvians setting out to cross the Andes. One quarter of the Spaniards and two-thirds of the Indians perished in the Andes due to the cold, fatigue and starvation. But they were undaunted by the trifling deaths of ten thousand people, in 1540 Santiago was founded and Concepcion in 1550. Despite a number of setbacks, mainly the hostility of the locals who preferred they not stay, the Spaniards maintained a foothold and continued to arrive.

In the early years of Spanish America it was decreed, in Spain, that people and goods bound for Chile were to travel through Peru. Most came via the land crossing at Panama however there was some travel from Buenos Aires across the continent to Peru.

Anthony Sepp, who spent most of his time saving the natives of Buenos Aires and Paraguay and did not make it to Chile himself, noted that the road from Buenos Aires to Tucuman, then Paraguay and ultimately to Peru was safe and easy. The route direct to Chile over the Andes provided only one pass open only in summer due to the cold, snow and rapid streams of water. Travel over the Andes, direct from Argentina had been made

by the late seventeenth century but were rare. This changed in 1778 when it was decided that goods no longer needed to go to Lima which spurred on efforts to find usable passes over the mountains.

In the first decade of the nineteenth century John Constanse Davie, on the lamb from English justice, started out from Buenos Aires. It was twenty two days to Mendoza, the preparation point at which to cross the mountains. He traveled in a large party with natives and Negroes, he does not say whether or not they were slaves, who were to take care of the animals. While some of the party rode horses, he himself sat in a cart pulled by cattle. There was not much access to supplies so that bread, of maize and wheat, wine and fruit were carried with them. The one constant concern while crossing the dry pampas was the search for water. It was difficult to maintain palatable water while on the move so it was the aim, each night to reach and halt at a water source. This was aided by the thirsty cattle who would move uncontrollably to a water source whenever they 'snuffed' it out.

It took Peter Schmidtmeyer about thirty two days to cross the pampas. He traveled much as did John Constanse Davie in an ox cart with wheels eight feet high. These were rather rough affairs, they moved slowly, they rocked incessantly on the uneven road, or path, and they were noisy, no grease available for the axles. Beyond that, despite the thrill of being in a new land and the sense of adventure, they were boring. The selection of on board movies were limited, the vista of unending plains would have worn itself out within a few days. Unless one had a cartmate with thirty two days of conversation, this unlikely improved. Peter Schmidtmeyer regretted not traveling by horse.

And there were those who made this trip as part of their livelihood, the peons who were responsible for the animals, carts, goods, preparing meals and any other odd job that may be required. They were asleep by ten or eleven pm and up at dawn, during their waking hours their work was non-stop. Animals were routinely worked to death.

These caravans were of ten to twenty carts and at times more. At night they were lined up in two rows with a passage like a street between them covered with awnings for sleeping. Fires were lighted, an ox selected and butchered and the Mendoza wine was

brought out. It would be quite an idyllic scene, the stars overhead, perhaps a guitar or a good story, a deck of cards for amusement.

There were dangers on the road to Mendoza. The Pampas of Argentina, as elsewhere in the isolated areas of South America, was something of a lawless region where Natives and renegade soldiers could move about the land unhindered. John Constanse Davie was at no time threatened but three years prior to his travel a party was attacked in which twelve people were killed and thirteen injured. The situation may have improved by the 1820s when Peter Schmidtmeyer made his trip. South America was in turmoil and Natives were displaced. Independence movements were afoot and Spain sought to counteract this tide. The Natives of the region were often used as pawns influenced by one side or the other. European politics entered the scene as agents for Napoleon and his enemies plotted about South America looking to influence the various countries. And there were disaffected Generals and their followers, beyond the reach of authorities. Small scale wars took place between regions, in the 1820s the Republic of Mendoza had pretensions of independence from Buenos Aires.

While the threat to travelers was not ever present they were aware of the danger. Peter Schmidtmeyer noted that it was unwise to travel any distance from the road without a large body of peons, 'the more firearms the better, they are what the Indians dread the most.' He did not encounter any troubles himself but Schmidtmeyer had to alter his return journey from Chile due to the activities of a certain General Correa.

Mendoza, at the foot of the Andes, provided safety, a good bed, good food, Mendoza wines and it was here that one would make arrangements for crossing the Andes. Guides, muleteers and mules, horses, peons for baggage and food were available for hire. The guide and muleteer could be the same person as there seems to have been a bit of an industry ferrying people across the mountain chain, and the guide would arrange for the peons and food required consolidating various parties in one trip. Beyond Mendoza there was little that could be attained as the area was sparsely populated; in 2000 when I passed through the region it was still incredibly isolated. Food was required for at least the ten days it took to cross the range. Schmidtmeyer, who was going late in the season, took food for thirty days in case the weather held them up. Even in summer snow storms could occur, leaving people with frostbite and crossing in winter

was considered impossible although the natives had managed to do so, Constanse Davie wore fur cloaks and caps at night. On the Chilean side of the mountains, the government had assembled vaults, eight feet off the ground and able to accommodate thirty people, a safety shelter to accommodate those trapped in inclement weather. There was also, on the Chilean side, a hamlet in which the inhabitants were employed to assist parties over the mountains providing lodging, food and entertainment. Even when the weather wasn't severe, it was uncomfortable, Schmidtmeyer relates: 'Our resting place was in the open air where a fire was lighted up and supper cooked to which an uninterrupted ride of thirteen hours had insured a welcome reception. The days had been so hot, that it was with every prospect of sound sleep that we laid ourselves down but there suddenly descended to us such a cold breeze, to announce the vicinity of the cordillera, that it did not allow some of us, of whom I was one, to sleep a moment, and our surprise at the effect of it ended when, in the morning, we found that some running water near us was frozen over.'

The travelers would ride on horse or mule, as much as thirteen hours a day. I've never ridden a horse or mule for more than a few hours and I can imagine that it would take a few days for one's but to feel at all comfortable. The mule trail became precarious, disputes would occur between two parties meeting head on, unable to pass on the narrow ledge, the mountain rising to one side, and descending on the other. Knees and feet were banged, bruised and twisted from the side of the mountain. The mules had the ability to climb slippery passes in winter while carrying passengers and baggage however one mule from Schmidtmeyer's party lost its footing and cartwheeled, with baggage bound to its back, down the side of a mountain. When he assisted in retrieving the cargo he noticed the carcasses and skeletons of animals that had suffered the fate of his mule. Tomas Sutcliffe noted the crosses erected in memory of individuals 'launched into eternity', 'the sight of these alarms the solitary traveller, but there are few instances of highway robbery, especially to the north of Santiago.' On his return to Argentina the skeleton of a foreigner was pointed out to him, murdered, it was supposed by a peon for his valuables, the man had apparently neglected to hire a proper guide for the journey.

The descent of the mountains on the Chilean side was less hazardous, even enjoyable. The decline gradual, Santiago was seventy five miles away, there was little

habitation between the mountains and the city but on arrival there was rest and food. Santiago was a small city with a population of forty to fifty thousand with all amenities available to the weary traveler. There was no need to seek out the accommodation of a farmer, there were hotels, usually run by foreigners, where a bed, a meal and a bath could be attained. The city was not substantial, the buildings of any substance were few, the mint was one of these and was mentioned by all of our travelers. The Rio Mapuche would still flood in the spring with the melting of the snows of the Andes had the potential to wash away the homes and lives of the poorer people who live near the river. 'The air was bright pure and sweet' according to Mrs George B Merwin, it is no longer so. Santiago is now a city of three million and has the inherent problem of noise and smog contained within the valley by the surrounding mountains.

The town was for the most part contained between the Mapuche River and the Cañada, the Canal that broke off from the river to water the surrounding land and the Cañada was the place to go in the evening, the water feeding the tree lined boulevard where the perfect climate could be enjoyed. Ice cream could be purchased, made with ice brought from the Andes by mules, a three day trip, coffee and chocolate the favourite flavours. This was the employ of some people who would bring the ice, wrapped in hay to the markets in the capital. It is a practice that has died out in all but a very few circumstances. The canal is now buried by an eight lane city street chocked with cars, and pedestrians and ice cream is purchased in wrappers with the Nestle label, and the Mapuche River is now contained to prevent the spring floods from sweeping away the homes along its bank.

From Santiago it was a two day trip to the coast to Valparaiso with an overnight stay in the Hotel Casa Blanca. The trip was made by mule or horse and later on by carriage and in the 1850s the railway was introduced. The road was windy and hilly and perhaps a little dangerous and the winding road would take itself up and down the mountains. There is now a highway between Santiago and Valparaiso, tunnels cutting their way through the mountains making the trip at most ninety minutes, the approach to Valparaiso is still windy. The Hotel Casa Blanca is gone but lends its name to a quiet town which at most serves as a stop for gas and a washroom break. The highway is spotted with wineries making Chile's most famous export easily available, and its quality

has improved over the years. Peter Schmidtmeyer complained 'how the excellent grapes of these countries are converted into bad wines' and also of the 'very thick and sickening wines.' The review varied, but all of our travelers, with the possible exception of the stoutly Protestant Mrs George B Merwin, made use of the drink. There was also Chicha, the drink of the poorer classes, made with apples. Chicha now is difficult to find but when found is made of grapes.

In Valparaiso, a town of fifteen hundred there was less to do but accommodations were available. It seems that Mrs George B Merwin, in her three years there spent some time strolling the inclined street which lead to the bay listening to the street musicians who were hired by the city. Otherwise she would wait for the mail ship 'The great event of the foreigner's life at Valparaiso, is the semi-monthly arrival of the mail-steamer, bringing news from home. We long eagerly for the day she is expected, and hail with rapture the first breath of her smoke on the distant horizon. As she reaches her anchorage, we watch with a glass the transfer of the mail-bags to the boat, and calculate the moments which must elapse before we receive our letters.' And ever more occasionally there was an execution, 'The criminal, clothed in a long white robe, and accompanied by three holy fathers, was led to a post, seated with his back against it, and his body and arms tied to it. Eight soldiers were drawn up in front, and at a signal, four of them fired at his heart – a drooping of his head was the only perceptible motion that followed this discharge. I had no intention of witnessing so horrible a spectacle, but looking with a glass to see how the man was secured, the soldiers fired before I would withdraw my eyes. This is the mode of execution in Chile.' Valparaiso offers much more today, executions although are no longer on offer. It was a Pacific port city in which vessels, having rounded Cape Horn, would prepare and take on supplies before heading into the Pacific, and again would stop on their return. The opening of the Panama canal in 1916 made Valparaiso unnecessary as a port and the city has remained in something of a freeze. There has been no additions of public buildings since 1916 and the residential homes are scattered haphazardly up the hills that lead from the coast creating mazes of unique streets and neighborhoods.

Reaching 'el fin del Christiandad' presented some rather arduous obstacles and yet Europeans set out to reach this faraway land. But why? Why risk death at sea, from

storm or malnutrition? Why the long days and nights crossing the Pampas of Argentina, searching for water and risking attack from natives, renegade soldiers, or getting caught up in the local political squabbles? Why cross the Andes, with their interminable cold and snow and the risk of being 'launched' down the side of a mountain into eternity? 'The Kingdom of Chile is unquestionably, as might be inferred from its benign climate, its products, and the character of the inhabitants one of the most pleasant and enviable countries in the world.' So wrote Hipolito Ruiz around 1790 after his sorjourne in Chile and Peru. Similar sentiments were shared by all our travelers, from Anthony Sepp at the end of the 17th century to Charles Darwin passing by in the 1830s.

The climate of Chile is an exceptional draw, 'it basques in perpetual sunshine' according to Mrs George B Merwin, there is no rain for the seven months, for in the spring, summer and fall the lowlands are watered from the snow runoff of the mountains, 'the sea breezes, render this kingdom more temperate and congenial to Europeans, than any other of this vast continent. But being as it were the termination of the Spanish discoveries, it has not been so well known and appreciated as either of the others' wrote John Constanse Davies about fifteen years after Ruiz. The temperatures are not extreme in either direction, and there seemed to be an exceptional lack of lightning storms and thunder, a matter in which more than one of our visitors took note.

All that was familiar to the European could be found in Chile. It provided pastures for sheep, cattle and wheat. Apples, strawberries, and grapes were available in plenty and the wine from grapes or chichi from apples was noted, not always favourably, by our European visitors. The conditions were amenable to anyone willing to work the land for their livelihood.

Efforts in the 1860s to attract immigration to Chile pointed out 'no magnificent wild beast in the country. No lions, tigers, leopards, neither the small ferocious reptiles which are the curse of most South American countries. It has been observed that Chili being the healthiest country in the south, is precisely the one which produces most medicinal plants and at the same time, is free of all venomous animals or reptiles.' Diseases which afflicted other regions, yellow fever, cholera and other pestilences are not found in Chile.

And of course there was the gold and silver in abundance which caught the attention of first the Spaniards and later English, Germans and French operating little independent mines scattered about the country.

For those visiting the country, the people of Chile have always proved to be a friendly and hospitable. In the 1850s Mrs. George B Merwin observed that thirty years previous, 'the Chilenos welcomed all foreigners with overflowing hospitality, and with a primitive warmth and simplicity that was delightful. Such welcome is now seldom shown, except in remote places in the country.' But Mrs. George B Merwin was a bit of complainer, the kind of visitor aware that things are not as they are at home and eager to condescendingly point them out. Perhaps she was there at a brief time when the national mood was not fond of foreigners. She no doubt based her comments of thirty years previous from the same sources as I did. All of our travelers had positives to say, 'generous and inviting' from Hipolito Ruiz, Darwin spoke of their kindness and Schmidtmeyer of their cheerful disposition.

Schmidtmeyer spoke further of their character: 'A feature which deserves particular notice is the security with which a traveller may pursue his journey, sleep in open air, and remain entirely exposed during his rest, although known to be always travelling for trading purposes, and generally with much money or valuable goods in his trunks. There are few spots in Chile where this may not be done without risk. To receive strangers is, even with the poorest Chilenos, an act of hospitality rather than of self-interest; and they sometimes would sooner be without that opportunity of parting with a very scanty stock of bread and provisions got from a considerable distance; if more than two or three reals be offered for a supper sufficient for two persons, and some accommodations, they well often observe that they do not desire so much or anything.'

Tourists are always anxious to find the locals friendly but are always happy to complain, back home, when they are not. My experience with the Chilenos was of friendliness and helpfulness, with the sole exception of the bastard who stole my backpack. In the student riots, with tear gas still in the air burning the eyes and throats of our children, we were assisted by rioters themselves and other less disposed to their cause, to find a way to avoid the mayhem. They seemed, living at the edge of Christianity, quite happy that we had made the effort to come to their country.

There were various reasons our travelers were drawn to Chile. Ruiz was sent by the government from Spain to study the flora and fauna of Peru and Chile. Darwin hooked up with the Beagle on its voyage around the world, of which he made famous, for similar reasons. I cannot find Peter Schmidtmeyer's reason for going to Chile but he certainly shared the interests of the other two. All three of them loved to prattle on about rocks and shrubs and bugs, Ruiz dropped more Latin than a grade eleven language teacher. Someone cared about these facts, but not me. I want to know where they slept, what they ate, and what problems they had, how did they pass the time?

John Constanse Davies arrived while on the lamb from English justice and he was, no doubt, not the only one to do so. It was a vast continent with plenty of room to lose oneself from the vigilance of a justice system back home, whether English, French, German or other European county.

Mrs George B Merwin was the spouse of the United States representative in Valparaiso. She came along with her children, it seems, almost as a lark, out of curiosity and perhaps a need to see how another part of the world lived. In three years she did not leave Valparaiso or Santiago, we on our trip were constrained to this central area only by lack of time.

Tomas Sutcliff came as a mercenary to serve the newly independent Chilean government. He was not the only one for he encountered others with whom he had served with in the English military. There were others from France and Spain who came and involved themselves of the intrigues of the independents and Royalists. It is, I suppose, understandable that a new and fragile country will look for outside help as it seeks to establish itself but why would these soldiers of fortune leave their home voluntarily to fight in a foreign war and unfamiliar land. Were there not sufficient wars in Europe to keep these men entertained? It was the time of Napoleon and efforts to advance or check his cause spread the world over, South America included.

There has been remarkable consideration as to the spiritual orientation of the natives of Chile. I wonder if, when the Incas arrived, they made any effort to promote their king as a deity at the top of the Chilean spiritual pyramid. When the Spanish arrived they ridiculed the Chilean god, Pedro Valdivia in the 1540s declaring it to be 'unjust...so

kind to wicked men, and take so little notice of the innocent.' How could one so well versed in the word feel otherwise? Anthony Sepp arrived with the express purpose to bring his beliefs to the natives of South America but saw them as 'stupid' and 'naturally so lazy.' The Jesuits arrived in Chile in 1607 and the effort was on, if not so much to save the lives of natives, but at least their souls.

Our English travelers, Constanse Davies, Schmidtmeyer and Darwin were all concerned about the condition of the natives of Chile feeling that England could do a better job than Spain, but these were more of political considerations than for their souls. Mrs George B Merwin wasn't content that the natives be Christians and reflected on the fact that Protestantism had made very few inroads.

If we can accept that these people were the products of their time, we can see that they really were not the worst that the natives had to encounter. Those who brought God with them did not come alone, the others that came with them, those in search of gold, silver and land had a far greater impact on the people of Chile than did the proselytizers.

Central Chile, around Santiago and Valparaiso came under Spanish Control from the middle of the sixteenth century. Further south beyond the Biobio river and the city of Concepcion the land was more 'unpossessed than unconquered', in the worlds of Schmidtmeyer, and the natives maintained some degree of independence although be it forever precarious. For three hundred and twenty years the Spaniards and after them the Chileans, fought on again, off again wars with the Araucanians and other groups south of the Biobio. In the 1560s the natives moved to the hinterlands but reasserted themselves in the 1590s, peace was established in 1641 and independence of those south of the river was recognized in 1773. Wars and the subsequent peace that would follow occurred throughout the eighteenth century and by the early nineteenth century. It is probably an exaggeration to call these wars, skirmishes more likely, hit and runs, there were really too few men assembled at any one time for a pitched battle to take place. The native population south of the Biobio was small, thinned by small pox and measles.

Chilean relationships with the natives varied, at times they traded and coexisted and married and interbred. At other times they were at war. The natives would have to abandon their homes and move to where they were more isolated, Spanish settlements

were decimated and entire populations wiped out, many of these battles retaliation for previous attacks. Other natives would often be allied with the settlers and Chileans, having become settled in the towns.

But the push south by the Spanish and their descendants was relentless and inevitable. There was the view, common in situations such as these, held also by Schmidtmeyer of the need 'to forward the progress of civilization among the Indians' for which they would have to overcome their 'many moral and physical evils.' The land south of the Biobio was unfamiliar at the time, Hipolito Ruiz had to travel with militiamen for security. Mrs George B Merwin visited the port of Concepcion but was able to ascertain that the 'interior of their territory is almost unknown as they (the natives) are so suspicious of the white race, that only peddlers, bringing toys and finery are permitted to pass to the plains.' A few years later, Darwin was able to move about with little need for security. Regardless the die was cast, in 1866 the Chilean government had established a plan to sell Indian lands in the State of Arauco, south of the Biobio, the same year that a reservation system was introduced. In 1881 a truce was signed and the south was subsumed into the country of Chile.

The population of Chile is a predominant mix of Spanish and Natives however others have settled here. The Germans came in the mid nineteenth century to settle towns like Valdivia deep in native territory. Croatians came around the same time to settle further south, and Boers came from South Africa before the end of the century. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries immigrants arrived from Spain, Great Britain, Italy, Germany, Serbia, Bosnia Herzogovenia, Argentina and France. In the mid 20th century Christian Palestinians arrived fleeing the turmoil in the middle east.

I live in Toronto. This is a city in which most people, or at least their parents, come from another part of the world, there is not a country or region that is not represented here. My friends, colleagues, acquaintances are, as often as not, from someplace else, South America, Japan, China, Vietnam, India, the Middle East, Africa, Europe and significantly, Chile. (Ironically I know of no Native Canadians.) These are people who have, for many reasons, decided to remove themselves from their homes and families and travel a significant distance around the globe to establish a change in their life. Some have come as they foresaw new opportunities for themselves, others out of desperation,

escaping wars, privation and persecution. As hard as these decisions have been, these people are able to maintain communication with those that they left behind, technology today allows easy access to family and information from their homes, and if they choose they can return home, travel time at the most twenty-four hours, stay a week or two, or longer, then return to their new lives in Toronto.

It has not always been so. From the sixteenth to nineteenth even the twentieth century, when people left their home, bound for a land such as Chile, their decision was often final and irreversible. Goodbyes would be said and people removed from each other's lives forever. Perhaps if they were literate, letters would be exchanged, but these would be infrequent and unreliable, and at some point the letters would end without explanation, the fate of those at the other end never to be known.

I don't know if I could ever have been one of these people, picking up part of my family and leaving others, to voyage around the world, and it is even more unlikely that I would have found my way to Chile. Perhaps I could have made the voyage to Buenos Aires naively thinking the sea voyage would be easy. But on arrival there and making enquiries towards Chile, the dry Pampas, with the threat of Indians or petty local wars, and crossing the Andes would have placed my descendants firmly in Argentina. Fortunately for my story there are souls hardier than I.

It is unfortunate that I have no access to accounts from these people, the Spaniards who arrived in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. What I have read and conveyed to you is all very valuable but these people, Ruiz, Schmidtmeyer, Mrs George B Merwin (did she not have her own first name?) and Darwin, it seems to me, had it rather easy and were able to return to tell their story. I'd like to know of those who arrived perhaps under more desperate circumstances, who had no home to return to. I suppose that many of these people were illiterate and it has been an unfortunate habit of the illiterate to leave us no written accounts.

Chile remains outside of the main travel routes for most tourists. Its history does not have the draw of Europe or parts of Asia, it is simply not old enough nor does it have a heavy concentration of sites. Santiago has a population of five million and its airport is small, comparable to a regional airport that one finds in Canada or the United States,

indicating that the volume of international traffic into the country is slight. It is unfortunate that the country is not more central on the global map for it is a safe destination with a climate that would suite most dispositions and while it can no longer claim to be 'el fin del christiandad' it does remain in the minds of many the end of the world.