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**Jesus in New Zealand  
1900-1940**

**A thesis presented in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
in  
History**

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New Zealand**

**Geoffrey Michael Troughton**

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# ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses pervasive ways in which New Zealanders thought about Jesus during the years from approximately 1900 to 1940. In particular, it considers ways that he appeared within discourse, contexts in which he was especially invoked, and ends for which he was employed. It examines Jesus as a religious icon, but also as a reflexive tool for examining the place of religion in New Zealand culture and society. In this sense, it addresses Jesus as a phenomenon of social and cultural history. The thesis draws on a wide range of sources and methodologies, and is organised thematically into chapters that highlight predominant images of Jesus and important contexts that helped shape them. It considers Jesus in the languages of doctrine and devotion, social reform, and for children. It further assesses images of Jesus' masculinity, and representations of him as an 'anti-Church' prophet.

The overarching argument is that Jesus constituted an increasingly important focal point in New Zealand religiosity during the period under investigation. Especially within Protestant Christianity, Jesus became a more important discursive focus and acquired new status as a source of authority. This movement reflected wider social and cultural shifts, particularly related to understandings of the nature of society and notions of personality. The increasingly Jesus-centred orientation of Protestant religiosity was fundamentally an attempt to modernise Christianity and extend its reach into the community. In particular, Jesus was invoked as the simple core of Christianity – the attractive essence of 'true religion'. Jesus-centred religiosity provided evidence of a changing social and cultural situation, demonstrating that religious language and ideals could be sensitive indicators of such shifts. The rise of Jesus as a focal point in religion was a response to change that reoriented Protestant Christianity in the process.

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# ABBREVIATIONS

AJHR	<i>Appendices to the Journal of the House of Representatives</i>
ANZ	Archives New Zealand, Wellington
ATL	Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington
CC	<i>Church Chronicle</i>
DNZB	<i>Dictionary of New Zealand Biography</i>
ENZ	<i>Encyclopaedia of New Zealand</i>
EP	<i>Evening Post</i>
JRH	<i>Journal of Religious History</i>
MAC	<i>Minutes of Annual Conference, Methodist Church of New Zealand</i>
MW	<i>Maoriland Worker</i>
NZB	<i>New Zealand Baptist</i>
NZH	<i>New Zealand Herald</i>
NZJH	<i>New Zealand Journal of History</i>
NZMBC Link	<i>New Zealand Methodist Bible Class Link</i>
NZMT	<i>New Zealand Methodist Times</i>
NZOYB	<i>New Zealand Official Year Book</i>
NZPD	<i>New Zealand Parliamentary Debates</i>
NZ Tablet	<i>New Zealand Tablet</i>
ODT	<i>Otago Daily Times</i>
PGA	<i>Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand</i>
PGS	<i>Proceedings of the General Synod of the Church of the Province of New Zealand</i>
TS	<i>Truth Seeker</i>
YCU	<i>Yearbook of the Congregational Union of New Zealand</i>

# INTRODUCTION

The central claim of Christian revelation is that God became incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Though orthodox Christian belief has always emphasised that Jesus was God, it has also maintained that he lived a fully human existence. Yet, the ways in which this life have been understood and interpreted have varied substantially over time. In short, Jesus has a history. This thesis addresses the pervasive ways in which New Zealanders thought about Jesus during the years from approximately 1900 to 1940. It analyses what New Zealanders made of him. In particular, it considers ways that he appeared within discourse, contexts in which he was especially invoked, and ends for which he was employed.

## JUSTIFICATION

Dealing as it does with Jesus, this thesis tells an historical story that is both social and theological. However, it is conceived more as a work of social and religious history than of historical theology.<sup>1</sup> It examines conceptualisations of Jesus and forms of devotion to him. It also considers Jesus as an ideal and as a form of religious justification. Investigation into New Zealanders' views of Jesus can be justified simply on the grounds of his centrality to the Christian story and Christian devotion. Because of this, Jesus has been a dominant figure within cultures that have been shaped by Christian influences. He has been a figure of cultural significance, even among those who have not believed the Church's teaching about his identity. Thus, when the early nineteenth-century poet and atheist Percy Bysshe Shelley finally arrived at an ideal figure to epitomise his aspirations he drew copiously on Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Particularly where historical theology is taken to refer to an emphasis on the development of Christian doctrine in formal theological reflection. For examples of this genre, see Justo L. Gonzalez, *A History of Christian Thought*, 2nd ed., Nashville: Abingdon, 1987; Alister McGrath, *An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1998; Jaroslav Pelikan, *Christian Doctrine and Modern Culture (Since 1700)*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Edmundson, 'Rebel With a Cause: The Romantics' Jesus', *New York Times Book Review*, 26 December 1999, p.23. See also Timothy Larsen, *Crisis of Doubt: Honest Faith in Nineteenth-Century England*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, which indicates that the figure of Jesus haunted some converts to secularism, and was one factor in the reconversion of a few of these to Christianity.

However, there are further specific reasons why investigation of Jesus is potentially significant. One is that discussion of him can be highly reflexive. Christians have often considered faith in Christ to be a critical marker of self-identity.<sup>3</sup> This reflexivity has been particularly evident where Jesus' humanity has been the object of scrutiny. Indeed, this was the basic insight propounded in Albert Schweitzer's devastating critique of the so-called 'Quest of the Historical Jesus', published in 1906. Schweitzer surveyed the conscious efforts of writers and scholars during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to interpret Jesus in historical terms free from doctrinal tyranny. He concluded that these reconstructions of Jesus' life invariably revealed as much about authors and their times as their subject: 'Thus each successive epoch of theology found its own thoughts in Jesus.... But it was not only each epoch that found its reflection in Jesus; each individual created Him in accordance with his own character'. Schweitzer went on to argue that, 'There is no historical task which so reveals a man's true self as the writing of a *Life of Jesus*.'<sup>4</sup>

At the level of the individual, this insight is perhaps unsurprising. Psychological understandings of the self consistently indicate that people tend to view others out of the dimensions of their own personality and experience. More significant in historical terms, and methodologically, is Schweitzer's observation that interpretations of Jesus can shed light on the wider social context in which that discourse is located. In this thesis, the principle of reflexivity is primarily applied in relation to the character of religion in New Zealand and the character of New Zealand society. In this sense, the humanity of Jesus is used as a lens through which social and religious patterns may be viewed. The usefulness of Jesus as an analytical tool depends to a large extent on the way that discussion of him has operated functionally. Notwithstanding the historicity of his existence, Jesus has often served as an idea and an ideal, both in Christian devotion and in the imaginings of people well beyond the Christian Church. Because of this, references to him provide a window to view

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<sup>3</sup> Thus, the great twentieth-century Swiss theologian Karl Barth's remark, 'Tell me where you stand on Christ and I will tell you who you are'. Cited in Donald G. Dawe (book review), *Theology Today*, 43:1, 1986, p.102.

<sup>4</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede*, W. Montgomery (trans.), 2nd ed., London: A & C Black, 1911, p.4.

conceptions of religion, the way it operated in society, and some of its changing roles and expressions.

No previous historical analysis of Jesus in New Zealand exists. Thus, the subject matter addressed here is novel.<sup>5</sup> The approach also represents a departure from established ways of dealing with religious subjects. More familiar modes of religious history in New Zealand have involved biographies, institutional and organisational histories, and analyses of secularisation. Valuable as these are, they have not always facilitated close engagement between the nation's religious history and its general historiography. Indeed, historians of religion have periodically lamented the lack of attention to religious themes in New Zealand historical writing.<sup>6</sup> Most recently, John Stenhouse has highlighted the marginalisation of religious influences, themes and voices within a predominantly secular nationalist historiography. He has noted some recent changes in this pattern, but also called for greater attention to the religious dimension within New Zealand history.<sup>7</sup> Focusing on Jesus enables an understanding of religious history separate from formal theological and ecclesiastical history. It provides a way to place religious, social and cultural history in closer relation. Furthermore, it provides a method for addressing social and cultural patterns with due attention to the religious climate. This alignment of social, cultural and religious dimensions reinforces the significance of religion for the telling of New Zealand stories.

### ***The Timeframe***

The timeframe for this study focuses primarily on the years 1900 to 1940. At certain points, these parameters have been broadened, especially where this helps to illustrate

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<sup>5</sup> Most works that have addressed Jesus in New Zealand have actually been inspired by evangelistic concerns, and are essentially expositions of Christian belief. For example, George A.F. Knight, *New Zealand Jesus*, Wellington: Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1974.

<sup>6</sup> Ian Breward, *Religion and New Zealand Society*, Dunedin: Presbyterian Historical Society, 1979; Peter Lineham, 'Religion', in Colin Davis and Peter Lineham (eds), *The Future of the Past*, Palmerston North: Department of History, Massey University, 1991, pp.3-28; Allan Davidson, 'New Zealand 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, pp.205-21.

<sup>7</sup> John Stenhouse, 'God's Own Silence: Secular Nationalism, Christianity and the Writing of New Zealand History', *NZJH*, 38:1, 2004, pp.52-71.

change over time or to place developments within a more realistic timeframe. In particular, some material from the 1890s has been included in Chapter Three, which deals with social issues, in order to indicate that many of the dominant images of Jesus in early twentieth-century social discourse were formed in the social changes of this earlier period. Similarly, Chapter Four, on children, incorporates some examples from after 1940 where those materials were either evidently shaped during the earlier period or illustrate the extension of patterns described throughout the chapter as a whole. The overall timeframe has not been selected on the basis of the existence of any objectively identifiable 'period'. As with all such decisions, there is a degree of arbitrariness in the dates. Yet, the early decades of the twentieth century do provide an opportune moment for a number of reasons, not least because they were years of considerable change.

These are widely held to be pivotal years in the creation of a modern New Zealand. Thus, the Caversham Project focuses its research on the southern suburbs of Dunedin on the years from 1893 to 1940, assuming this to represent 'The Birth of Modern Times'.<sup>8</sup> Important changes were taking place in New Zealand at a number of levels. Politically, the state socialism introduced by the Liberals in the 1890s led to incremental expansion of the state, and eventually a welfare state from 1938. Loyalty to the British Empire remained strong. However, New Zealand was also granted Dominion status in 1907 and thereafter engaged with increasing confidence in the international political environment. After World War One this was especially evident in its role at Versailles and support of the League of Nations. The war loomed large in memory and consciousness after 1918, and contributed to some of the uncertainty and social upheaval experienced during these years. Periods of major industrial unrest immediately prior to and following the war also contributed, as did economic fluctuation during the interwar years including the depression of the 1930s. Technological advances, growing urbanisation and industrialisation all changed the shape of working and domestic routines. Changes in social structure also followed as the colonial imbalances of gender and age evened out, and as birth rates declined.

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<sup>8</sup> See 'The Caversham Project'. URL: <http://caversham.otago.ac.nz/resource/index.html>, accessed 25 May 2007.

Writing of the Dunedin context, Erik Olssen argues that 'the social structure fashioned between 1890 and 1914 survived the war, the depression of the 1930s, and then another war'.<sup>9</sup>

Religious landscapes were also changing as wider cultural and intellectual shifts occurred. For example, by the beginning of the twentieth century the 'dominance of evangelicalism' was waning.<sup>10</sup> Within Protestant Christianity, there were growing theological divisions between conservative and liberal evangelicals. The battles between Fundamentalism and Modernism that erupted so forcefully in North America around the time of World War One reverberated through the English-speaking Christian world. Echoes of this could be heard quite early in New Zealand, and became louder by the 1930s. Protestant Christians often expressed concern that the influence of religion was waning. Some evidence of this sense of pressure came in outbursts of sectarianism. Conflict between Protestants and Catholics was less ferocious and protracted than in Australia, but was nonetheless evident in New Zealand. Faith healing missions and a fledgling Pentecostal movement emerged after the war and provided further trajectories of religious experience and expression.

In religious and theological terms, the timeframe under consideration is a particularly apt one for investigating approaches to Jesus. For in many ways the first half of the twentieth century was *the* recent period during which interest in the humanity of Jesus was to the fore. Boyd Hilton has suggested that the first half of the nineteenth century was the 'Age of the Atonement' in British religious and economic thought. According to this analysis, by the twentieth century the Age of the Incarnation had come. Thus, Hilton cites Canon Vernon Storr's claim in 1913 that 'In all schools of theological thought, Christology rather than Soteriology, the Incarnation rather than the Atonement, now occupies the central position'.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Erik Olssen, *Building the New World: Work, Politics and Society in Caversham 1880s-1920s*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1995, p.261.

<sup>10</sup> See David Bebbington, *The Dominance of Evangelicalism: The Age of Spurgeon and Moody*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Boyd Hilton, *The Age of the Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, p.5.

## ***Exceptionalism and New Zealand Historical Writing***

Noting these broader trends raises the issue of the particularity New Zealand's Jesus. To what extent do the images of Jesus addressed in this study reflect a unique local idiom, and to what extent do they mirror patterns that may be found elsewhere? For clearly, these social and religious patterns were not only experienced in New Zealand. Recently, historians like Kerry Howe and Peter Gibbons have castigated a New Zealand propensity to emphasise the exceptional in local experience. They further allege that such claims are often made without sufficient awareness of patterns abroad. Neither international currents nor their influence in New Zealand are adequately addressed, with the consequence that history writing becomes parochial and lacking in wider context and relevance.<sup>12</sup>

This thesis does not attempt to construct an argument for the 'exceptionalism' of New Zealand experience. It explores Jesus 'in' rather than 'of' New Zealand. For a start, this study only addresses Pakeha representations. A comprehensive exploration of the latter kind would need to investigate Maori images of Jesus, but would also require levels of contextualisation and specialisation that go beyond what is possible here. Indeed, the task of addressing Maori images would be worthy of a thesis in its own right.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, even within Pakeha New Zealand society, important differences existed based on factors like region and denomination. New Zealand religion was primarily shaped by Protestantism, with a large Anglican community and significant Catholic minority. Presbyterians and Methodists largely set the Protestant tone of the country, alongside smaller Free Church groups like the Baptists, Congregationalists and Churches of Christ, as well as the Brethren. No consideration of Jesus in New Zealand can avoid the reality that areas of affinity existed, as well as theological and devotional distinctions within the denominations, between Protestant, Catholic and sectarian groups, and within Protestant Christianity itself.

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<sup>12</sup> K.R. Howe, 'Two Worlds?', *NZJH*, 37:1, 2003, pp.50-61; Peter Gibbons, 'The Far Side of the Search for Identity: Reconsidering New Zealand History', *NZJH*, 37:1, 2003, pp.38-49.

<sup>13</sup> This distinction can be further justified on the grounds that Maori and Pakeha largely existed in separate worlds during the first half of the twentieth century. For example, James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders From the 1880s to the Year 2000*, Auckland: Allen Lane, 2001, pp.466-67. There was much greater convergence by the 1960s and 1970s. The works of James K. Baxter and Colin McCahon illustrate the influence of this on some local representations of Jesus.

Moreover, discussion of the New Zealand experience need not become a search for what is peculiar or unique, but can lead in quite different directions. As Miles Fairburn has recently suggested, it was arguably 'the abnormal degree to which its people have borrowed from other cultures' that made New Zealand distinct.<sup>14</sup> In much of what follows it will be evident that developments in New Zealand were not unique. Similar factors and patterns were apparent elsewhere. Part of what this thesis demonstrates is that many of the ideas that circulated within New Zealand religion were either derivative of international trends or expressive of similar patterns. This is not to deny that something particular did occur in New Zealand, however. The New Zealand situation was different, simply because ideas were articulated and events occurred in a particular time and place. As Mark Noll has recently argued, 'The history of Christianity in North America is a distinct history because of the North American context. It is not unique in a religious or theological sense, but it does reflect distinctives arising from an "American difference."' <sup>15</sup>

## LOCATING THIS STUDY IN THE LITERATURE ON JESUS

Literature on Jesus in history exists in a number of forms. One approach has occurred in the context of the 'Quest of the Historical Jesus'. Historiographical surveys of this are now quite numerous, with most addressing major trajectories over the long term.<sup>16</sup> Yet, there would be space for a more focused study of early twentieth-century works. It is conventionally asserted that the Quest went quiet after Schweitzer's critique before a renewed burst of activity in the middle of the twentieth century sparked by Rudolf Bultmann.<sup>17</sup> While there may be methodological grounds for this claim, it is also slightly misleading. For one thing, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* was not translated

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<sup>14</sup> Miles Fairburn, 'Is There a Good Case for New Zealand Exceptionalism?', in Tony Ballantyne and Brian Moloughney (eds), *Disputed Histories: Imagining New Zealand's Past*, Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2006, p.167.

<sup>15</sup> Mark A. Noll, *The Old Religion in a New World: The History of North American Christianity*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002, p.26.

<sup>16</sup> See Charlotte Allen, *The Human Christ: The Search for the Historical Jesus*, Oxford: Lion, 1998; Gregory W. Dawes, *The Historical Jesus Question: The Challenge of History to Religious Authority*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001; Gregory W. Dawes (ed.), *The Historical Jesus Quest: Landmarks in the Search for the Jesus of History*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1999.

<sup>17</sup> For example, James Veitch, 'Searching for Jesus', *Stimulus*, 4:4, 1996, p.3.

into English till 1910 and its impact on the English-speaking world was not swift. Some English-speakers read it in German or in early translation. George Tyrrell took up some of Schweitzer's critique in *Christianity at the Crossroads* in 1909. Notably, he argued that the Jesus constructed by scholars like Adolf von Harnack (1850-1931) was merely 'the reflection of a Liberal Protestant face, seen at the bottom of a deep well'.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, others remained interested in the historical Jesus' identity, and continued to set forth interpretations. In particular, popular semi-biographical 'lives of Jesus' written by scholars, preachers and literary figures flooded the market throughout the English-speaking world.

Though written abroad in quite different settings, these works are of interest to the extent that they were influential locally, or indicated commonly articulated ideas. In fact, no popular biographical lives of Jesus were produced in New Zealand during this period, nor was there any conscious historical-theological scholarly production of the form usually associated with the Quest. The absence of a New Zealand Quest partly reflects the small scale of local theological production. This general paucity was noted by Frank Nichol in 1966 when he claimed that theology 'must be one of New Zealand's least indigenous activities'.<sup>19</sup> Of course, some theologians were active, including the Presbyterian John Dickie. His magnum opus, *The Organism of Christian Truth*, was a work of dogmatic theology rather than a Christology or specific contribution to debate on the historical Jesus.<sup>20</sup>

In any case, the literature of the Quest does not form the central focus of this study. The biblical scholar James Dunn has noted that discussion on 'the historical Jesus' has most often referred to the historians' Jesus. In other words, with historians' Jesus rather than the person who 'walked the hills and tracks of Galilee'.<sup>21</sup> There is no

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<sup>18</sup> George Tyrrell, *Christianity at the Crossroads*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1963 (1909), p.49.

<sup>19</sup> Frank Nichol, 'Theology in New Zealand', *Landfall*, 20:1, 1966, p.49.

<sup>20</sup> John Dickie, *The Organism of Christian Truth: A Modern Positive Dogmatic*, London: James Clarke, 1931. On Dickie, see Geoffrey Stewart King, "'Organising Christian Truth": An Investigation of the Life and Work of John Dickie', PhD Thesis in Church History, University of Otago, 1998; John Roxborough, 'The Christology of Principal John Dickie', BD Exercise in Historical Theology, Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, Theological Hall, Dunedin, 1974.

<sup>21</sup> James D.G. Dunn, *A New Perspective on Jesus: What the Quest for the Historical Jesus Missed*, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2005, pp.28-29.

attempt here to recover an actual 'historical Jesus', or to make historians' views of him central. Rather, this thesis concerns ways that New Zealanders reflected on Jesus – especially in his lived humanity and sometimes in their own terms, but more often as they appropriated certain ideas for their own ends and purposes.

In recent years, a number of studies have emerged that are closer in approach to this thesis than the historical Jesus literature. These have addressed Jesus as a phenomenon of social and cultural history. Literature of this kind has swelled to the point where, in 2003, an entire two volume encyclopaedia appeared dealing with Jesus in history, culture and thought.<sup>22</sup> The earliest examples of this cultural genre attempted to survey global, primarily European, historical perspectives and mapped characteristic images of Jesus within identifiable epochs.<sup>23</sup> More recently, a number of similar treatments have focused on national contexts. Notable examples include the book-length studies of Jesus in America by Stephen Prothero and Richard Wightman Fox,<sup>24</sup> and an article by Stuart Piggin on Australia.<sup>25</sup> One other study incorporates an historical perspective, but goes further in attempting to construct a Cuban contextual Christology.<sup>26</sup> With the exception of Piggin's article, these national works were all published after research on this thesis began.

The present study differs from these works in a number of important respects. First, national studies of historical representations have generally been quite ambitious in the timeframe covered, by contrast with the more confined period addressed here. Second, and a related point, whereas the national and global surveys tend to adopt an epochal approach in identifying dominant images, the narrower timeframe of this

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<sup>22</sup> Leslie Houlden (ed.), *Jesus in History, Culture and Thought: An Encyclopedia*, 2 vols, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2003.

<sup>23</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus Through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985; John Ferguson, *Jesus in the Tide of Time*, London: Routledge, 1980. Dennis C. Duling, *Jesus Christ Through History*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979 attends largely to the framework of the Quest of the Historical Jesus, but includes earlier and other material.

<sup>24</sup> Stephen Prothero, *American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003; Richard Wightman Fox, *Jesus in America: Personal Savior, Cultural Hero, National Obsession*, San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Stuart Piggin, 'Jesus in Australian History and Culture', in Emilsen and Emilsen (eds), pp.50-67.

<sup>26</sup> Miguel A. De La Torre, *The Quest for the Cuban Christ: A Historical Sketch*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002.

thesis lends itself to thematic organisation. Third, this study is, like the writings of Prothero, Fox and Piggin, focused primarily on Jesus the human rather than the broader Christological approach adopted elsewhere. However, unlike Prothero, there is no suggestion that Jesus became a national icon in New Zealand. Finally, though the present study shares the interest of De La Torre's project in questions of national identity, it does not aim to construct a contextual theology.<sup>27</sup>

Nevertheless, there are clearly theological dimensions to this historical story. This thesis does contribute to the field of contextual theology by supplying an account of the lived Christology of New Zealanders in the early twentieth century. Contextual theologies developed internationally during the last decades of the twentieth century and generated important approaches to Jesus.<sup>28</sup> At one level, contextual theologies have been concerned with understanding the environment in which theology is developed. They have emphasised the concerns and agendas that shape the construction and reception of theological ideas. In general, they prioritise the production of 'indigenous' forms and are suspicious of imported or transplanted expressions of faith. Thus, Bishop Leslie Boseto of the Solomon Islands has argued that it is necessary to find a 'Christian identity which is first of all born, not imposed or merely transplanted from somewhere.... It is only when Jesus is again born in each given cultural context that he is also recognised as universal'.<sup>29</sup>

The central questions of contextual Christology in New Zealand have addressed who Jesus is 'for us'.<sup>30</sup> Contextual theologies tend to assume the existence of national traits and identity, and that a 'relevant' Jesus can be expressed in terms that are consistent with these. The distinctive local fruits of this enterprise have been rather limited. Neil Darragh has suggested that the New Zealand context implies a

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<sup>27</sup> De La Torre, xv.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Volker Keuster, *The Many Faces of Jesus Christ: Intercultural Christology*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 2001; Priscilla Pope-Levison, *Jesus in Global Contexts*, Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992; J. Schreier (ed.), *Faces of Jesus in Africa*, London: SCM Press, 1992; R.S. Sugirtharajah (ed.), *Asian Faces of Jesus*, Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993; Antoine Wessels, *Images of Jesus: How Jesus is Perceived and Portrayed in Non-European Cultures*, John Vriend (trans.), London: SCM Press, 1990.

<sup>29</sup> Leslie Boseto, 'Forward', in Cliff Wright and Leslie Fugui (eds), *Christ in South Pacific Cultures*, Suva: n.p., 1986, pp.1-2.

<sup>30</sup> For example, Tim Pettengell, 'Who and What is Jesus for Us Today?', in Chris Nichol (ed.), *A Festival of Southern Insight*, Christchurch: Southern Insight, 1996, pp.106-113.

theological geography of being 'down under'. Yet, as Clive Pearson has noted, this 'insight' was developed without reference to Christology and few implications were explored.<sup>31</sup> Gerald Fitzgerald's ostensibly New Zealand Christology drew heavily on categories from Liberation Theology that emerged from remarkably dissimilar contexts abroad.<sup>32</sup> Strikingly, discussion of contextual theology in New Zealand has lacked an historical dimension.<sup>33</sup> This thesis fills a significant gap by asking who Jesus 'has been' for New Zealanders. Furthermore, it provides a way to examine the extent to which contextuality must be self-consciously undertaken, or is inherent in the process of representation. In theological terms it is usually suggested that New Zealand trends simply mirrored those of the United States or Europe around the same times.<sup>34</sup> To some extent, this is demonstrably the case. However, such broad characterisations can also overlook more subtle differences in the ways these patterns have been expressed.

## **JESUS AS A FOCAL POINT IN RELIGION**

This thesis considers pervasive ways in which Jesus was understood and represented. The overall argument is quite simply that interest in Jesus was a distinctive feature of religiosity in New Zealand during the early decades of the twentieth century. Indeed, emphasis on Jesus arguably became an increasingly important feature of religion during this time. This pattern was especially significant among Protestant Christians, and may be viewed as a changing focus within Protestantism in which the balance of religious authority shifted from Scripture to Jesus. In short, appeals to Jesus acquired new value during this period.

In one sense, Jesus had always been central to Christian doctrine and piety. However, by the early decades of the twentieth century it had become more attractive

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<sup>31</sup> On Darragh's contributions, see Hilary Regan and Alan J. Torrance (eds), with Antony Wood, *Christ and Context: The Confrontation Between Gospel and Culture*, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993; cf. Clive Pearson, 'Christ and Context Down Under: Mapping Trans-Tasman Christologies', in Emilsen and Emilsen (eds), pp.298-317.

<sup>32</sup> Gerald Patrick Fitzgerald, *Christ in the Culture of Aotearoa-New Zealand*, Dunedin: Faculty of Theology, University of Otago, 1990.

<sup>33</sup> One partial exception is Steve Taylor's work on the Atonement imagery of Anzac Day. See Steve Taylor, 'Scars on the Australasian Heart: Anzac Day as a Contextual Atonement Image', *New Zealand Journal of Baptist Research*, 6, 2001, pp.48-74.

<sup>34</sup> For example, Peter C. Matheson, 'The Contours of Christian Theology in Aotearoa New Zealand', in Emilsen and Emilsen (eds), p.256.

to frame religious piety and teaching in relation to him than in earlier times. This was expressed in a variety of ways, but particularly through ascribing a pre-eminent position to Jesus devotionally, in justifications for ideas and behaviour, and in interpreting the nature of true Christianity. The pattern was indicated through extensive references to Jesus and appeals to him for legitimacy. The idea that an Age of the Incarnation had come suggested a focus on Jesus' human attributes. This was important, though it was arguably the dimension of his personality that distinguished twentieth-century views from earlier Jesus-centred piety. Typically, religion in this mode emphasised Jesus' life, rather than his death, and its importance as an example and repeatable pattern; Jesus' teaching, rather than doctrine concerning him, as a basic source of religious authority; Jesus' personality, alongside his character; and finally, his social interactions, rather than his divinity or the ontological nature of his relationship with God the Father. However, this thesis will demonstrate that even where emphasis on Jesus was shaped by a particular interest in his humanity and personality, the reasons for appealing to him varied widely.

Furthermore, while notions of humanity and personality were important, their implications were not always thoroughly developed. Nor were they fundamental to all expressions of Jesus-centred religion. For various reasons 'Jesus' could sometimes appeal theologically, even when no evident priority was placed on his humanity. Jesus increasingly functioned as the defining point of true religion. Yet the meaning of that emphasis could be quite varied, and the idea deployed in diverse ways. Moreover, mere mention of Jesus' name was not inherently an expression of Jesus-centredness. Indeed, his name, identity and teaching were often invoked to bolster social, moral and religious ends that neither required Jesus-centred religion, nor even Christianity. This serves as a reminder that Jesus appeared in an extraordinarily wide variety of contexts. Nonetheless, the salient point here is that appeals to Jesus were thought to be valuable, and that discourse increasingly gravitated around him.

### ***The Appeal of Jesus-Centred Religiosity***

This growing attention to Jesus and the doctrine of the Incarnation requires some explanation. It did not occur in a vacuum, but at a time when new interest in the

individual and notions of society emerged amidst complex social, intellectual and cultural change. To some extent, Jesus the individual became a symbol and touchstone amid the contests and uncertainties of the age. A strong focus on Jesus reflected cultural priorities, but also provided a tool for reshaping religion in the light of the transformations within society. Christianity was being remoulded using a central resource from within Christian tradition.

In part, Jesus-centred Christianity was a response to the churches' concerns about the place of religion in society, and the continuing influence of religion. While most of the community still adhered formally to some kind of Christian identity, the churches faced considerable challenges. Some of these concerned adaptation to the changing landscape of increasingly industrialised, urbanised and educated societies, and the increase of alternative associational options. Others involved seemingly resistant attitudes that ranged from overt hostility to, more commonly in the churches' estimation, apathy or indifference. Even where such attitudes prevailed, esteem for Jesus was generally high. By focusing on Jesus the devout were appealing to what seemed the most attractive and uncontroversial core of religion. Arguably, this also entailed rejection of more doctrinal or systematic theology, which was often perceived as befuddling and divisive.

In the context of concerns about the continuing social influence of religion, there were repeated calls for presentation of a clear, simple and unified Christian message. In 1916, Anglicans called for an end to disputation, urging that all 'modern theories, quibbles and shibboleths' should be dismissed in favour of 'a few easily grasped cardinal and irrefragable principles'.<sup>35</sup> Emphasis on Jesus accorded well with such an approach. In 1909, W.H. Griffith Thomas, a leading English evangelical Anglican scholar and Principal of Wycliffe Hall in Oxford, published a handbook that expressed something of this general mood. His *Christianity is Christ* stressed the centrality of Jesus to the Christian message: 'Christ is essential, Christ is fundamental, Christ is all'.<sup>36</sup> It was also a call to retain a vital connection between the 'Christ of

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<sup>35</sup> PGS, 1916, p.6.

<sup>36</sup> W.H. Griffith Thomas, *Christianity is Christ*, London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1909, p.118.

Experience' and the 'Christ of History'.<sup>37</sup> The argument highlighted orthodox belief in both the humanity and deity of Christ. However, it went further in asserting the necessity of 'experiencing' the personality of Jesus through the mediating role of the Holy Spirit.

According to D.G.S. Rathgen, Thomas' book caused something of a sensation in New Zealand when it appeared.<sup>38</sup> This may exaggerate the case a little, but certainly the language was widely utilised. It was particularly beloved of evangelicals, who were at times quite anti-dogmatic and found that its simplicity and focus provided an ideal rallying cry. Thus, the Rev. Walter McLean's address to the Presbyterian Bible Class conference in 1922 resolved the question 'What is Christianity?' in a single word: 'CHRIST! Christianity is Christ! He is the whole of Christianity! Christianity and Christ, Christ and Christianity are one. That is an answer that will mean much or little, everything or nothing, according as a man has or has not had personal experience of Christ'.<sup>39</sup> The language and the concerns it addressed were not peculiarly evangelical, however. According to one correspondent in the *New Zealand Methodist Times*, this simple focus on Christ was also the key to increasing church attendance. In an article on 'Empty Pews and How to Fill Them', the writer noted that 'The late Dr. Rutherford Waddell, asked to define Christianity in a thousand words commented that he could define it in three words: "Christianity is Christ." Similarly the writer, asked to give his views on how to fill empty Churches in a thousand words considers he can do better than Dr. Waddell and sum it all up in two words "Christ first"'.<sup>40</sup>

But why did Jesus seem to provide the answer to such concerns? Kerry Howe has noted the 'very powerful strands of cultural plasma' that linked New Zealand with centres of ideas and values in Europe.<sup>41</sup> Thus, the great movements that affected European culture and religion were also evident locally. Even relatively contemporary changes were often only separated by a matter of months from New Zealanders, many

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<sup>37</sup> Thomas, *Christianity is Christ*, p.115.

<sup>38</sup> D.G.S. Rathgen, 'The Church in New Zealand 1890-1920, With Special Reference to W.A. Orange', LTh Hons Thesis, New Zealand Board of Theological Studies, 1969, p.55.

<sup>39</sup> *Outlook*, 13 February 1922, p.3.

<sup>40</sup> *NZMT*, 9 May 1936, p.3.

<sup>41</sup> K.R. Howe, *Singer in a Songless Land: A Life of Edward Tregear, 1846-1931*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1991, pp.44-45, quote p.44.

of whom read avidly and were attuned to developments abroad. The focus on Jesus was partly attributable to the confluence of a number of these cultural and religious shifts. In particular, the priority placed on Jesus reflected impacts related to the Enlightenment, Romanticism, the rise of psychology, and notions of personality.

Some particularly important factors derived from Enlightenment legacies. Enlightenment thinking emphasised the capabilities and authority of the reasoning subject and cultivated scepticism toward tradition. Reason was often contrasted with the purported irrationality and superstition of religion and the weakness of its traditional proofs. Out of this framework, interpretations of religion and history emerged that profoundly influenced perceptions of Jesus. These shaped later approaches and helped to explain some of Jesus' appeal. Historians in New Zealand as elsewhere have increasingly emphasised that scientific rationality was not as hostile to religion, or corrosive of it, as has sometimes been assumed.<sup>42</sup> It was significant, therefore, that Enlightenment emphases did not necessarily lead to secularisation or supplant religious outlooks. They did, however, contribute to changes in the way religion was understood and configured.

Enlightenment priorities strengthened a correlation between religion and morality. Thus, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) dismissed 'supernatural' religion as being inimical to reason, but emphasised the ethical functions of religion instead. This closer association of religion with ethics paved the way for increased focus on the teaching of Jesus and his human existence. For Jesus was still held in generally high regard, notably by influential thinkers like Kant and George F. Hegel (1770-1831) who viewed him as a moral archetype and reformer.<sup>43</sup> According to Jaroslav Pelikan, the dominant image of Jesus that emerged from Enlightenment thought was that of the Teacher of Common Sense.<sup>44</sup> Jesus' special nature consisted in the excellence of his moral teaching

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<sup>42</sup> For example, on Darwinism and religion, see John Stenhouse, 'Darwinism in New Zealand, 1859-1900', in John Stenhouse and Ronald L. Numbers (eds), *Disseminating Darwinism: The Role of Place, Race, Religion, and Gender*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp.61-89; cf. David N. Livingstone, *Darwin's Forgotten Defenders: The Encounter Between Evangelical Theology and Evolutionary Thought*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987.

<sup>43</sup> See Arthur F. Holmes, *Fact, Value, and God*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997, pp.128-31. On Hegel's view of Jesus, see further, James Yerkes, *The Christology of Hegel*, Missoula: Scholars Press, for the American Academy of Religion, 1978.

<sup>44</sup> Pelikan, *Jesus*, pp.182-93.

and his manifestation of virtue. The beauty and wisdom of Jesus' message was celebrated on account of its compatibility with reason.

Liberal Protestant theologies like those descended from Albrecht Ritschl (1822-89) and Harnack obviously built upon these assumptions. Ritschl spurned mystery, feeling, and speculation in religion, but emphasised the ethical significance of Christianity.<sup>45</sup> 'Religious' knowledge was contrasted with 'scientific' knowledge, and defined in terms of helping attain the highest good.<sup>46</sup> A truly religious view of Jesus therefore emphasised what he actually did: namely, lived in obedience to the Father in ways appropriate to the kingdom of God. Jesus was therefore primarily a moral example, and the kingdom an ethical one. In Harnack, such notions were transposed into the idea that the 'essence of Christianity' was not so much about belief as a way of life that systematised dogma had made unintelligible. This essence was described in the primitive Christianity of Jesus' kingdom teaching, rather than in teaching about him.<sup>47</sup> Kingdom language and notions of ethical Christianity were often taken up in social gospel theologies that sought to address the problems associated with social change, industrialisation and urbanisation. Crucially, these themes were evident in much of the Jesus language that circulated in New Zealand.

Another associated legacy related to notions of history. Enlightenment rationalism cultivated the growth of historical consciousness, especially using methods that emphasised change, human agency, and natural causation. Treated scientifically, history and historical criticism became important means for accessing truth. As Peter Hinchliff has noted, British Christians reacted to new notions of history in a variety of ways.<sup>48</sup> One important response embraced historical criticism, making the historical Jesus authoritative and turning him into the fount of authentic Christianity. Liberal Protestants were especially interested in stripping away the supernatural elements associated with Jesus' life to find the kernel of true religion it contained. This approach was exemplified in the 'lives' written by John Seeley, Ernst Renan and David F.

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<sup>45</sup> John Macquarrie, *Jesus Christ in Modern Thought*, London: SCM Press, 1990, p.253.

<sup>46</sup> Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *20<sup>th</sup>-Century Theology: God & the World in a Transitional Age*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1992, pp.53-54.

<sup>47</sup> Macquarrie, pp.261-63.

<sup>48</sup> See Peter Hinchliff, *God and History: Aspects of British Theology, 1875-1914*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Strauss,<sup>49</sup> which New Zealanders were clearly familiar with.<sup>50</sup> Strauss's *Life of Jesus* was a product of historical criticism and caused a sensation when translated into English by the novelist Mary Ann Evans (George Eliot) in 1846. A pupil of F.C. Baur, Strauss dismissed most of the New Testament as being based on a primitive supernatural worldview. Its stories did not express historical facts but theological truths. While Strauss was appropriated by many radical critics of Christianity, his treatment of Jesus retained a reverential tone.<sup>51</sup> He supported the 'idea' of divinity joined with humanity, but disconnected this from the historical person of Jesus. His Jesus was the realisation of Hegel's Absolute in history.<sup>52</sup> Paradoxically, then, quests for the historical Jesus could actually lead to quite abstract formulations. Indeed, constructions of him as an ideal type became commonplace.

Classically, Enlightenment interpretations of history were shaped by teleological assumptions, with human history presented as a narrative of progress. For example, Hegel's dialectical idealism, Marxian atheistic materialism, and the positivism of Auguste Comte (1798-1857) all constructed history in terms of progressive human advancement. In fact, this mood was characteristic of modernity in general. It was also evident in Romantic and Darwinian ideas, and the confidence generated by technological improvements. Notions of progress incorporated the social, political and material spheres, but also morality. Thus, by the late nineteenth century, optimistic assessments of human moral potential were widespread. Jesus fitted in this milieu. Humanity was less in need of salvation than an example to live up to, and this is what he seemed to provide. On the other hand, by the twentieth century, kerygmatic theologies began to resist this buoyant temper. These questioned the usefulness of history for faith. The 'Jesus of history' was distinguished from the 'Christ of faith', with

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<sup>49</sup> John Seeley, *Ecce Homo*, 17th ed., London: Macmillan, 1883 (1865); Ernst Renan, *The Life of Jesus*, (trans.) London: Trubner, 1863; D.F. Strauss, *The Life of Jesus Critically Examined*, George Eliot (trans.), London: SCM Press, 1975 (1835).

<sup>50</sup> For example, J.G.S. Grant, *Critical Examination of 'Ecce Homo'*, Dunedin: Mills, Dick & Company, 1867; William Williams, *Remarks Upon 'Ecce Homo'*, Auckland: Cathedral Press, 1867.

<sup>51</sup> See Timothy Larsen, *Contested Christianity: The Political and Social Context of Victorian Theology*, Waco: Baylor University Press, 2004, pp.43-58.

<sup>52</sup> Grenz & Olson, p.38; Colin J.D. Greene, *Christology in Cultural Perspective: Marking Out the Horizons*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003, p.143.

the latter occupying the central position. In this trajectory, the historians' Jesus became less important than existential encounter with Christ.

Perhaps the most important cultural influences shaping interest in Jesus derived from the rise of Romanticism and notions of personality. For all its diverse threads, the Romantic movement essentially arose as a direct response to the rational impulses of the Enlightenment. In contrast to reason, Romanticism prioritised 'will, spirit and emotion', along with the glories of untamed nature.<sup>53</sup> In particular, it celebrated the 'living, breathing, whole human being'.<sup>54</sup> Idealisation of humanity led to an emphasis on simplicity, rusticity and primitivism. The allegedly dehumanising tendencies of mass production, industrialisation and the machine age were deplored. Humanism flourished, and the individual personality idolised, especially in the Great Man tradition exemplified in Thomas Carlyle's study of heroes and hero worship.<sup>55</sup>

In New Zealand, religious interaction with Romanticism was shaped as much by this general mood as by any particular philosophical or theological formulations. But religious Romanticism was an important phenomenon. Friedrich D.E. Schleiermacher's (1768-1834) challenge to the narrowest forms of Enlightenment rationalism was an important progenitor of subsequent approaches. His critique distinguished religion from metaphysics and morality, and located it in the heart and dispositions.<sup>56</sup> Schleiermacher's theology cohered with Romantic priorities and was oriented to notions of religious 'feeling' and experience of redemption. Jesus figured prominently – not as a moral hero or ideal of the Enlightenment type, but as a real historical person. In this, Colin Greene argues that Schleiermacher established one of the most important trajectories for subsequent theology by insisting on Jesus' humanity in the face of any docetic tendency.<sup>57</sup> In general, Romantic sensibilities were

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<sup>53</sup> Bebbington, *Dominance*, p.148.

<sup>54</sup> James M. Byrne, *Religion and the Enlightenment: From Descartes to Kant*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996, p.75.

<sup>55</sup> Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966 (1841).

<sup>56</sup> See Macquarrie, p.193; Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century: Volume 1, 1799-1870*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972, p.65.

<sup>57</sup> Greene, pp.104-8. Docetism refers to a Christological position that resolves tensions in the idea that deity and humanity were united in one person by suggesting that the deity was real and complete, but the humanity only appeared so.

diffused in the religious sphere somewhat later than in literature, art and history.

David Bebbington has argued that the Romantic influence in religion built as the nineteenth century progressed. Among evangelicals, Romantic tastes were only being eclipsed by the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>58</sup>

The cult of personality that emerged in the twentieth century was effectively a form of modernist Romanticism. According to Warren Susman, the rise of a 'culture of personality' marked a pervasive cultural shift away from a nineteenth-century 'culture of character' based on ideas of self-improvement and self-help.<sup>59</sup> Shaped around notions of individual prowess and psychological interpretations of the self, the culture of personality responded to urban distress and other modern problems by celebrating the power of the individual, especially in its ability to effect change and bend the world to its will. In a sense, it reformulated the heroic tradition for a psychological age. The disciplines of history, psychology and sociology all cohered with the new mood, as did modern biography and child-centred education. Jesus-centred religion was also arguably a manifestation. It seemed kinder and gentler, affirmed the individual and supported simple practical religiosity in relation to a universally admired model.

In this melange of influences the doctrine of the Incarnation seemed particularly appealing. Religion centred on Jesus affirmed human experience, as well as notions of brotherhood and solidarity that were proving attractive in the community at large. Advocates for more inclusive theologies therefore tended to regard Jesus as an ally. In the late nineteenth century, New Zealand Presbyterians became embroiled in a number of theological controversies. In 1888, William Salmond was tried for heresy on account of his attack on the doctrine of Double-Predestination.<sup>60</sup> Salmond felt that his advocacy of the 'larger hope' was expressive of the direction in which the 'whole

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<sup>58</sup> See Bebbington, *Dominance*, ch. 5; David Bebbington, 'Evangelism and Spirituality in Twentieth-Century Protestant Nonconformity', in Alan P.F. Sell and Anthony R. Cross (eds), *Protestant Nonconformity in the Twentieth Century*, Carlisle: Paternoster, 2003, p.199.

<sup>59</sup> W.I. Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1984, pp.271-85.

<sup>60</sup> On this, see Simon Wood, 'Liberalism and Heresy: An Examination of the Controversy Surrounding William Salmond's *The Reign of Grace*', BA Hons Research Essay in History, University of Otago, 1991.

Church' was heading – away from the 'hard and stern logic' of earlier Calvinism.<sup>61</sup> Salmond's tract was not primarily Christological, though the issue did concern the scope of the Atonement. Nonetheless, his discussion was punctuated with references to 'the love of God and the mercy of Christ'. The instinct toward more inclusive theology was supported by 'the boundless love of Christ'.<sup>62</sup> Notably, when the Rev. James Gibb was later tried for heresy he also called for greater emphasis on Jesus. Attacking the narrowness and punitive aspects of Calvinism, Gibb asserted that Christ provided the model for Christian living not the Ten Commandments.<sup>63</sup>

Questioning of the nature of the Atonement during the early twentieth century was also shaped by a desire to emphasise the love of God, and to affirm human moral capacities. Thus, the Rev. John Gibson Smith's attack on penal-substitution made it clear that the Atonement indicated God's 'holy mercy' rather than his 'retributive justice'.<sup>64</sup> W.H. Fitchett's account of the 'ideals and methods' of Methodism, for the Centenary of Australasian Methodism in 1915, included a chapter outlining Methodist approaches to the Atonement.<sup>65</sup> Significantly, Fitchett's account stressed that Methodist teaching 'refuses to think of God the Father as an angry Judge, with Christ as our Substitute, bearing the actual penalty of our sins'.<sup>66</sup> Fitchett conceded that the Substitutionary, Governmental and Moral Influence theories were all necessary to an 'adequate explanation'. However, his interpretation also stressed the universal character of salvation, and argued that 'identification' rather than 'substitution' was the best characterisation of Christ's relation to humanity in his atoning work.<sup>67</sup>

In other contexts, some commentators promoted reflection on Jesus as a way to improve personal and social morality. In 1922, the Anglican *Church Chronicle* carried

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<sup>61</sup> William Salmond, *The Reign of Grace: A Discussion of the Question of the Possibility of Salvation for All Men in This Life, or in the Life to Come*, Dunedin: James Horsburgh, 1888, p.34.

<sup>62</sup> Salmond, *Reign of Grace*, pp.36, 57.

<sup>63</sup> See *ODT*, 5 July 1888. On Gibb, and his trial for heresy in 1890, see Laurie H. Barber, 'James Gibb's Heresy Trial, 1890', *NZJH*, 12:2, 1987, pp.146-57.

<sup>64</sup> John Gibson Smith, *The Christ of the Cross, or, The Death of Jesus Christ in its Relation to Forgiveness and Judgment*, Wellington: Gordon & Gotch, 1908, p.299.

<sup>65</sup> W.H. Fitchett, *What Methodism Stands For*, Melbourne: Printed by T. Shaw Fitchett, 1915, pp.44-55. The book was written at the request of Centenary Committee of the Victorian Conference, with approval of the New Zealand and other Australian Conferences.

<sup>66</sup> Fitchett, pp.48-49.

<sup>67</sup> Fitchett, pp.49-50, 54.

comments by the British Christian socialist James Adderley. These repudiated notions of God as an angry king or indifferent sovereign in favour of God's nature as Father. According to Adderley, Christians needed to focus more on Jesus, for the divine qualities of mercy and forgiveness were most clearly expressed in him:

We rattle off the creeds about His perfect humanity, but how great a responsibility we take upon ourselves when we thus declare our faith! We get angry with the liberals who write books about the human life of Jesus and His ethics, because, perhaps they do not seem quite orthodox about His divinity. Yet is [sic] often in these very books that we find a much greater faith in the importance of love and mercy and forgiveness than in more catholic manuals.<sup>68</sup>

In fact, Adderley's critique went further in describing frustrations with the official Church. 'Why is it', he questioned, 'that so often outside Church circles we find a greater faith in the sacred humanity of Christ than we do within?' Thus, Jesus could appeal as a symbol for the necessity of reform, even of the Church itself.

## **METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES**

The analysis provided in this thesis draws on a wide range of primary and secondary sources, and to some extent methodologies. The chief primary sources have been religious periodicals, books, tracts, and ephemera. In addition, archives of social, religious and political organisations have been consulted, along with other periodicals, art, poetry, music, literature and film. Determining patterns of popular religiosity is notoriously difficult. Quantitative methods have been employed in some New Zealand studies, like the Caversham Project, in delineating community composition and values.<sup>69</sup> Census data and statistics of church attendance are also used here. More characteristically, however, qualitative methods are employed. In particular, pamphlet literature and sources of individual opinion are utilised, but weighed and located in terms of their impact. Cumulatively, these sources and methodologies build a picture of religious language, including the various ways that it operated and its impact.

The use of an eclectic range of sources over a time span of at least forty years has necessitated some sampling. For example, while denominational periodicals and

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<sup>68</sup> CC, April 1922, p.59.

<sup>69</sup> For example, Olssen, *Building the New World*; Barbara Brookes, Annabel Cooper and Robin Law (eds), *Sites of Gender: Women, Men and Modernity in Southern Dunedin, 1890-1939*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003.

proceedings have been canvassed in detail, the secular press has been used primarily to pursue leads uncovered through other means. In some areas, greater selectivity has been necessary. For instance, vastly more literature relating to socialism and the labour movement exists for this period than could be realistically utilised within the scope of this investigation. A range of labour sources have been consulted. However, particular attention has been given to the *Maoriland Worker*, in part because it was arguably the leading labour newspaper during the 1910s and early 1920s, but also because many of the contests within labour were played out in its pages.

This thesis addresses images of Jesus that were used by both Christians and non-Christians, at grassroots levels and through official structures. It incorporates Christological reflections as well as more popular images and representations. In one sense, any Christian view of Jesus may be considered a Christology. However, in this context, the term is understood more narrowly to describe a confessional or doctrinal interpretation of Jesus based on systematic theological reflection. Even distinguished in this way, Christologies were not necessarily at odds with popular ideas and claims about Jesus. Indeed, the two could conceivably coincide or be mutually reinforcing. They could also be expressed in visual or textual forms.

Underlying this approach is a notion of the 'popular' that requires clarification. This term's semantic range incorporates the commonsense meaning of something widespread or generally liked. Alternatively, it may include the idea of things considered 'of the people', or even non-hegemonic, rather than 'of the elite or official'. A distinction between things 'for the people' from the elite or official is also possible.<sup>70</sup> Each of these conceptualisations is employed at various points in this study, and distinguished wherever necessary. For the most part, notions of popularity are invoked to connote images of Jesus that were widely used or had broad appeal. However, modern methods of mass communication also created evangelistic and commercial possibilities, and Jesus occasionally appeared within this kind of popular culture. Notions of the popular are not used to imply a class analysis. Nor do they necessarily infer an opposition to concepts of 'high' culture, since popular images might be found

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<sup>70</sup> For a useful survey of these issues see John Storey, *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture*, 4th ed., Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2006, esp. pp.4-11; John Fiske, *Reading the Popular*, Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989; John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989.

in official sources or in explicitly theological formulations, but also independently of them. Admittedly, denominational and other periodicals were not unfettered media for conveying popular views, even when party lines were challenged or resisted. Yet, these sources still provide an indication of ideas that were widely aired or disseminated, and which may be tested against other sources. These notions are important insofar as they help indicate Jesus' place in the formulas of New Zealand religion and culture.

In many ways, this thesis concerns languages of religion. In particular, it highlights ways that language carries religion, and actually modifies it as usage changes. Theories of language and discourse have become increasingly important tools for social and cultural analysis since the middle of the twentieth century. Their significance for historical research has been traversed extensively in recent decades, especially in light of the 'linguistic turn' in late twentieth-century historiography.<sup>71</sup> In common with all modern history, the present study reflects an expectation that interpretation of texts requires listening for tone, as well as what is said. It also utilises fundamental questions of more recent discourse analysis, such as those addressing who is 'speaking', who is 'listening', and the contexts and communities in which discourse is expressed. However, there is no intention of deliberating in any detailed way on theories of either language or discourse analysis. All that is assumed here is that exploring these will tell us about society, and religion's function within it.

### **Outline**

The thesis is organised into five thematic chapters. These have been selected to highlight predominant images within the range of those that circulated, as well as significant contexts that helped to shape the way Jesus was viewed. Images have also been considered in the light of significant debates in New Zealand historiography. The chapter on children developed out of an intuitive assumption that images for children are significant and therefore deserved special attention. Other chapters, like that on the masculinity of Jesus, were formed out of the inductive process of research.

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<sup>71</sup> For example, Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text: Historians and the Linguistic Turn*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004; Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History*, London: Granta Books, 1997, esp. pp.75-128.

Chapter One assesses a range of approaches to Jesus in Christian doctrine and devotion and highlights the pattern of growing Jesus-centredness during the period. The focus is on notions of Jesus' humanity and personality. However, as the chapter demonstrates, Jesus was invoked in a range of ways that did not strongly emphasise these features. The chapter therefore addresses some of the terminology and vocabulary associated with Jesus and its usage, and highlights limits to the pattern of Jesus-centredness. It establishes that interest in the humanity of Jesus was clearly increasing and acquiring new value, even if this never entirely supplanted other ways of thinking.

Not all references to Jesus were couched in what might be considered conventional devotional terms. Chapter Two addresses a range of approaches that were constructed outside of churchly contexts. In particular, it considers a sharp counter-image in which a prophetic 'anti-Church' Jesus functioned as the churches' leading critic. This was widely appropriated, though for strikingly different ends. It was sometimes applied as a voice of external critique, but was also used as an argument for reforming, reviving, or reinvigorating the churches from within. For some, the anti-Church Jesus would overthrow the Church, while for others he sought its renewal. While purposes for applying the image differed, the critique relied on a widely held premise that ecclesiastical legacies had distorted and even corrupted Jesus' message.

In many ways, the twentieth-century pattern of Jesus-centred Christianity emerged out of social changes that had been occurring over a much longer period. It reflected a changing social context, and especially concern about the social problems that change created. It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that Jesus featured significantly in the language of social reform. Chapter Three addresses ways that Jesus appeared in discourses related to social campaigning. Much of this built on language and ideas that had been established in previous decades. Different social issues, and approaches to social issues, were addressed during these years. These ranged from debates about prohibition to contests within the labour movement and in relation to conceptions of socialism. The chapter argues that invoking Jesus provided a moral underlay to ideas in social debates. Jesus was particularly cited in the interests of the

poor, of workers, and those with an agenda for social reform. Appeals to Jesus provided a common language, but carried little tangible influence.

Chapter Four addresses the 'children's Jesus' because of the enormous investment in religion for children, but also because ideas presented to children provide such a good mechanism for analysing cultural values. Religious activity was concentrated in the childhood years during the early decades of the twentieth century. Sunday Schools, campaigns for religious education in schools, and family religion were all emphasised primarily with a view to securing children's religious identities. The chapter examines this range of contexts in which children encountered religious ideas, and evaluates the messages communicated there. It finds that Jesus occupied a central space in the religious discourse of childhood, and that the person described to children was also particular to childhood in certain ways. The language and values ascribed to him were fitted to support values that parents and religious leaders hoped religion would provide. Significantly, childhood was also a prime context in which the growing Jesus-centredness within Protestantism was expressed.

The religiosity of men was a point of ongoing debate and concern during the period. In particular, the period of transition from boyhood to manhood saw more males cease active participation in organised religion than females. Chapter Five considers images of Jesus that were used to address anxieties about these issues. In particular, it highlights attempts to use a manly Jesus to bolster religion among working men, returning soldiers and youth – especially in the wake of World War One. Some of the categories of religion for boys were explicitly invoked, particularly the heroic. After the war, this heroism was overwhelmingly defined in military terms. However, the manly Jesus was essentially an instrumentalist attempt to reach men who were expected to be resistant to organised religion. Consequently, it was more of a presentation technique than a wholesale reinterpretation.

As they did at other times, New Zealanders interpreted Jesus' life in diverse ways between 1900 and 1940. Notwithstanding this diversity, reference to Jesus acquired new value and he became a more important focus. Part of the change was a new emphasis on humanity conceptualised as personality. Attention to the personality of

Jesus influenced a range of areas from devotional patterns and methods of evangelism to justifications for social priorities. The appeal of Jesus-centred Christianity was reflective of a cultural flow in which religious discourse was embedded. As an idea and ideal, Jesus therefore provides a window into the cultural milieu in which New Zealanders interpreted him, and the role of religion in New Zealand society.

## CHAPTER ONE

# JESUS IN AN AGE OF PERSONALITY

In 1910, the Rev. J.K. Archer's sermon to the Baptist Union made some remarkably comprehensive claims for Jesus.<sup>1</sup> An Englishman, Archer had been ordained into the Baptist ministry in 1891. He served in pastorates around the north of England before arriving in New Zealand in 1908, when he became the minister at the Baptist Church in Napier. A noted preacher, and an activist and controversialist by temperament, Archer was also a keen supporter of socialism from within the Christian socialist tradition.<sup>2</sup> His address gathered his varied concerns together in a sermon that focused squarely on Jesus. Archer claimed that, 'A thing is not true because a good man says it, or right because a good man does it.... It is true, if true at all, because it harmonises with the teaching of Jesus, and false if it does not'. He then applied this principle to a range of issues including war, evangelism, and smoking, concluding that 'Jesus, and Jesus only. Jesus, rightly understood, interpreted, applied, is the solution of all social, national and international problems'.

Archer's statement about social and political problems depended on the integration of social and religious ideals. In a sense, it called for an extension of evangelical devotional commitment to Jesus into public life: 'The sum and substance of my sermon is that we must claim all life for Jesus, home life, business life, political life, and recreative life, as well as religious. We must destroy the distinction between sacred and secular by making all life sacred'. The sermon concluded on what was for Archer a typically florid note:

We see, "Jesus only". We see not yet all things subject unto God; but we see Jesus, Jesus only, Jesus wholly, the Jesus of the villages, the model boy, the model youth, the model working man; the Jesus of the cities, preaching, teaching, healing; the Jesus of the mountains, the Mount of the Beatitudes, the Mount of the Transfiguration, the Mount of the Crucifixion, the Mount of the Ascension; we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, incarnating himself in personalities and institutions, and gradually bringing the kingdoms of this

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<sup>1</sup> NZB, January 1911, pp.11-13.

<sup>2</sup> M.P. Sutherland, 'Pulpit or Podium? J.K. Archer and the Dilemma of Christian Politics in New Zealand', *The New Zealand Journal of Baptist Research*, 1, 1996, pp.26-46.

world, all of them, and all departments of them, under His sway... let us lift up the eyes of our faith and see no one, and no thing save Jesus only.

Archer's address made Jesus central to a Christian vision of society, but also to Christian strategy. Jesus was viewed as an exemplar of the kind of spirituality and morality that was winsome and capable of effecting social and spiritual transformation.

Desire to place Jesus at the centre – as the answer to every question and solution to every problem – led to some rather startling imagery at times. Another sermon in the *New Zealand Baptist* contrived a New Year address on the theme of 'Jesus and January'. It argued that 'Jesus is the true Janus. He is both the door and the Door-opener.... Jesus our Janitor awaits us with the key to life eternal. Whether as individual or as Christian Church the key to the best for this year is with Jesus'.<sup>3</sup> Images like these indicated the rhetorical appeal of Jesus, even if the precise meaning of the language was not altogether clear.

This chapter charts significant ways that Jesus appeared within Christian devotion and spirituality during the early decades of the twentieth century. It notes that Jesus was becoming a central reference point in religious discourse, especially in relation to his humanity. In an age in which notions of personality were ever more important, Jesus' personality received particular attention. However, while some Jesus language was clearly shaped by this priority, a diverse range of ways of talking about him existed. Some Christian spirituality consciously resisted Jesus language, while in other contexts the person of Jesus was invoked with little emphasis on his humanity or implication of Jesus-centredness. The first section of this chapter assesses Jesus language that was not evidently shaped by notions of personality. The second evaluates contexts in which emphasis on Jesus' humanity and personality was more clearly influential. Addressing these various approaches underscores the reality that Jesus appeared within Christian discourse in complex ways. It also helps locate the tendency toward Jesus-centredness in Protestant religiosity within a wider vocabulary about him.

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<sup>3</sup> *NZB*, January 1928, p.4.

## APPROACHES TO JESUS

Jesus appeared in Christian discourse in quite different ways. He was not the focus of all religious discourse. Yet, even when references to him were extensive, approaches varied. This section addresses kinds of Jesus language that were not fundamentally influenced by categories of personality, nor even especially by interest in the humanity of Jesus. At times Jesus figured more as a representative of respectable religion, or as a theological marker. Important doctrinal contests revolved around the question of Jesus' humanity, and advocates sometimes cast their theological positions in terms of loyalty to him. However, debates about the Incarnation and Atonement were usually defined by other concerns, like contests over the authority of Scripture. Even devotional religiosity that cultivated a language of friendship with Jesus sometimes engaged with his humanity in only limited ways. Catholic spirituality made much of Jesus' suffering body, but differed strikingly from Protestant approaches. Thus, Jesus could be exalted in numerous ways that did not all reflect patterns of personalisation.

### ***Jesus the Christ: Respectability, Reverence and Doctrinal Debate***

Though Jesus was central to Christian faith and devotion, some forms of religion consciously resisted explicit Jesus language precisely because of its increasingly personalised connotations. One Anglican correspondent in the Diocese of Wellington after the First World War noted the increasing prevalence of such discourse, but complained that over-familiarity with Jesus was one of the 'most questionable tendencies of modern thought and expression':

Men are being taught to fraternise with the Nazarene instead of to approach the Cross of Jesus Christ with reverent and humble adoration. It seems that any phraseology is permitted to-day when men speak of Christ.... The name of Christ has been sufficiently bandied about, and, in the opinion of many, lowered during the last few years. It is high time that we began to regard Christ not so much as just one of ourselves, but rather to endeavour to make ourselves one with Him. This will never be achieved by the encouragement of 'familiarity' with His Sacred Name. He must be lifted up, not dragged down. The vulgar phraseology is not itself the chief danger. It is the attitude of mind which it reflects that is so pernicious. It accurately denotes the purblind overweening individualism of the day.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> CC, September 1919, p.132.

To some, therefore, Jesus language could seem almost irreligious because it was redolent of crudity and extremism.

During the early twentieth century, religious material appeared frequently in secular periodicals and newspapers, though newspaper-published sermons became less common.<sup>5</sup> In sources like these, populist religious sentiments were favoured and extremism and vulgarity avoided. By the 1920s and 1930s, the rise of dairy farming in New Zealand was reflected in the growth of industry-based newspapers which reached circulation figures as high as 60,000.<sup>6</sup> Lucy E. Scott contributed a column in the 'home page' of the *New Zealand Dairy Exporter and Farm Home Journal* under the pseudonym 'San Toy' during the 1930s. Her articles were seldom overtly religious, but religious ideas provided a consistent underlay. In 1950, an intentionally inspirational compilation volume was published. Religious references featured prominently in this, though they were often articulated in oblique terms. Allusions to 'Supreme Power' and 'Divine Will and Purpose' evoked a sense of the numinous and the workings of Providence.<sup>7</sup> Yet, apart from some references to 'commonsense Christianity', Scott seemed reluctant to name the Christian tradition on which she was drawing.<sup>8</sup> In particular, Jesus was identified only through indirect appellations like 'the Voice, the Light', the 'Master' and 'Unseen Comrade', 'the Founder', and the 'Compassionate Heart'.<sup>9</sup> Even an Easter reflection mentioned him merely as the 'Lord of Life' and 'Master of Life'. The cross symbolised life's beauty and the possibility of a life lived to the full; the wedding at Cana stood for abundant life and simple practical faith.<sup>10</sup>

Scott's devotional literature appealed to reverential and Romantic religious traditions whose themes were nostalgic and comforting. Reluctance to name Jesus was partially born out of a desire to not alienate her audience. Scott clearly hoped to awaken faith in her readers, and commend its practical value. She traded on widespread knowledge of biblical stories, including the stories of Jesus. Indeed, aspects

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<sup>5</sup> In 1927, the Baptist Union congratulated the Rev. A.H. Collins on seven consecutive years of sermons in the *Taranaki Daily News*, despite the unpopularity of printing sermons elsewhere in the country. *NZB*, December 1927, p.358.

<sup>6</sup> *New Zealand Dairy Produce Exporter*, 29 August 1926, p.1.

<sup>7</sup> Lucy E. Scott, *This Heritage*, Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1950, p.59.

<sup>8</sup> Scott, p.110.

<sup>9</sup> Scott, pp.71, 74, 111, 117.

<sup>10</sup> Scott, pp.32-33, 116, 130, 134-39.

of his life and supposed character were central to her approach. Yet, Jesus' name seemed too directly evangelistic, religious, and possibly too crass to communicate with a general audience. Scott was resorting to universal spiritual principles rather than evangelical appeal. In this context, the name of Jesus could sound uncomfortably like enthusiasm.

Lucy Scott's writing and the correspondence in the *Church Chronicle* signalled the importance of reverence as an indicator of religiosity. Jesus' role was emphasised in this context, though for some streams within the Christian tradition there was resistance to addressing him in overtly personal terms. The title of 'Christ' could function as an important marker, especially for those who were concerned to preserve the respectability and transcendence of religion, or respect for Jesus' divinity.

Reverential emphasis on Christ was particularly important in certain contexts. The language of Anglican religiosity typically evinced a quasi-Establishment tone. Liturgical style placed particular stress on careful expression and correct phraseology, as well as the beauty of transcendence. These features shaped the way that Jesus was presented. Thus, the official prayer of the leading Anglican women's group, the Mothers' Union, referred awkwardly to Jesus' incarnation as an example for womanhood: 'O Lord Jesus Christ, thou Good Shepherd and Bishop of our souls... O Blessed Jesus, who by thy holy Incarnation didst consecrate womanhood to thy glory; make us pure... by the vision of thy purity; make us lowly by the example of thy lowliness; make us holy by the indwelling of thy Holy Spirit'.<sup>11</sup>

In a similar vein, Christ was often invoked in the context of public religion and high occasion. Writing in one of the surveys written for the nation's centennial in 1940, Oliver Duff highlighted New Zealanders' tendency to 'turn back to religion in sorrow and trouble', noting that there was 'no indication at all that the pace has slackened'.<sup>12</sup> Duff was writing in the context of war, and suggesting a superficial, foul-weather-friend sort of attachment to religion within the community. There was a personal aspect to his claim. However, a public discourse of sorrow and trouble also existed in which Christ functioned as a symbolic marker or principle. During World War One,

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<sup>11</sup> *Mothers' Union Book of Offices and Prayers*, rev. ed., Westminster: Mothers' Union, 1948, p.30.

<sup>12</sup> Oliver Duff, *New Zealand Now*, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1941, p.40.

patriotic propagandists like the Rev. James Gibb had presented the war as a conflict between 'Christ and anti-Christ'.<sup>13</sup> Scott Worthy has also noted that religion supplied the vocabulary for the public mourning rituals of interwar Anzac commemoration.<sup>14</sup> Anzac themes like sacrifice, death and respect were inferred from events in Jesus' life. However, the title of Christ was preferred in the context of public remembrance. Jesus did not convey sufficient dignity and formality, and was potentially too Protestant and therefore sectarian to provide a focus for public religion. By contrast, Christ was readily aligned with notions of citizenship and public morality.

Similarly, by the interwar years the churches increasingly framed their stance on social issues by appealing to Jesus' teaching. However, the language of formal statements and public pronouncements more often referred to 'the Lord Jesus Christ'. The Christological titles apparently added authority to official statements. In 1922, the Presbyterian General Assembly claimed to enter a new year remembering 'that ours is the Gospel of the redeeming love of God, the Message of the Kingdom to call all nations to the obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ and thus to world-brotherhood.... We believe that we have the world panacea, for all social and international problems have God's own solution, the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'.<sup>15</sup> Two years later, James Gibb argued that the success of the League of Nations lay with 'the Churches of the Lord Jesus Christ'.<sup>16</sup> Similar language was evident within the non-denominational temperance movement, and in other statements on issues of conscience and morality.<sup>17</sup>

The title of Christ was also commonly employed when emphasising the saving work of Jesus, and in the context of committed service to God. Thus, the language of Christ's lordship was employed as a marker of humility and consecration. In 1908, Sister Mabel Cartwright, a prominent Presbyterian deaconess in south Dunedin,

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<sup>13</sup> *Church Gazette*, March 1915, p.37.

<sup>14</sup> Scott Worthy, 'A Debt of Honour: New Zealanders' First Anzac Days', *NZJH*, 36:2, 2002, pp.191-93.

<sup>15</sup> *PGA*, 1922, p.179.

<sup>16</sup> *PGA*, 1924, p.236.

<sup>17</sup> For example, *Leader*, 20 July 1888, p.101, cited in Phillida Bunkle, 'The Origins of the Women's Movement in New Zealand: The Women's Christian Temperance Union 1885-1895', in Phillida Bunkle and Beryl Hughes (eds), *Women in New Zealand Society*, Auckland: George Allen & Unwin, 1980, p.64; *NZMBC Link*, 5 November 1938, p.4.

recorded reflections on her conversion and call in her diary. She noted that the Rev. J.C. Jamieson of Middlemarch had been instrumental in bringing her 'to that frame of mind where I saw my duty towards God and man and was to leave the old life of self & sin & to seek forgiveness & new life through the Lord Jesus Christ'.<sup>18</sup> Language of this kind was also commonly expressed in connection with foreign missions.

The concept of the 'work of Christ' was of fundamental importance. It was especially prominent within Reformed theological vocabulary. Evangelicals like the Congregationalist Lionel Fletcher referred frequently to Jesus, but used his full 'title' when stressing the work of salvation. In 1936, Fletcher affirmed three important things: 'Jesus is your Saviour; Jesus is your Keeper; and Jesus is your Teacher'. The first point was the most important, for all else depended on it. The observation led Fletcher to complain that there was too much general talk about the teaching of Jesus, and not enough about 'the Person of Jesus Himself and the great work which He has done for our salvation.... It is not doctrine that saves you, but it is the Lord Jesus Christ'.<sup>19</sup>

As Fletcher's observations implied, many conservative and self-consciously Evangelical Christians placed similar emphasis on the divine 'person of Christ' through whom the 'work' was effected. Salvation was personal. Yet, there were sometimes worries that too much interest in the humanity of Jesus would undermine the distinctive Christian assertion that he was divine. After all, the deity of Jesus was considered essential to his role in securing salvation. One consequence of this emphasis was that writers like the Presbyterian minister Isaac Jolly tended to treat the Incarnation simply as a necessary precursor to the salvation achieved through the cross.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, the Brethren evangelist C.H. Hinman highlighted the doctrine of the Incarnation as part of another argument concerning the divinity of Christ and the possibility of salvation. Incarnation required divinity, and was 'absolutely necessary if

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<sup>18</sup> Mabel Cartwright Diary, 8 January 1908, Manuscript 3/279, PCANZ Archives, Knox Hall, Dunedin, cited in Brooke Emma Whitelaw, 'A Message to the Missahibs: New Zealand Presbyterian Women Missionaries in the Punjab, 1910-1940', MA Thesis in History, University of Otago, 2001, pp.50-51. On Cartwright, see Margaret Tennant, 'Sister Mabel's Private Diary 1907-1910: Sisterhood, Love and Religious Doubt', *Women's Studies Journal*, 14:1, 1998, pp.43-59.

<sup>19</sup> Lionel B. Fletcher, *After Conversion – What?*, London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1936, pp.9-10.

<sup>20</sup> For example, Isaac Jolly, *Why Did God Become Man? A Short Study of the Purpose of the Incarnation of the Son of God*, Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, 1932.

fallen man was to be reached'.<sup>21</sup> Crucially, Hinman noted that it was a tendency of heterodox religious groups to enthuse over the humanity of Jesus: 'In a patronising kind of way the Theosophist, Unitarian, and Spiritist can speak of the Lord as a wonderful teacher and moralist: they can extol His virtues as man, and admire His self-sacrifice and self-effacement, but they combine with others in denying his proper deity'.<sup>22</sup>

The humanity of Jesus was a central element in some of the most important doctrinal debates of the age. Questioning of the Virgin Birth, for example, was a staple of Modernist interpretation, but a point of concern for those anxious about the contemporary tendency to treat Jesus as 'a merely natural man'.<sup>23</sup> Conservative Christians feared that over-emphasis on Jesus suggested that his humanity was all that mattered, or even all that existed. Yet, in the context of doctrinal debate, Jesus-talk was often a focal point for other contests – especially those concerning the role and nature of Scripture. Significantly, Hinman's tract highlighted that even the question of Christ's divinity was crucial because of its central place in the 'present-day attack upon the Word of God'.<sup>24</sup> Similarly, Isaac Jolly's review of *The Christ of the Cross* noted that John Gibson Smith's repudiation of the expiatory view of the Atonement avoided any detailed examination of the relevant Scriptures. In Jolly's estimation, expiation was so woven into the fabric of the New Testament that criticisms like Smith's could 'in no way affect the doctrine of the Atonement with those to whom Holy Scripture speaks with authority'.<sup>25</sup>

These theological differences were most evident in the growing conflict between conservative and Modernist positions during the interwar years. Significantly, the 'Fundamentalist' reaction against Modernism at this time was defined primarily in terms of biblical fidelity and doctrinal purity. Approaches to the Bible were deemed central, and acceptance of higher biblical criticism isolated as the chief cause of

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<sup>21</sup> C.H. Hinman, *The Deity of Christ. As Seen Before Incarnation. In Incarnation. Among Men. In His Works. In His Death and Resurrection. In His Coming Reign and Glory*, Palmerston North: E. Whitehead Print, 1907, p.11.

<sup>22</sup> Hinman, p.2.

<sup>23</sup> *Reaper*, July 1924, p.138.

<sup>24</sup> Hinman, p.2.

<sup>25</sup> *Outlook*, 1 August 1908, p.7; cf. Smith, *Christ of the Cross*.

deviations from orthodox Christian faith. Yet Jesus also provided an important rallying point for the conservative position. Nowhere was this more evident than in the rhetoric surrounding the Great Bible Demonstration of 1929. The event was organised in Auckland as a counter to the publicity surrounding a visit of the New Zealand-raised Modernist theologian H.D.A. Major.<sup>26</sup> On 14 March, about 3,000 people attended a gathering at the Town Hall that the *Reaper* described as a reply to Modernist 'attacks upon our holy and historic Faith'.<sup>27</sup> The occasion included addresses by 'several ministers of the Gospel and prominent Christian men of the city', as well as prayers, Bible reading, and singing.

Most presentations criticised Modernism directly, and in some way addressed the nature and reliability of the Bible. Echoing the basic argument of the American theologian Gresham Machen,<sup>28</sup> the leading Baptist minister the Rev. Joseph Kemp argued that Fundamentalism and Modernism were different religions, since Modernism denied basic Christian claims such as 'the Deity of Christ'. Kemp judged such teaching to be subversive of faith, morals and the minds of the young. C.J. Rolls provided a more explicit focus on biblical issues in his address on 'The Trustworthiness of the Bible'. So did the Rev. Evan R. Harries, whose talk on the 'The Antidote to Modernism' urged listeners to 'Take the Bible as It Is', 'Read the Bible as God's Self-Revealing Message', and 'Read the Bible as God's Word to You'.<sup>29</sup>

Crucially, resistance to Modernism and concern for doctrinal purity were also construed in terms of loyalty and faithfulness to Jesus Christ. The Rev. A.A. Murray of the independent United Evangelical Church spoke on the 'Infallibility of Jesus Christ'. Chastising Modernists for their refusal to accept Jesus' own scriptural and doctrinal interpretations Murray asserted that Jesus' teaching was 'entirely free from error and

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<sup>26</sup> On H.D.A. Major and the Great Bible Demonstration, see Clive Robert Pearson, 'H.D.A. Major and English Modernism, 1911-1948', PhD Thesis, University of Cambridge, 1989; Clive Pearson, Allan Davidson and Peter Lineham, *Scholarship and Fierce Sincerity: Henry D.A. Major The Face of Anglican Modernism*, Auckland: Polygraphia, 2005.

<sup>27</sup> *Reaper*, April 1929, p.26. This discussion relies mainly on the account in, 'Special Report on the Great Bible Demonstration', *Reaper*, April 1929, pp.26-40.

<sup>28</sup> J. Gresham Machen, *Christianity and Liberalism*, London: Victory Press, 1923.

<sup>29</sup> *Reaper*, April 1929, pp.39-41. Harries' approach was exemplified in his assertion that 'It does not help the Bible to get its messages into your heart by believing that its first five books were written by four persons, "J" "E" "D" "P" about whose existence no one knows anything at all'.

positively authoritative and final. We believe that the authority of the Scriptures rests upon the authority of Jesus Christ... the testimony of Jesus Christ is wholly and entirely trustworthy and free from error or mistake of any kind'. Significantly, Murray pinpointed acceptance of the 'kenotic theory' of the Incarnation as a contributor to Modernism's failings. Modern kenotic ideas had been advocated by the German Lutheran theologian Gottfried Thomasius in the mid-nineteenth century, but popularised in the English-speaking world by the Anglican theologian and bishop Charles Gore (1853-1932). Kenotic Christology posited an emptying of Jesus' divine attributes in his becoming human, which conservatives took as a denial of his full divinity. Contrasting this, Murray made great play of pointing his audience to Christ. He concluded by exhorting the gathered to 'build lives on Jesus Christ', drawing on quotations from the hymn 'On Christ the solid rock I stand'. Indeed, the use of hymns throughout the event illustrated the power of appeal to Jesus. The Demonstration opened with the national anthem followed by a rousing rendition of 'All hail the power of Jesus' name'. Other hymns included 'Jesus shall reign where'er the sun' and 'The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord'.

Another prominent individual at the meeting was Dr W.H. Pettit, a General Practitioner and former medical missionary in India. In the interwar years, Pettit became a leading public critic of Rationalism and theological Modernism. He was instrumental in the formation of the Crusader Movement and the Inter-Varsity Fellowship of Evangelical Unions (IVF) in the early 1930s. Reflecting later on the IVF's secession from the Student Christian Movement (SCM), Pettit highlighted the early evangelicalism of the latter organisation as demonstrated in its attitudes to Scripture and Christology.<sup>30</sup> He noted John R. Mott's formative role, praising his 'fearless and uncompromising... witness to the deity of Christ, His Virgin birth, His atoning death, His bodily resurrection, and His second advent'. Moreover, he cited Mott's belief that 'a Movement confessing and proclaiming the deity of Christ would attract Christians from every denomination and keep them true to the faith'. By contrast, Pettit complained that the SCM bore 'no clear witness to the infallibility of the Holy

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<sup>30</sup> See W.H. Pettit, *Experiences in Christian Work Among New Zealand Students*, IVF Papers no. 2, New Zealand: IVF, n.d.

Scriptures, which is the ground of all our belief. The result was that the influence of the Higher Criticism and Modernism was early felt in that Movement’.

Perhaps unsurprisingly then, the reverential language of lordship was often allied to resistance to Modernism and higher biblical criticism throughout the period. The Presbyterian controversialist P.B. Fraser’s *Biblical Recorder*, one of the most outspoken organs of conservative theology, characterised Modernism as ‘the religion of corrupt Christian idealism plus “science” and good advice.... Jesus of Nazareth, with them is either a hero to be applauded, or a God who only operates from Rome’.<sup>31</sup> References to ‘the Lord Jesus Christ’ in this context became markers of fidelity to historic Christian belief – especially in relation to the divinity of Jesus and the penal-substitution model of the Atonement. Thus, after World War One the *Biblical Recorder* railed against German theology, arguing that:

The new theology belittles our Lord Jesus Christ. It takes away His Supernatural birth, His Deity, His Resurrection, and His Atonement for sins. These great truths and the power of Christ to regenerate and miraculously change men have Christianised the barbarous and brought the wonderful changes wrought among the heathen. Reverse the order, take away the Bible as the Word of God, tell men they do not need the blood of Christ and the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, and you lead the civilised back to barbarism.<sup>32</sup>

Similarly, the Rev. Thomas Miller employed reverential address in challenging the orthodoxy of John Dickie’s *The Organism of Christian Truth*.<sup>33</sup> Miller argued that his challenge was warranted, ‘In view of the clear and consistent teaching of the Word of God on the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in view of our Church’s subordinate standards’.<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, a distinctive set of discourses existed in which Jesus was invoked primarily with reference to his divinity. Reverential attitudes and patterns of public religiosity tended to emphasise notions of transcendence. Language that emphasised the grandeur of God also lent an air of authority to religion, and was prioritised accordingly. Concern to preserve biblical authority also discouraged thorough

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<sup>31</sup> *Biblical Recorder*, August 1931, p.227.

<sup>32</sup> *Biblical Recorder*, January 1919, p.7.

<sup>33</sup> Dickie, the Principal of the Presbyterian Theological Hall, Knox College, Dunedin, was challenged by Jolly, Miller and others on account of the book’s treatment of the doctrine of the Atonement. See further King, ‘Organising Christian Truth’.

<sup>34</sup> *PGA*, 1932, p.26.

exploration of Jesus' humanity. To some extent, conservatives aimed to reclaim the divine Jesus as the true Jesus, and thus rescue him from experimentalists. However, the fact that they felt pressured to respond so strongly arguably indicated the growing influence of the more liberal position.

### ***The Sweetest Name: Sentimental Piety***

Jesus also appeared conspicuously in affective devotional discourse. In 1916, the Anglican Primate's address to General Synod claimed that the general attitude of the community to religion was one of indefinite and sentimental acceptance.<sup>35</sup> This observation could equally have been applied to Jesus himself, for some of the most popular approaches to him were highly sentimental. The Jesus of sentimental piety was characteristically tender, generous and compassionate. Popular religiosity made much of Jesus' sweetness and the power of his friendship. Where affective piety engaged Jesus directly, it emphasised personality, experience, and emotion. It did not always connote an emphasis on Jesus as an historical person, however. These aspects were primarily deployed to encourage genuine religious commitment, since this mattered more than the details of Jesus' historical existence.

Sentimental expositions of Jesus' ministry often emphasised his compassion, contrasting it with mere religiosity. Preaching on Mark 1.41, the Rev. J. Anderson Reilly from Seddon noted that 'the yearning of the human heart is not so much for the religion of the Priest and the Levite as that of the Samaritan'. Like the Samaritan, Jesus responded to lepers with compassion: 'the tears started to His eyes; His heart ached, and the blood flowed quicker through His veins as He thought of the terrible tragedy behind that leprous look'.<sup>36</sup> Similar ideas could also be found in Catholic devotional literature. One contribution in the *New Zealand Tablet* noted that compassion was the hallmark of Jesus' life: 'Compassion ruled in the heart of the Divine Lover of souls, compassion for the weakness of His creature whom He came to save, and hence the thought of man's sin was with Him – in childhood, in boyhood, in all the lonely years of suffering, overwhelming Him in Gethsemane, darkening His last hours on

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<sup>35</sup> PGS, 1916, p.6.

<sup>36</sup> *Outlook*, 3 January 1927, p.17.

Calvary'.<sup>37</sup> Reflection on Jesus' suffering and 'yearning for souls' were mainstays of Catholic piety:

I see His Blood upon the roses,  
And in the stars the glory of His eyes;  
His body gleams amid eternal snows,  
His tears fall from the skies...

All pathways by His feet are worn,  
His strong Heart stirs the ever-beating sea.  
His crown of thorns is twined with every thorn,  
His Cross is every tree.<sup>38</sup>

'Sweetness' was one of the great adjectives and praise words of the age. It was used in Protestant discourse to describe singing and fellowship, but also individuals – primarily, though not exclusively, women and children. Michael Faraday, a leading nineteenth-century English scientist, was lauded as 'one of the most sweet and simple of Christians'.<sup>39</sup> In relation to Christians, sweetness described warmth, sincerity and an absence of pretence. As a descriptor of Jesus, it further implied beauty and excellence. It connoted his superiority, but also a heart-warming presence that could satisfy the believer's soul. The term was used widely in the language of adoration. One Anglican Christmas sermon used the text of Psalm 72.18-19 to reflect on the theme of Jesus' sweetness:

Sweetest note of seraph song;  
Sweetest Name on mortal tongue;  
Sweetest carol ever sung,  
JESUS, precious JESUS.

Predictably, the reflection concluded with John Newton's classic hymn, 'How sweet the name of JESUS sounds'.<sup>40</sup>

Recent literature has emphasised the role of music in forming and expressing religious convictions.<sup>41</sup> The local hymnic tradition was largely derivative of

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<sup>37</sup> *NZ Tablet*, 10 February 1921, p.45.

<sup>38</sup> *NZ Tablet*, 10 February 1921, p.45.

<sup>39</sup> *NZB*, June 1931, p.166

<sup>40</sup> *CC*, December 1927, p.203 (original emphasis).

<sup>41</sup> For example, Stephen Marini, 'Hymnody as History: Early Evangelical Hymns and the Recovery of American Popular Religion', *Church History*, 71:2, 2002, pp.273-306; Mark A. Noll

international sources. Apart from Maori music, little contextualised production appeared before the second half of the twentieth century.<sup>42</sup> While no detailed study of New Zealand hymns exists, insights can be drawn from favoured choices. In New Zealand as in America, trans-denominational hymns tended to be popular. Oliver Duff's comment on New Zealanders' religiosity pointed to the solace that it provided. Indeed, many of the best-loved hymns in the popular musical corpus invoked the tenderness and comfort of the Saviour in times of sickness and trouble. Hymns like 'Rock of ages', 'Abide with me', 'Jesus lover of my soul', and 'Lead kindly light' all fitted within this framework. Others like 'Nearer my God to Thee' addressed God, but spoke of heaven as being in the 'Saviour's love'. Many of these were used as accompaniments during screenings of *The King of Kings* in 1928, which indicated their popularity. In Wellington, one reviewer had suggested potentially suitable music, but doubted there was room for 'Lead kindly light' or 'Nearer, my God to Thee'.<sup>43</sup> The advice was ignored. Both of these featured alongside other favourites like 'Abide with me' and 'Rock of ages' in Wellington,<sup>44</sup> while 'Lead kindly light' featured in Auckland together with excerpts from 'The Messiah', 'Elijah' and 'Lohengrin'.<sup>45</sup>

Gospel songs, especially in the Ira Sankey tradition, were also popular. His music poured into New Zealand from the mid-1870s in connection with a revivalist movement modelled on D.L. Moody's methods.<sup>46</sup> Sankey's songbook was imported in that context, but circulated more widely. Missions led by R.A. Torrey and Charles Alexander in 1902, and J. Wilbur Chapman with Alexander in 1912-13, extended this influence. Sankey shaped Alexander's style, and a third of Alexander's mission hymnbook drew directly from *Sacred Songs and Solos*.<sup>47</sup> Contemporary commentators

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and Richard J. Mouw (eds), *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004.

<sup>42</sup> Colin Gibson, 'Mapping the New Zealand Landscape: A Survey of the Hymnic Tradition', in Emilsen and Emilsen (eds), pp.238-54.

<sup>43</sup> CC, March 1928, p.40.

<sup>44</sup> EP, 16 June 1928, p.7.

<sup>45</sup> NZH, 15 March 1928, p.12; NZH, 23 March 1928, p.15.

<sup>46</sup> See Geoffrey Troughton, 'Moody and Sankey Down Under: A Case Study in "Trans-Atlantic" Revivalism in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', *JRH*, 29:2, 2005, pp.145-62.

<sup>47</sup> Joan Mansfield, 'The Music of Australian Revivalism', in Mark Hutchinson and Stuart Piggin (eds), *Reviving Australia: Essays on the History and Experience of Revival and Revivalism in Australian Christianity*, Sydney: Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, 1994, p.137.

noted that this music caught the ear and lodged in the memory.<sup>48</sup> It was still popular in the 1930s when the Sunday night choir on the 'Friendly Road' radio station run by C.G. Scrimgeour (Uncle Scrim) styled itself as the 'Sankey Singers'. Though widely known, it became particularly established in the evangelical churches in contexts like evangelistic meetings, the home, and with youth.<sup>49</sup> Even H.D.A. Major reflected that singing 'Moody and Sankey hymns' had constituted one of the pleasurable aspects of Sunday School attendance.<sup>50</sup>

Analyses of this gospel hymn tradition have highlighted an increasing concentration on Jesus, and changing approaches to him, during the nineteenth century. According to Sandra Sizer, Isaac Watts' hymns were ten times more likely than Sankey's to focus on Jesus' role as mediator, but the latter referred to Jesus more often. Sankey's approach to Jesus favoured themes of grace and salvation, refuge, help and guidance, and referred to him frequently as loving and beloved.<sup>51</sup> The emphasis on a loving, yearning saviour fitted within a general pattern of softening theology. An emphasis on heaven was in sympathy with wider questioning of eternal damnation. Yet, as other writers have noted, these characteristics also led Sankey close to a 'cloying sentimentality'. If anything, Joan Mansfield argues that Alexander pushed the tendency further.<sup>52</sup>

Such sentimentality has been connected with a feminisation of piety during the nineteenth century.<sup>53</sup> According to Mary De Jong, feminine social stereotypes predominated in this popular evangelical hymnody. Jesus featured prominently, but was generally cast as a lover, friend, victim or leader. These themes were applied equally to men and women, but the images and ideals were more readily aligned with

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<sup>48</sup> For example, NZMT, 20 April 1912, cited in Bryan D. Gilling, "'Almost Persuaded Now to Believe": Gospel Songs in New Zealand Evangelical Theology and Practice', *JRH*, 19:1, 1995, p.95.

<sup>49</sup> M.W. Wilson, *Turakina: The Story of a Country Parish, 1852-1952*, Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, 1952, p.41.

<sup>50</sup> Pearson, Lineham and Davidson, p.81.

<sup>51</sup> Sandra S. Sizer, *Gospel Hymns and Social Religion: The Rhetoric of Nineteenth-Century Revivalism*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978, esp. pp.171-73.

<sup>52</sup> Mansfield, pp.129, 137.

<sup>53</sup> For example, Callum G. Brown, *Religion and Society in Twentieth-Century Britain*, Edinburgh: Pearson, 2006; Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation, 1800-2000*, London: Routledge, 2001.

feminine social categories.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Sizer notes the essential passivity of the language. Gospel hymns expressed believers' dependence on Jesus for strength, consolation, and companionship. Surrender, emotion and intimacy were made central to the salvation process.<sup>55</sup>

Thus, Jesus featured prominently in the discourse of sentimental piety. Revivalist language made constant appeal to the 'power of Jesus Christ', and the need to make a 'decision for Jesus' and become a 'follower of Jesus'.<sup>56</sup> In some senses, this approach made personality central. Notions of personal salvation and the idea of Jesus as Saviour were constructed relationally in terms of Jesus' friendship and reliability. However, these leading attributes were spiritualised rather than historicised, as emphasis on companionship seldom translated into reflection on Jesus' lived humanity. The motif contrasted with earlier emphases on a more distant creator. But the focus on Jesus' personality related to his ability to convince, lead and save. Personalism was closely allied with the salvation of the divine Son of God and the need to 'accept Christ'.<sup>57</sup> Jesus' beauty proved his identity as Saviour and Lord.

Sentimental approaches to Jesus were shaped by the rising tide of Romanticism. According to David Bebbington, this 'Romantic gale' swept over the Evangelical movement in the 1920s influencing conservative and liberal alike.<sup>58</sup> In many ways, personality merely reformulated the heroic tradition. Notions of Jesus' humility, simplicity and sympathy fitted comfortably with Romantic priorities. While humanity and personality were important, Romanticism worked more with ideals than specifics. The accent was on religious feeling and affective response. Sentimental piety in the Romantic mode imagined Jesus through these lenses. Intimacy and emotion were regarded as channels to religious devotion. Cultivation of this spiritual relationship was central to development in the religious life.

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<sup>54</sup> Mary G. De Jong, "'I Want to Be Like Jesus": The Self-Defining Power of Evangelical Hymnody', *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 54:3, 1986, pp.461-93.

<sup>55</sup> Sizer, pp.36, 39.

<sup>56</sup> See the special issue of the *Outlook: Illustrated Memento of the Torrey-Alexander Mission, August-September 1902*, pp.15-16.

<sup>57</sup> See Torrey's address, 'What Shall I Do With Jesus', *Outlook: Illustrated Memento*, pp.41-43.

<sup>58</sup> See David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History From the 1730s to the 1980s*, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989, pp.80-81, 181-84, quote p.183; Bebbington, *Dominance*, pp.148-83.

On the other hand, the interaction between embodiment and sentiment also owed something to modernist cultural preoccupations. The social context of early twentieth-century New Zealand was one in which overt physicality and display of the body was becoming more common.<sup>59</sup> Following Harold Segel, Caroline Daley refers to this as a time when 'the emphasis was on the body rather than the mind, when activity and rationality were celebrated and passivity and irrationality decried'.<sup>60</sup> For Segel, the modernist Jesus was reconstituted as a robust, manly activist.<sup>61</sup> This suggests that modernism offered an entirely different figure to the 'pail, limp Jesus' of conventional devotional piety. Yet, physicality also served a function in sentimental piety. Materiality and the body were conduits to the intimacy and emotion that fired religious commitment. Protestants tended to make the connection textually. Hymns like 'When I survey the wondrous cross' invoked the physical marks of the crucifixion as a vehicle to consecration. The pattern was particularly pronounced, however, in the material culture of Catholic devotion where Jesus' wounded body was supposed to inspire love, adoration and commitment.

### ***Jesus in Catholic Spirituality***

Catholicism represented another important religious tradition that was characterised by distinctive images and emphases. The Jesus of New Zealand Catholicism was shaped by a refashioning of Irish Catholic religiosity during the 'devotional revolution' led by Cardinal Cullen in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>62</sup> This had a flow-on effect to New Zealand where the Catholic community was largely comprised of Irish Catholic migrants. Post-famine Irish Catholicism was rich in devotional associations and artefacts, and these shaped local forms. Sodalities and lay associations proliferated to encourage institutional participation, while Catholic homes were identified by

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<sup>59</sup> On this, see Caroline Daley, 'Puritans and Pleasure Seekers', in Allison Kirkman and Pat Moloney (eds), *Sexuality Down Under: Social and Historical Perspectives*, Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2005, pp.47-62; Caroline Daley, *Leisure and Pleasure: Reshaping and Revealing the New Zealand Body, 1900-1960*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003.

<sup>60</sup> Daley, *Leisure*, p.5; cf. Harold Segel, *Body Ascendant: Modernism and the Physical Imperative*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.

<sup>61</sup> Segel, p.220.

<sup>62</sup> On this, see Emmet Larkin, 'The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-1875', *American Historical Review*, 77:3, 1972, pp.625-52. More recent discussion interrogates the timing, extent and mechanisms, but not the fact of change.

particular devotional practices like displaying of religious images including Jesus, Mary and the Saints.<sup>63</sup> Catholic spirituality identified Christ as the source and giver of merits, the benefits available in Christ, and the richer life that flowed from him. Contemplation of Jesus' grace, expressed principally through his sacrifice, was central to the whole devotional system.<sup>64</sup>

Catholic approaches to Jesus emphasised the Passion. Indeed, the devotional system provided countless ways to consider his sacrifice and broken body. The emphasis was evident in periodicals and occasional literature.<sup>65</sup> Contemplation of Jesus' death was also central to the drama and ritual of the Mass, attendance at which was becoming increasingly common.<sup>66</sup> In 1921, an article in the *New Zealand Tablet* claimed that the Blessed Sacrament held the key to Jesus' character, and therefore of Christian character:

It is a new day in a man's life when he realises that here in the Blessed Sacrament is the summing up of all the works of Jesus – His mercy, His pity, His infinite loving kindness. It makes life worth living. The first desire of the Catholic heart will be to return love for love; to atone in some way for the negligence and indifference of the world... to respond in some way to that Divine yearning that brought Him from heaven to Nazareth and Calvary, and now makes Him as it were the Prisoner and Bondsman of His own love.<sup>67</sup>

However, Catholic interpretation also distinguished between the Sacrament of the Eucharist and the Sacrifice of the Mass. Jesus' death was understood as a present sacrifice and permanent institution of the Church. Participation in Mass involved reflection on the Passion, but also a strong emphasis on union with the great Church.

Catholic spirituality gave visual emphasis to the death of Jesus in other ways. Although also acceptable to some Anglicans and Lutherans, the crucifix, rather than an

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<sup>63</sup> S.C. MacPherson, 'A "Ready Made Nucleus of Degradation and Disorder"? A Religious and Social History of the Catholic Church and Community in Auckland 1870-1910', MA Thesis in History, University of Auckland, 1987, p.91; *NZ Tablet*, 5 January 1922, p.45.

<sup>64</sup> See J.M. Liston's address in *NZ Tablet*, 6 November 1932, pp.1-2.

<sup>65</sup> For example, Francis Redwood, *The Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, Wellington: Tolan Print, 1926.

<sup>66</sup> Increasingly frequent attendance at Mass was a feature of the nineteenth-century 'Catholic Revival' generally, but Hugh Jackson argues that the pattern persisted well into the twentieth century in New Zealand. See Hugh Jackson, 'Churchgoing in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', *NZJH*, 17:1, 1983, pp.43-59, and 'The Late Victorian Decline in Churchgoing: Some New Zealand Evidence', *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions*, 56:1, 1983, pp.97-106.

<sup>67</sup> *NZ Tablet*, 10 February 1921, p.45.

empty cross, was a distinctively Catholic form. Within churches, the crucifix was the principal ornament of the altar and was supposed to 'recall to the mind of the celebrant, and the people, that the Victim offered on the altar is the same as was offered on the Cross'.<sup>68</sup> In homes, crucifixes were displayed as markers of identity and devotion. The Stations of the Cross were found around the interior of many churches. These provided a narrative account of Jesus' suffering and death, and a focus for reflection during the season of Lent. Because they were displayed throughout the year, the Stations witnessed to Christ's suffering outside the Holy Season.<sup>69</sup>

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus was perhaps the most distinctive Catholic practice of this period in New Zealand as throughout the Catholic world. Modern impetus for the devotion dated to Margaret Mary Alacoque (1647-1690), but strengthened during the nineteenth century – culminating in Leo XIII's consecration of humanity to the Sacred Heart on 11 June 1899.<sup>70</sup> According to Katherine Massam, the devotion was already well established in Australia by that time, though it flourished particularly in the years between World War One and Vatican II.<sup>71</sup> In New Zealand, the devotion had also been established prior to the pontifical act of consecration. By 1900, the Sacred Heart sodality was the largest and most significant of the new Catholic organisations in Auckland.<sup>72</sup> Even still, the devotion was further strengthened after World War One on account of Episcopal initiatives.<sup>73</sup> A pastoral letter of the Archbishops and Bishops of Australasia called for re-consecration to the Sacred Heart on 29 June 1919, through reading an Act of Consecration.<sup>74</sup> In subsequent years the month of June became a focal point for reflection.

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<sup>68</sup> 'Altar Crucifix', *Catholic Encyclopedia*, (online version), 15 vols, New York: Robert Appleton, 1907-1912. URL: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/01352a.htm>, accessed 29 June 2006.

<sup>69</sup> *NZ Tablet*, 20 March 1919, p.23; *NZ Tablet*, 13 May 1938, pp.3-4.

<sup>70</sup> Leo XIII referred to this consecration as 'the great act' of his pontificate. See 'Sacred Heart', *Catholic Encyclopedia*. URL: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/07163a.htm>, accessed 29 June 2006.

<sup>71</sup> Katherine Massam, *Sacred Threads: Catholic Spirituality in Australia, 1922-1962*, Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1996, pp.62-63.

<sup>72</sup> MacPherson, p.91.

<sup>73</sup> *NZ Tablet*, 13 April 1932, cover, and p.14, which describes and illustrates the foundation of the Sacred Heart parish at Takaka.

<sup>74</sup> See *NZ Tablet*, 26 June 1919, pp.17-19.

Display of Sacred Heart images was a central element. These adorned churches in a range of forms including paintings, statuary and glass.<sup>75</sup> They were also prominent in Catholic homes where some devout families placed pictures in every room.<sup>76</sup> The image of Jesus' heart was symbolical. While his physical heart was displayed, the devotion concerned its moral or spiritual equivalent. The heart was emblematic of Christ's love. The bishops' letter highlighted that the heart stood for the man. Jesus' heart was the most loving, the broadest and most comprehensive, most compassionate, generous, indulgent and tender of all hearts. The devotion was supposed to renew spiritual vigour. Reciprocation of Jesus' love and constancy became the evidence of renewed vitality. As the bishops explained, 'Love is the guiding principle of all our Saviour's conduct towards us. He asks only love in return for His countless benefactions.... He is ready to obliterate the greatest crimes, if there is but love'.<sup>77</sup> The Sacred Heart icon expressed Christ's sorrow at the world's rejection of his redemption, and promoted awareness of Jesus' wounds and suffering. It focused attention on his redeeming work, and incorporated motifs related to the Passion and Eucharist. As Bernard Cadogan has argued, Sacred Heart spirituality made devotees feel loved, but also 'reminded the Faithful that Jesus was close to them through the bond of common suffering. Catholics often found consolation in moments of sorrow by comparing their sufferings to those of Christ'.<sup>78</sup>

Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus has been interpreted as an effort to keep Catholic spirituality 'in touch with the emotional side of life, validating the compassion which drives people to action'.<sup>79</sup> According to P.J. O'Farrell, it also indicated a lack of balance within the spirituality of Irish Catholicism by exalting sentiment and ceaseless activity at the expense of thought or contemplation.<sup>80</sup> Certainly, the iconography in

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<sup>75</sup> Fiona Ciaran, *Stained Glass Windows of Canterbury, New Zealand: A Catalogue Raisonné*, Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1998, p.215, lists nine windows on the theme in Catholic churches in Canterbury. Most were installed prior to 1920, with all completed by 1947.

<sup>76</sup> For example, Patrick O'Farrell, *Vanished Kingdoms: Irish in Australia and New Zealand*, Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1990, p.87.

<sup>77</sup> *NZ Tablet*, 26 June 1919, p.19.

<sup>78</sup> Bernard Francis Cadogan, 'Lace Curtain Catholics: The Catholic Bourgeoisie of the Diocese of Dunedin, 1900-1920', BA Hons Dissertation in History, University of Otago, 1984, p.88.

<sup>79</sup> Rosemary Haughton, cited in Massam, p.63.

<sup>80</sup> Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, rev. ed., Kensington: New South Wales University Press, 1985, p.213.

New Zealand reflected the sentimental *l'art saint sulpice* style that had become the international fashion of Catholic art by the end of the nineteenth century. This presented an effeminate Jesus, rather than the manly and highly politicised version that Raymond Jonas argues was also in circulation.<sup>81</sup>

Around the world, Protestant Christians were critical of the Catholic tendency to place Mary alongside Jesus.<sup>82</sup> The prominent Baptist minister J.J. North's attack on Catholicism, timed for the Catholic centenary in New Zealand, reiterated these concerns in relation to Sacred Heart spirituality. North noted that, 'In some devotional pictures she is represented as sitting as an equal on Christ's Throne. There is no honour ascribed to Christ in any new devotion, like that strange devotion of the sacred heart, but Jesuits and Marists claim equal honour for Mary. She too has a sacred heart which can be directly addressed and which is girt with roses'.<sup>83</sup> North primarily objected to the mediating role assigned to Mary, which he felt belonged biblically to Christ alone. His critique aimed to preserve the supremacy of Jesus by ascribing characteristics associated with Mary to him. However, in a curious way, his comments reinforced some of the fundamental instincts of Sacred Heart spirituality. Though critical of its extension in Marian devotion, North affirmed the affective emphasis: 'The humanity of Christ bridges the gulf between God and man. No woman's heart is as tender as the heart of Jesus.... No prayer should be diverted from His ear. No worship, which belongs to Him alone should be bestowed on His creatures. Pity and power have their home in the heart of Jesus, for Jesus is one with the Father'.<sup>84</sup>

Christopher van der Krogt has noted that more assertive forms of lay Catholic spirituality were evident during the interwar years, some of which centred on Jesus. Notably, he highlights the feast of Christ the King, arguing that: 'If the Sacred Heart represented the Church's suffering at the hands of its enemies, the proclamation of Christ's kingship represented a renewed determination to wrest the initiative in the

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<sup>81</sup> Colleen McDannell, *Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, pp.170, 173; cf. Raymond Jonas, *France and the Cult of the Sacred Heart: An Epic Tale for Modern Times*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000.

<sup>82</sup> For example, Hugh McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe, 1848-1914*, Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 2000, p.238.

<sup>83</sup> J.J. North, *The Plain Points of Protestantism*, Auckland: H.H. Driver, 1938, p.44.

<sup>84</sup> North, *Plain Points*, p.48.

struggle with a hostile society'.<sup>85</sup> While the two images seemed distinct and complementary, van der Krogt notes that they often became intertwined.<sup>86</sup> This tone was evident elsewhere. Outlining the origins of the New Zealand National Eucharistic Congress in 1938, a Catholic apologist, D.M. Taylor, reminded Catholics that the Mass was the 'very centre of the Catholic religion, the principal fount from which the faithful in all ages have drawn fortifying grace'. He affirmed the Real Presence, and the divinity of Jesus, whilst remembering those who for a variety of reasons 'have not attained our faith and certainty'. Taylor concluded by calling participants to honour God and country, remembering 'the import of our Catholicity, shining with the blood of martyrs, as we kneel in adoration'.<sup>87</sup>

Catholic approaches tended to correlate Christ and Church quite closely. In 1910, Archbishop Francis Redwood proclaimed Jesus as the 'noblest scion of humanity, the consummate model of perfection'. This verdict, he contended, was universally accepted among all true Christians, and even those 'writers who have shorn Him of the splendour of His miracles and prophecies, and brought him down to the lowest level which the cold fancy of unbelief could conceive'. The reference was to Strauss, Renan, Harnack and J.S. Mill, whom Redwood characterised as 'unrelenting assailants' of Jesus' Godhead. These had done their best to 'sink Him to the lowest possible plane', but their efforts still left him 'standing on the summit of human greatness and goodness'.<sup>88</sup> Redwood claimed that no life could better have manifested God's love and nature than did 'Jesus the prophet of Galilee'. He hailed Jesus' 'fortitude' and 'celestial sweetness', and the 'sublime inspiration' of his teaching.<sup>89</sup> He credited Christ as the moral force that gave shape to 'the Christian religion'. The marvels of 'true religion', however, were clearly those of the Catholic faith. Drawing on Hebrews 13.8, Redwood claimed that 'Jesus Christ Yesterday, to-Day, and for Ever' was 'every good Catholic's

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<sup>85</sup> Christopher John van der Krogt, 'More a Part than Apart: The Catholic Community in New Zealand Society 1918-1940', PhD Thesis in History and Religious Studies, Massey University, 1994, p.81.

<sup>86</sup> van der Krogt, 'More a Part', pp.82-83.

<sup>87</sup> D.M. Taylor, 'Origin of the Congress', *N.Z. National Eucharistic Congress, Wellington, February 1-4 1940: Souvenir Programme*, Christchurch: Printed by Whitcombe & Tombs, 1940, pp.3-4.

<sup>88</sup> Francis Redwood, *Jesus Christ Yesterday, To-Day, and For Ever*, Dunedin: NZ Tablet, 1910, pp.1-2.

<sup>89</sup> Redwood, *Jesus Christ*, pp.2-4.

profession of faith'. Christ had been the Saviour and King of mankind for nineteen centuries, swaying 'the destinies of the Catholic world' and framing its civilisation. Christ's achievements symbolised the promise of Catholicism.

This willingness to use Jesus as a symbol of denominational identity, and to bolster denominational priorities, was marked within Catholicism. It reflected Catholic ecclesiology as much as Christology. This tendency was characteristic of Catholicism generally, though was arguably reinforced by the community's minority position in New Zealand. The result was a rather emblematic Jesus. Catholic approaches characteristically focused on the Passion, and made Jesus' wounded body the primary evidence of his humanity and a focal point of spiritual reflection. Like many Protestants, Catholics believed that emotion could facilitate religious commitment, and cultivated this through Passion imagery. However, there was much less interest in Jesus' personality. Partly as a consequence of their approach to the Bible, Catholics also appeared less interested in using details of Jesus' life as a direct religious model.

## **JESUS THE MAN**

Diverse approaches to him existed, but there were clear signs of a rising tide of interest in Jesus. In particular, categories of humanity and personality were becoming a more important feature of references to him. This trend was especially evident in religious literature, material culture and the language of outreach and mission. Emphasis on Jesus in these terms did not entail rejection of biblical authority, or even the complete eclipse of other forms of discourse. However, greater explanatory power was accorded to Jesus' human attributes.

### ***The Life of Jesus in Literature***

Whatever impact Schweitzer's work had on the 'Quest of the Historical Jesus', it did not staunch the flow of semi-biographical studies from scholarly popularisers, preachers and literary figures in the English-speaking world. By 1935, one writer in the Presbyterian denominational newspaper the *Outlook* observed that 'Every man of note has to write his book on Jesus'.<sup>90</sup> While many nineteenth-century examples of the genre had been produced by liberal Protestants in Europe using the tools of critical

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<sup>90</sup> *Outlook*, 29 July 1935, p.13.

scholarship, a more devotional tone was evident in later works. Daniel Pals has noted that many Victorian 'lives' of Jesus stressed the importance of the human Jesus, but adopted a moderate stance on biblical criticism. Like F.W. Farrar's exceptionally popular *Life of Christ*, they romanticised both their subject and the setting of his life in ancient Palestine in order to appeal to a mass market. Late Victorian volumes like his often aimed to settle believers' anxieties, especially those created by questions about Jesus' historicity and challenges to supernatural belief.<sup>91</sup> Characteristically, the twentieth-century 'lives' read by English-speaking audiences picked up on this devotional tone, whilst self-consciously determining to communicate Jesus' humanity and personality more effectively.

Evidently readers recognised the emphasis and appreciated it. Writing in 1939, J.J. North considered that 'No man could read a "Life of Christ" dated a century back and then read a modern life... without feeling that what was obscure and remote has been transfigured and become contemporary, and this not because of additions introduced, but because of the neglected and misunderstood humanity of Jesus'.<sup>92</sup> For North, this new emphasis revealed a compelling personality: 'We see Him more completely man than any man, and from Whom the men of to-day are never able to divert their gaze. He haunts us, at once human and divine. He is both the hero and the Lord of the world'.

The genre proved popular. One volume by Giovanni Papini created a sensation when published, and remained perhaps the best-loved of the interwar lives.<sup>93</sup> According to North, it epitomised the modern approach to writing about Jesus' life.<sup>94</sup> Papini's fictionalised biography was exceptionally well-received abroad, becoming a top-five fiction seller in America.<sup>95</sup> Undoubtedly, this acclaim contributed to its local

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<sup>91</sup> Daniel L. Pals, *The Victorian 'Lives' of Jesus*, San Antonio: Trinity University Press, 1982. See F.W. Farrar, *The Life of Christ*, New York: A.L. Burt, 1907 (1874), which went through over 30 editions.

<sup>92</sup> J.J. North, *'Me a Christian!' 'Why Not?'*, Auckland: H.H. Driver, 1939, p.12.

<sup>93</sup> Giovanni Papini, *The Story of Christ*, Mary Prichard Agnetti (trans.), London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1923.

<sup>94</sup> North, *'Me a Christian!'*, p.12.

<sup>95</sup> Prothero, p.108.

appeal. In 1923, the Bible Class magazine *Four Square* highlighted the book, paying particular attention to its international success.<sup>96</sup>

Part of Papini's appeal was literary. The author had been a journalist and poet, and brought these skills to bear in 96 impressionistic episodes. Reviewers noted the 'arresting originality' of the style and language of his work, and the vivid depiction of Jesus' life.<sup>97</sup> Yet, reviews also signalled that the author's own story was important.<sup>98</sup> Papini had repudiated religion early in life, and his early literary career had been iconoclastic and controversial. At one point he courted scandal by speculating that Jesus and John had shared a homosexual relationship. In fact, he had begun research on Jesus' life with sceptical intent, but converted to Roman Catholicism in 1921 while completing the book. Christians embraced Papini as a latter-day Saul of Tarsus and heralded his work as one of consummate devotion.<sup>99</sup> The author was a trophy of grace.

Papini's portrait of Jesus was fresh, but affirmed key orthodox doctrines. For instance, though one correspondent to the *New Zealand Methodist Times* remained unconvinced, Papini seemed certain that he had unearthed proof of Jesus' divinity.<sup>100</sup> He also believed that the Resurrection was incontrovertible. Papini claimed that he respected the Bible but saw an apologetic need for his own work. No life of Jesus could be more beautiful and perfect than the Gospels, 'But who reads the Evangelists to-day?'<sup>101</sup> Every generation needed to translate the 'old Gospel' anew: 'In order that Christ may always be alive and eternally present in the lives of men, it is absolutely necessary to resuscitate Him from time to time'.<sup>102</sup> His prose exuded certainty. Earlier portrayals of Jesus were dismissed as 'ice-cold abstractions', while he launched a thinly-veiled attack on Frederick Nietzsche.<sup>103</sup>

Papini's Jesus was also appealingly radical. He wanted his book to be edifying, 'Not at all in the sense of mechanical religiosity, but in the human and virile sense of

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<sup>96</sup> *Four Square*, June 1923, p.325; *Four Square*, July 1923, p.344.

<sup>97</sup> *NZMBC Link*, 24 July 1924, p.1.

<sup>98</sup> For example, *Outlook*, 24 September 1923, p.7.

<sup>99</sup> *Four Square*, June 1923, p.325. Some of this background was outlined in Papini, xxii-xxiv.

<sup>100</sup> *NZMT*, 27 March 1926, p.1.

<sup>101</sup> Papini, viii-ix.

<sup>102</sup> Papini, ix.

<sup>103</sup> Papini, vi-vii.

remaking souls'.<sup>104</sup> Indeed, he chided traditional devotion. Lives created for the devout invariably exhaled a musty staleness, 'an obnoxious odour of extinguished candle, a stench of evaporated incense and bad oil, which takes away one's breath'.<sup>105</sup> This kind of language appealed particularly to young people. Youth magazines cited extracts emphasising Jesus' forceful personality, and his practical attention to social need: 'Of all subvertors, Jesus is the greatest. He is the Mendicant, who distributes alms; One who, Himself naked, clothes the naked; One who, Himself famishing, yet feeds others. He is the miraculous and superhuman Pauper, who changes the falsely rich into paupers and makes the poor truly rich'.<sup>106</sup>

Other lives of Jesus circulated widely, particularly during the interwar years. Written in the same year as Papini's volume, J. Paterson Smyth's *A Peoples' Life of Christ* often featured among recommended books for Bible Class and older Sunday School scholars.<sup>107</sup> Basil Mathews wrote material for children as well as adults. In 1935, the *Outlook* rated his *A Life of Jesus* the best of the lives of Christ then currently available. According to the reviewer, it avoided the usual pitfalls of the genre which included producing a mere diatessaron, a purely imaginative biography, or a series of incidents turned into sermonettes.<sup>108</sup> Theologically liberal Americans like Bruce Barton and Harry Emerson Fosdick were also taken with Jesus' personality, and their attempts to construct his life in contemporary terms were widely cited.<sup>109</sup> Some of Shailer Mathews' social gospel interpretations of Jesus were also considered 'notable'.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Papini, xvii.

<sup>105</sup> Papini, vix-x.

<sup>106</sup> *NZMBC Link*, 24 July 1924, p.1.

<sup>107</sup> J. Paterson Smyth, *A Peoples' Life of Christ*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1921; cf. *A Syllabus of Religious Instruction for Use in the State Schools of New Zealand under the Present Voluntary System*, Dunedin: Otago Branch of the New Zealand Council of Religious Education, 1933, p.4; *Jesus Among Men: Junior Bible Class Syllabus*, Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, for the Youth Committee of the New Zealand Council of Religious Education, 1933, p.6; *Sunday School and Bible Class at Work: Text-Book for Teacher-Training Classes, Study Groups, and General Use*, 2nd ed., Melbourne: Joint Board of the Graded Lessons of Australia and New Zealand, 1936, p.119.

<sup>108</sup> Basil Mathews, *A Life of Jesus*, New York: R.R. Smith, 1931; cf. 'An Intelligent Layman's Library', *Outlook*, 29 July 1935, pp.13-14.

<sup>109</sup> Bruce Barton, *A Young Man's Jesus*, Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1914; Bruce Barton, *The Man Nobody Knows*, Indianapolis: Bobb's-Merrill, 1925; H.E. Fosdick, *The Manhood of the Master*, rev. ed., London: Wyvern, 1958 (1913). See Chapter Five below.

<sup>110</sup> *NZMT*, 19 July 1921, p.9.

Though not a 'life of Jesus' in the sense that books like Papini's and Smyth's were, T.R. Glover's *The Jesus of History* was also influential during this period.<sup>111</sup> Glover was a notable English Baptist and classical scholar at Cambridge University.<sup>112</sup> His book on Jesus was republished frequently and distributed widely following its appearance in 1917. Originally delivered as a lecture series on the historical Jesus in India during 1915-16, the work was unmistakably apologetic. Glover aimed to provide a scholarly argument for Christian faith in the light of questions raised by historical criticism. Though recognising that the Gospel accounts were not biographical, he did explore Jesus' personality to some extent. However, Glover placed more emphasis on the need to experience Jesus, and the centrality of Jesus to Christianity.<sup>113</sup> As he observed, 'the fact must weigh enormously that wherever the Christian Church, or a section of it, or a single Christian, has put upon Jesus Christ a higher emphasis – above all where everything has been centred in Jesus Christ – there has been an increase of power for Church, or community, or man'.<sup>114</sup>

New Zealanders also read popular religious novels like the American Congregationalist minister Charles M. Sheldon's *In His Steps*. In this, members of the fictional First Church of Raymond vowed, after cajoling by their minister, to consider 'what would Jesus do?' before undertaking any action.<sup>115</sup> The book was a social gospel novel. It aimed to inspire Christians to self-sacrificing action by emulating Jesus' example. By 1933, Sheldon estimated that 23 million copies of his book had sold in 21 languages, though some scholars suggest that this may be too generous.<sup>116</sup> In any case, New Zealanders were aware of it and generally positive. One early commentator in the *Outlook* claimed that Sheldon's books were among the 'most potent factors in the life to-day, working for the elevation of public morals and the achievement of

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<sup>111</sup> T.R. Glover, *The Jesus of History*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965 (1917).

<sup>112</sup> Glover was elected President of the Baptist Union in 1924, and his father was a Baptist minister in Bristol.

<sup>113</sup> Glover, p.154.

<sup>114</sup> Glover, p.16.

<sup>115</sup> Charles M. Sheldon, *In His Steps: What Would Jesus Do?*, London: Frederick Warne, 1928. First written in 1896, the book was never copyrighted so exists in many editions.

<sup>116</sup> Ronald C. White and C. Howard Hopkins, *The Social Gospel: Religion and Reform in Changing America*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976, p.143.

righteousness in our midst'.<sup>117</sup> The concept of following 'in his steps' became established in the vernacular.<sup>118</sup> Sheldon averred scholarship, preferring an 'untheological Christianity' in which simple love for God and humanity was the primary concern. Apparently, this practical and somewhat moralistic tone appealed to New Zealand readers.

None of Sheldon's many later works rivalled the popularity of *In His Steps*. Some, however, proved more controversial. *Jesus is Here!*, a sequel to *In His Steps*, took reflection on Jesus a step further.<sup>119</sup> Instead of merely considering what Jesus might do, the Rev. Henry Maxwell and his congregation found that Jesus actually became present in their midst. The book was not well received. Later critics have noted that it was badly written.<sup>120</sup> Contemporary observers claimed that it transgressed a boundary in attempting to imagine Jesus' humanity in contemporary terms. According to a reviewer in the *Outlook*, 'adverse criticism was due to the feeling that no one should attempt to picture in a novel what might happen if Jesus were actually to appear in the world a second time in human form'.<sup>121</sup> The difference in reactions to the two works was significant. While Jesus could serve as a moral inspiration, attempts to update him were problematic. Partly this reflected residual reticence about imaging the divine. It also indicated how difficult it was to portray a specific Jesus in generally acceptable terms. Part of the attraction of *In His Steps* had been the universally applicable call to reflective ethical conduct. Jesus was an effective touchstone for such a proposal, since he was commonly linked with notions of moral excellence. Notwithstanding Sheldon's confidence about what Jesus might have done, the essential premise of the earlier novel left the implications open. His sequel was perhaps too definite, and hence the suggestions were more easily resisted.

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<sup>117</sup> *Outlook*, 24 February 1900, p.43; cf. *Outlook*, 25 August 1906, p.21.

<sup>118</sup> For example, *In His Steps: Senior Bible Class Syllabus 1939*, Auckland: Youth Committee of the New Zealand Council of Religious Education, 1939.

<sup>119</sup> First published as *Jesus is Here! Continuing the Narrative of In His Steps*, New York: George H. Doran; 1914.

<sup>120</sup> For example, Ferenc Morton Szasz, *The Protestant Clergy in the Great Plains and Mountain West, 1865-1915*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004, p.207.

<sup>121</sup> *Outlook*, 28 March 1927, p.15.

## **Material Culture**

Perceptions of Jesus were reflected in, and shaped by, the way he appeared in material culture. Because the Reformation of the sixteenth century did not so much expunge images as redefine suitable places and uses for them, these patterns remained important for Protestant and Catholic alike. Indeed, recent studies suggest that Protestant religiosity utilises material culture extensively despite a theologically ambivalent attitude toward it.<sup>122</sup> David Morgan has emphasised the role images play in rooting cultural messages in the 'natural' world, and the way that images of Jesus have shaped patterns of 'visual piety'.<sup>123</sup> Within the material culture of Protestant religiosity, emphasis on Jesus' human attributes and representation of his personality became increasingly important features.

## **Art**

In New Zealand as elsewhere, supposedly 'word-centred' Protestants cultivated iconographic vocabularies. They enjoyed illustrated Bibles, Bible-story books for children, and other decorated literature. In addition to the pious and quasi-religious verse that appeared in many homes, there were also favoured images of Jesus. These included illustrations by Gustave Doré, and depictions by Heinrich Hofmann and Harold Copping.<sup>124</sup> New Zealand missionaries in the Punjab used some of the latter as evangelistic tools. As one report to the Presbyterian missionary magazine the *Harvest Field* noted, 'Harold Copping's pictures have made some excellent coloured slides, and these show more vividly than much talk ever could the reality and beauty of a Life once lived on earth for all men'.<sup>125</sup>

William Holman Hunt's *The Light of the World* was perhaps the most widely disseminated and influential image of Jesus for Protestants during the twentieth century. The painting had become prominent in the mid-nineteenth century following favourable reviews by John Ruskin, and some windows based on the image had been

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<sup>122</sup> See McDannell, *Material Christianity*; cf. Hent de Vries and Samuel Weber (eds), *Religion and Media*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001, p.187.

<sup>123</sup> David Morgan, *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

<sup>124</sup> See *NZMT*, 9 June 1934, p.1.

<sup>125</sup> *Harvest Field*, May 1938, p.10.

installed in Anglican churches before the twentieth century.<sup>126</sup> However, its circulation and reputation grew considerably in New Zealand when the third of three versions of the painting visited the country in 1906 as part of a tour of the British Empire.<sup>127</sup>

The painting was exhibited in New Zealand between 15 April and 28 May 1906, before returning again for display at the International Exhibition in Christchurch between November 1906 and April 1907. During the initial sojourn, it aroused considerable excitement as large crowds turned out to see it filling substantial public venues. In Auckland, over 50,000 people came to the Mackelvie Gallery in one week. The *Auckland Weekly News* reported that the crush on the final Sunday was barely containable, with members of the 'fair sex' emerging 'breathless and by no means so neat in appearance as when they entered'.<sup>128</sup> In Christchurch, queues of up to one thousand waited outside the Canterbury Society of Arts Gallery.<sup>129</sup> A letter to the painting's owner Charles Booth asserted that 'No person or event has moved Dunedin with a tithe of the intensity of interest that the picture has done'. The writer estimated that no less than 120,000 people had viewed the picture there out of a population of less than 60,000.<sup>130</sup> In smaller centres crowds were similarly overwhelming.<sup>131</sup> By late July 1907, when the painting finally departed the region, the tour's organiser estimated, perhaps over-generously, a total Australasian attendance of at least four million out of a population of just over five million people.<sup>132</sup>

The enthusiastic response to the painting reflected the convergence of art with entertainment, imperialism and religion. However, the work was widely hailed as religious art and for many people viewing it was a kind of a religious experience. Significantly, despite its allegorical nature, responses to the work frequently

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<sup>126</sup> For example, St Peter's Anglican Church in Upper Riccarton (1893-94) and St Peter's Anglican Church in Akaroa (1897-98). See Ciaran, pp.150, 153.

<sup>127</sup> See Geoffrey Troughton, 'The Light of the World at the End of the World, 1906', *Journal of New Zealand Art History*, forthcoming, 2007; cf. Geoffrey Troughton, 'Light at the End of the World: Holman Hunt's *The Light of the World* in New Zealand, 1906', *Australian Historical Studies*, 37:128, 2006, pp.55-71; Jeremy Maas, *Holman Hunt & The Light of the World*, London: Scolar Press, 1984.

<sup>128</sup> *Auckland Weekly News*, 26 April 1906, p.29.

<sup>129</sup> *Press*, 19 May 1906, p.8; *Lyttelton Times*, 19 May 1906, p.8.

<sup>130</sup> J.H. Roy to Charles Booth, 4 June 1906, Charles Booth Papers, Ms797/II/91/3, Special Collections, University of London Library, London [Booth Papers]; cf. *Auckland Weekly News*, 31 May 1906, p.25.

<sup>131</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 22 May 1906, p.6.

<sup>132</sup> Maas, pp.188-90; cf. Troughton, 'The Light of the World'.

emphasised its depiction of Jesus' humanity. As one commentary noted, 'This Christ, for all His symbolised divinity, is magnificently human'.<sup>133</sup> One preacher spoke of the sense of the nearness of God the painting engendered.<sup>134</sup> Another observer commented on fellow-feeling that flowed from the subject's face, asserting that it was the face of 'the Son of Man rather than the traditional countenance of the Son of God'.<sup>135</sup>

To the extent that viewers perceived a human Jesus, he was a somewhat mawkish combination of humanity, piety and invitation to repentance and communion. He was the Man of Sorrows.<sup>136</sup> His bearing was grave and noble, and marked by a countenance of 'deep solemnity... blended with dignity'.<sup>137</sup> An apparent lugubriousness reflected the great yearning in the subject's soul: 'The face of Christ standing lonely with His lantern is wistful, with a wistfulness which seeks human fellowship'.<sup>138</sup> There is evidence that some viewers expected to see more humanity and personality depicted. The *Taranaki Herald* reported that 'Many good and devout people take exception to the expression of the face. Some think "The Light of the World" should depict an expression of hope and cheerfulness, instead of which is readily conveyed to the mind by the words of Isaac Watts, "See from His head, His hands, His feet, sorrow and love flow mingled down."' <sup>139</sup> Another correspondent from Napier acknowledged the artistry of the work, but noted that they expected to see 'a gentler face outlined of Him who came and suffered for mankind'.<sup>140</sup>

Observers' interpretations actually isolated morals, 'lessons', and principles more than anything personal. Thus, James Craigie hoped that the painting would excite 'a more lively appreciation of that great Christian love and charity of which it is emblematical'.<sup>141</sup> Viewers may have been conscious of the humanity of Jesus in the painting, but read its message according to their understanding of his divine mission. Jesus was a gentle, pleading saviour seeking reconciliation. This vision appealed

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<sup>133</sup> *ODT*, 23 May 1906, p.2.

<sup>134</sup> *Press*, 21 May 1906, p.9.

<sup>135</sup> *EP*, 4 May 1906, p.6.

<sup>136</sup> *Wanganui Chronicle*, 27 April 1906.

<sup>137</sup> *Press*, 16 May 1906, p.7.

<sup>138</sup> *EP*, 4 May 1906, p.6.

<sup>139</sup> *Taranaki Herald*, 17 April 1906, p.7.

<sup>140</sup> Booth Papers.

<sup>141</sup> *Timaru Herald*, 22 May 1906, p.6.

particularly to Protestants shaped by conversionistic and pietistic models. Support for the painting was most evident among low church Anglicans, Presbyterians and Methodists, who appreciated its allegory. Ironically, the painting was heralded as a 'sermon in oils', signalling a Protestant instinct for 'the word' as well as the conversionist strain.<sup>142</sup> Numerous sermons drew moral and spiritual 'lessons from the great picture'.<sup>143</sup> However, its meaning was already reasonably transparent, and had been widely published. Few could have remained ignorant of its call to recognise Jesus as the Saviour. The imagery was drawn from Revelation 3:20 which, by the twentieth century, was widely utilised as an evangelistic text.<sup>144</sup> Consequently, there were hopes that many would 'open their hearts to Jesus and let Him come in' on account of viewing it.<sup>145</sup> Given that New Zealanders had generally been ambivalent about revivalism, it is possible that the painting was instrumental in making this kind of language respectable.

The fact that Protestants were so taken with the humanity of Jesus in the painting was significant, since it indicated that they were consciously looking for it. Responses also highlighted growing appreciation of the power of embodiment as a mediator for religious feeling. As a 'sermon in oils', *The Light of the World* was thought to transcend mere artistry, appealing to the 'reverence for the divine' resident 'Deep in the hearts of even the most careless and frivolous'.<sup>146</sup> The 'nobility of the sacred figure' of Jesus would evoke a pious response. As one correspondent suggested, 'To gaze on the symbolical painting is to inspire holy sentiments'.<sup>147</sup>

*The Light of the World* arguably became one of the most recognisable works of religious art in the country. The exhibition was a major cause as it aided dispersal of reproductions. A lucrative trade in postcards of the work accompanied the tour.<sup>148</sup> Major newspapers also published full-page reproductions. In Christchurch, the

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<sup>142</sup> *ODT*, 23 May 1906, p.4.

<sup>143</sup> *Outlook*, 19 May 1906, pp.22-23.

<sup>144</sup> Revelation 3:20: 'Behold I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and sup with him, and he with me' (all Bible quotations are from the Authorised Version).

<sup>145</sup> *Outlook*, 19 May 1906, p.3.

<sup>146</sup> *Press*, 19 May 1906, p.8.

<sup>147</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 15 May 1906, p.2.

<sup>148</sup> Maas, pp.167-68; *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 30 April 1906, p.8.

*Lyttelton Times* reported that the *Canterbury Times* would print a supplement to its regular weekly edition to include a 'most artistically reproduced' copy of the painting, 'well suited for framing, as an adornment for a room'. In expectation of increased demand the *Times* planned to print 'several thousand extra copies'.<sup>149</sup> In more specifically religious contexts, *The Light of the World* lived on in other ways. In 1906, numerous sermons utilised stories, texts and symbolism drawn from the painting.<sup>150</sup> The painting endured as a favoured preaching illustration for many years following, and was used widely for religious education purposes.<sup>151</sup> Framed copies of the work remained on display in many churches. From 1912, a version of *The Light of the World* comprised one panel of the altar reredos at Woodend near Christchurch.<sup>152</sup> The picture also became a favourite subject for stained-glass windows.<sup>153</sup>

## Stained Glass

Jesus featured prominently in religious stained-glass windows, though in many ways these epitomised a style that attempts to personalise Jesus were moving away from. As J.J. North described, the stained-glass Jesus was often 'The stiff Christ of the church windows'.<sup>154</sup> Nevertheless, there were hints even in this conservative medium of the growing emphasis on Jesus' humanity. There is little evidence that religious themes appeared much in non-church or domestic stained glass.<sup>155</sup> By contrast, one detailed catalogue of Canterbury sources indicates that Jesus was the predominant subject of ecclesiastical windows. Two-thirds of the 711 examples in the province included some depiction of the life of Christ.<sup>156</sup> Of these, the most common themes related to Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension, as well as his childhood and the Johannine themes

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<sup>149</sup> *Lyttelton Times*, 15 May 1906, p.2.

<sup>150</sup> *Press*, 21 May 1906, p.9.

<sup>151</sup> Elizabeth Smither, 'Mauriac et Moi', in Mark Williams (ed.), *The Source of the Song: New Zealand Writers on Catholicism*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1995, p.64; *NZMBC Link*, 5 December 1933, cover, p.3.

<sup>152</sup> *Church News*, March 1912, p.3.

<sup>153</sup> Rory Sweetman, *Spire on the Hill: A History of St Andrew's Church in the Epsom District, 1846-1996*, Auckland: St Andrew's Parish, 1996, p.108.

<sup>154</sup> North, 'Me a Christian!', p.12.

<sup>155</sup> See Jock Phillips and Chris Maclean, *In the Light of the Past: Stained Glass Windows in New Zealand Houses*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1983.

<sup>156</sup> Ciaran, p.75. The following discussion is drawn from analysis of Ciaran's catalogue.

of Jesus as Good Shepherd and Light of the World. Images of Jesus were often found in the sanctuary where the symbolism of Jesus' death and resurrection related most strikingly to celebration of the Eucharist.

From the evidence in Canterbury it is clear that stained glass appealed to particular forms of religiosity. It appeared in churches of all the main denominations, but overwhelmingly among Anglicans and Catholics. Presbyterians and Methodists had some, but at rates significantly lower than their share of the population.<sup>157</sup> Imagery relating to the life or teaching of Jesus was proportionally more common within the Protestant churches, while Anglicans particularly favoured the Johannine symbolic motifs. Catholics had a higher proportion of windows devoted to the saints, though Anglicans also depicted the apostles. Eucharistic and Passion imagery featured in Anglican and Catholic churches.

The timing of installation reflected changes in Protestant religiosity. Most early installations in the province were in Anglican and to a lesser extent Catholic churches. This reflected religiosity, and the relative wealth of Anglicanism in Canterbury. Of 493 windows in place in the province by 1940, 335 had been installed after 1900.<sup>158</sup> Significantly, only 22 of the 66 Presbyterian windows in the catalogue had been fitted by 1940 (including 14 in a single church at Cave). All 22 were fitted after World War One. Aside from those at Cave and an insignia of the burning bush at Knox Church in Waimate, all dealt with facets of Jesus' life and teaching, or his evangelistic appeal. Similarly, only 6 of the 28 Methodist windows in the sample were installed prior to World War Two, and all of these concerned Christ.

Fiona Ciaran notes that ecclesiastical windows drew from a range of sources including medieval and renaissance styles. New images and themes emerged in the nineteenth century, but there was often a lag time between British trends and New

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<sup>157</sup> Out of the total collection of 711 windows, the proportions by denomination are Anglican (49.78%), Catholic (17.11%), Presbyterian (9.27%), and Methodist (3.28%). The denominational proportions for Canterbury in 1906 were, Anglican (45.55%), Catholic (12.36%), Presbyterian (19.79%), Methodist (12.78%). See *Census*, 1906, p.97. The comparison assumes that the proportion of population was to some extent reflected in the number of churches for each denomination.

<sup>158</sup> Ciaran, p.219.

Zealand installations – especially during the Victorian era.<sup>159</sup> Glass was often used for memorial purposes, which explains why so many windows appeared in the years following each of the two World Wars. Yet, prior to the Second World War, there was little local context evident in designs for church windows.<sup>160</sup> Consequently, the Jesus who appeared in New Zealand stained-glass art was firmly contextualised within European traditions.

Nevertheless, the introduction of glass into Methodist and Presbyterian churches was a significant departure. The increasingly respectable and settled position of Protestant churches in the province probably encouraged the change. Another factor was arguably the influence of the *Light of the World* tour. Ciaran’s catalogue lists 17 windows modelled on the painting, mostly in rural churches. The earliest were Anglican, dating from nineteenth century. However, two were installed in 1917 and another three in the interwar years. Presbyterian windows based on the work were installed from 1935, but appeared more frequently after World War Two.<sup>161</sup> Fraser’s Art Glass Company in Dunedin also supplied windows to a number of Methodist churches in the 1930s.<sup>162</sup> *The Light of the World*, and its evangelistic message, may have provided an acceptable iconography that helped to establish the medium from the interwar years. The fact that preferred Protestant images concerned Jesus’ life and teaching seems particularly striking. Allowing for the delay factor in stained-glass production, the increasing use of the media from the interwar years can be seen as reflecting the increasingly Jesus-centred nature of Protestant Christianity. In effect, windows had become justifiable within this context.

## Moving Pictures

In addition to more established media, film provided further opportunities for encountering Jesus. In particular, its warmth and immediacy offered fresh perspectives on Jesus’ humanity and illustrated the way that changing approaches to him fitted within a wider cultural milieu. Film became a significant cultural force during the first

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<sup>159</sup> Phillips and Maclean, *Light of the Past*, p.26, argues that the lag was often about 20 years.

<sup>160</sup> Ciaran, pp.84-85.

<sup>161</sup> See references from Ciaran, p.215.

<sup>162</sup> *NZMT*, 28 October 1933, p.6.

half of the twentieth century. Writing in 1945, Gordon Mirams claimed that New Zealanders adopted the motion picture earlier and more enthusiastically than most other countries; on a per capita basis, they spent more time and money on picture-going as any other country bar America. In his estimation, only tea-drinking was a more popular diversion.<sup>163</sup> Some statistical evidence supports this assessment. Nerida Elliott cites estimates that by 1916, 320,000 people per week attended picture theatres.<sup>164</sup> In 1926, the figure was closer to 600,000.<sup>165</sup> By the end of World War Two, film-going was still among the most popular leisure pursuits. New Zealand had one movie theatre for every 3,000 persons in 1943, compared with one in 8,700 in the United States.<sup>166</sup>

The rise of film had profound effects. Mirams noted the cultural impact on habits, customs and attitudes, claiming that 'If there is any such thing as a "New Zealand culture", it is to a large extent the creation of Hollywood'.<sup>167</sup> Patterns of leisure changed. Some churches worried that movie-going was effectively an alternative to religious association, and threatened religious education and morality.<sup>168</sup> The coarser aspects of film content also raised concern. Religious groups were among those that feared the detrimental impact that on-screen crudity and violence would have on children and the tone of society. Agitation spearheaded by the New Zealand Catholic Federation, with support from churches, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Young Men's (YMCA) and Women's Christian Associations (YWCA), became instrumental in the development of film censorship apparatus in the form of the Cinematograph-films Censorship Act, 1916.<sup>169</sup>

Yet, religious people also saw the potential benefits of film. In 1916, A.H. Norrie, a Presbyterian Home Missionary, was organising screenings around Whangamomona on his Pathé Free Home Cinematograph machine. Shows included

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<sup>163</sup> Gordon Mirams, *Speaking Candidly: Films and People in New Zealand*, Hamilton: Paul's Book Arcade, 1945, p.5.

<sup>164</sup> Nerida Jeanie Elliott, 'Anzac, Hollywood and Home: Cinemas and Film-Going in Auckland 1909-1939', MA Thesis in History, University of Auckland, 1989, p.119.

<sup>165</sup> See *EP*, 25 November 1926, p.8.

<sup>166</sup> Mirams, p.6.

<sup>167</sup> Mirams, p.5.

<sup>168</sup> See Elliott, p.128.

<sup>169</sup> Paul Christoffel, *Censored: A Short History of Censorship in New Zealand*, Wellington: Department of Internal Affairs, 1989, p.12; *NZPD*, vol. 177, 1916, p.572.

films on biblical subjects such as 'The Finding of Moses' and 'The Prodigal Son', though most of his material was not religious at all.<sup>170</sup> In Australia, Herbert Booth helped produce an evangelistic multimedia show, *Soldiers of the Cross*, which combined short films with slides, hymns, sermons and prayers.<sup>171</sup>

Many early films, including epics like *Ben Hur* and *Quo Vadis*, addressed religious themes in a generally reverential manner. A smaller number concerned Jesus directly,<sup>172</sup> though it is not clear how many of these reached New Zealand. Certainly, by 1917, New Zealanders were viewing depictions of Jesus on film. In March of that year the newly established Film Censor's office passed both *The Life of Christ* and *Intolerance* for viewing.<sup>173</sup> The latter decision proved highly controversial. Made in 1916, *Intolerance* was directed by the American D.W. Griffiths. It actually featured four separate stories from four distinct eras, each reflecting the theme indicated in the title. One portrayed Jesus. While this accounted for just 12 minutes in a film of three hours, the idea of Jesus as a victim of intolerance was fundamental to the project as a whole.<sup>174</sup>

There had been opposition to the film before it came to New Zealand. In America, complaints by the WCTU had focused on its critical portrayal of social purity reformers who seemed to be caricatures of WCTU members.<sup>175</sup> Certainly, Griffiths had used Jesus' miracle at Cana to make explicit anti-prohibition messages, though he found other ways to associate social up-lifters with hypocrisy.<sup>176</sup> In Britain, the film ran foul of censorship laws that prohibited depictions of Jesus on film and on stage.

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<sup>170</sup> A.H. Norrie to W. Jolliffe, 6 November 1916, Mr Jolliffe Correspondence, 1916-17, IA 83, Envelope 10, ANZ.

<sup>171</sup> Robert K. Johnston, *Reel Spirituality: Theology and Film in Dialogue*, Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2000, p.32.

<sup>172</sup> These include a film version of the Oberammergau Passion Play (produced in New York in 1898), a French *Life of Christ* from 1899, and three short films produced by Pathé in 1902, 1907 and 1908. Sidney Olcott's *From the Manger to the Cross* (1912) was shot on location in Egypt and Palestine and influenced heavily by J.J.J. Tissot's illustrated Bible. See Lloyd Baugh, *Imaging the Divine: Jesus and Christ-Figures in Film*, Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1997, pp.8-10.

<sup>173</sup> Registers of Films, 12 Sept 1916 to 31 May 1917, IA 60, 6/1, ANZ.

<sup>174</sup> See W. Barnes Tatum, *Jesus at the Movies: A Guide to the First Hundred Years*, Santa Rosa: Poleridge Press, 1997, pp.33-34.

<sup>175</sup> Alison M. Parker, 'Mothering the Movies: Women Reformers and Popular Culture', in Francis G. Couvares (ed.), *Movie Censorship and American Culture*, Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996, p.77.

<sup>176</sup> Tatum, p.38.

In New Zealand, controversy over *Intolerance* was sparked primarily by debates in Dunedin. Audiences were initially alerted to the film through international reviews, especially from the Australian stage magazine *The Green Room*.<sup>177</sup> When the censor William Jolliffe passed the film without amendment, criticism followed. Armed with negative opinion from Australia, a review in the *Dunedin Evening Star* promptly condemned the film, while Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist preachers in the city denounced it shortly thereafter.<sup>178</sup> A meeting in early June addressed the issue, and led to a delegation petitioning G.W. Russell, the Minister of Internal Affairs.<sup>179</sup> In his representations to Russell, R.S. Gray, the Baptist minister at Hanover Street, reflected concerns that the film was sacrilegious. In particular, he referred to depictions of Jesus and his Passion, and a sequence that portrayed Christ stumbling under his cross.<sup>180</sup> This complaint reflected long-standing discomfort with the theatre in general as well as resistance to rendering Jesus' life on stage. Many Christians simply regarded the Passion an unsuitable subject for dramatic treatment.<sup>181</sup> Indeed, in light of the furore, Russell criticised Jolliffe for failing to act and urged him to follow overseas precedents in establishing a list of prohibited subjects. Russell felt that the British Board of Film Censors' ban on representations of Christ and nudity provided a suitable model.<sup>182</sup>

There were further issues that related specifically to *Intolerance*. While the portrayal of Jesus was orthodox in many respects, the movie cast him in more iconoclastic terms than earlier reverential depictions had. It juxtaposed Christ's suffering with other stories, drawing overt comparisons between them. This

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<sup>177</sup> The Rev. Winslade of Mornington, Dunedin telegraphed the Film Censor's office on 22 May 1917 with the simple message: 'Reports from Australia indicate film *Intolerance* unfit public exhibition if correct Methodist Morals comte protests'. See Jolliffe Correspondence, 1916-17.

<sup>178</sup> See *Eltham Argus*, 12 June 1917, in Mr Jolliffe's Papers – General, 1916-1923, IA 83, Envelope 9, ANZ.

<sup>179</sup> Lisa Cutfield, 'Silent Film and Censorship in New Zealand, 1908-1928', BA Hons Long Essay in History, University of Otago, 1994, p.34. Similar meetings occurred in Christchurch, Wellington and Auckland; see *EP*, 10 July 1917, p.3.

<sup>180</sup> See the report of the deputation, IA 1, 13/11/25, ANZ.

<sup>181</sup> See Charles Musser, 'Passions and the Passion Play: Theatre, Film, and Religion in America, 1880-1900', in Couvares (ed.), pp.43-72.

<sup>182</sup> This in turn caused scorn in some sections of the news media. Jolliffe resisted the advice, and in so doing established a New Zealand film censorship tradition that judged sequences in the context of the film as a whole. See Cutfield, p.35; Chris Watson and Roy Shuker, *In the Public Good: Censorship in New Zealand*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1998, p.31.

undermined the sense that Jesus' suffering and death was unique, and removed his Passion from its more familiar ritual context. More importantly, the redemptive interpretation of his death was also diminished. Jesus' humanity was effectively highlighted at the expense of his divinity.

In fact, the issue of representing Christ was only one area of concern. Most of the debate actually concerned morality rather than sacrilege. Notably, correspondence largely complained about violence and sexual immorality – including depictions of rape and sexual assault. Thus, Kingsley Wigglesworth, writing as Honorary Secretary of the Methodist Lay Preachers Meeting in Christchurch, directed Jolliffe to reports in the *Dunedin Evening Star* and *The Green Room* referring to sensuality, nudity and immorality.<sup>183</sup> Gray had argued against showing 'the living figure of Christ'. But he also raised objections with the Minister concerning vampire women, indecorous dress, and pictures that brought marriage into contempt or lowered 'the sacredness of family ties'.<sup>184</sup> Cultural factors also seem to have been important. In light of American dominance in the film industry, some commentators considered the objectionable features of the film indicative of a wider problem. Commenting on *Intolerance*, the minister at Knox Presbyterian Church in Dunedin complained that 'These malignant exhibitions of sensuality and vice, these prurient plays that came to us from America present the worst phases of American life, and should be banished out of our midst'.<sup>185</sup>

After World War One, the movie industry became progressively more commercialised, leading to increased rates of film-going during the 1920s and 1930s. The commercial drive came largely from America, which was the source of most of the films entering New Zealand. The dominance of Hollywood commercialism generated considerable discussion, including attempts to promote British film in its stead.<sup>186</sup> In 1920, the *New Zealand Times* reported on a resolution adopted by the Council of Education, 'That encouragement be given to British picture films, as the present

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<sup>183</sup> K. Wigglesworth to W. Jolliffe, 15 June 1917, Jolliffe Correspondence, 1916-17.

<sup>184</sup> *EP*, 10 July 1917, p.3.

<sup>185</sup> *Eltham Argus*, 12 June 1917.

<sup>186</sup> The idea of quota was raised at the Imperial Conference in 1926. Henry Hayward, the president of the New Zealand Picture Supplies, supported the idea. He claimed to respect American civilisation, but believed that British civilisation was better fitted for the British Empire – if not the world. See, *Press*, 3 September 1926, and *EP*, 25 November 1926, in Film Censor: Loose Papers, News Clippings, 1918-27, IA 83, ANZ.

preponderance of American films does not encourage morality or the growth of a knowledge of the British Empire'. Nonetheless, in 1926, the same newspaper reported that 95% of the 450 films coming to New Zealand in 1927 were expected to be American.<sup>187</sup>

In an increasingly commercial environment, American filmmakers like Cecil B. DeMille began to recognise the potential profitability of religion. According to R.K. Johnston, DeMille responded to a growing market for the illicit within an increasingly secular culture. Though personally religious, he also understood the morality of the flapper era and gave the public what it wanted with 'a religious gloss over salacious scenes'.<sup>188</sup> His *Ten Commandments* (1923) was indicative of the new approach, and portrayed sensuous orgies within the moral context of the giving of Torah. When DeMille embarked on filming a life of Christ there was further controversy, partly because of lingering reservations about depicting Jesus on film. In New Zealand, W. Bower Black noted retrospectively that DeMille's project, *The King of Kings*, had aroused much discussion with some thinking it should never have been shown.<sup>189</sup>

*The King of Kings* followed a tradition handed down from Renan in giving a sultry, sexually alluring Mary Magdalene a central role, and by surrounding Jesus with adoring females. Yet, aware of the financial risk involved, DeMille also worked hard to ensure religious support for his film by engaging religious consultants.<sup>190</sup> Similarly, distributors worked to allay concerns in the religious community. In New Zealand, there was widespread advertising in the denominational press.<sup>191</sup> Promotional material included brief descriptions of characters, and endorsements from religious leaders.<sup>192</sup> Preview screenings were arranged for leading church figures. The *Anglican Church Chronicle* reviewed one for ministers and clergy in Wellington at the De Luxe Theatre

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<sup>187</sup> *NZ Times*, 18 June 1920; *NZ Times*, 26 November 1926. See News Clippings, 1918-27.

<sup>188</sup> Johnston, p.33.

<sup>189</sup> W. Bower Black, *Shepherd of Souls*, Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, 1952, p.14.

<sup>190</sup> DeMille clearly targeted the religious community for financial reasons. After a string of movie failures, he later commented that *The King of Kings* was the movie that made his studio possible. See Robert S. Birchard, *Cecil B. DeMille's Hollywood*, Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2004, p.216.

<sup>191</sup> For example, *NZMT*, 11 February 1928, p.14.

<sup>192</sup> *NZH*, 2 March 1928, p.7.

in Courtenay Place on 7 February 1928.<sup>193</sup> Its report noted misgivings about biblical films and referred to unfavourable reviews in the *Church Guardian* and *London Spectator*. However, it judged that the motivation inspiring the film was sincere, which was ‘the wish to spread the knowledge of our Lord to “the uttermost parts of the earth.”’

When the film opened, newspaper reports highlighted that wide consultation had occurred during production and emphasised its accessibility to ordinary viewers’ tastes. According to the *New Zealand Herald*, critics claimed it was not merely a biblical film, but one that ‘every man, whatever his thought, can understand and appreciate. Throughout it surges with infinite humanity, with tenderness, with beauty, and never does it overstep the bounds of good taste’.<sup>194</sup> Reviews paid tribute to the spirit of reverence in the movie,<sup>195</sup> and its faithfulness to the ‘spirit of the original story in the Bible’.<sup>196</sup> There were oblique references to controversy. Some people apparently objected to the idea that, as a carpenter, Jesus profited from making crosses.<sup>197</sup> The *Evening Post* reviewer noted that the film contained many apocryphal interpolations which were ‘quite inessential to a dignified representation of the ministry of Jesus when on earth, but, seemingly, they are indispensable elements in commercial cinematography’.<sup>198</sup> Most commentary emphasised the film’s orthodoxy and conservatism. One supplement to the *New Zealand Herald* noted that *The King of Kings* had ‘probably caused more bitter argument and diverse opinion than any other picture yet made’ but concluded that it was not revolutionary in theme or treatment: ‘It did not upset, as so many church authorities apparently like to think, the common conception of Christ. DeMille simply followed the Bible as closely as possible’.<sup>199</sup>

Sensing an opportunity in it, the churches rallied behind the film and appropriated it for devotional purposes. Reports of its success in evangelistic terms helped to bolster support. The *New Zealand Herald* carried the testimony of one patron

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<sup>193</sup> CC, March 1928, pp.39-40.

<sup>194</sup> NZH, 15 March 1928, p.12.

<sup>195</sup> NZH, 5 April 1928, p.15.

<sup>196</sup> NZH, 12 April 1928, p.13.

<sup>197</sup> CC, March 1928, p.40.

<sup>198</sup> EP, 16 June 1928, p.7.

<sup>199</sup> *Supplement to the NZH*, 7 April 1928, p.9.

who claimed to have attended Sunday School and church all their life, and 'earnestly studied the Bible', but believed that 'the three hours I have spent viewing this picture have given me a deeper and more real understanding of the life and teachings of Christ than all else'.<sup>200</sup> Others reported witnessing the transformation of crowds who entered as amusement seekers, only to exit three hours later 'silent and thoughtful, awed and subdued, with a look of wonder and wistful inquiry in their tear-stained eyes'.<sup>201</sup> Contemporary reviewers credited such responses to the film's evocation of Jesus' humanity. According to one, it was 'a magnificent sermon, which needs no translation, set forth as it is in the universal language of the eye which renders the message of the Gospel in eloquent testimony.... With bold, but sympathetic, strokes he does away with any merely symbolic representation, and depicts Christ as a flesh and blood figure'.<sup>202</sup>

According to Ian Faulkner, C.G. Scrimgeour had been interested in 'moving pictures' as an evangelistic medium from about the middle of 1927. Through the 1920s, Scrimgeour had served briefly in a series of rural home missions for the Methodist Church before being appointed as the inaugural missionary at the Auckland Central Mission in 1927. During his time at the Mission Scrimgeour developed a reputation for innovative practical and evangelistic work. The success of *The King of Kings* helped convince him of its value. On 29 October 1928, he received authorisation to hire the Strand Theatre for Sunday evening services. For the first few weeks he used clips from the movie as part of these special services. The theatre, which had a capacity of 1,500 seats, was frequently full with some reports suggesting as many as 400 were unable to receive entry.<sup>203</sup> For a populist like Scrimgeour, film represented a boon. Partly, his experimental services succeeded because of their novelty and on account of his personal charm. There was also the fact that film was inherently well suited to

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<sup>200</sup> NZH, 7 April 1928, p.17.

<sup>201</sup> Black, *Shepherd of Souls*, p.14.

<sup>202</sup> NZH, 18 April 1928, p.14.

<sup>203</sup> Ian F. Faulkner, *The Decisive Decade: Some Aspects of the Development and Character of the Methodist Central Mission, Auckland, 1927-1937*, Christchurch: Wesley Historical Society, 1982, pp.7-8.

conveying the warmth, emotion and personality that reflected his approach to religion.<sup>204</sup>

The epic scale and grand spectacle of *The King of Kings* contributed to its success. Moreover, its heroic style and scale were felt to do justice to the film's subject. Despite the commercial imperatives driving it and DeMille's sensual embellishments, the movie helped to make film depictions of Jesus more acceptable. The supposed sincerity and evangelistic intent of the film contributed. In turn, acceptance was justified by the feeling that something of Jesus' essential character had been revealed. The advent of film represented a new technology that facilitated different kinds of experience. As on-screen renderings appeared, perceptions of Jesus were shaped by the possibilities of the medium. Above all, film conveyed immediacy and provided vivid memorable images. These features aided engagement with personality and were precisely the aspects that religious use of the film drew upon. Writers and preachers who continued to refer to *The King of Kings* did so because its scenes conveyed emotional impact.<sup>205</sup> Thus, Bower Black could claim that 'in the spell of Jesus cast on a great audience the picture found its justification and its purpose'.<sup>206</sup>

### ***The Language of Outreach and Missions***

Attempts by the churches to extend their influence in the community were often communicated using appeals to Jesus. These efforts were exerted in diverse ways and contexts, some of which will be considered in subsequent chapters. One important area was in relation to evangelism and mission. Foreign missionary activity was a distinctive feature of Protestant religious life during the period, and was most closely associated with conservative theology. Throughout the period, central justifications for the task of mission were closely linked to Jesus. Early Protestant missions emphasised human sinfulness and the glory of God as points of motivation. By the later interwar years it had become more common to find the missionary task framed with reference to Jesus' example, supported by notions of compassion and sympathy.

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<sup>204</sup> On the characteristics of film and its implications, see Robert Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to our Idea of History*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

<sup>205</sup> For example, Rita Snowdon, *Through Open Windows*, London: Epworth, 1940, p.25.

<sup>206</sup> Black, *Shepherd of Souls*, p.14.

In keeping with evangelical priorities, missionary work was closely tied to Jesus himself. In the first instance, foreign mission was predicated on Jesus' command. In particular, supporters pointed to the 'Great Commission' of Matthew 28.18-20 as a foundational justification for their enterprise. In his history of the New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society, the Rev. H.H. Driver declared that the reason for the mission was 'First and chiefly, because Jesus Christ bade his followers to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature'. The Great Commission was applied personally, which made mission a matter of simple obedience:

We knew that His royal command had never been revoked, and applied to us as it did to those who first heard it... Our Society rests, therefore, as all other Missionary Agencies do, upon the solid foundation of the Will of Christ the Lord. It is not based upon human opinions. It was not formed to gratify any unworthy ambition. It was established with the one grand aim of carrying out the command of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>207</sup>

The Great Commission became a characteristic justification for Protestant missionary enterprise during the nineteenth century, though it was often linked with other motivations. Even these linkages were significant, however, as they highlighted that Jesus' call provided the primary justification. As David Bosch notes, Jesus' words lent moral authority. The text became a defensive bastion, 'as if the protagonists of mission were saying, "How can you oppose mission to the heathen if Christ himself has commanded it?"'<sup>208</sup>

Jesus not only ordered missionary activity, it was also his work. This emphasis provided confidence and reassurance, and a focal point for calls to commitment. It also heightened a sense of obligation. When financial giving to missionary work fell behind targets in the 1920s, Methodists were reminded that they had a direct duty to Christ: 'We may and should deny ourselves. We cannot deny Christ. We cannot deny our Lord of that which He needs. He is taking up this collection. When we give to Missions, we give to Him. Were He to come round to us individually and press the

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<sup>207</sup> H.H. Driver, *Our Work for God in India: A Brief History of the N.Z.B.M.S.*, Dunedin: H.H. Driver, 1914, p.10; cf. A.H. Collins, *The Interest of the Home Churches in Foreign Missions*, Auckland: Wright & Jaques Printers, 1899, p.4.

<sup>208</sup> David Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, New York: Orbis, 1991, pp.340-41.

claims of His Kingdom in fields afar, we should each give a little more'.<sup>209</sup> During the depression of the 1930s, Presbyterian children were encouraged to give financially to a building for the Maori mission in the central North Island because Jesus wanted them to. J.G. Laughton appreciated the children's efforts to 'present Jesus with a house of worship at Reporoa for His birthday in 1932', and assured them that Jesus was very thankful.<sup>210</sup>

Hugh Morrison's recent study of the Protestant missionary movement in New Zealand reinforces the view that motivations were complex, and varied to some extent over time.<sup>211</sup> Yet, in whatever form, love for Jesus remained a central motif. Experience of Jesus' love was the route to commitment to the missionary cause. As A.H. Collins expressed, 'our wayward hearts must be captured by Jesus, and His love must breathe its aroma of peace and heavenly joy before we can have an abiding sense of the greatness of the missionary cause'.<sup>212</sup> Experience created reciprocal love for Jesus, expressed in grateful service. The benefits of the gospel were supposed to fire a sense of duty and obligation to the rest of the world, or what Collins called 'love to Jesus Christ and pity to the heathen'.<sup>213</sup> As one commentator explained in 1926, 'If the love of Christ is a constraining power in any man's life it will compel him to give of what he possesses to satisfy his brothers' need.... A stay-at-home Christianity is not real Christianity'. True faith required 'active service for Christ'.<sup>214</sup>

The language of duty often coincided with sharp juxtapositions between light and dark, Christian and heathen, civilisation and depravity. After World War One, some observers noted a fall-off of student volunteers and lamented the loss of many of those who were 'most likely to make adventure for Christ'. Loss of missionary spirit was construed as failure, and students were urged to 'take the truth and light that is in Christ Jesus to those who live in darkness'.<sup>215</sup> However, this tone existed alongside an

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<sup>209</sup> NZMT, 3 February 1923, p.2.

<sup>210</sup> *Break of Day*, 24:10, 1932, pp.1, 5.

<sup>211</sup> See Hugh Douglas Morrison, "'It is our Bounden Duty': The Emergence of the New Zealand Protestant Missionary Movement, 1868-1926", PhD Thesis in History, Massey University, Albany, 2004.

<sup>212</sup> Collins, *Interest of the Church*, p.9.

<sup>213</sup> Collins, *Interest of the Church*, p.8.

<sup>214</sup> NZB, December 1926, pp.342-43.

<sup>215</sup> *Australasian Intercollegian*, 1 August 1919, p.121.

emphasis on the compassion of Jesus. Bosch contends that late nineteenth-century foreign missionary work was increasingly conceptualised in terms of response to the love of God and the pitiful state of non-Christian people, rather than a response to the glory of God.<sup>216</sup> The need of the non-Christian world featured more prominently and Christians were called to reach out to this world, 'constrained by the love of Jesus'. Under the title, 'Carest Thou Not?' one missionary prayer calendar from 1905 depicted a map of India, in which images of famine-stricken Indians contrasted starkly with a Christian congregation at worship. To the side, Christ's shadow fell on the starving while an outstretched arm reached to the map. The caption read, 'The touch of Christ upon India is one of compassionate longing and beseeching appeal'.<sup>217</sup>

The growth of missionary medical work fitted consistently with these ideas. According to the Baptist medical missionary Charles North, hospitals provided opportunities to care for 'the suffering poor in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ'.<sup>218</sup> Missionaries like him viewed medical work and evangelisation as part of the same project. Invoking the example of Jesus they aimed to progress each in tandem. Driver claimed that the first medical missionaries were 'led by common humanity as well as by the example and spirit of the Master to combine the ministry of healing with the preaching of the Gospel'.<sup>219</sup> Commenting on the opening of a new dispensary at Chandpur, North sought to assure Baptists that work carried out in the new building would prove an 'effective means of introducing men and women to the wonderful love of God in Christ; and we confidently anticipate that much larger numbers will under these favourable conditions be more effectively treated, and told more clearly of the Great Physician'.<sup>220</sup>

In 1926, one report in the *New Zealand Baptist* highlighted that missionary motivations were becoming more complex.<sup>221</sup> Missionaries were increasingly hoping to promote world peace, inter-racial brotherhood, social and industrial betterment and

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<sup>216</sup> Bosch, pp.285-91.

<sup>217</sup> 'Australasian Baptist Missions in Bengal, Prayer List Calendar', 1905, Folder 1, Box 0026, New Zealand Baptist Missionary Society Archives. Image supplied by Hugh Morrison.

<sup>218</sup> *Baptist Handbook*, 1911, p.78.

<sup>219</sup> Driver, *Our Work*, p.59.

<sup>220</sup> *Baptist Handbook*, 1911, p.78.

<sup>221</sup> *NZB*, October 1926, pp.276-77.

intellectual advancement. These were accepted as good, but the supreme missionary motivations were still defined in terms of conversion and duty – loyalty to ‘Jesus Christ as Divine Lord and Saviour, a sense of the need of men for a way out of failure and sin, and a conviction that He alone shows the Way of Life, here and hereafter’. Most outgoing missionaries were felt to be ‘actuated by such loyalty to Christ’. However, the writer noted that they needed also to be ‘thoroughly grounded in faith and knowledge, and able to give the reasons for their conviction that the Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes on Him’. Similarly, Driver reiterated his earlier statements on missionary motivation: ‘our Scriptures, with their pure and lofty morality, have refined and ennobled all who have yielded to their influence. And because we have the truth which makes men free, it is our bounden duty to declare it to all who are fettered by error and who grope in the darkness.... We were debtors to India, and in duty bound to do our best to impart to it the truth that makes men free’.<sup>222</sup>

References to Jesus in the public discourse of mission combined certitude and sentiment, reflecting the traditions of revivalism and conversionist Evangelical culture that nurtured missionary activity. A single Baptist missionary report in 1910 referred variously to ‘the honey-sweet name of Jesus’, his peace, and power, declaring that ‘When once the fire of religion is kindled in a man’s heart... sooner or later he will take refuge at the feet of Jesus Christ’.<sup>223</sup> In 1931, an article in the *New Zealand Baptist* constructed an image of Indian school children ‘holding out their hands to us, whose lives are so full of sweet things’. Christians could respond by offering nothing else but Jesus: ‘it is only as we bring Jesus within reach of their outstretched hands that we shall bring peace and happiness to their lives, and heal the hurt of India’.<sup>224</sup> Missionary propaganda aimed to inform, inspire, and mobilise. By nature, it tended toward the triumphal. Alexander Don’s history of the Presbyterian mission in the New Hebrides was conceived as a propaganda piece. It noted that ‘The history of missions in the Pacific abounds with examples of dauntless heroism and sublime patience, and in such

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<sup>222</sup> Driver, *Our Work*, pp.15, 21; cf. H.H. Driver, *These Forty Years: A Brief History of the N.Z.B.M.S.*, Dunedin: H.H. Driver, 1927, pp.11, 17.

<sup>223</sup> *Baptist Handbook*, 1910, pp.72-73.

<sup>224</sup> *NZB*, September 1931, p.280.

history the New Hebrides group has no mean share'.<sup>225</sup> Not surprisingly, an allied set of descriptors cast Christ in laudatory terms. H.H. Driver described the difficulties Baptist missionaries in India faced, but noted that, 'as followers of the Victorious Christ, we saw no reason for dismay, and resolved to go on in His name'.<sup>226</sup>

Missionary hymns reinforced ideals, and bore witness to a range of motivations. Some, like 'Hark the voice of Jesus is calling', emphasised that mission was Jesus' initiative and involved spreading the news of his saving love, whilst urging support for the cause. Appeals for participation and consecration were repeated in 'Ye servants of God' and 'Take my life and let it be', while 'Jesus shall reign' and 'Rescue the perishing' illustrated the confidence and emotion of missionary discourse. One of the most popular missionary hymns of the period was 'From Greenland's icy mountains'. This supplied romanticised images of foreign lands held in 'error's chains', but freed by the Christian message:

Shall we, whose souls are lighted with wisdom from on high,  
Shall we to men benighted the lamp of life deny?  
Salvation! O Salvation! The joyful sound proclaim,  
Till earth's remotest nation has learned Messiah's name.

Such ideas could become allied to a jingoistic sense of cultural and religious superiority. Driver's sense of 'bounden duty' was awakened in part by dismay at the 'puerilities, obscenities and absurdities' contained in Hindu sacred texts.<sup>227</sup> He was equally dismissive of the immorality and impurity of Indian Muslims, and clear that the decision to enter India owed much to the British presence there: 'Patriotism as well as piety called us to this glorious crusade'.<sup>228</sup> Missionary commentators were aware that the British Empire was flawed, and ultimately subservient to the Kingdom of God. However, they also perceived the hand of Providence providing opportunities for missionary expansion.<sup>229</sup>

Yet, the missionary movement also helped to awaken awareness of cultural biases. Missions, interwar internationalism, and increasing appreciation of Christ's

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<sup>225</sup> Alexander Don, *Light in Dark Isles. A Jubilee Record and Study of the New Hebrides Mission of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*, Dunedin: Foreign Missions Committee, PCNZ, 1918, p.12.

<sup>226</sup> Driver, *Our Work*, p.17.

<sup>227</sup> Driver, *Our Work*, p.15

<sup>228</sup> Driver, *Our Work*, pp.27-28, and p.21.

<sup>229</sup> See, *NZB*, November 1916, pp.210-11.

humanity all encouraged self-conscious reflection on the influence of cultural assumptions. One consequence was an increased willingness to consider non-European representations of Jesus. At the end of the Second World War Methodist young people were reminded that 'all races, colours and nationalities' claimed Jesus, and had their particular ways of portraying him: 'So wrapped up are we in our own conceits that we tend to think of Him as a white child, a European, and English babe. But the folk amongst whom Jesus lived were swarthy, and their high cheek-bones and long noses marked them as very different from Western European types'.<sup>230</sup> This yuletide reflection concluded that 'The gift of Christmas is the gift of Christ to the whole world. It is a gift of brotherhood, a gift of peace... it is not in the nature of small children to be unfriendly or to wage war'.

One of the most influential missionary books of the 1920s, E. Stanley Jones' *The Christ of the Indian Road*, discussed how Christ was 'becoming naturalised' in India.<sup>231</sup> A leading American Methodist missionary and theologian, Jones argued that there was enormous interest in Jesus in contemporary India, due largely to Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>232</sup> This interest portended a potential mass movement toward Christianity. Christianity was 'defined as Christ, not the Old Testament, not Western civilisation, not even the system built around him in the West, but Christ himself'. To be Christian was to follow Jesus, which meant that Christ had to be interpreted in terms of Christian experience rather than argument.<sup>233</sup> One reviewer in the *Outlook* hailed Jones' work, delighting especially in its focus on 'Christ as a Person' and news that 'the principles and spirit and personality of Jesus are increasingly impressing themselves on the minds and hearts of men of goodwill in these great lands'.<sup>234</sup> Significantly, one of the few complaints about the book derived from an Anglican critic who deplored Jones' depreciation of the role of the Church at the expense of the person of Christ.<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> *Methodist Youth News*, December 1945, p.154.

<sup>231</sup> E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of the Indian Road*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1926, p.11.

<sup>232</sup> Similar sentiments were expressed elsewhere, including *NZB*, January 1927, pp.25-26.

<sup>233</sup> Jones, *Indian Road*, p.33.

<sup>234</sup> *Outlook*, 25 April 1927, p.11.

<sup>235</sup> *CC*, February 1927, p.30.

Numerous writers appropriated Jones' theme and terminology.<sup>236</sup> In missionary contexts the idea was often used to assert the humanity of Christ and humanitarian values. The Rev. A.W. Stuart's missionary sermon in 1927, 'The Christ of the World's Highways', was clearly inspired by Jones and utilised these ideas to make two key points.<sup>237</sup> First, that Jesus defied national limitation: 'Jesus Christ is the Spirit of God whispering glad tidings to all men. His life was fragrant with sympathetic appeal'. Secondly, that no age could 'outgrow the Christ of the World's Highways'. Stuart argued that there was discontent in the world, but also a new mood of 'internationalism, of co-operation, of earnest desire to foster genuine brotherhood'. Only Jesus provided solutions to the problems and hopes of this present situation. Jesus wanted 'all men' to realise 'the dignity of manhood'. In response, men sought him as 'Liberator, as Friend, as Brother, as Lord'. In this context, non-European interpretations of Jesus clearly circulated with some influence. Thus, when J.J. North listed contemporary witnesses to the 'wonderful humanity' of Jesus, he included Chiang Kai Shek, Sadhu Sunder Singh, Toyohiko Kagawa and T.Z. Koo.<sup>238</sup> Jesus therefore occupied a central position in missionary discourse, though he appeared in a variety of ways. Notions of personality and humanity did not eclipse all other modes of address. However, it was significant that they became more evident even in an area of Protestant religiosity that was profoundly shaped by conservative assumptions.

In 1932, the death of the Rev. Rutherford Waddell sparked a considerable outpouring of grief. This was understandable since Waddell had been an active figure within the Presbyterian Church and in national life for many years. Writing in a memorial volume, another prominent Presbyterian minister, the Rev. James Gibb, commented on the character of Waddell's religious faith. According to Gibb:

He lived under the spell of Christ. To apply such a term to a man's feeling for Christ may not be quite orthodox; and our friend's theology, especially in his later years, was strongly conservative. The too common disparagement of

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<sup>236</sup> For example, *Two Wayfarers, The Christ of the English Road*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1929, which sought a revival of 'Christian England' on the basis that Christ was the formative influence in English history.

<sup>237</sup> *NZB*, November 1927, pp.341-42.

<sup>238</sup> North, 'Me a Christian!', p.13.

Paulinism found no favour in his sight. He would with Dr. Glover have said that the Sermon on the Mount, apart from the salvation accomplished for us by Christ on the Cross, might well drive a man to despair. The Man of Nazareth was the Christ for him. Yet few men have ever surrendered themselves more whole-heartedly to the fascination of the life lived in the days of the Galilean spring. Its story held him all through and inspired him with a passion to serve.<sup>239</sup>

Waddell has often been viewed as a liberalising influence within New Zealand Presbyterianism on account of his progressive social attitudes. As Gibb's description indicates, he was also quite evangelical in his atonement theology, support of missions, and rejection of much higher biblical criticism. In many ways, he exemplified a form of moderate, liberal evangelicalism that was becoming increasingly important in New Zealand. This position makes Gibb's description particularly interesting, for it describes an approach to Jesus in which his teaching and personality had great appeal but were balanced by other commitments.

However accurate Gibb's assessment of Waddell actually was, its appearance in such a laudatory volume was revealing. At one level, it highlighted some of the quite different connotations that references to Jesus implied. This confirms the sense that Jesus appeared in Christian discourse in complex ways. However, the assessment also demonstrated that Jesus' personality had become an important category. This chapter has argued that a range of social, theological, and even technological factors encouraged greater emphasis on Jesus' personality and human attributes during the opening decades of the twentieth century. Gibb's judgement suggested that the trend was not a marginal one, but was fairly close to the mainstream of New Zealand Protestantism.

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<sup>239</sup> See J. Collie (ed.), *Rutherford Waddell: Memoir and Addresses*, Dunedin: A.H. Reed, 1932, p.10.

## CHAPTER TWO

# ANTI-CHURCH JESUS

Jesus appeared in a range of ways that contrasted with devotionally-oriented images. Some of these were constructed outside of churchly contexts in order to advance religious and social claims. One of the most striking and widespread representations portrayed Jesus as a prophetic opponent of organised religion. Jesus arguably became the iconic anti-Church figure of the age. The divine personality was also a man who challenged, confronted and confounded the churches. These misunderstood his identity, so that the 'real Jesus' remained unknown to them. Jesus was portrayed as a stranger to the churches, and often more confrontationally as a critic of organised religion.

If this sounded like an attack on organised Christianity by the forces of irreligion, the impression was only partially accurate. Some critics clearly appealed to Jesus in these ways in order to undermine the churches. However, others used the motif ironically, or to boost the moral standing of agendas for reform. In some senses, this merely highlighted how important religious frameworks continued to be. Furthermore, many of the criticisms advanced using an anti-Church Jesus were actually articulated from within the Christian community. Dissociation of Jesus from the Church was often allied with forms of Christian progressivism and primitivism that gained traction during these years. Both ideas made recovery of the life and teaching of Jesus essential for the reconstruction of true Christian faith, but also of renewed Christian influence in society. In short, the anti-Church Jesus could be observed among outright critics, but also among the devout.

The idea of the 'Christianity of Christ' became an important motif for proponents of the anti-Church Jesus. This contrasted the invented dogma and tradition of the churches with the teaching Jesus espoused and behaviour he practised. The religion of Jesus, as distinguished from religion about him, became a standard of authenticity promoted by critics from within the Church and without. The theme was supported by an assumption that the religion of Jesus was pristine and undefiled.

Bernard Lightman has noted that the basis of late nineteenth-century agnostics' criticism was 'their belief that Victorian Christianity was a perversion of the original, pure religion as founded by Christ'. Many, like T.H. Huxley who invented the term, genuinely revered Christ and his teachings and saw in him 'an attractive symbol of true religious ideals in contrast to the degenerate state of present day Christianity'.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in New Zealand, the prominent Rationalist John Sim claimed to be seeking a pure Christianity that the churches had missed.<sup>2</sup> Another factor was the widespread affection that existed for Jesus, partly on account of the positive images that many people had encountered during childhood. Thus, the maverick labour politician John A. Lee's semi-autobiographical reflections contrasted his warm attraction to Jesus with early fear of God and distaste for hypocrisy – appreciation that he claimed 'fluctuated between the admiration I might have felt for a conjuror and the sentiment I might have towards a warm-bosomed aunt'.<sup>3</sup>

The image of an anti-Church Jesus made his teaching and example normative. In a sense, it made Jesus the centre of authority using essentially Protestant forms of argumentation. This chapter contends that attempts to dissociate Jesus from organised religion were an important feature of discourse about him in the early twentieth century. It begins by examining a range of images of Jesus that were formed outside of ecclesiastical contexts. More explicitly anti-Church images are considered in relation to the labour movement during the early part of the period and Rationalism in the 1920s and 1930s. A final section considers the anti-Church Jesus of the churches themselves. Dissociation of Jesus from contemporary Christianity built on anticlerical and Romantic traditions that accentuated the gulf between Jesus and the Christian institutions that were supposed to represent him. By the twentieth century this mode of argumentation had wide currency and served a number of purposes. In particular, the anti-Church Jesus provided a discourse for the critique of power that supported agendas for change.

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<sup>1</sup> Bernard Lightman, *The Origins of Agnosticism: Victorian Unbelief and the Limits of Knowledge*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987, p.121.

<sup>2</sup> *TS*, August 1928, p.3.

<sup>3</sup> John A. Lee, *Children of the Poor*, London: T. Werner Laurie, 1934, pp.67-69.

## THE NON-CHURCH JESUS

Jesus' true identity, and the significance of his life, was contested ground.

Representations made independently of the institutional and devotional life of the Church often interpreted Jesus in ways that consciously departed from orthodox Christian views. They highlighted that Jesus could be a powerful symbol outside of ecclesiastical contexts, especially for those who felt marginalised, victimised or powerless. He was used to legitimise various regimes, including new religious ideas and political programmes. In some ways, portrayals in these contexts reflected wider contests within society.

### *Sensational Lives of Jesus*

Foreign visitors to New Zealand sometimes noted that local interest in religion could be intense, but idiosyncratic. André Siegfried commented that while religious activity retained an English form, it had 'split up into a number of sects, in which the slightest shades of thought are represented'.<sup>4</sup> This proliferation of ideas extended to Jesus.

Amongst the various options there was some interest in what Mike Higonson refers to as 'sensational' lives of Jesus.<sup>5</sup> Like the more recent examples Higonson surveys, these older versions often used scholarly rhetoric to advance quite unorthodox interpretations.

One popular type of sensational literature was what Theodore Ziolkowski has termed the 'modern apocrypha' form of 'fictionalising biography'.<sup>6</sup> Examples of this form were preoccupied with the years between Jesus' childhood and ministry, and claimed to have uncovered knowledge of him that the churches had either ignored or deliberately suppressed. From the late nineteenth century, European fascination with the Orient fuelled interest in spiritualism and esoteric religion at precisely the time that 'comparative religion' was emerging as a serious field of intellectual enquiry.

Consequently, numerous sensational lives were based in encounter with Eastern religions, though there was also interest in what were more generally described as

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<sup>4</sup> André Siegfried, *Democracy in New Zealand*, E.V. Burns (trans.), Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1982, p.311.

<sup>5</sup> Mike Higonson, 'English Popular Culture, Modern', in Houlden (ed.), vol. 1, p.241.

<sup>6</sup> See Theodore Ziolkowski, *Fictional Transfigurations of Jesus*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972, p.13.

'legendary' accounts of Jesus' life.<sup>7</sup> These upheld the enduring significance of Jesus. However, by transporting him outside of organised Western Christianity into vastly different religious worlds they also suggested the need to modify existing interpretations.

Most of this literature was produced abroad, but attracted a small following in New Zealand. In 1894, Nicolas Notovitch wrote a life based on translations of 'The Life of Saint Issa', a manuscript allegedly uncovered in a Himalayan monastery.<sup>8</sup> It purportedly accounted for the 'lost years' of Jesus' life, which Notovitch claimed were spent in India studying the teachings of the Buddha. Possibly more popular still was Levi H. Dowling's *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*.<sup>9</sup> This also placed Jesus in India and Tibet, but provided no documentary evidence of the kind offered by Notovitch. Instead Dowling claimed to have drawn from the esoteric Akashic Records. Rosicrucianism reiterated similar interest in the 'known and unknown periods of the Great Master's life' through works like the *Mystical Life of Jesus*.<sup>10</sup> Though Rosicrucianism never gathered a great following in New Zealand, writings like these still found their way into the country and perpetuated the tradition.

Fictional biographies appealed to quasi-scientific independent religiosity, disappointment with religious institutions and interest in progressive politics. In 1931, one New Zealander reproduced selections of a text known as *Philochristus: Memoirs of a Disciple of the Lord*. Believing it was 'the only true Gospel of the life and teaching of the Man of Nazareth', the author considered that *Philochristus* had been written on Jesus' authority by a biographer of his choosing.<sup>11</sup> The writer argued that it portended a day when 'Jesus' socialism' would rule the world, and that it made plain the mystery of 'Joshua of Nazareth'. Jesus had conquered the laws of creation, and a glorious end waited for those who watched and kept his law. Logically, Jesus' superiority spelled the end to religion on earth, and also to marriage, which was merely a 'licence of

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<sup>7</sup> In 1911, the *New Zealand Methodist Times* ran a series of articles on 'The Legendary Life of Jesus' that included Muslim accounts. For example, NZMT, 25 March 1911, pp.1-4.

<sup>8</sup> Nicolas Notovitch, *The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ*, New York: Macmillan, 1894.

<sup>9</sup> Levi H. Dowling, *The Aquarian Gospel of Jesus the Christ*, London: L.N. Fowler, 1908.

<sup>10</sup> H. Spencer Lewis, *Mystical Life of Jesus*, San Jose: Supreme Grand Lodge of AMORC, 1929.

<sup>11</sup> *Found at Last! The Lost Gospel: The Book That Nobody Knows*, Wellington: Evening Post Print, 1931, p.3.

adultery by priestcraft'.<sup>12</sup> In fact, the original 'biography' was less ancient than it seemed. It had been written in 1878 by the English schoolmaster and mathematician Edwin A. Abbott.<sup>13</sup>

Some esoteric approaches presented Jesus as an example of enlightened mystical spirituality and the power of human potential. The credibility attached to Jesus, and his exemplary life, was used as a basis for advancing new religious ideas. Eileen Soper recounts her 'shocked delight' at a somewhat theatrical clandestine encounter with a spiritual teacher, facilitated by her father. This teacher instructed the children that 'though we were young in body we were old in soul and much wiser and more capable of goodness than we might have realised'. She urged them to conceptualise God as sunlight, rather than a person, and to strive with intelligence and discipline for physical, mental and moral perfection as a way for God to express himself on earth. Through prayer they could make a conscious effort to ally themselves with 'our Best – God – and if we wished to know what a true child of God was like, we could find such a child in the person of our familiar Jesus'. According to Soper, this seemed 'more probable, more feasible, more practicable to one too egotistical to be capable of thinking of others before self, and moreover it bore out the command of the Parable of the Talents. To try to be somebody through whom God could shine was something I felt I should like to attempt'.<sup>14</sup>

### ***The Literary Outsider***

Jesus figured in a small but significant way in the non-devotionally-inspired literary production of the early twentieth century. As Karl-Josef Kuschel has suggested, twentieth-century artists' imaginations were not captured by the Christ of 'churches and dogmas, not the Christ of theologians and priests, Christ the Redeemer and miracle-worker, the eternal Son of God, a second person of the Trinity, but the concrete

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<sup>12</sup> *Found at Last*, pp.33-35.

<sup>13</sup> [Edwin Abbott Abbott], *Philochristus: Memoirs of a Disciple of the Lord*, Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1878. Abbott is best known for the mathematical satire and allegory *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*, published in 1884.

<sup>14</sup> Eileen Soper, *The Green Years*, Dunedin: John McIndoe, 1969, pp.39-40.

Jesus of history'.<sup>15</sup> In particular, Kuschel argues that 'the revolutionary element' in Jesus, his role as a heretic and outsider, provided the link between contemporary writers and the historic Jesus of Nazareth.<sup>16</sup> Literary interest in Jesus sometimes incorporated quite strong anti-Church implications. Often, however, Jesus was employed more as a model of social exclusion. He was construed as a victim, outcast or outsider who functioned as a symbol for prophetic critiques of society. As an outsider he also exemplified a kind of simple, authentic and independent religious experience.

Arthur H. Adams was widely regarded as one of New Zealand's more promising poets in the late nineteenth century.<sup>17</sup> Born at Lawrence in 1872 his first volume of poems, *Maoriland, and Other Verses*, was published to critical acclaim in 1899. In 1902, having recently departed for England, he published *The Nazarene: A Study of A Man*. The book was a meditation in verse on the life of Jesus as seen through the eyes of his contemporaries – characters from the gospels like Mary, Judas, John the Baptist and Pilate. As the subtitle suggested, it focused explicitly on Christ's humanity, asserting that Jesus was 'a man' like other men. As the Prelude expressed,

He was of us, all human, brother, friend;  
He strove, was vanquished, strove and won – a Man.<sup>18</sup>

*The Nazarene* intimated that the story of Jesus was too often 'shadowed over by his divinity'. His humanity was shrouded by the 'waving of fine priestly hands', incense-smoke, and the throb of sonorous organs.<sup>19</sup> Extracted from all this, a quite different Jesus would emerge.

Despite his desire to liberate Jesus from tradition, certain aspects of Adams' portrait were actually quite conventional. Idealistic images of the 'sweet Nazarene' as a dreamer and lover of children were common Romantic tropes, as was the vision of his noble, heroic and kingly death.<sup>20</sup> However, Adams' doctrinal approach was certainly

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<sup>15</sup> Karl-Josef Kuschel, *The Poet as Mirror: Human Nature, God and Jesus in Twentieth-Century Literature*, London: SCM Press, 1999, p.232.

<sup>16</sup> Kuschel, p.234.

<sup>17</sup> John Thomson, 'Bibliography', in Terry Sturm (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand Literature*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1991, p.636; Nelson Wattie, 'Adams, Arthur Henry 1872-1936', *DNZB* (online edition). URL: [www.dnzb.govt.nz](http://www.dnzb.govt.nz), accessed 18 March 2005.

<sup>18</sup> A.H. Adams, *The Nazarene: A Study of A Man*, London: Philip Welby, 1902, p.9.

<sup>19</sup> Adams, *Nazarene*, p.10.

<sup>20</sup> Adams, *Nazarene*, pp.57, 66, 67-68.

not orthodox. In particular, he argued against Jesus' divinity, claiming that the man himself had confounded the idea by refusing at all times to prove it.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, though gripped by the drama of Jesus' death, Adams resolutely denied the idea of a bodily resurrection:

His body was not rapt in splendour up,  
But somewhere with us lies, his ashes sealed  
In some long-fallen tomb.<sup>22</sup>

Jesus existed in his continuing power to inspire, and his participation in the cycles of death and rebirth that were common to all creation. The story of Jesus was inspirational, but this did not require his being divine. MacDonald Jackson has noted that the strength of *The Nazarene* lay in its 'psychological insight'.<sup>23</sup> The work explored the force of Jesus' personality, and its impact on those who encountered him. It also examined the complex responses and inner conflicts that encounter with Jesus initiated. For Adams, focus on Jesus' humanity made investigation of psychological interplay and personality possible. Crucially, he suggested that the observations were only conceivable once the churches' interpretative frameworks had been discarded.

Consideration of the suffering and martyrdom of Jesus was a prominent feature of literary interest in him. The emphasis has sometimes been taken autobiographically to reflect the vocation of the artist. Thus, John Albert has argued that the suffering outcast Christ of Oscar Wilde exemplified the artistic nature of suffering and sorrow.<sup>24</sup> In New Zealand, R.A.K. Mason's career is often held to epitomise the bleak condition writers faced in the literary wasteland of the early twentieth century.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps, then, it is not entirely surprising that Mason's work contained some of the most sustained reflection on Jesus of any local literature from this period. Like Wilde's Jesus, the figure in Mason's poetry has been interpreted as an image of the author himself, particularly

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<sup>21</sup> Adams, *Nazarene*, pp.54-55.

<sup>22</sup> Adams, *Nazarene*, p.11.

<sup>23</sup> MacD. P. Jackson, 'Poetry: Beginnings to 1945', in Sturm (ed.), p.361.

<sup>24</sup> John Albert, 'The Christ of Oscar Wilde', *American Benedictine Review*, 39:4, 1988, pp.372-403.

<sup>25</sup> See P.J. Gibbons, 'The Climate of Opinion', in Geoffrey W. Rice (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd ed., Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp.308-36; Belich, pp.327ff.

as a victim of New Zealand society.<sup>26</sup> However, as Joost Daalder has more recently indicated, serious religious ideas were also involved that reached beyond self-identification.<sup>27</sup>

Mason was concerned with the human Jesus, whom he distinguished from the divine Christ, or even God whom he rejected as hostile. The Jesus who interested him was not divine in any traditional sense,<sup>28</sup> but Mason believed he should still be remembered and honoured. His poetry emphasised the intrinsic alienation and irrationality of human experience. Within this context, Christ recurred chiefly as 'the man persecuted by men and betrayed by God'.<sup>29</sup> He exemplified the human condition. Yet, awareness of his life could also deepen the solidarity and empathy necessary for ameliorating human existence. Thus, the motif of Christ as Beggar highlighted the reality of suffering, but also of compassion and hospitality. In 'On the Swag', Jesus figured as an archetypal outsider ostracised largely because his true identity was veiled.<sup>30</sup> By contrast, Judas also featured prominently in Mason's poetry as the antithesis of Jesus, representing the cruelty of human selfishness.<sup>31</sup>

Mason was no friend of organised religion, or its leadership. Indeed, his poetic vision has been described as belligerently anticlerical.<sup>32</sup> However, Mason's Jesus was linked with practical and experiential spirituality. He exemplified the lonely, the misunderstood, and the victimised in society, but he also provided a model of authentic religiosity. In this, genuine spirituality existed independently of religious organisation, and was expressed through unmediated experience of God in Nature. Such spirituality was described early in Jane Mander's *Story of a New Zealand River* in relation to the protagonist Alice:

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<sup>26</sup> See Joost Daalder, 'R.A.K. Mason: The Poet as a Pacific Christ', in Guy Amirthanayagam and S.C. Harrex (eds), *Only Connect: Literary Perspectives East and West*, Adelaide: Centre for Research in the New Literatures in English & East-West Centre, 1981, pp.311-20.

<sup>27</sup> Joost Daalder, 'The Religious Experience in R.A.K. Mason's Poetry', in Jamie S. Scott (ed.), *'And the Birds Began to Sing': Religion and Literature in Post-Colonial Cultures*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996, pp.91-101.

<sup>28</sup> R.A.K. Mason, *Collected Poems*, Allen Curnow (ed.), Christchurch: Pegasus, 1962, p.108.

<sup>29</sup> Cited in Rachel Barrowman, *Mason: The Life of R.A.K. Mason*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2004, p.63.

<sup>30</sup> Mason, p.56.

<sup>31</sup> Mason, p.57; cf. Jackson, 'Poetry', p.368.

<sup>32</sup> Mason, p.76; Barrowman, *Mason*, p.63; Jackson, 'Poetry', p.366.

She had nothing of the gypsy in her, but she loved beauty, more especially the beauty that was created – as she would have put it – by the hand of God. And it was the hand of God that she saw in that night, in that mountain, that bush and that river.... She looked up at the stars, and she felt that God was there, and that His protecting arm was about her.<sup>33</sup>

Sentiments like these were expressed often among people unused or resistant to church attendance. E.M. Blaiklock described his non-church-attending father as a ‘thoughtful theist’ whose constant consciousness of the ‘wonder of created things’ confirmed his belief in God’s existence. Blaiklock claimed that awareness of natural beauty ultimately led him to seek the perfection that lay behind it.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, Elsie Locke became progressively disenchanted with organised religion, preferring instead her own ‘kind of pantheism’ that saw ‘God everywhere in nature’ – though she regarded this as a ‘sufficient meeting point’ with the religious humanism of a university friend.<sup>35</sup>

Some writers with strong religious commitments referred to Jesus in ways that linked comfortably with these forms of spirituality. Eileen Duggan’s verse is often noted for its strong Celtic themes, attention to the New Zealand landscape and religion.<sup>36</sup> Jesus featured in some of her work, though perhaps as a consequence of her Catholicism, not particularly strongly. The royal Christ was a prominent motif,<sup>37</sup> but in the folksy and sentimental ‘Legend of the Cuckoo’ the young Jesus drew spiritual lessons from creation.<sup>38</sup>

Ursula Bethell’s poetry was less popular in its own time, but also described religious sentiments evoked from the natural world. A committed Anglican, and possessed of a strong sense of social responsibility, Bethell observed that ‘The *consciousness* of God came to me, as to many, chiefly in the solitudes of Nature’.<sup>39</sup> M.H.

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<sup>33</sup> Jane Mander, *The Story of a New Zealand River*, Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1920, pp.18-19.

<sup>34</sup> E.M. Blaiklock, *Between the Valley and the Sea: A West Auckland Boyhood*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1979, pp.41-42.

<sup>35</sup> Elsie Locke, *Student at the Gates*, Christchurch: Whitcoulls, 1981, pp.36-39, 54.

<sup>36</sup> Eileen Duggan, *Selected Poems*, Peter Whiteford (ed.), Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1994, pp.18-20; F.M. Mackay, *Eileen Duggan*, Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1971, pp.10-22.

<sup>37</sup> Duggan, pp.24, 32, 44.

<sup>38</sup> Duggan, pp.39-40.

<sup>39</sup> Bethell to M.H. Holcroft, 17 December 1939, cited in Ursula Bethell, *Collected Poems*, Vincent O’Sullivan (ed.), Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1997, xvii.

Holcroft praised her capacity to relate 'the anatomy of the land and the value of human experience', which was evident in rich natural and devotional imagery.<sup>40</sup> At times, Bethell imagined Jesus in the natural world, exemplifying the idea that spiritual encounter and sustenance were derived from the created order:

So, long ago, I think, the Syrian Shepherd  
Inhaled the sweet airs of his hills and valleys,  
Drew in his breath and sang: Yahweh sustains me:  
Lifted his head, and went his way rejoicing.<sup>41</sup>

Jesus experienced God independently in harmonious relation with nature, confirming the authenticity of this spirituality and demonstrating the possibility of true religious experience apart from the churches.<sup>42</sup> Bethell's work suggested that contemplation of nature could lead directly to Jesus, and evoke reflection on his life.<sup>43</sup> For her, the specificity of the Christian story lent substance to the existential encounter. Yet, the emphasis was still on unmediated experience.

### ***Profanity, Blasphemy and the Name of Jesus***

Another way that Jesus appeared in contrast to devotional ecclesiastical images was as a subject of offensive language. Profane or blasphemous references to Jesus' name were clearly non-Church uses. To some extent, these categories were also in the eye of the beholder. The various meanings attached to such language, and perceptions of it, often highlighted significant fault-lines within New Zealand society.

Profanity was a source of anxiety for respectable New Zealanders, and from time to time religious people expressed fears that it was increasing. In 1903, the Report on the State of Religion for the Presbyterian General Assembly listed it alongside gambling and impurity as a trinity of evils requiring attention.<sup>44</sup> The prevalence of profanity was sometimes taken as an indicator of moral crisis.

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<sup>40</sup> Stuart Murray, *Never a Soul at Home: New Zealand Literary Nationalism and the 1930s*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1998, p.83; M.H. Holcroft, *Mary Ursula Bethell*, Wellington: Oxford University Press, 1975.

<sup>41</sup> 'Appel', in Bethell, pp.22-23.

<sup>42</sup> 'Sabbath', in Bethell, p.23.

<sup>43</sup> 'The Crucifix', in Bethell, pp.60-61.

<sup>44</sup> PGA, 1903, pp.89-90.

Whether profanity was actually becoming more commonplace or not, it was often associated with working-class behaviour and attitudes. The increasing profile and organisation of working-class interests in the early twentieth century concentrated concerns. Thus, Samuel Woods rejected J.T. Paul's suggestion that socialism was essentially synonymous with true Christianity: 'No; the men who can lie, steal, swear, and take God's name in vain, and even deny the Divinity of Christ, may be thorough Socialists on the basis of their party political vote; but no man can be a Christian on Scriptural lines who has not given his heart to Christ, who has not been converted by the power of the Holy Spirit of God'.<sup>45</sup> After World War One, labour unrest and the corrosive effects of war renewed concerns about public decency and speculation about the impact of ills like obscenity on national life.<sup>46</sup> Jesus became an important symbol in the battle for public morality. Sometimes he was viewed as a means for effecting change through direct appeal to the conscience. One article in the *New Zealand Methodist Times* recounted how the silent testimony of one young student's painting of Jesus caused his roommates to quietly remove obscene art from their walls.<sup>47</sup>

Protecting Jesus' name became a more important priority. The Holy Name Society was one example of assertive interwar Catholic spirituality. The society emerged in Australia in 1921, and expanded rapidly after becoming a national organisation there from 1925.<sup>48</sup> It featured prominently in the Auckland Catholic diocesan newspaper *The Month* during 1925. The following year Bishop Henry Cleary announced intentions to establish the Society in the diocese. The plan proceeded with support from his coadjutor James Michael Liston.<sup>49</sup> The Holy Name Society was intended to bolster conventional Catholic piety, and sat within the devotional tradition. It aimed to encourage male religious practice by strengthening reverence for Jesus and increasing participation in the Eucharist. Members promised to honour God and the

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<sup>45</sup> 'Socialism, Christianity, and "J.T.P."', in Newspaper Clippings Book, 1903-6, J.T. Paul Papers, MS-982/707, Hocken Library, Dunedin [J.T. Paul Papers].

<sup>46</sup> *Reaper*, June 1926, p.99.

<sup>47</sup> *NZMT*, 11 February 1928, p.2.

<sup>48</sup> O'Farrell, *Catholic Church*, p.372. The Society was established under Pope Gregory X at the Second Council of Lyons in 1274, but re-emerged in the modern era in nineteenth-century North America.

<sup>49</sup> See Barry Buckley, 'The Holy Name Society: A Short History of the Society in Auckland', BA Hons Research Exercise in History, Massey University, 2001, pp.12-14.

name of Jesus Christ, to receive Eucharist once each month, attend monthly meetings, and wear the Society's badge.<sup>50</sup>

The name of Jesus was the symbolic centre of a wider attempt to bolster men's devotion. Cleary hoped the Society would counter irreligious tendencies that included abuse of Jesus' name, speaking lightly of 'God and His saints' and 'a growing custom of laughing at and ridiculing whatever approaches the supernatural'.<sup>51</sup> There were also political dimensions, for the issue of Catholic good citizenship seems to have been important. The working classes were well represented within Catholicism, and Catholic loyalty had been a major theme in the sectarian conflicts of the 1910s and early 1920s. Bolstering reverence for Jesus accorded with Catholic priorities generally, but provided an important symbol of commitment to public order. Thus, discussing the 'objects of the society' at the St Patrick's branch of the Society, the Hon. C.J. Carrington argued that 'loyalty to their country was also a vital tenet, as the society upheld the flag and the God-given principles of freedom and justice for which it stood'.<sup>52</sup>

Politicisation of Jesus' name was most dramatically illustrated in New Zealand's first and only blasphemy trial, which took place in 1922.<sup>53</sup> Late in 1921, the Attorney-General Sir Francis Bell sanctioned charges of 'blasphemous libel' against John Glover as publisher of the *Maoriland Worker* under section 150 of the Crimes Act of 1908. The charges stemmed from publication of Siegfried Sassoon's poem 'Stand-to: Good Friday Morning' on 12 October 1921.<sup>54</sup> The final three lines constituted the offending passage:

O Jesus, send me a wound to-day,  
And I'll believe in Your bread and wine,  
And get my bloody old sins washed white!<sup>55</sup>

The presence of Jesus in the poem was fundamental to the case, even if it was not necessary to the charge of blasphemy generally. According to the presiding judge,

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<sup>50</sup> Buckley, p.13.

<sup>51</sup> *Month*, October 1926, p.13.

<sup>52</sup> *NZH*, 21 March 1928, p.17. Carrington was a committed Catholic and member of the Reform Party in the Legislative Council.

<sup>53</sup> See Geoffrey Troughton, 'The *Maoriland Worker* and Blasphemy in New Zealand', *Labour History*, 91, 2006, pp.113-29.

<sup>54</sup> See *MW*, 12 October 1921, p.1.

<sup>55</sup> See Siegfried Sassoon, *The War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon*, Arranged by Rupert Hart-Davis, London: Faber and Faber, 1983, p.28.

Justice Hosking, the jury were to decide whether the poem was couched in language of 'insult and of contemptuous irreverence to the subjects with which it deals – Jesus Christ and the Doctrine of the Atonement', especially with respect to the effect of the last line.<sup>56</sup>

The defence case, led by Sir John Findlay, K.C., aimed to demonstrate that the lines of the poem were not blasphemous, and had not been inserted with wilful intent to injure the feelings of the community.<sup>57</sup> In a decision lauded by the *Evening Post* as a rare feat of 'substantial justice' the jury found the defendant 'not guilty', but attached a rider 'That similar publications of such literature be discouraged'.<sup>58</sup> Clearly it was not entirely convinced that there had been no intention to 'shock and insult the feelings of the community towards matters that are religious and sacred'.<sup>59</sup> Neither was it willing to convict. As the *Evening Post* judged, the ruling amounted to a warning: "'not guilty, but don't do it again.'"<sup>60</sup>

The prosecution of the *Maoriland Worker* for blasphemy can be understood within a nexus that linked socialism, and to some extent Rationalism, with political and moral disorder. As Justice Hosking argued during the trial, the object of the law of blasphemy was not to 'take God under its protection', but to 'prevent disorder in the community'.<sup>61</sup> In Western Europe, approaches to blasphemy increasingly emphasised social harmoniousness rather than repression on God's behalf. Edward Royle suggests that the terms 'blasphemy', 'obscenity' and 'sedition' became virtually interchangeable.<sup>62</sup> By the late nineteenth century, the crime was largely associated with

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<sup>56</sup> *Gazette Law Reports [GLR]*, 1922, pp.184-85, 187.

<sup>57</sup> *EP*, 23 February 1922, p.4.

<sup>58</sup> *EP*, 23 February 1922, p.6; *GLR*, 1922, p.188. This contradicts Margaret Thorn's recollection in a number of respects. She claimed that her husband 'Jim was prosecuted with the *Worker* company for blasphemous libel, found guilty, and fined £100 or three months' jail. I do not think he ever knew who paid the fine'. While James Thorn appeared for the defence, Glover was prosecuted and found not guilty. See Margaret Thorn, *Stick Out, Keep Left*, Elsie Locke and Jacquie Matthews (eds), Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1997, p.47.

<sup>59</sup> *GLR*, 1922, p.187.

<sup>60</sup> *EP*, 23 February 1922, p.6.

<sup>61</sup> *GLR*, 1922, p.187.

<sup>62</sup> Edward Royle, *Radicals, Secularists and Republicans: Popular Freethought in Britain, 1866-1915*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980, p.271.

the Rationalist press.<sup>63</sup> In the early twentieth century, relentless campaigns, notably by J.W. Gott in Britain, courted prosecution in an effort to make blasphemy laws appear ridiculous.<sup>64</sup> But as David Nash has noted, these backfired. Stirrers were regarded as threats to public order, and became linked in the public mind with all sorts of moral and political conspiracies.<sup>65</sup>

Specifically, the *Maoriland Worker* prosecution was a product of more general attempts to suppress sedition within New Zealand after World War One. During the war the government had assumed strong powers of political censorship, and these were retained afterwards in the face of considerable criticism. Rory Sweetman has demonstrated that the air was thick with concern about sedition and public order during the post-war years.<sup>66</sup> By 1921, the 'red scare' led to a Cabinet directive prohibiting 'any document which incites, encourages, advises or advocates violence lawlessness or disorder or expresses seditious intention'.<sup>67</sup> In fact, the *Maoriland Worker* had only recently been tried unsuccessfully for sedition. In that case, John Glover had been prosecuted along with the editor Pat Hickey. Both defendants were prominent members of the New Zealand Labour Party (NZLP).<sup>68</sup> The charges of 'blasphemous libel' appeared to be a pragmatic alternative to sedition. Use of the law to challenge radicalism had close recent parallels in Australia where R.S. Ross, a former editor of the *Maoriland Worker*, faced similar charges.<sup>69</sup>

The New Zealand trial demonstrated the way that Jesus could be invoked in the wider national interest. In a sense, the government utilised public notions of the sacredness of Jesus, and esteem for him, to pursue its prosecution. It reasoned that

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<sup>63</sup> See David Nash, *Blasphemy in Modern Britain: 1789 to the Present*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999, pp.107-193; also Royle, *Radicals, Secularists and Republicans*, esp. pp.271-83.

<sup>64</sup> Gott's last trial and prison sentence occurred in 1921-22, at precisely the same time as the *Maoriland Worker* case, following his comparison of Christ to a circus clown entering Jerusalem. Nash, pp.189-90.

<sup>65</sup> Nash, p.190.

<sup>66</sup> Rory Sweetman, *Bishop in the Dock: The Sedition Trial of James Liston*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1997. He also demonstrates that this climate was aided by imperialistic ideals of race and religion. Liston's St Patrick's Day speech, and his subsequent trial for sedition, came just weeks after the *Maoriland Worker* case concluded.

<sup>67</sup> Christoffel, p.10.

<sup>68</sup> *EP*, 6 May 1921, pp.7-8; *MW*, 11 May 1921, p.2.

<sup>69</sup> See Peter Coleman, *Obscenity, Blasphemy & Sedition: 100 Years of Censorship in Australia*, Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1974, pp.65-75, 80-81.

perceptions of an offence against Jesus lent credence to its claims against its political opponents. Attacking religion was dubious enough, but to ridicule Jesus was even more suspect.

## **JESUS AS STRANGER AND OPPONENT**

In some contexts, images constructed outside ecclesiastical contexts became more explicitly anti-Church. A fundamental anti-Church tenet suggested that Jesus was a stranger to the churches. Typical expressions of this idea claimed that the churches had buried Jesus beneath dogma and tradition. On the one hand, the beliefs of organised Christianity – especially regarding Jesus’ divinity – were erroneous. On the other, church practices bore no resemblance to Jesus’ life and teaching.

The notion of Jesus being a stranger to organised religion melded easily with claims of actual hostility between Jesus and the Church. Jesus was enlisted in complaints against ‘institutional religion’, and became the standard by which Christianity was judged. By this measure, the churches were criticised for their ignorance or active disregard, while their leaders were accused of misrepresenting Jesus and cultivating religious systems that conflicted with his actual teaching. Contemporary religious leaders were the modern counterparts of Jesus’ original persecutors. As a logical counterpoint, Jesus supposedly resisted the contemporary Church as he had the religion of his own time. Organised religion opposed Jesus, and he was its chief adversary. The real Jesus was not only a stranger to the churches but also their leading critic.

There were clearly religious aspects to these claims, but also social and political ones. The ideas were particularly prominent in the arguments of radical socialists, and among freethinkers and Rationalists. The combination of reverence for Jesus, anticlericalism and criticism of the churches had a long tradition in radical and socialist rhetoric. For instance, anticlericalism featured prominently in early French socialism and Marxism. While this eased and positions became more fragmented, the tradition remained influential.<sup>70</sup> But anticlericalism tended to thrive with Established religion,

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<sup>70</sup> See Pamela Pilbeam, ‘Dream Worlds? Religion and the Early Socialists in France’, *The Historical Journal*, 43:2, 2000, pp.499-515; Robert Stuart, ‘Marxism and Anticlericalism: The Parti Ouvrier Français and the War Against Religion’, *JRH*, 22:3, 1998, pp.287-303.

where perceptions of excess could gain a footing. In England, its appeal was limited by a weakening of Anglican power as a consequence of urban pluralism. According to Hugh McLeod, the only English mass movement in which anticlericalism was a major theme was the agricultural labourers' movement of the early and mid-1870s.<sup>71</sup> More common, perhaps, were criticisms by British labour leaders of the hypocritical conditions imposed by professing Christian employers.<sup>72</sup> Despite the lack of an official Established Church in New Zealand, surrogate forms did exist and made it easier for such language and attitudes to flourish. James Watson has argued that anticlericalism seemed to be especially attractive to the 'independent working class' for whom intellectual and economic independence were equally esteemed.<sup>73</sup>

J.H.G. Chapple exemplifies a number of these observations. On the one hand, he combined fierce intellectual independence with criticism of the churches, and enthusiasm for freethought and socialism. He also demonstrates the movement from claims that churches misunderstood Christ into alleged opposition between the two parties. Chapple had been active in the Salvation Army before ordination as a Presbyterian minister in 1903.<sup>74</sup> However, his attraction to rationalism and socialist politics ultimately led to a breach with the Presbyterians and adoption of Unitarianism around 1910. In Maurice Gee's fictionalised account, this transition was marked by something of an epiphany wherein Chapple's understanding of Jesus was profoundly reconfigured: 'And more and more it grew plain that what we must do was put aside Christ, sweep Him into the past, those dark and superstitious times in which He had his genesis, and turn to the real person, Jesus the man. And go on through him, as an

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<sup>71</sup> Hugh McLeod, *Secularisation in Western Europe, 1848-1914*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000, pp.123, 194-95.

<sup>72</sup> For example, Callum Brown, *The Social History of Religion in Scotland Since 1730*, London: Methuen, 1987, pp.175-76.

<sup>73</sup> James Watson, 'An Independent Working Class?', in John E. Martin and Kerry Taylor (eds), *Culture and the Labour Movement: Essays in New Zealand Labour History*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1991, p.188.

<sup>74</sup> See Frank W. Castle, *Annals of the Auckland Unitarian Church*, Auckland: Auckland Unitarian Church, 1981, pp.25-26; Geoff Chapple, 'Chapple, James Henry George 1865-1947', *DNZB*, accessed 16 February 2005; John Maindonald, *A Radical Religious Heritage: Auckland Unitarian Church and its Wider Connections*, rev. ed., Auckland: Auckland Unitarian Church, 1993, pp.11-13.

example of goodness, to God, to the One, of whom we were a part'.<sup>75</sup> Chapple accused the churches of falsification by smothering biblical truths with creeds 'which would make Jesus a Deity'. In doing so, they distorted Jesus' true nature and removed religion from the truth the world hungered for, which concerned 'Jesus the Carpenter and Divine Brother Man'.<sup>76</sup>

Chapple's antipathy toward 'the churches' amplified in later years following his incarceration for sedition during World War One. Addressing the issue of war, Chapple railed against the seeming imperialism of Christian clergy, even though 'the founder of their religion was a rebel against the Empire of Rome'.<sup>77</sup> The churches were not only ignorant of Jesus, they revolted against him. In full rhetorical flourish, he proclaimed that 'The Churches are Anti-Christ'. In light of their connection with the war, he argued that 'they are really Anti-Christ – they who profess to follow the One of peace and goodwill, yet ever ready to fall over each other to serve the State when war is declared in the interests of imperialism, big commerce and capitalism generally'. By contrast, pacifists and conscientious objectors like him were objects of contempt and derision, though they were 'nearer to the Nazarene than the Anti-Christ Churches'.<sup>78</sup> Chapple took these ideas further than most did, and even fellow radicals sometimes considered him rather extremist – especially in his later years.<sup>79</sup> However, the general contours of his argument were familiar.

In some ways this Jesus was a rhetorical trope rather than a person. His historicity and humanity were less important than the uses for which he was deployed. However, Chapple still placed great emphasis on him. As the reference to pacifists and conscientious objectors indicated, it was not that Jesus was unknowable but that he was most truly known outside the churches where his identity would not be obscured by emphasis on his divinity. One important function of this language was to support the legitimacy of non-institutional spirituality, or conversely, to downplay the value of

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<sup>75</sup> Maurice Gee, *The Plumb Trilogy*, Auckland: Penguin, 1995, p.88.

<sup>76</sup> J.H.G. Chapple, *The Divine Need of the Rebel: Addresses from Texts from the Wider Bible of Literature*, London: C.W. Daniel, 1924, p.104.

<sup>77</sup> J.H.G. Chapple, 'The Growing Point of Truth' (unpublished manuscript), MS-Papers-4678-027, Maurice Gough Gee Papers, MS-Group-0193, ATL.

<sup>78</sup> Chapple, *Divine Need*, p.73.

<sup>79</sup> Castle, pp.26, 30; Maindonald, pp.13, 46.

organised religion in general or church attendance in particular. The discourse also functioned as a form of ethical boosterism by suggesting the superior morality of agendas for reform.

### ***Socialism and the Labour Movement***

Debates about social reform constituted one important site in which the anti-Church Jesus appeared. Growing unionisation, the 'long depression', and the maritime strike of 1890 pushed labour issues closer to the centre of the social and political agenda. According to Erik Olssen, socialism acquired cachet in New Zealand from the 1890s.<sup>80</sup> By 1900, it was the leading ideological framework through which labour's aspirations were expressed. Socialism, however, was a house of many rooms.<sup>81</sup> In late nineteenth-century New Zealand the term was used broadly to describe emphasis on the social basis of human existence and commitment to improving social conditions. According to Margaret McArthur, socialism largely prioritised altruism, community and co-operation over class, conflict and competition.<sup>82</sup> This approach was very influential. As Olssen argues, William Pember Reeves' Fabian articulation of the social laboratory probably did the most to legitimise the socialist agenda in New Zealand.<sup>83</sup>

These ideals were not uncontested. Radical and revolutionary socialism gained a following at times, particularly in association with the 'Red Feds' between about 1908 and 1913.<sup>84</sup> The *Maoriland Worker*, which began in 1910 and became the official organ of the New Zealand Federation of Labour from 1911, was one place in which such views were expressed. Styled as a journal of 'industrial unionism, socialism and politics', it was the mouthpiece for labour's radical left, especially up until the great industrial confrontations of 1912 and 1913. Some editors retained this stance. However, from 1916 when the New Zealand Labour Party was formed, and even more so from the end of

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<sup>80</sup> Olssen, *Building the New World*, p.188.

<sup>81</sup> For an overview, see Anthony Wright, *Socialisms: Theories and Practices*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

<sup>82</sup> Margaret J. McArthur, 'Collectivist Tracts and Altruistic Sermons: A Study of "Socialism" in Late Nineteenth Century New Zealand', MA Thesis in Political Science, University of Canterbury, 1981, pp.21-22.

<sup>83</sup> Olssen, *Building the New World*, p.193.

<sup>84</sup> See Erik Olssen, *The Red Feds: Revolutionary Industrial Unionism and the New Zealand Federation of Labour 1908-1913*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1988.

World War One, contests between industrial and political methods were often evident.<sup>85</sup> In its most radical phases the editorial position of the *Maoriland Worker* echoed the industrial confrontation espoused by the International Workers of the World (IWW). While this approach gained traction for a time, the milder tradition on which New Zealand socialism was established attracted greater support over the longer term.<sup>86</sup>

The relationship between Christianity, socialism and labour was conceived in a variety of ways, not least within the labour movement itself. For the present, it is sufficient to recognise that the idea of conflict between Jesus and the churches ran through much of the debate. It was evident within the Marxist labour tradition, which emphasised the destruction of capitalist 'institutions' including the Church, but also among Fabian and state socialist groupings that had more support from within the churches. Indeed, the anti-Church Jesus represented a point of agreement between these streams. He was particularly evident prior to the mid-1920s in the period when organised labour was emerging as a significant force.

In 1890, Arthur Desmond produced one of the earliest New Zealand studies of Jesus as a social reformer.<sup>87</sup> Desmond had been a rural worker in Hawke's Bay before a semi-itinerant career in political agitation on behalf of small settlers and workers. In Auckland, he became involved in journalism, briefly publishing his own paper before continuing his jibes against capitalism in other forums. Desmond's pamphlet claimed to be primarily concerned with the human Jesus, especially the 'heroic nobility of His thought and the grandeur of His deeds'. It also quite deliberately noted that the account did not deny the divinity of 'the Divine Democrat'.<sup>88</sup> Desmond argued that those who opposed Jesus did so out of vested interests. These he described, somewhat anachronistically, as the 'heads of the Church, the owners of land, the owners of slaves, and the owners of capital'. More recently, theologians had suppressed the social

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<sup>85</sup> The radical rhetoric was most apparent under the editorships of R.S. Ross (1911-13), H.E. Holland (1913-18) and W. Kraig (1919-20).

<sup>86</sup> According to Olssen, *Red Feds*, p.45, circulation for the *Maoriland Worker* reached 8,500 by 1912.

<sup>87</sup> Arthur Desmond, *Christ as a Social Reformer*, Auckland: Arthur Cleave, 1890. On Desmond, see Rachel Barrowman, 'Desmond, Arthur fl. 1884-1894', *DNZB*, accessed 18 March 2005; *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 8, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1981, pp.291-92.

<sup>88</sup> Desmond, preface.

element of Jesus' teaching, while clergy had betrayed him through their 'theology, gold-greed, and personal aggrandisement'.<sup>89</sup>

Desmond preached the Christianity of Christ, which consisted of social equality and duty towards one's fellow man. The churches had degraded this message through 'Dogma and denominationalism – bigotry and creed – belief and ceremony'.<sup>90</sup> His solution was almost apocalyptic: 'What the world wants to-day is a MAN – a Leader – a heroic Champion of the Right – a ruthless demolisher of age-worn shams... whose clarion call shall ring round the world, inspiring millions to enlist beneath the standard of a new crusade, and go forth to battle unto death for the rights of man – for the cause of the poor'.<sup>91</sup> Whether that person was supposed to be Jesus or Desmond was not entirely clear. For Desmond was partly thinking about his own political prospects, and positioning himself as a champion of the underdog.

As it transpired, much of his argument was probably plagiarised. Writing in the local press, Adam Kelly accused Desmond of pirating A. Van Deusen's 'Ecclesiastical Christianity versus Jesus' from New York's *Twentieth Century* magazine of 27 April 1889. The claim was corroborated by publication of both articles in parallel columns for comparison.<sup>92</sup> In a sense this merely indicated the extent to which so much religious and political argumentation in New Zealand was derivative. Nevertheless, the work did signal important motifs that were reiterated in later meditations on the theme. Most notably, it posited a fundamental gulf between the Christianity of Christ and the religion practised by the churches. Under its present leadership, contemporary Christianity had become enslaved to wealth, despising Jesus' ethical teaching as an 'unattainable chimera'. For Desmond, the best solution was to reform the Church by recapturing the true spirit of Jesus. For others, the breach merely indicated that organised religion must be swept aside. In either case, the fundamental arguments concerned ethics and ecclesiology, rather than Jesus directly. The focus of the anti-Church Jesus was primarily the Church.

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<sup>89</sup> Desmond, pp.7, 10-11.

<sup>90</sup> Desmond, p.13.

<sup>91</sup> Desmond, p.14.

<sup>92</sup> A copy of Kelly's letter can be found in the Auckland War Memorial Museum Library's copy of Desmond's book.

Assertions that the Jesus of the churches was not the 'real Jesus' were repeated frequently within the labour press. Within international socialism, Jesus was contrasted with anti-socialists, or those deemed unsympathetic to working-class aspirations. The churches featured prominently among the groups classed this way. They were accused of hypocrisy, self-interest and protecting their own privileged position in society.<sup>93</sup> Accusations that the churches perpetrated vice in Jesus' name appeared more commonly during periods of sharp conflict, such as industrial unrest and war.<sup>94</sup> The charges were seldom linked directly to particular events within these disputes, though these may have contributed. More often, they highlighted the heightened state of conflict that existed, and the feeling that religious groups were at best only limited supporters of labour's position.

These kinds of objections had originally been formulated with Roman Catholicism or the Church of England in mind, since these were the wealthiest, most powerful and most hierarchical forms of Christianity in the contexts in which the ideas arose. In New Zealand, however, the rhetoric was applied generally, with few concessions made for a substantially altered situation or in recognition of denominational differences. In fact, complaints were often directed at religious leaders as much as to the churches in general. Leaders were characterised as deceivers, and accused of being out of touch with ordinary workers' lives. Their greed for wealth and power allegedly led to conservatism. Complaints therefore highlighted that religious leaders' failings were at once spiritual and political. Support for the capitalist system was chided, even when it was tacit rather than explicit. One writer lamented, 'O Lord, shake up the parsons. They are so very slow in establishing Thy Kingdom on earth'.<sup>95</sup> Ministers were also derided for their hypocrisy. Critics enjoyed using biblical texts, especially Jesus' words, to shame their opponents.<sup>96</sup> However, they appeared to take particular delight in using Jesus to expose double-standards among religious leaders. Thus, Margaret Thorn gleefully described the labour leader Robert Semple's attack on

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<sup>93</sup> See Donald M. Winters, *The Soul of the Wobblies: The I.W.W., Religion, and American Culture in the Progressive Era, 1905-1917*, Westport: Greenwood, 1985, pp.61-81.

<sup>94</sup> *MW*, 23 June 1911, p.9; *MW*, 23 December 1914, p.1.

<sup>95</sup> *MW*, 21 July 1911, p.3.

<sup>96</sup> Thorn, *Stick Out*, p.49.

the Rev. Howard Elliott and the Protestant Political Association (PPA) as an unforgettable analysis of intolerance, and an 'ear-splitting post-mortem dissection of a parson professing faith in the gentle saviour of mankind'.<sup>97</sup>

One longstanding method of attacking institutional forms of Christianity focused on a distinction between 'real' Christianity, and 'priestcraft' or 'Churchianity'. There was a post-Reformation anti-Catholic aspect to the discourse, but also a radical one. In 1832, controversial British radical and publisher Henry Hetherington was arguing that priestcraft, or 'priestianity', had become the great obstacle to the mental, moral, social, and political improvement of the people. By contrast, 'the religion of Jesus' was 'a plain, practical religion, unpolluted with mysteries, unencumbered with priests, and eminently calculated to generate... a love of truth, of justice, of liberty'.<sup>98</sup> The religion of Jesus was supposed to embarrass the churches and provide a moral flavour to reform. Strategically, assailing the power of religious leaders was sometimes viewed as a way to strengthen support for the labour movement. One letter to the *Maoriland Worker* claimed that 'priestcraft' was one of labour's deadliest foes because of the influence priests had over women.<sup>99</sup> Others considered anticlerical rhetoric a potentially useful recruitment tool. J. Smith of Waimate contended that socialism was 'purely a Christian ideal and doctrine', but that it needed to stand against the 'colossal ignorance' of the modern churches. Smith argued that 'denunciation of the false teaching of the clergy' could be a 'powerful lever for agitation, and an incomparable means for recruiting our ranks for propaganda purposes. In doing this we remain faithful to our Christian watchword, yet by this rule of revolutionary action we will disarm the enemy and arm Socialism'.<sup>100</sup>

The supposed distinction between the religion of Jesus and Churchianity generally carried confrontational overtones. Pejorative terms like these referred to perversions. They suggested that pure religion had no rituals, but implied that pure forms of Christianity could still perhaps be found. Blaming religious leaders also

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<sup>97</sup> Thorn, *Stick Out*, p.54.

<sup>98</sup> Henry Hetherington, *Cheap Salvation; or, an Antidote to Priestcraft*, London, 1832, p.17, cited in Edward Royle, *Radical Politics, 1790-1900: Religion and Unbelief*, London: Longman, 1971, p.109.

<sup>99</sup> MW, 21 July 1911, p.15

<sup>100</sup> MW, 1 July 1914, p.6.

meant that criticism was directed at one particular class. 'Clerical' influence was a blight on society, comparable to 'King-craft', 'deacon-craft', 'diplomatist-craft' and 'merchant-craft'.<sup>101</sup> Thus, religious ills were similar to other social evils imposed by the powerful. By returning to the religion of Jesus, organised Christianity could become a religion of the people expressing socialist ideals. It could become a force for life rather than death.<sup>102</sup> As one labour critic anxiously noted, 'lest we be misunderstood, we have not one word to say against true Christianity'.<sup>103</sup>

This was a discourse of power, favoured especially by those who felt, however subjectively, on the margins. In this context, churches and religious leaders were conflated with the wider forces of 'society' that opposed Jesus and socialism equally. Thus, 'Religion provided him with a cross, Society with a tomb'. In its complicity with the powerbrokers of society, religion had lost ethical power as well as its 'nutritive and reproductive functions'.<sup>104</sup> It had essentially become Jesus' leading adversary. This language probably reached its zenith during the years of heightened conflict around World War One. At points, socialist disputes with supporters of the war became almost hysterical. Pacifist sects like the Quakers were applauded, but the churches as a whole were heavily criticised. Despite two thousand years of Christianity, a supposedly Christian civilisation had turned its back on Jesus and unleashed hell with their endorsement: 'The collective Church – that has for twice a thousand years rendered a lip service of Peace on Earth – spits in the face of its Christ of Peace, and in all lands shrieks in demoniacal frenzy for the crucifixion of the Christ idea and the Christ idealist'.<sup>105</sup>

Claims that organised religion opposed Christ were part of a wider argument concerning the failure of social institutions, and the vices and degradations of Christian civilisation were catalogued as evidence. Churches invoked the name of Jesus, but were accused of being irreligious.<sup>106</sup> In 1920, the editorial in the Easter issue of the *Maoriland Worker* argued that interest in Jesus was running high, despite the churches'

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<sup>101</sup> MW, 5 May 1915, p.1.

<sup>102</sup> MW, 11 July 1913, p.3.

<sup>103</sup> *Otago Liberal*, 9 September 1905, p.8.

<sup>104</sup> MW, 11 July 1913, p.3.

<sup>105</sup> MW, 22 December 1915, p.4.

<sup>106</sup> MW, 23 June 1911, p.9.

obstruction. It claimed that the time was ripe for the 'resurrection of the spirit of Christ, which has lain too long in the sepulchre of the Churches'. It also developed the argument that false teaching had turned the churches into Jesus' opponents. Churches claimed to respect Jesus, but actually opposed him: 'Religions have been founded in his name; grand cathedrals in his honor; beautiful pictures, heavenly music, all these mock him and his gospel'.<sup>107</sup>

Contemporary religious leaders were characterised as either Judas, or the Pharisees of Jesus' day. As Judases, they had betrayed Jesus. In 1913, the *Maoriland Worker* also complained about ministers who undermined industrial action by volunteering to act as 'scabs'. In doing so, they allegedly sided with the oppressor against the oppressed in defiance of the plain example of 'the Divine Teacher'. These ministers were accused of prostituting their Master's teaching. They had become 'soulless tools of capitalism', and lowered themselves 'to a level which Judas himself could not reach.... Those preachers, who, in consideration of pelf and place, range themselves upon the side of the oppressor, are surely greater betrayers than that despicable person of history who, for thirty pieces of silver, handed over the Carpenter of Nazareth, the Friend of the poor and the outcast, to a brutal authority'.<sup>108</sup> During World War One, ministers were accused of becoming traitors for staying home and preaching the glories of war.<sup>109</sup>

Literature on religion and social reform frequently highlighted Jesus' conflicts with religious leaders. In one well-known English publication from later in the interwar period, John Lewis claimed that Jesus had embarked on a 'deliberate and devastating anti-religious campaign' because the religion of his day was an 'insuperable barrier to the coming of the Kingdom'.<sup>110</sup> Lewis doubted that there could be any recovery of the Jesus of history within the churches, since he considered them too reconciled to the existing social order.<sup>111</sup> However, the principle that modern religion was akin to that of Jesus' persecutors became well established. It was the false,

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<sup>107</sup> *MW*, 7 April 1920, p.4.

<sup>108</sup> *MW*, 26 September 1913, p.7

<sup>109</sup> *MW*, 20 January 1915, p.4.

<sup>110</sup> John Lewis, 'The Jesus of History', in John Lewis, Karl Polanyi and Donald K. Kitchen (eds), *Christianity and the Social Revolution*, London: Victor Gollancz, 1935, p.92.

<sup>111</sup> Lewis, 'Jesus of History', p.102.

hypocritical and self-serving religion of the scribes and Pharisees. It was 'a sham', because people were denied conditions that would make it possible to actually implement 'the golden rule'.<sup>112</sup> The whip of cords and Jesus' action in the Temple were favoured symbols of opposition to established authority.<sup>113</sup> Religion was part of the established order that Jesus revolted against. Consequently, contemporary churches were challenged to account for their behaviour in the light of 'the action of the Divine Teacher, who whip in hand, scourged the money-changers from the temple'.<sup>114</sup>

Characterisations of an anti-Church Jesus fastened on the idea that he stood aloof from organised religion. Spurning conventional religious practices and the leaders who oversaw them, Jesus taught and practised a simple brand of religion: 'he confounded the self-righteous, and made light of formal religion, and mocked the orthodox of his day, whose religion consisted in observing set times, and laws, and commandments.... To him creeds, churches, systems, sacraments and ceremonies were nothing'.<sup>115</sup> Modern Christianity was charged with inventing a superstructure of faith and doctrine out of its own 'vain imaginings'. These were not only alien to the religion of Jesus, they were ideas he would actually repudiate: 'Hardly a claim made in the name of Christ to-day by the churches that take his name in vain but can be refuted out of his own mouth'.<sup>116</sup>

One aspect of this argument related to church attendance. In response to an article by Archbishop Redwood on socialism and social order in the *Tablet* one correspondent noted that, 'Nothing in the sayings of Christ, as I read them, makes it obligatory on any follower of Christ to belong to a Church'.<sup>117</sup> The imperfections of the Church demonstrated that it was purely a human institution. True Christianity was divinely ordained. The teaching of Jesus represented genuine Christianity, which was defined in ethical terms. Proponents claimed that practical, ethical but non-institutional

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<sup>112</sup> MW, 9 June 1911, p.14.

<sup>113</sup> MW, 19 January 1912, p.16; MW, 14 March 1913, p.1; Tony Simpson, *The Sugarbag Years*, Auckland: Penguin, 1984, p.201.

<sup>114</sup> MW, 26 September 1913, p.7.

<sup>115</sup> MW, 7 April 1920, p.4.

<sup>116</sup> MW, 7 April 1920, p.4.

<sup>117</sup> MW, 30 July 1919, p.2; cf. MW, 16 July 1919, p.4.

Christianity appeared suspect to the conventionally religious, but was the expression Jesus would have approved. Thus R.S. Mackay could claim that,

Many Socialists deny Christ with their lips, but accept Him by their lives, ideals, and the sacrifice they are prepared to make for the sake of their ideals. Many church-goers accept Him with their lips, but deny Him by their lives, and the objects they devote their energies to, principally their own material welfare. I think that if Christ himself were here to-day he would undoubtedly cast in his lot with the former, as being those who are carrying on His work.<sup>118</sup>

### ***Freethought and Rationalism***

Criticisms generated by freethinkers and Rationalists were often similar to those from the political left, partly because the constituencies overlapped. As Bill Cooke has suggested, Rationalists were often socialists with an enduring interest in the question of religion.<sup>119</sup> This connection was certainly one that Christian apologists made, especially in the turbulent years of labour unrest prior to World War One.<sup>120</sup> By the 1920s and 1930s, the anti-Church Jesus was being most forcefully articulated in the rhetoric of Rationalism.

The extent of actual adherence to freethinking and Rationalist groups is hard to trace, as is their influence. For one thing, freethinkers may have been less disposed to association than some other religious groupings. Moreover, a frequently confrontational and combative approach may have militated against broad appeal, but also ensured greater profile and significance than numerical strength suggested. Census self-identification was always low, but formal association with these groups fluctuated. According to the 1936 census, Rationalism was numerically very small at the turn of the century, and only grew significantly in the later 1920s and 1930s.<sup>121</sup> From a mere 22 in 1901, numbers grew to 791 in 1911, before a decline to 430 in 1921, and sharp rise to 2,066 (0.14%) in 1936. Affiliation with Freethinking grew from a stronger base of 2,856 in 1901 to 4,238 (0.42%) in 1911, but fell steadily to as low as 925 (0.06%) in 1936. Freethinkers' organisation had collapsed in the late nineteenth century, but

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<sup>118</sup> MW, 27 January 1915, p.1.

<sup>119</sup> Bill Cooke, *Heathen in Godzone: Seventy Years of Rationalism in New Zealand*, Auckland: NZ Association of Rationalists and Humanists, 1998, p.22.

<sup>120</sup> See, for example, H. Foston, *In the Bell-Bird's Lair, or 'In Touch With Nature'*, Wellington: Gordon & Gotch, 1911, p.9.

<sup>121</sup> See *Census*, 1936, p.1 (Religious Section).

renewed growth around 1911 corresponded with the 'mission' of Joseph McCabe. Rationalism increasingly became the more fashionable term as the century progressed. It also benefited from the McCabe tour of 1910 and others by J.S. Langley in the late 1920s and again in the 1930s.<sup>122</sup>

After World War One, some Christians pointed to declining identification with Rationalism as evidence of the movement's 'sterility'. Rationalists responded that it simply reflected the inadequacies of the census.<sup>123</sup> Active local organisations existed in places like Auckland, Christchurch and Wanganui in the 1920s, but these did not show up clearly in census self-identification. A substantial rise in the 'Object to State' category was particularly evident in Auckland province, the centre of Rationalist organisation.<sup>124</sup> Professions of Agnosticism also rose steadily through these years, though the total remained small. The category of 'No religion' was larger in absolute terms, but declined in proportional strength throughout the period. Together, respondents in the 'No religion', 'Agnostic' and 'Object to State' categories accounted for 5.06% of the population in 1936.<sup>125</sup> These probably included a fair proportion of individuals sympathetic to Rationalist ideas. Still, however vocal and influential radical dissenters were, they remained a numerical minority.

Jesus featured prominently in Rationalist discussions, reflecting the importance of Jesus for religion and the fundamentally religious character of the Rationalist movement.<sup>126</sup> Recent commentators have suggested that Rationalism functioned as something of a surrogate religion for ultra-liberals,<sup>127</sup> or even as a form of Protestant extremism.<sup>128</sup> Certainly, many leading Rationalists had intensely religious backgrounds, and continued to be formed by a thorough knowledge of the Bible. Yet, the desire to destroy Christian religion that was evident in the nineteenth century

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<sup>122</sup> On the tours, see Bill Cooke, "'The Best of Causes': A Critical History of the New Zealand Association of Rationalists and Humanists", PhD Thesis in Religious Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, 1998, pp.13-14, 33.

<sup>123</sup> *TS*, October 1927, pp.7-8; *TS*, November 1927, pp.7-8.

<sup>124</sup> These rose from 25,577 in 1916 to 71,302 in 1936 (from 2.33% to 4.67%), of whom 38% were in Auckland.

<sup>125</sup> Object to State (4.67%), Agnostic (0.1%), No Religion (0.29%).

<sup>126</sup> *TS*, October 1927, p.7; *TS*, December 1928, p.7; *TS*, July 1930, pp.1-2.

<sup>127</sup> For example, Royle, *Radicals, Secularists and Republicans*, pp.2-3.

<sup>128</sup> Peter Lineham (book review), *NZJH*, 33:2, 1998, pp.259-61.

persisted.<sup>129</sup> Rationalists utilised the gospel accounts of the life of Jesus because they believed these provided potent ammunition for the assault on Christianity. Like many others, Ettie Rout grew up in a devout religious home, and experienced 'conversion' to Rationalism as part of a broader transition to radical politics and progressive social morality.<sup>130</sup> Long after this had occurred, Rout claimed to draw inspiration from the Bible and the life and teaching of Jesus. Her arguments in *Sexual Health and Birth Control* suggest that Jesus was employed because his teaching provided useful tools for attacking contemporary Christians whose 'fat-headedness' impeded moral progress. Rout contended that the Bible was excellent value for money as a source to 'slay a few modern Christians intellectually'. To do this she would,

turn up the references to what Jesus had to say nearly 2000 years ago about the Scribes and Pharisees and hypocrites and Sadducees and Lawyers; and I find that his sayings fit the Modern Churches absolutely. I am therefore enormously grateful to my Bible and *Concordance* and to Jesus himself for having supplied such permanently valuable weapons... because Jesus is one of the world's greatest philosophers and geniuses whereas I am only a humble writer.<sup>131</sup>

According to Rout, Jesus was a free thinker: 'he thought freely and he spoke freely, and he attacked the Church, which is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. That is why he was crucified'.<sup>132</sup>

Rationalists recognised that Jesus was central to the structure of Christian belief, and that his character was widely admired. Destabilising confidence in Jesus was therefore a logical strategy for tackling Christianity. Considerable efforts were made to demonstrate that, if he ever existed, Jesus was not the person Christians generally imagined. Satire, like Frederick J. Gould's 'What Jesus Did Not Say' in the *Truth Seeker*, relied on the premise that Christian interpretations of Jesus were selective and muddle-headed.<sup>133</sup> Rationalism did not provide a single view of Jesus. Positions ranged from denial of his existence through to accusations of dubious moral character. Yet these agreed that the churches' opinions about Jesus were erroneous – whatever

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<sup>129</sup> Peter Lineham, 'Freethinkers in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', *NZJH*, 19:1, 1985, p.76.

<sup>130</sup> According to her biographer, the Congregationalism of Rout's upbringing made for a relatively smooth transition to Rationalism. See Jane Tolerton, *Ettie: A Life of Ettie Rout*, Auckland: Penguin, 1992, p.32.

<sup>131</sup> E. Rout, *Sexual Health and Birth Control*, London: Pioneer Press, 1925, p.11.

<sup>132</sup> Rout, p.42.

<sup>133</sup> *TS*, July 1933, pp.1-2.

they were. Moreover, the fact that a plethora of often-contradictory views of Jesus existed simply demonstrated that 'Man makes God in his own image'. Jesus was malleable; people shaped him to 'exactly fit their own political, social and religious leanings'.<sup>134</sup>

The Mythical Jesus theory was perhaps the most controversial yet distinctive view of Jesus promoted within Rationalist circles. Numerous writers propounded it during the early twentieth century, most notably J.M. Robertson, W.B. Smith and Gordon Rylands, who helped the idea gain a measure of intellectual respectability.<sup>135</sup> The Mythical theory argued that there was no historical evidence to justify any claim for the historicity of Christ – whether as 'god-man', or itinerant Palestinian preacher.<sup>136</sup> Mythical theorists dismissed the biblical gospels as sources on grounds of their late composition, conflicting narratives and lack of reliable eyewitness testimony. Furthermore, they argued that no reliable extra-biblical source corroborated claims of Jesus' existence.

The Mythical theory of Jesus was articulated forcefully and frequently enough to be considered a dominant theme. Provocative and controversial, touring speakers and debaters found the theory well suited for use in public forums. J.S. Langley's tours in 1929 and 1930 were important stimuli for the Rationalist movement, and he was an ardent promoter of the Mythical theory.<sup>137</sup> Earlier, Scott Bennett had followed J.M. Robertson's argumentation, claiming that Jesus was a beautiful, but not historical, figure like William Tell.<sup>138</sup> Reporting a debate between a Mr Nugent and the Presbyterian minister Lawson Marsh at the Strand Theatre on 15 April 1928, *The Truth Seeker* claimed that Nugent's arguments against the existence of Christ were clearly the strongest – at least to those of 'unprejudiced mind'.<sup>139</sup> Commentary in the *Truth Seeker* routinely expressed 'grave doubts' about the historical Jesus,<sup>140</sup> and popular pamphlets

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<sup>134</sup> *TS*, August 1928, p.6.

<sup>135</sup> Bill Cooke, *Heathen*, p.15; also Patrick Campbell, *The Mythical Jesus*, with an introduction by James O. Hanlon, Auckland: Waverly Publishing, 1963, pp.11, 16-17.

<sup>136</sup> Campbell, pp.9-10.

<sup>137</sup> On the importance of Langley, his tours and beliefs, see Cooke, 'Best of Causes', p.33.

<sup>138</sup> Cooke, 'Best of Causes', p.17.

<sup>139</sup> *TS*, May 1928, p.4.

<sup>140</sup> *TS*, September 1927, p.3; *TS*, December 1927, p.3; *TS*, April 1929, p.2. See also *TS*, September 1928, pp.3-5; *TS*, November 1928, pp.2-4.

like the leading British Rationalist Chapman Cohen's *Did Jesus Christ Exist?* were widely advertised and circulated.<sup>141</sup> In 1939, James O. Hanlon's dialogue on the question 'Did Jesus Christ Ever Live?' restated the Mythical Jesus position, and was supported by a later piece challenging 'The Resurrection Myth'.<sup>142</sup>

Little wonder that Christian apologists argued the theory was essential to Rationalism. Their contemporary antagonists consistently rejected this, noting that Rationalism eschewed unitary creedal positions, and that attitudes to Jesus varied considerably.<sup>143</sup> The most important alternatives followed Joseph McCabe who accepted the historical existence of Jesus, but argued that he was simply 'a man who was gradually turned into a God'.<sup>144</sup> McCabe was a prolific writer, and something of a polymath. His speaking tour in 1922 was a critical factor in the reinvigoration of Rationalist organisation in New Zealand, and there was some support for his approach.<sup>145</sup> For H.H. Pearce, the historical existence of Jesus might be accepted, but was not ultimately critical: 'The issue is not a question of evidence on the existence of the *man* Christ, but of the existence of the Christ as in the Christian *conception*'.<sup>146</sup> Echoing McCabe, he contended that the existence of the human Jesus was not the essence of Christian teaching or faith. It was the nature of his existence that mattered. For Pearce, the 'god-saviour' was, like McCabe's later-deified-man, the heart of Christian proclamation. This person was unhistorical, irrational, and ripe for criticism.

The various Rationalist approaches to Jesus uniformly rejected Christian representations. In particular, they contended against belief in Jesus' uniqueness and sublime character. Challenging the moral superiority of Jesus' life and teaching attacked what Christians regarded as one of their strongest positions. The 'real Jesus' was used to undermine the churches' claims, since Jesus' exemplary morality was often

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<sup>141</sup> Chapman Cohen, *Did Jesus Christ Exist?*, London: Pioneer Press, n.d.; cf. *TS*, February-March 1939. Cohen was editor of the National Secular Society in England from 1915 to 1949, and editor of the *Freethinker* from 1915 to 1951.

<sup>142</sup> *TS*, April-May, 1939, pp.2-3; *TS*, August 1939, pp.6-7.

<sup>143</sup> *TS*, July 1930, pp.1-2.

<sup>144</sup> Joseph McCabe, 'Did Jesus Ever Live?', cited in Bill Cooke, *A Rebel to His Last Breath: Joseph McCabe and Rationalism*, New York: Prometheus, 2001, p.190. Cooke devotes a chapter to McCabe's views on 'The Historicity of Jesus'.

<sup>145</sup> The foundation of the Auckland Rationalist Association in 1922 was the crucial development. See Cooke, *Heathens*, p.13.

<sup>146</sup> *TS*, September 1928, p.6 (original italics).

advanced as proof of his divinity and the superiority of the Christian religion. Rationalists denied that there was anything exceptional about Jesus using comparative and evolutionary approaches to the study of religion. McCabe's *Sources of the Morality of the Gospels* elucidated the various strains that he considered shaped the teaching attributed to Jesus.<sup>147</sup> For McCabe, Christian elevation of Christ's moral teaching was simply a response to the challenges that modern thought posed to traditional dogma. Stripped of the miraculous, Christ's greatness depended entirely on his moral teaching. Yet McCabe argued that this teaching had exhaustive parallels in Jewish, Greek and Roman religion, and presented 'no advance whatever on the later and finer teaching of the Old Testament'.<sup>148</sup> The moral principles, maxims and parables of Jesus in the Gospels were 'the common stock of the religious movements of the time'. Jesus did not even synthesise them; the writers of the gospels did, once exposed to cosmopolitan ideas outside Judaea.<sup>149</sup>

Critics repeated that Jesus' teaching was unoriginal, irrational and immoral. Not only was his teaching derivative, as McCabe suggested, it included numerous aspects untenable to the modern mind, such as belief in devils, angels and the supernatural. Moreover, Jesus' apparent advocacy of 'the horrible doctrine of Hell' was cited as evidence of moral imperfection.<sup>150</sup> This argument was reiterated in reprints of Bertrand Russell's *Why I Am Not a Christian*, and utilised as a stock argument in public debates.<sup>151</sup> Addressing the same topic at a meeting in the Majestic Theatre, J.S. Langley pointed to the 'absurd gospel stories' like cursing the fig tree, the money in the fish's mouth and Jesus' belief in demon causes of illness. Jesus also taught 'one of the greatest, wickedest ideas that has ever stained the face of this world's thought – that of everlasting hell.... Jesus taught nothing new. Moreover, he came into the world and said not a word about war, or slavery, or of women and their inferior position'.<sup>152</sup> Others claimed that Christ's teaching was morally culpable for the horrors of Christian

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<sup>147</sup> Joseph McCabe, *The Sources of the Morality of the Gospels*, London: Watts, 1914, vii-viii.

<sup>148</sup> McCabe, *Sources*, pp.15-16, 204-97, 302.

<sup>149</sup> McCabe, *Sources*, p.22.

<sup>150</sup> *TS*, September 1927, p.3

<sup>151</sup> *TS*, April 1933, p.11; *TS*, May 1930, p.2.

<sup>152</sup> *TS*, May 1930, p.2.

history,<sup>153</sup> and made no difference to people's moral behaviour. The latter point was advanced to counter Christian advocacy for religious instruction in schools.<sup>154</sup> 'When and where', questioned H.H. Pearce, 'have these teachings of Christ produced a society of people socially and morally desirable from a modern civilised view'?<sup>155</sup>

Other criticisms suggested that even the lofty elements of Jesus' teaching were too obscure, unintelligible, or unliveable to be of any practical use. A.E. Carrington argued that the most unique of Christ's moral utterances were also the most impracticable: 'Resist not evil', and 'Take no thought for the morrow' would only place a civilisation 'at the mercy of its most evil elements and lead to utter ruin'.<sup>156</sup> Similarly, 'Love your enemies' might sound fine, but its meaning seemed unclear even to Christians and was inconsistent with the Christian precept of a God who 'assuredly does not love his enemies'.<sup>157</sup> Rationalist apologists further argued that even Jesus failed to 'love his enemies'. Jack Langley claimed that Jesus' violence in the temple was directed against innocent workers, while Carrington catalogued various 'cruel words'.<sup>158</sup> This was a step further than the claim that the churches simply failed to live up to their Master's teaching and example. Indeed, H.H. Pearce argued that fidelity was as much of a problem:

In paganism there was a growing universalism of love and brotherhood, independent of race or creed, and the new meaning of the word given by Christ was to limit its application to *fellow believers in him*. Unbelievers, infidels, or heretics, received the undying and full-blooded hatred of Christ and his followers. Its new meaning has persisted now for nearly two thousand years, with the tears, blood, misery, and degradation that history shows us as its consequence, and we are now only gradually back to its old and *unchristian* meaning.<sup>159</sup>

Significantly, the challenge to Christian representations of Jesus included those offered by social Christians whose political views were often sympathetic to those commonly held by Rationalists. Rejection of Jesus' ethical superiority effectively

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<sup>153</sup> TS, July 1930, p.8.

<sup>154</sup> For example, Robert Stout, *The Bible In Schools: The Scriptures as Moral Teaching*, Dunedin: Otago Daily Times Print, 1927.

<sup>155</sup> TS, October 1932, p.6.

<sup>156</sup> TS, July 1930, p.4.

<sup>157</sup> McCabe, *Sources*, p.299.

<sup>158</sup> TS, May 1930, p.2; TS, July 1930, p.5.

<sup>159</sup> TS, July 1930, p.8 (original italics).

eroded the ground on which they stood. In December 1930, Ormond Burton debated Langley before an audience of about 800 people. Burton proposed that the means to solve the 'problems of international relationships and strife' were found in 'putting into actual practice the teaching of Jesus'. Langley responded that 'There was so much advertisement of Christ by professional clergymen that the majority had never seen the true Christ'. Jesus was a 'simple, fanatical, Galilean teacher with the one great idea that the world was shortly to end'. Neither he nor his teaching was moral, and it was essentially otherworldly. Jesus could never provide an ethical answer to modernity as Burton proposed.<sup>160</sup> Debating Scott Bennett in 1939, Canon Averill Bennett also appealed to the ethical principles of Jesus' teaching as the basis for 'Re-construction'. He maintained that these incorporated everything necessary for social order, and even 'unconsciously influenced' Rationalist social ideals. Bennett rejected this, claiming that Christian teaching was anti-materialist, its record one of 'tyranny, plunder and oppression'.<sup>161</sup>

Therefore, despite considerable sympathy between socialist and Rationalist ideas, Rationalist approaches diverged from socialist attempts to enlist Jesus against the Church. Both challenged organised religion. However, socialist language tended to present religion as part of a failed capitalist system. Recovery of the true Jesus could provide an avenue for the critique of religion, but also its reform. By contrast, the Rationalist press criticised the churches but implicated Jesus in the critique by questioning his morality and downplaying the value of his ethical teaching. In doing so, they rejected mediating positions in favour of a hard line against organised religion. This position was not only anti-Church but also seemed anti-Jesus. Though consistent, this probably had a detrimental effect on popular support for organised Rationalism. Conscientious myth-busting made good press, but was too extreme to remain broadly appealing over the longer term. It could appear rather confrontational and pompous. Moreover, it underestimated levels of popular devotion to Jesus. Rationalists were perhaps unduly committed to the destruction of organised Christianity. While they

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<sup>160</sup> *TS*, 6 December 1930, pp.1-3.

<sup>161</sup> *TS*, April-May 1939, pp.5-6.

sometimes used Jesus against religion, their willingness to attack him directly was simply too radical to be popular.

## THE CHURCHES' OUTSIDER

Potentially damaging as they were, many of these claims had their counterparts within the churches and religious organisations. In particular, suggestions that Jesus was unknown to the churches, or actively opposed them, were widely expounded in Christian contexts. In their own way, groups expressing these ideas were usually aiming to enliven the churches, and renew their effectiveness and reach into the community. The strategy was often a direct response to criticism, and presumed that the churches were weaker than they ought to be. Conflict between Jesus and the Church suggested the need for religious change, perhaps by purification, or by bringing the Church closer to the Christianity of the New Testament.

During this period, the religious community often claimed that the churches were 'under fire', and that 'active and articulate hostility to religion' was widespread.<sup>162</sup> As early as 1911, Presbyterians were acknowledging that failure to implement Jesus' teaching provided a fundamental element in criticism of the churches. The General Assembly's Report on the State of Religion in 1911 sensed that the Church was being judged by new standards, especially regarding its response to social conditions: 'Men are growing increasingly conscious of a contradiction between Christ's attitude to the masses of the poor, to the lapsed and the social outcasts, and the attitude of many who profess and call themselves Christians'.<sup>163</sup> The report accepted that there was actually considerable common ground between the churches and the labour movement, since the prevailing mood of concern for the downtrodden and demands for equity and justice originated in Jesus' teaching. In 1928, G.H. Jupp also noted the prevalence of heavy and general criticism. To counter this, he contended that the Christian message had to be delivered 'authentically, and warmly, out of the depths of a real experience and without the impediment of obscurantism, negativism or outworn dogma'.<sup>164</sup> Jupp was effectively accepting that organised Christianity faced challenges that were

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<sup>162</sup> *NZMT*, 29 March 1924, p.12.

<sup>163</sup> *PGA*, 1911, p.64.

<sup>164</sup> *Outlook*, 13 February 1928, p.29.

existential and doctrinal as well as ethical. An effective response to criticism required that each facet be addressed.

Suggested programmes for the reform of religion varied wildly. Denominational leaders were less likely to accept claims of Jesus' hostility toward religion than critics or more sectarian religious groups. However, these shared the premise that the churches had failed – to whatever extent, and in whatever ways. Religious leaders increasingly argued that recovery of the real Jesus, and the religion of Jesus, were fundamental to future success. However, interpretation of what exactly this meant was similarly diverse. Modernists, Pentecostals, Evangelicals and social Christians all utilised aspects of anti-Church rhetoric to bolster their varied agendas and emphases. The anti-Church Jesus therefore signalled a mode of argumentation more than a particular programme.

### ***The Rhetoric of Reform***

The real Jesus and the Christianity of Christ became important touchstones in religious proposals for reform. The notion of 'Churchianity', so reviled by critics of organised religion, was equally disdained by many of its strongest supporters. Churchianity was presented as a failure of moral courage and commitment to the 'religion of Jesus'. It featured prominently in expressions of social Christianity that emphasised ethical fidelity to Jesus' teaching. J.T. Paul was a committed Methodist, but also a leading trades unionist and social reformer. In a terse interchange with correspondents in the *Methodist Outlook* Paul argued that socialism was a more Christian system than competition, since it enabled 'men to live lives and act towards their brothers in the true spirit of Christianity, not of Churchianity'.<sup>165</sup>

However, criticism of Churchianity was expressed by Christians of differing political perspectives. In 1928, the *Herald* reported an address of T.E. Ruth at Pitt Street Congregational Church in Sydney that decried the righteous, complacent and moralising Pharisees of the city. He contended that 'Sin is not always swaggering, blasphemous and coarse. It is sometimes gentle and mild-mannered, and comes in the guise of an angel of light in the church. How insidious is the temptation to substitute

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<sup>165</sup> See 'Newspaper Clippings, 1903-6', J.T. Paul Papers.

Churchianity for Christianity!’<sup>166</sup> Ruth was no social Christian. A colourful and controversial Baptist minister from Melbourne, he had been a leading British imperialist during the war and one of Catholic Archbishop Daniel Mannix’s sectarian opponents.<sup>167</sup>

The notion of Churchianity appeared frequently among youth, for whom the appeal of whole-hearted and ethically demanding Christianity was especially strong. Attacks against it also provided one of few legitimate opportunities to challenge the practice of seniors. One contributor to the *Methodist Bible Class Link* contended, somewhat defensively, against what they perceived to be an erroneous distinction. They argued that the popular saying, ‘I believe in Christianity, but not in Churchianity’ was as fallacious as believing in healing but not hospitals, or education but not colleges, since moral reform and institutions of service always came from the Church.<sup>168</sup> The argument failed to appreciate the nature of the criticism, but it did highlight how popular the idea had become.

The idea of Jesus as Stranger was another important theme in anti-Church rhetoric. Indeed, it could become a devotional image as much as a prophetic one. The idea was often used to rebuke religion, but also had currency within the churches – albeit in more romanticised terms. Reference to Jesus as ‘the Stranger of Galilee’ seems to have become popular in the late nineteenth century, aided considerably by Leila N. Morris’s hymn of 1893. A Methodist from Ohio, Morris was active in the camp meeting movement and a prolific writer of popular gospel songs. Her hymn recounted imagined encounters with Christ during his earthly ministry, which become personalised when ‘the Stranger’ reveals his hand and ‘riven side’. The conclusion was explicitly evangelistic:

Oh, my friend, won’t you love Him forever?  
So gracious and tender is He!  
Accept Him today as your Saviour,  
This Stranger of Galilee.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> NZH, 2 February 1928, p.13.

<sup>167</sup> See Ken Manley, ‘Shaping the Australian Baptist Movement’. URL: <http://www.bwa-baptist-heritage.org/hic-mnly.htm>, accessed 17 May 2005.

<sup>168</sup> NZMBC *Link*, 24 August 1924, p.1.

<sup>169</sup> Taken from *The Cyber Hymnal*. URL: <http://www.cyberhymnal.org/>, accessed 3 March 2005.

Reflecting on the popularity of Morris's song, the Presbyterian minister and writer of devotional booklets W. Bower Black remarked that the notion was lamentably widespread.<sup>170</sup> It reflected ideas expressed in Bruce Barton's *The Man Nobody Knows*, and demonstrated a worrying lack of certainty about Jesus' identity. According to Black, it highlighted the truth that Jesus was indeed a stranger to the greater part of humanity. This was the Church's fault, because Christians had failed to adequately represent him: 'In some tragic way we have misrepresented our Master, so that many of those round about us have never really seen Him as he is. Neither our preaching nor our living as Church people have set forth Christ in all His strength and fulness of manhood. Men have not got the impression of the real Jesus, the Man Christ Jesus, when they have considered *us*'.<sup>171</sup>

Like Morris's hymn, Black's discussion of Jesus as Stranger ultimately challenged readers to encounter him as Saviour, Friend and Lord.<sup>172</sup> Black argued that the familiar Jesus was a tepid fiction. If people saw him as he really was, rather than as Christians represented him, they would gladly accept Jesus. The real Jesus was not 'gloomy', but

possessed of a marvellous attractiveness for the ordinary man of His day. He mingled in all companies, and He did not criticise these men, though on the other hand He never condoned their sin. He was never demonstrative or gushing. He had the dignity of a strong man. His life was not narrow, but free, spontaneous and glad. He had in Him the constraining force of a great personality.<sup>173</sup>

According to Black's analysis, Christians' own insipid character obfuscated Jesus and impeded commitment to him. This limited support for the churches, which further diminished their influence.

Popularisers like C.G. Scrimgeour also favoured the imagery of the Stranger. After his time with the Methodist mission in Auckland, Scrimgeour became best known as 'Uncle Scrim' through the extraordinarily popular non-denominational 'Friendly Road' radio church on 1ZR. In this, he sought to promote a simple, heartfelt

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<sup>170</sup> W. Bower Black, *The House of Quietness*, Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, 1945, p.58.

<sup>171</sup> Black, *Quietness*, p.59 (original italics).

<sup>172</sup> Black, *Quietness*, pp.60-64.

<sup>173</sup> Black, *Quietness*, p.59.

but non-creedal form of Christianity based on friendliness and goodwill. The church he hoped for was one 'without creed, something that was built in the human heart, something that required of its members no doctrine other than that of love and kindness'.<sup>174</sup> For Scrim, the only test for any creed, idea or philosophy was that urged 'by the Stranger of Galilee many long years ago', who said "'By their fruits ye shall know them" .... One man's meat is often another's poison, and so these differences are called creeds'.<sup>175</sup>

Scrimgeour claimed to have developed a profound dislike for the Bible early in life. He later suggested that he once opened his mother's Bible but found it an 'entirely useless piece of literature, tinted by superstition with a tone of reverence'.<sup>176</sup> According to A.J.S. Reid, Scrimgeour's references to the 'Stranger of Galilee' accorded with his strategy of avoiding the Bible for contemporary effect.<sup>177</sup> It fitted with the folksy and vaguely-defined style of religion he promoted. Perhaps it was also expected to appeal to the semi-itinerant, transient workingman figure that he himself represented. Yet it also served to distance Jesus and true religion from conventional understandings. Scrimgeour constantly espoused the line that churches had veiled the real Jesus. This 'strong, healthy, happy, friendly Jesus' had been hidden for nearly two thousand years 'beneath the dark Cloak of Orthodoxy and almost buried in the tomb of man-made creeds'.<sup>178</sup> Theology's crime was to obscure personality.

Notwithstanding the significant differences between the evangelicalism of Bower Black and the approach adopted by Scrimgeour they were agreed on a number of points. Not least, they concluded that Jesus was inherently attractive, especially when presented as a virile and well-rounded individual. As Scrimgeour noted in 1934, 'Physically, mentally and spiritually He was fully developed'.<sup>179</sup> According to his conception, Jesus was 'not the physical weakling we often see depicted in story books and stained-glass windows'. He was not anemic, but 'must have had sinews of steel to

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<sup>174</sup> *Hello Everybody*, 4, 1935, p.8.

<sup>175</sup> *Hello Everybody*, 2, 1935, p.26.

<sup>176</sup> *Hello Everybody*, 2, 1935, p.4.

<sup>177</sup> A.J.S. Reid, 'Church and State in New Zealand, 1930-35: A Study of the Social Thought and Influence of the Christian Church in a Period of Economic Crisis', MA Thesis in History, Victoria University, 1961, p.144.

<sup>178</sup> *Hello Everybody*, 2, 1935, p.5.

<sup>179</sup> *Observer*, 15 February 1934, cited in Reid, 'Church and State', p.142.

live as He did'. Neither was he a killjoy, but rather a gentleman who always went around doing 'charming things'.<sup>180</sup> Thus, the idea of Jesus as Stranger was allied to calls for more assertive forms of religion, but was also deeply sentimental. It exuded mystery and invited curiosity whilst maintaining that Jesus was knowable. The terminology invariably culminated in some plea for ethical, existential or evangelical commitment to him. There was perhaps some irony in this use of the motif to promote religion given Scrimgeour's uneasy relationship with organised Christianity. However much the Fellowship of the Friendly Road criticised established forms, it still aimed to promote religion rather than abolish it. Scrimgeour's approach responded to populist views, especially as they appeared in working-class circles.

### ***Restorationism and Primitive Christianity***

The use of this language was aided by a revival of primitivism within contemporary Protestant Christianity. Primitivism, or restorationism, describes efforts to recover a Christian faith believed to have been practiced in the first century. These attempts to restore New Testament Christianity generally presumed a fall from primordial rightness that could be reversed in the modern age.<sup>181</sup> In this sense, the primitivist agenda was distinctively Protestant and harked back to Reformation principles. Richard Hughes has demonstrated the enduring impact of primitivism in America, especially from the nineteenth century. The ideas were particularly prominent in smaller sects like the Mormons and Churches of Christ, but also in 'dissenting' Protestant groups like the Brethren, Baptists, and some Methodists. By the late nineteenth century, the primitivist ideal had become widespread. It was an influential force within the mainline denominations, and in some Pentecostal and Fundamentalist groups.<sup>182</sup>

Jesus-centred religion fitted comfortably with this general move to recover pristine forms of New Testament Christianity. Jesus-centred primitivism reprised

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<sup>180</sup> *Hello Everybody*, 2, 1935, p.6.

<sup>181</sup> Richard T. Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of the Churches of Christ in America*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996, pp.1-2; Richard T. Hughes and C. Leonard Allen, *Illusions of Innocence: Protestant Primitivism in America, 1630-1875*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988, pp.1-24.

<sup>182</sup> See Richard T. Hughes (ed.), *The American Quest for the Primitive Church*, Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988.

established themes for a new age and context, incorporating criticisms of the contemporary churches into a discourse of faithfulness. At the opening address to the United Christian Convention in Cambridge, New Zealand, the prominent Baptist revivalist A.S. Wilson commented: 'We have no hesitation, but much sorrow, in saying that the average Christianity of the day is a caricature of that portrayed in the New Testament. Surely we are in the Laodicean age, and it will be well for us to get out of the mind of the age, and get into Christ's mind'.<sup>183</sup> According to Wilson, the convention aimed to provide opportunities to 'confer together about the deep things of God, to recollect ourselves before God and to possess our possessions in Christ'.

Divisions within Christianity were often blamed for the churches' failures, and provided impetus for greater co-operation. Early ecumenists argued that a weakened and divided Church betrayed the teaching of Jesus and Paul. In 1928, L.B. Fletcher's address to the Congregational Union presented Christian union as the best way to face an increasingly cynical 'Christless' world. The current position was one of strong Churchianity but weak Christianity: 'Organised Christianity was never so perfectly organized as it is to-day. It was never so wealthy. It was never so rich in scholarship. It never had such tremendous opportunities for carrying out Christ's commands. Yet it is facing a world seething with discontent at its seeming inability to do more than propagate its own separate denominations'.<sup>184</sup> A.L. Haddon, principal of the Churches of Christ College in Dunedin, became a leading advocate for ecumenism. He spoke widely on the topic, and introduced a course of eighty lectures on 'ecumenics' to his students in 1941. In one popular apologetic for the World Council of Churches he declared, 'The church has been lost'. A divided Church was a defeat, and betrayal of Christian origins. For Haddon, ecclesiology and incarnation were closely allied. Thus, he argued, the invisible unity of the churches in Christ must be made manifest in order for the Church to become 'the bearer of His second incarnation, His mouthpiece, the bodily instrument of his will'.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> A.S. Wilson, *Faith's Fight*, Auckland: Scott & Scott, 1933, p.12.

<sup>184</sup> *NZH*, 9 March 1928, p.11.

<sup>185</sup> A.L. Haddon, *The Coming of the World Church: A Brief Introduction to the Ecumenical Movement*, Wellington: Youth Committee of the New Zealand Council of Religious Education, 1942, p.5.

One way to re-pristiniate religion was to make it less complex. Primitivism idealised simplicity, and often supported the widespread call for less dogmatic forms of religion. Commentators noted that Jesus' wisdom was practical, and confounded intellectual dogmatism and speculation. One writer in the *New Zealand Methodist Times* claimed that the school of life constantly confirmed Jesus: 'Time, which has tested and cast away a thousand theories, has but vindicated Him. The heated eloquence of politicians, the supercilious certainties of the scholarly, the pompous platitudes of the Pharisees had their day.... From them we turn back to the Divine Peasant'. A concluding prayer invoked the simple religion of Jesus:

We turn back to Thee from those experiences which have shattered the system of philosophers and turned the doctrines of the wise to nonsense. How refreshing has been Thy simplicity in those sad days of disillusionment!.... Be Thyself their Leader – consciously and publically [sic] accepted before the eyes of the world, to the dismay of sneering wealth and shocked pietism, Jesus, Son of God, now and for ever the Captain and Friend of all who labour and are heavy-laden! Amen!<sup>186</sup>

Simplicity and anti-intellectualism were occasionally allied with appeals to Nature. C.G. Scrimgeour's 'Friendly Road' approach advanced forms of simple, natural religion as alternatives to dogmatic Christianity:

The God of Theology has caused many people to become discouraged, and to lose touch with the greatest things of life. It is perhaps because they have mis-read the orthodox labels. So, in the unfettered manner of the psalm of the birds and with the simplicity of the flower that grows on the garden wall, we seek to interpret the Great Law of Life.<sup>187</sup>

Devotional literature often emphasised simplicity, and the spirituality of ordinary life. One prayer for housewives in the *Methodist Times* began, 'Jesus, teach me how to be / Proud of my simplicity'. The verse was an appeal for wisdom and spiritual renewal amid the mundane rituals and pressures of domestic life.<sup>188</sup> Other devotional writing presented Jesus as a Galilean peasant wandering the hillsides and finding solace in nature. One article in the missionary magazine *Harvest Field* reflected on Jesus' itinerant healing ministry and found evidence of his being known outside the churches. It went

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<sup>186</sup> NZMT, 13 March 1926, p.13.

<sup>187</sup> *Hello Everybody*, 1936, p.3.

<sup>188</sup> NZMT, 1 June 1929, p.6.

so far as to claim that, in the current time, Christ was present wherever touching hands were healing and blessing.<sup>189</sup>

### ***Disparate Agendas of Reform***

Anti-Churchianity, representation of Jesus as a stranger, and advocacy of simplified religion were all part of the rhetoric associated with the reform of religion. The language did not connote a single approach, however, but was applied in support of a remarkably diverse range of projects. Theological Modernism eschewed homely simplicity, but utilised tools of scholarship and biblical criticism to achieve a strikingly similar effect. The differences between Modernism, Unitarianism and Rationalism were not always great. In attempting to rework orthodox dogma into contemporary idiom, Modernist critiques came closest to those expressed by Rationalist opponents of religion. H.D.A. Major one of the leading figures in the Modernist movement in England. Though Modernism never gained a particularly strong following in New Zealand, Major's work was read and his career followed by at least some leading Rationalists.<sup>190</sup>

Characteristically, Modernist approaches emphasised 'the historical Jesus'. Uncomfortable with a wholly 'other' or miraculous Jesus, notions of immanence were preferred. In *The Gospel of Freedom*, Major articulated a Modernist agenda for reforming the Church. He argued that a conflict existed in Christianity between those who regarded 'the Spirit of Christ as the supreme authority, and those who wish to elevate traditional dogmas, practices, and organisations to an equality with it'.<sup>191</sup> Modernists were evidently the former, and felt duty bound to bring the Church up-to-date. To do so required rethinking dogmatic, institutional and miraculous encumbrances to Christianity, and more productive engagement with personality and ethics.<sup>192</sup> Like other critics, Major claimed that Church leaders, as Pharisees, were impediments to progress. Christ had condemned the Pharisees for not apprehending the signs of the times, and using education to hinder progress: 'they used it to stop development; they

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<sup>189</sup> *Harvest Field*, February 1940, p.10.

<sup>190</sup> For example, Robert Stout's letter to the editor, *ODT*, 5 September 1927; see also Pearson, Davidson and Lineham.

<sup>191</sup> H.D.A. Major, *The Gospel of Freedom*, London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1912, viii.

<sup>192</sup> Major, xi-xii.

used it to quench inspiration; they used it to crush reform, instead, as they might have done, to help it forward'.<sup>193</sup> According to Major, a return to the Christianity of Christ was now needed: 'not the Christianity of the great Church Councils. Not the Christianity of the mediaeval scholastics, not the Christianity of the Lutheran and Calvinist Reformation, but the Christianity of Christ.... Therefore it would seem to be our duty and our wisdom to try to teach our people the Christianity of Christ'.<sup>194</sup>

Social Christians were seldom Modernists as such, but also honed in on ethics and the alleged neglect of Jesus' actual teaching. Groups like the Christian Pacifist Society (CPS) were products of the churches, but critical of them. According to one leading member of the CPS, Ron Howell, churches perpetuated the half-truth that religion was an individual matter between 'a man and his God'. This 'debased the Gospel of Jesus Christ'. He argued that 'The Church, to whose charge has been committed the proclamation of a Gospel which was associated [sic] by its Founder with the bringing of good news to the poor, healing the broken-hearted, freeing the captive and curing the blind, has been guilty of a tragic betrayal'.<sup>195</sup> For Howell, the idea of the Church as betrayer was closely linked to its performance on issues of social morality. However, it was also a matter of character and personal morality, since the Kingdom of God required leaders of 'moral stature'.

Theologically conservative Christians freely conceded that contemporary churches had failed. While their interpretations of the problem differed in some respects, Evangelicals also articulated anti-Church arguments as part of their critique. Poor theology, failure of Christian experience, and waning zeal and fervour were pinpointed as fundamental failings.<sup>196</sup> More specifically, claims of inadequate experience of Jesus, and representation of him, featured prominently. A.S. Wilson was a leader in the Keswick-influenced interwar revival movement in New Zealand and a Baptist minister.<sup>197</sup> Quoting E. Stanley Jones, he argued that 'Our greatest difficulty is

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<sup>193</sup> Major, pp.48-49.

<sup>194</sup> Major, p.49.

<sup>195</sup> Ron Howell, *Christian Pacifism and Social Change*, Auckland: Christian Pacifist Society of New Zealand (Auckland Branch), 1945, pp.22-24.

<sup>196</sup> *Reaper*, March 1928, p.8.

<sup>197</sup> See Douglas E. Ireton, 'O Lord How Long? A Revival Movement in New Zealand 1920-1933', MA Thesis in History, Massey University, 1986.

not *anti-christianity* but this sub-christianity. It takes the facts of Christ's life, His death, His resurrection, but not the living fact of Christ'.<sup>198</sup> Hence, correct theology did not necessarily produce 'true Christianity'. The Congregationalist, Lionel Fletcher held that common disgust at 'double-faced Christians' was a positive thing, since it showed that 'men of the world' understood that such people were not true followers of Jesus.<sup>199</sup> For revivalists, estrangement from Jesus was ethical and dogmatic, but also experiential. In some ways, this aspect of revivalist spirituality promoted distinctively simple, accessible religion. Thus, according to Fletcher, genuine, winsome Christianity simply followed from experiencing the 'person' of Jesus, and appropriating his saving work in a personal way.<sup>200</sup>

Pentecostal Christianity emerged in New Zealand during the interwar years. Though innovative in some respects, the movement was also shaped by a primitivist impulse. Pentecostals were inspired by the New Testament church and interpreted their experiences as a new manifestation of earlier authentic Christianity. Early Pentecostalism was Jesus-centred. He was the means of atonement, but also the centre of the devotional life and source of power for victorious living.<sup>201</sup> Fresh encounter with a personal and living Saviour was transformative, and opened the way for dynamic Christian experience.<sup>202</sup> Yet, early Pentecostalism also gained support, and validity, by criticising more established forms of organised Christianity. Claims that 'dry rot' had infected many churches and leaders were axiomatic among pioneering leaders.<sup>203</sup> By contrast, Pentecostal faith offered a revival of old time religion, as well as personal connection with Jesus and the energy of New Testament Christianity. Some of the movement's greatest influence came through reshaping the experience and commitments of existing churchgoers. Many early 'converts' were drawn from

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<sup>198</sup> A.S. Wilson, *Definite Experience: Convention Aids and Deterrents*, London: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1937, p.53. The quote is from E. Stanley Jones, *The Christ of Every Road: A Study in Pentecost*, New York: Abingdon, 1930.

<sup>199</sup> Lionel B. Fletcher, *The Pathway to the Stars*, London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1933, p.51.

<sup>200</sup> Fletcher, *After Conversion*, pp.9-10.

<sup>201</sup> See Grant Wacker, *Heaven Below: Early Pentecostals and American Culture*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001, pp.87-89.

<sup>202</sup> James E. Worsfold, *The Reverend Gilbert and Mrs Alice White*, Wellington: Julian Literature Trust, 1995, p.27.

<sup>203</sup> See the report of Aimee Semple McPherson's revival meetings, *Dominion*, 28 August 1922, p.6.

evangelical backgrounds.<sup>204</sup> Yet, with the benefit of hindsight, converts from these quarters often dismissed much of their former experience as mere 'churchianity and religiosity'.<sup>205</sup>

A.H. Dallimore was one of the most colourful and controversial of the figures associated with early Pentecostalism in New Zealand.<sup>206</sup> Having spent time in New Zealand in the 1890s, Dallimore was converted in Vancouver by Charles Price, a protégé of the well-known American Pentecostal leader Aimee Semple McPherson. Persuaded to enter the ministry in 1920, he returned to Auckland in 1927 and founded the Revival Fire Mission.<sup>207</sup> Dallimore's mission placed considerable emphasis on healing, and became outstandingly popular. By 1931, his meetings had transferred to the Town Hall. The Mission faltered, however, following public denunciations of his healing activity after investigations led by a committee of ministers, academics and medical representatives late in 1932.

Dallimore's religiosity made Jesus central and his activities were framed as imitating Jesus' historical ministry. Healing was effected by the 'power of Jesus', and attributed to his direct working. There was also a sense in which healing represented the fulfilment of promises Jesus made. This required radical commitment to Jesus that was juxtaposed with the faith of 'the church'. Arguing against the medical establishment, he called for simple Christocentric faith in contrast with prevailing religious patterns: 'If the whole of New Zealand would renounce the entire medical system and turn to Jesus Christ and put a childlike, sincere and simple faith in him, NEW ZEALAND WOULD SEE AN ASTONISHING TRANSFORMATION IN ITS CONDITION OF APPALLING SICKNESS AND MISERY. BUT NOT EVEN THE CHURCH BELIEVES THAT FAR IN JESUS'.<sup>208</sup> The Church's claim that God had raised up doctors, nurses and hospitals was a lie. God had provided Jesus.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> James E. Worsfold, *A History of the Charismatic Movements in New Zealand*, Bradford: Julian Literature Trust, 1974, p.173.

<sup>205</sup> For example, Worsfold, *Gilbert and Alice White*, p.25.

<sup>206</sup> Dallimore has generally been regarded as a Pentecostal, though he insisted that his ministry was independent. See Laurie Guy, 'One of a Kind? The Auckland Ministry of A.H. Dallimore', *Australasian Pentecostal Studies*, 8, 2004, pp.125-45.

<sup>207</sup> Bryan D. Gilling, 'Dallimore, Arthur Henry 1873-1970', *DNZB*, accessed 23 November 2006.

<sup>208</sup> *Revival Fire Monthly*, July 1937, p.3, cited in Guy, 'One of a Kind', p.131 (original emphasis).

<sup>209</sup> *NZB*, December 1932, p.370.

Critics argued that Dallimore's use of biblical texts were 'so outrageous as to amount to sacrilege', and described his ministry as a 'vaudeville show under the cloak of religion'.<sup>210</sup> His approach to Jesus also aroused controversy. Laurie Guy has noted Dallimore's anti-trinitarianism, and that his adoptionist view of Jesus led to increasing conflict with church leaders.<sup>211</sup> His presentation of Jesus as a controversialist and sectarian was also problematic. In 1932, at the height of the debate over his ministry, the *New Zealand Baptist* noted Dallimore's love of calling loudly on the 'wonderful Jesus' to heal people. Yet, it claimed, 'The Dallimore cult are heretics. They deny the central dogma of our faith. They deny the deity of Jesus. It is only by denying his deity and making Him a rebel against the world order, which is of God's appointment, that they can wage war against the use of medical means'.<sup>212</sup> Tellingly, the article argued that 'His Jesus is a rebel against the world that God made.... We do not wonder for a moment that he does not believe in the real deity of Jesus. A man with such a creed could not believe'.

Reaction to Dallimore and his kind notwithstanding, the ministry of healing actually garnered broad support during the same interwar years. For Evangelicals, the ministry of T.W. Ratana had provided evidence that upheld conservative theological belief in the reality of miracles, and therefore the reliability of the New Testament.<sup>213</sup> Even some of Dallimore's most scathing critics claimed to believe firmly in 'divine healing' and regard it as 'indispensable'.<sup>214</sup> The spiritual healing mission of James Moore Hickson in 1923 represented a less theatrical but more respectable and widely acceptable approach. Born in Australia in 1868, Hickson's involvement in the ministry of healing grew greatly after he moved to England in 1897. In 1905, he founded the Society of Emmanuel and began publishing *The Healer* as vehicles to encourage the

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<sup>210</sup> *Press*, 13 December 1932, p.7.

<sup>211</sup> See Laurie Guy, 'Miracles, Messiahs and the Media: the Ministry of A.H. Dallimore in Auckland in the 1930s', in Kate Cooper and Jeremy Gregory (eds), *Signs, Wonders, Miracles: Representations of Divine Power in the Life of the Church*, Woodbridge: Ecclesiastical History Society, 2005, pp.453-63.

<sup>212</sup> *NZB*, December 1932, p.370.

<sup>213</sup> See Fannie Lammas, *How I Was Healed, or A New Zealand Miracle: An Autobiographical Sketch of Miss Fannie Lammas, Nelson New Zealand by Rev Joseph W. Kemp*, Joseph W. Kemp (ed.), Auckland: Tabernacle Bookroom, 1923.

<sup>214</sup> *NZB*, December 1932, p.370.

healing ministry. After World War One, he became a significant figure in the revival of spiritual healing within the Church of England.<sup>215</sup>

Hickson's approach to healing emphasised its basis in gospel Christianity. Hickson consistently highlighted that healing was part of the ministry Jesus exercised, and should therefore be part of Christianity.<sup>216</sup> The argument implied that churches had failed to make it so, and on occasions these criticisms were explicit. He argued, 'The church had been "going slow" for 2000 years and it was high time now that something was done about it'.<sup>217</sup> The contemporary healing ministry was replicating Jesus' work, as true Christianity should: 'I have no more power to heal any more than anyone else.... When Christ formed His Church He made it clear that He intended that the healing work should be continued.... The early Church was a healing Church. What a calamity has befallen the Church since that day.... The Church of Christ will not be a living Church until it is a healing Church'.<sup>218</sup> Perhaps most importantly, healing was held to mediate 'the living presence of the Man of Galilee'.<sup>219</sup> It converted the churches' Jesus from a shibboleth into a personality and 'living spiritual force'.<sup>220</sup>

There is evidence that this incarnational dimension was an important factor in arousing sympathy for Hickson's mission. T.H. Sprott, the cautious and scholarly Anglican bishop of Wellington, claimed to have been reluctant to receive Hickson for fear that his mission might arouse 'undue excitement', disappointment and antagonism to the medical profession.<sup>221</sup> Persuaded against these concerns, Sprott noted that, theologically, the ministry of healing seemed a 'natural corollary' of the recent recovery of Christ's conception of the kingdom of God. Moreover, the emphasis seemed attuned to a postwar age that was less materialistic than its predecessor.<sup>222</sup> The ministry seemed peculiarly fitted to the needs of the age, and could signal a renewal of Christian influence:

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<sup>215</sup> See Stuart Mews, 'The Revival of Spiritual Healing in the Church of England', in W.J. Shiels (ed.), *The Church and Healing*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982, pp.299-331.

<sup>216</sup> *Parish Magazine* (All Saints' Anglican Church, Palmerston North), 4 October 1923, p.12.

<sup>217</sup> *NZH*, 8 October 1923, p.9.

<sup>218</sup> *Dominion*, 6 November 1923, p.9; cf. *Parish Magazine*, 4 October 1923, p.19.

<sup>219</sup> *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 24 October 1923, p.4; cf. *EP*, 6 November 1923, p.8.

<sup>220</sup> *Parish Magazine*, 8 November 1923, pp.20-21.

<sup>221</sup> *Proceedings of the Diocesan Synod of the Diocese of Wellington*, 1923, pp.48-49.

<sup>222</sup> *Proceedings of the Diocesan Synod of the Diocese of Wellington*, 1923, p.56.

The Church confronts the new age, and she confronts it with her more adequate conception of the Kingdom of God. Is it mere fancy that it may be the purpose of God that, just as the first proclamation of the Kingdom by Christ and His Apostles was accompanied by a Ministry of Healing, so the re-proclamation of the Kingdom to the new age should be accompanied by a revived Ministry of Healing? I confess it seems to me more than fancy. I think that this may be one of the ways by which the Gospel of the Kingdom is once again to come with power to the hearts of men.<sup>223</sup>

In Christchurch, Bishop Churchill Julius commented that the mission had helped to break through the 'crust of our traditions and conventions', providing a fuller revelation of Christ as the 'Saviour of men, and not souls only'.<sup>224</sup>

The anti-Church Jesus was a mode of argumentation. It gained much by referring to Jesus' humanity and personality – and all that those terms connoted. However, the primary targets were actually 'the Church', 'religion', and 'institutions'. These were also the subjects of the discourse as much if not more than Jesus was. Yet, it was significant that personality in general, and the personality of Jesus in particular, carried so much authority in these debates. Similarly, the diverse contexts in which the image emerged, and uses to which it was put, were striking.

The approaches to Jesus identified in this chapter must be seen as a discourse of reform. Proponents of 'unconventional' representations used Jesus to project alternative visions for the future of religion and society. Some anti-Church discourse used Jesus to bolster radical social and political reform. It was also used to seek the destruction of the churches, ironically using their own language. For the churches, the anti-Church Jesus was also a symbol of necessary change. Part of this was a search for influence on all sides in which notions of power were fundamental. Jesus was especially popular among groups that felt their agenda was marginal to the centres of power. Indeed, the smaller or more threatened the group the more intense and sharply focused the argument became. Definitions of mainstream religion could vary, and differentiation from it was always a matter of one's perspective. However, positions of marginality and relative lack of power appealed to an underdog instinct. To be effective, the rhetoric depended on disaffection with organised religion. In some

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<sup>223</sup> *Proceedings of the Diocesan Synod of the Diocese of Wellington, 1923*, pp.56-57.

<sup>224</sup> *Church News*, April 1924, p.3.

quarters, criticism followed from a perception that churches were bastions of power. Perhaps this was the greatest weakness of the critique, since the churches in New Zealand were never as powerful as the rhetoric suggested. Indeed, for those who used anti-Church rhetoric as part of a process of internal reform, the perception of limited and weakening religious influence within society was one of the greatest motivating factors.

Clearly, there were social and political dimensions to the rise of Jesus as an icon of anti-Church sentiment. For all this, the language needs to be understood as a specifically religious mode of argumentation. That non-Church and anti-Church images circulated so widely suggests that credibility was attached to Jesus' life. Jesus was central to Christian identity and belief, which makes the compulsion to incorporate him in arguments for reform significant. In some senses, the anti-Church Jesus represented the logic of Protestantism at work. It was an aspect of Jesus-centred religiosity and argumentation that cohered with Protestant values. The critique of ecclesiology it offered would scarcely have been imaginable within Catholicism. Perhaps the anti-Church Jesus also demonstrated that Romanticism supplied the primary alternative to more conventional religious discourse.

## CHAPTER THREE

# THE SOCIAL CAMPAIGNER

Jesus the anti-Church prophet was also a social campaigner. From the late nineteenth century, changing social structures led to widespread concerns about social problems and the emergence of sociological analysis. Problems and proposals for reform were debated in New Zealand as elsewhere. Jesus was invoked in these deliberations in numerous ways and for a variety of purposes. This chapter assesses four main contexts in which this occurred. It begins by considering the place of Jesus in social Christianity, from the 1890s to about 1920. A second area relates to discourses of labour, unionism and socialism, which are assessed over the same timeframe. In addition to the anti-Church representations that have already been discussed, a range of other images were also advanced in support of the disparate agendas within these movements. The third context concerns Catholic social teaching, which consistently opposed socialism but also underwent significant changes between 1890 and 1940. A final section addresses Jesus in the social gospel of interwar Protestant Christianity.

The Jesus of social campaigning reflected a general sense of upheaval within society. More specifically, representations indicated the pressures that different constituencies felt. Social disharmony threatened church leaders' visions of a Christian society, while some also feared the competing influence of labour. On the other hand, the position of labour was far from assured. Attempts to enlist Jesus to the labour cause arguably reflected the movement's fractured nature and its need of internal stability. A socialist Jesus provided a retort to conservative critics. He was also attractive to religious workers. While this language did not necessarily amount to Jesus-centred religiosity, it did cohere with the religious tone in society. In general, Jesus was enlisted as a moral symbol, particularly through discourses of brotherhood, ethics and righteous opposition. But association with Jesus lent moral strength to competing social ideals. The ubiquity of appeals to him demonstrated Jesus' importance as a cultural reference. It also highlighted that Jesus language could have rhetorical force and wide circulation, but limited content or influence.

## SOCIAL CHRISTIANITY AND MORAL CAMPAIGNING

Attempts to Christianise the social order incorporated a range of strategies. Social Christianity, which had become a feature of Protestant Christianity in the late nineteenth century, included engagement based on traditional principles, as well as efforts to reinterpret the Christian message in more sociological terms. Its growth was concomitant with the rise of labour, new social thinking, and processes of industrialisation and urbanisation. However, Paul Phillips has argued that the social Christianity of this period was not simply a religious articulation of secular trends. Though informed by secular social thought, it was primarily a religious movement.<sup>1</sup> As such, social Christianity was animated by religious concepts and a distinctive religious vocabulary gave it coherence.

Jesus featured prominently in this common language. The doctrine of the Incarnation was a fundamental tenet. Yet, emphasis on the Incarnation did not produce a consistent Christology.<sup>2</sup> It often led to emphasis on Jesus' humanity, but not always. It could entail questioning or reformulation of Jesus' divinity, but not necessarily. However, the fatherhood of God, the humanity of Jesus, and the brotherhood of humanity were all central concepts that featured in expressions of social Christianity. The Incarnation was viewed as having established a kind of kinship between God and humanity. Heightened sensitivity to God's immanence blurred the line between sacred and secular and encouraged a sense of social responsibility.

The Kingdom of God also featured prominently. The concept was drawn from Jesus' teaching and that provenance gave it stature and credibility. Echoing ideas developed by Charles Kingsley and F.D. Maurice in the mid-nineteenth century, the Kingdom was interpreted in ethical terms and the Sermon on the Mount given special status. Social Christians prioritised the human element in society anticipating that this focus would improve social harmony. Applied socially, Christ's teaching provided a means to Christianise communities and thus realise the Kingdom of God. All of this

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<sup>1</sup> Paul T. Phillips, *A Kingdom on Earth: Anglo-American Social Christianity, 1880-1940*, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996, esp. xxiv-xxv.

<sup>2</sup> Janet Forsythe Fishburn, *The Fatherhood of God and the Victorian Family: The Social Gospel in America*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981, pp.145-49.

was thought achievable in the immediate future. Christ was an optimist, and the Church's history of social endeavour inspired confidence about its prospects.<sup>3</sup>

However, the ideas informing social Christianity were not only derived from religious sources. A new world context of nations and state building helped shape the intellectual climate. More specific influences like social Darwinism,<sup>4</sup> the sociology of August Comte and his 'religion of humanity', and Hegelian idealism and notions of organic unity were also important.<sup>5</sup> Together these factors strengthened interest in society as a unit of analysis rather than humanity as an aggregation of individuals. Jesus played a crucial role in linking social thinking with religion. He exemplified the ethical individual life, even as his life and teaching were cast as the means of redemption for society as a whole. As the leading British Wesleyan reformer Hugh Price Hughes had argued, 'Jesus Christ came into this world to save human society as well as to save individuals'.<sup>6</sup>

### ***Social Christianity as a Conservative Force***

In general, the goals and social analysis associated with early twentieth-century social Christianity were characteristically conservative. Beyond sometimes radical-sounding language, the social Jesus was often linked to social improvement through the individual rather than reordering of economic and political systems. Moral and evangelistic considerations were pivotal. On the one hand, the social Jesus encouraged conversion. On the other, he championed the personal ethics that would improve the social order. Social Christians sometimes added that the Incarnation created the Church, which was a great force for social good. Thus, the Australasian Student Christian Union was reminded,

No doubt our Lord Jesus Christ was the highest example; no doubt He was the greatest teacher. No doubt His words ought to form the rule of life. But the Incarnation means a good deal more than that. It means, amongst other things,

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<sup>3</sup> On optimism, see Alan Wilkinson, *Christian Socialism: Scott Holland to Tony Blair*, London: SCM, 1998, p.245; cf. A.H. Collins, *How Far and Why Have the Churches Failed? A Sermon Preached in the Ponsonby Baptist Church, Sunday Morning, February 5, 1899*, Auckland: Wright & Jaques Printers, 1899, pp.10-11; YCU, 1903, pp.50-51; PGA, 1932, pp.98-99.

<sup>4</sup> Fishburn, p.6.

<sup>5</sup> Phillips, *Kingdom on Earth*, pp.3, 10-11, 20.

<sup>6</sup> H.P. Hughes, *Social Christianity*, London, 1889, p.54, cited in K.S. Inglis, 'English Nonconformity and Social Reform, 1880-1900', *Past & Present*, 13, 1958, p.74.

that Christ took human nature and perfected it, and in that perfect human nature all members of the Christian Church are united.... The life of Christ working in the life of men is the most effective force in social regeneration.<sup>7</sup>

Writing of the British context, David Bebbington has argued that the late nineteenth-century social gospel was grounded in evangelicalism, and reflected the difficulties of urban mission. In his interpretation, 'The social gospel was an evangelistic strategy for reaching the working classes'.<sup>8</sup> In New Zealand as in Britain, the Protestant churches quite naturally blended social and evangelistic concerns. Thus, the Rev. F.C. Spurr argued that Jesus' social programme included the Atonement as well as the principles of the Lord's Prayer and Luke chapter four. Therefore, he urged, 'We must proclaim the whole Gospel for soul, body, and society.... Let us receive Christ as our own personal Redeemer and Lord, and then preach Him to the whole world'.<sup>9</sup>

Social gospel language operated functionally as part of efforts to reach the working classes and increase church attendance. A series of meetings for working men in Dunedin were said to have been undergirded by mutual recognition of 'the Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Jesus'. However, when Mr G. Laurensen, M.H.R., addressed the initial gathering of on 'The Supreme Need of New Zealand' his message was essentially evangelistic. It argued that true happiness proceeded not from legislation only but 'recognition of the saving power of Jesus Christ'.<sup>10</sup> Similarly, in 1906, J.T.M. Hornsby of Carterton employed standard anti-Church rhetoric in advising readers of the *Evening Post* on the best method of reaching 'the non-churchgoer': 'Whip the money-changers and the Holy Willies out of the Temple, preach and teach the Gospel of Jesus Christ – the Socialism of Jesus and the brotherhood of man – and, once again, the "common people will hear him gladly."<sup>11</sup>

Broader attempts to address social conditions also betrayed this evangelistic agenda. Addressing the Congregational Union in 1901, the Rev. J. Reed Glasson

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<sup>7</sup> *Jesus Christ and Social Need: Addresses Delivered at the Conferences of the Australasian Student Christian Union - 1911-1912*, Melbourne: Student Movement Press, 1912, pp.10-11.

<sup>8</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p.212.

<sup>9</sup> See *Jesus Christ and Social Need*, pp.23-24, quote p.24.

<sup>10</sup> *Outlook*, 2 June 1906, p.45.

<sup>11</sup> *EP*, 5 May 1906, p.9.

surveyed the characteristics of the age, and especially 'the growing social spirit'.<sup>12</sup> Glasson was generally considered progressive, and a keen supporter of Church Union.<sup>13</sup> Yet, his conclusions were rather conventional. Glasson argued that 'The mission of Christ and of His Church' in this context was both 'religious and social'. Primarily, however, it was 'to save the individual man, to bring man to God, to reconcile the alienated and sinful child to his Father. It has been said that Christ discovered the individual'. Christ used personal and spiritual methods to influence society: 'He took a few simple men.... Not so much to lead in social reform, as to inspire and train the men.... This is what is wanted. All the age's need is included in this: God intoxicated men – Christ filled men'.<sup>14</sup>

Conservative social analysis remained evident even where discussions were less explicitly evangelistic. Thus, J.J. North argued in 1905 that brotherhood and social reform were essentially Christian, deriving as they did from Christ's life and teaching: 'Social activities date from Nazareth.... Christ changed the world's climate. Ours is an age of wide philanthropies, of tender mercies, and of social sympathies. And this is of Christ'.<sup>15</sup> However, North's aim was primarily to counter perceived threats to the churches' influence. His apologetic claimed that the Church had historically led social reform because it followed Christ's teaching. Christ's own self-sacrifice was the best model for change: 'the world must either let go its social enthusiasms or return again to Jesus Christ. Selfishness is pressing very fiercely against the enlightened conscience'.<sup>16</sup> Significantly, North's message also warned about the limits of humanising theology: 'It is not the manhood of a Jesus long since dead alone that feeds the fires of Christian love. It is His Godhead also'.<sup>17</sup>

A.S. Adams, another prominent Baptist and seven-times president of the New Zealand Alliance, advocated similar ideas. Like North, he celebrated self-sacrificing Christian heroism and the epoch-making reform led by those 'inspired by the spirit of

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<sup>12</sup> See YCU, 1901, pp.38-51.

<sup>13</sup> J.B. Chambers, *'A Peculiar People': Congregationalism in New Zealand, 1840-1984*, Wellington: Congregational Union, 1984, p.66.

<sup>14</sup> YCU, 1901, pp.48, 50-51.

<sup>15</sup> J.J. North, *The Socialism of Jesus: An Argument*, Christchurch: T.E. Fraser, 1905, p.4.

<sup>16</sup> North, *Socialism*, p.6.

<sup>17</sup> North, *Socialism*, p.15.

the Saviour of men'.<sup>18</sup> He affirmed the centrality of Jesus' commands to love God and neighbour, arguing that 'There is no question affecting the social conditions of the people which cannot be explained and illustrated by the light of the moral teachings of Jesus'.<sup>19</sup> Yet, Adams' also seemed more concerned with the churches' social influence than sociological analysis of structures and problems. He hoped for a revival of Christian citizenship based on Jesus' teaching. Democracy was practical brotherhood, but Christ's teaching was also a way to retain 'influence and power over men'.<sup>20</sup> While Adams and North appeared progressive in some respects, their social analysis retained an emphasis on individual responsibility that was typical of older nonconformity.

Appeals to Jesus also addressed concerns about stability and social order, especially in response to the confrontational methods of militant labour and Red Fed-ism. In this context, Jesus' socialism was sometimes described in terms of the kind of even-handed moderation that would alleviate industrial conflict.<sup>21</sup> Though himself 'a workman' and a 'unionist to the backbone, on principle', J. Fuller argued that Christians should remain impartial in the struggle between capital and labour.<sup>22</sup> Jesus was 'the greatest socialist that ever lived'; in the principle of 'do unto others' he had given 'the highest ideal of socialism the world has known'. Yet, whatever criticisms Jesus might make of modern industrial society, his teaching boiled down to treating others well, doing a fair day's work and taking pride in your work.<sup>23</sup>

Similar arguments appeared in support of some more definite political programmes. George W. Fowlds was a high profile Congregationalist who served as a Member of the House of Representatives for the Liberals from 1899. He gained a reputation as a left-wing member prior to his resignation in 1911. Frustrated at the slow rate of progress, he thereafter campaigned unsuccessfully for a programme of

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<sup>18</sup> A.S. Adams, *The Relation of the Church to the Social Problems of the Age. Presidential Address Delivered at the Conference of the N.Z. Baptist Union, Wanganui, 1906*, Christchurch: T.E. Fraser, 1906, p.5.

<sup>19</sup> Adams, *Relation*, pp.8-9.

<sup>20</sup> Adams, *Relation*, pp.4, 9.

<sup>21</sup> J. Fuller, *Christian Socialism in the Industrial World: How We Can Abolish Industrial Warfare For Ever*, Auckland: Phipps & Hall, 1914.

<sup>22</sup> Fuller, pp.8, 11.

<sup>23</sup> Fuller, pp.8-10.

social and economic reform dubbed the 'New Evangel'.<sup>24</sup> In an address to the Congregational Union, Fowlds argued that the social and political engagement of Christians was essential to social cohesion. Militant suffragists and the labour movement fought worthwhile causes, but their 'absurd and anarchical' methods and 'anti-Christian' spirit were socially disruptive.<sup>25</sup> Yet, Christians had departed from the 'the teaching of Jesus' and the 'Christianity of Christ', which he defined as 'justice and human brotherhood... an impartial equality of opportunity for all'.<sup>26</sup> Political timidity had created a 'drift toward anarchy'. Fowlds urged the churches to include economic and political issues in their conceptualisation of morality, lest they 'degenerate into a pietistic social coterie'.<sup>27</sup> Broad application of Christ's moral teaching was necessary to prevent social disorder.

### ***Social Christianity and Progressive Values***

Some forms of social Christianity were more closely associated with progressive values and liberal theology. In these, Christianity was consciously adapted to cohere with contemporary thinking and conditions. Progressive forms exemplified the moral optimism of late nineteenth-century liberalism. Jesus figured prominently as principles of social thinking were related to his exemplary life.

The Forward Movement organised in Wellington by the Congregationalist minister the Rev. William A. Evans, with his counterpart the Rev. G.H. Bradbury, illustrates the flavour of late nineteenth-century progressive social Christianity. Begun in May 1893, the non-denominational movement was an attempt to respond to workers' needs along lines suggested by the settlement movement in London that gave rise to institutions like Toynbee Hall. The settlements encouraged wealthier educated citizens to live among the poor in order to help them. Social egalitarianism was promoted, and the social and environmental causes of poverty were emphasised rather than individual moral failings. Evans' Forward Movement was partly founded out of frustration at the limitations that conventional sectarian-based parish ministry placed

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<sup>24</sup> See George Fowlds, *The New Evangel: An Address*, Auckland: N.Z. Land Values' League, 1911.

<sup>25</sup> George Fowlds, *The Drift Towards Anarchy: Its Causes and Cure*, Auckland: Wright & Jaques Printers, 1914, pp.2-3.

<sup>26</sup> Fowlds, *Drift*, p.5.

<sup>27</sup> Fowlds, *Drift*, p.4.

on opportunities for service.<sup>28</sup> He described his movement as 'a faithful attempt to bring the cardinal principles of Christianity, as conceived and interpreted by its best exponents, to bear on the complex conditions of modern society'.<sup>29</sup> The organisation gathered momentum and briefly supported a journal, *The Citizen*, with the backing of civic leaders.

From the outset, Evans insisted that the Forward Movement was a modern form of evangelicalism. By this he meant that it considered 'man as a member of a body, and not as a mere individual', was humanitarian, and animated by 'the spirit of Jesus Christ'.

The Forward Movement is the expression in modern times of the true Evangelical faith. It affirms the fatherhood of God, and the sonship of man, irrespective of nationality or sex. It maintains therefore the brotherhood of man; it accentuates the law of service as the law of life; it asserts that rights and duties are correlative terms, either of which cannot be separated from the other without the essence of both being destroyed; that man is above things, and should control and determine them, not be controlled and determined by them. It comprehends, therefore, all spheres within which man operates, and claims that all thought and action should be determined by the spirit of Jesus Christ.<sup>30</sup>

Jesus was touted as the 'supreme authority'.<sup>31</sup> This authority was personal rather than doctrinal, and ethical in the sense that the good of Christ's subjects were his highest aim. Christianity was only evangelical when it conformed to his spirit and teaching.

Evans' Christology owed a debt to Hegelianism. Thus, Christ's genius lay in his ability to co-ordinate the 'energies of personality' and harmonise himself with the facts of the world – to discover the unity that binds the subject to the world as object. Assessing Jesus' ministry he argued, 'In the days of Christ, as to a very great extent in our own times, that unity was lost. ... Jesus Christ reversed the process. Instead of analysis he employed synthesis. Instead of emptying the world of its meaning by the process of excluding all differences, he grasped in one conception all these differences and brought them under one supreme principle'.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> *The Cyclopaedia of New Zealand*, vol. 1, Wellington: Cyclopaedia Company, 1897, p.407.

<sup>29</sup> *Citizen*, September 1895, p.1.

<sup>30</sup> *Citizen*, September 1895, p.1.

<sup>31</sup> See W.A. Evans, 'The Basis of Authority', *YCU*, 1903, pp.45-57.

<sup>32</sup> *Citizen*, January 1896, pp.203-4; Evans, 'Basis of Authority', p.50.

The relationship between religion and State was interpreted using Hegelian conceptions of the State as organism, which fitted comfortably with trajectories in liberal-labour politics. Recognition of man's essentially social nature in the modern State marked a transition from individualism to socialism, conceived as a revolutionary emphasis on 'the common life'.<sup>33</sup> For Evans, Church and State were complementary players in a moral project. The State organised social relations, creating the conditions where people could realise 'the moral ideal'. The Church simply embodied and articulated religion 'as unfolded and realised in the person of Christ'.<sup>34</sup> As 'the highest concrete embodiment of will', the State was based on the authority of Christ. Christian participation was necessary to 'make Christ's authority supreme in all its institutions'.<sup>35</sup> To Evans, contemporary industrial conflict marked a transitional period in the process of moralising property. Moreover, Christ was in the labour movement, which obliged Christians 'to sympathise with it, to understand it, and in His Spirit to guide it in the line of man's highest good'.<sup>36</sup>

Evans hoped the Forward Movement would forge a new, unified, and distinctly Christian view of society.<sup>37</sup> However, the search for a broad consensus embraced some rather un-evangelical positions, despite a certain commonality of language. There was little interest in espousing creedal Christianity, and the movement included Rationalists, Unitarians, and others with few obvious religious commitments. In its short life, *The Citizen* published an eclectic range of essays. One, by Evans' sister-in-law Lilian Edger, sought to downplay criticisms that Theosophy was too abstruse and dreamy to aid social reform by pointing to its central teaching: 'the universal brotherhood of man, a brotherhood which depends on unity of essence, all being animated by the same spirit, all being, as it were, rays from the one Divine Source'.<sup>38</sup>

The movement was initially conceived as an un-sectarian body of workers and a society of 'mutual helpfulness'. However, there was something of a disjunction between vision and practice. A Mutual Help Society offered some assistance, but most

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<sup>33</sup> *Citizen*, January 1896, p.207.

<sup>34</sup> *Citizen*, January 1896, p.210-11.

<sup>35</sup> Evans, 'Basis of Authority', p.56.

<sup>36</sup> Evans, 'Basis of Authority', p.56.

<sup>37</sup> Evans, 'Basis of Authority', p.51.

<sup>38</sup> *Citizen*, February 1896, p.248.

of the philanthropic social work of the movement fell to Evans himself.<sup>39</sup> The most popular activity was a Literary Society and Evans clearly delighted in the 'literati' who gathered around him.<sup>40</sup> The movement encouraged intellectual experimentation, and according to Tim Beaglehole its classes were effectively a forerunner to the foundation of a university college in Wellington.<sup>41</sup> It was also ultimately unsustainable. In 1904, Evans returned to parish ministry in the working-class community of Newtown where he served the Congregational Church until 1921.<sup>42</sup> This move provided greater financial security, since the role with the Forward Movement had not been salaried. Despite earlier reservations about such ministry, he exercised considerable influence there and within the wider Church. This influence, and the growth of his parish, suggests that a constituency for progressive social Christianity existed. His endeavours demonstrated that concern to reach the working classes provided an important motivation, but also that notions of social morality were a central priority for social Christians of various kinds.

### ***Moral Campaigning and the Prohibition Movement***

This moral priority, and the conservative nature of early social Christianity, was most clearly reflected in the alignment between social Christianity and moral campaigning. David Bebbington has noted that British nonconformists became preoccupied with tackling social problems, often perceiving moral malaise at the root of social evils.<sup>43</sup> In New Zealand, the perception of a moral basis to the 'social crisis' was also common. The tendency to mobilise on social issues where moral causes could be ascribed has led to identification of moral campaigning as a central religious response. According to James Belich, 'moral evangelism' was a feature of broader harmonising processes

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<sup>39</sup> Tim Beaglehole, *A Life of J.C. Beaglehole: New Zealand Scholar*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2006, p.34.

<sup>40</sup> *Cyclopedia*, vol. 1, p.406; *Citizen*, September 1895, pp.35-37. This included Sir Robert Stout, the socialist Christian A.R. Atkinson, and the Hon. T.W. Hislop.

<sup>41</sup> Beaglehole, p.34.

<sup>42</sup> J.N. Moller, *Newtown Congregational Church, Jubilee of Church 1898-1948: Souvenir Programme*, Wellington: Newtown Congregational Church, 1948, p.2.

<sup>43</sup> D.W. Bebbington, *The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics, 1870-1914*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982, pp.37-38.

within New Zealand from the late nineteenth century.<sup>44</sup> It rested on the perception that social problems reflected moral failing. The social fabric was woven from private virtue, which suggested that these problems were also religious ones.

The campaign for the prohibition of alcohol was the most prominent social campaign of the early twentieth century. For its opponents, the liquor trade was the central vice of the age, and the cause of most social problems. Indeed, the prohibition movement has been interpreted in a social purity framework, wherein elimination of intoxicating substances from the body presaged analogous processes within society.<sup>45</sup> Campaigns had been conducted previously. However, the 1881 Licensing Act, which gave effect to the principle of local control, provided a fillip to temperance supporters and marked the beginning of an era of significant agitation. Protestant churches took the leading role. Some secularists like Robert Stout advocated prohibition on the basis of appeals to the public good. The movement also held together a disparate range of theological and political strands that fitted within the rubric of social Christianity. However, support was arguably strongest in the denominations with a heritage of independent activism, and where evangelical and pietistic traditions were most pronounced. Thus, Presbyterians, Methodists, and other smaller Protestant churches were largely favourable, while there was less support among Anglicans and Roman Catholics.<sup>46</sup>

For supporting churches, prohibition promised to improve morality and social conditions, and help Christianise society. Temperance campaigning was often hailed as spiritual work, since alcohol and its associated vices hindered the work of the gospel. Thus, J.G. Woolley urged Christians to 'wake up' and fight alcohol because it was harmful to salvation.<sup>47</sup> Other campaigners argued that prohibition would improve the churches and uplift the moral tone in the community. It was not sentimental, but entailed 'removal of a stumbling block out of the way of Christ's kingdom', and

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<sup>44</sup> Belich, pp.121-25, 157-88.

<sup>45</sup> Sarah Dalton, 'The Pure in Heart: The New Zealand Women's Christian Temperance Union and Social Purity, 1885-1930', MA Thesis in History, Victoria University of Wellington, 1993, p.1.

<sup>46</sup> Though on Catholic Temperance activity, see MacPherson, pp.97-103.

<sup>47</sup> *White Ribbon*, 13:161, 1908, p.2.

preserving many from death.<sup>48</sup> In 1898, a range of church representatives attended a prohibition convention in Palmerston North. Speaking as President of the Primitive Methodist Conference, the Rev. J. Dawson claimed that destruction of the liquor traffic was 'one of the most honest, patriotic and philanthropic enterprises ever espoused by the followers of Jesus Christ'.<sup>49</sup> In other contexts, the movement was conceived in almost eschatological terms. Its ultimate success would usher in a 'universal reign of righteousness'.<sup>50</sup>

Temperance campaigning was popular among evangelicals. Despite this connection, and a desire to justify the campaign on biblical grounds, Jesus occupied an ambivalent space in the movement's rhetoric. Anthony Grigg has argued that the biblical grounds for promoting prohibition were in flux by the late nineteenth century; a fashion for differentiating between unfermented and intoxicating wines in the Bible was waning, while the teaching of St Paul became increasingly central.<sup>51</sup> In fact, later literature still contested the alcohol content of wine in biblical times though Pauline teaching did become prominent. The principle of the 'strong and the weak' in Romans 14 explicitly included a reference to wine, and became an important statement of the case for total abstinence.<sup>52</sup> Though broadly applicable, the principle seemed particularly apt for the problem of liquor.

Nonetheless, Jesus did appear in prohibition discourse. Various resolutions and pronouncements of the churches asserted that total abstinence would advance religion's cause. According to the Council of the Congregational Churches, 'the Liquor Traffic' was one of the 'greatest hindrances to the progress of the religion of Jesus Christ'. In 1908, the Primitive Methodist Conference declared its sympathy with efforts to 'destroy the liquor traffic', and urged people 'to work and pray for the removal of this obstacle to the spreading of the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ'.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *Outlook*, 27 June 1908, p.20.

<sup>49</sup> *Prohibition! Opinions of Experts! Papers Read at the Palmerston North Convention on May 24th and 25th, 1898*, Palmerston North: Hart & Keeling Printers, 1898, p.4.

<sup>50</sup> *White Ribbon*, 20:234, 1914, p.12.

<sup>51</sup> Anthony R. Grigg, 'The Attack on the Citadels of Liquordom: A Study of the Prohibition Movement in New Zealand, 1894-1914', PhD Thesis in History, University of Otago, 1977, p.75.

<sup>52</sup> George Dash (ed.), *No-License Handbook*, Auckland: Louis P. Christie, for the New Zealand Alliance, 1908, p.58; also *Outlook*, 22 July 1899, p.4.

<sup>53</sup> Dash (ed.), pp.75, 77.

Prohibitionists presented their movement as the fulfilment of Jesus' teaching. Echoing Matthew 25, the Temperance Committee of the Presbyterian Church argued that total abstinence and no-license would 'feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and prevent men and women making wrecks of their lives on the rocks of intemperance'.<sup>54</sup> In 1928, the Rev. J.R. Blanchard's address on the 'radicalism of Jesus' attacked alcohol as a 'menace to the purity of our political life'. Using the gospel text 'every plant which my Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up' he highlighted alcohol's detrimental effects – primarily on the young.<sup>55</sup> Similarly, T.J. Wills claimed that the only test of alcohol's worth was that given by Christ himself: 'The tree is known by its fruit'. While alcohol had use in the world of science, as a beverage it was a social evil.<sup>56</sup>

Prohibitionists referred to Jesus in ways typical of social Christianity, especially at the level of principle. Thus, the ideals of brotherhood, care for the weak, self-control and self-denial that funded social reform all derived from him. Wills accepted the Bible as the 'Word of God', but deplored its abuse in prohibition debates – primarily in the neglect of its principles: 'We marvel at the undue prominence given to Bible references to wine in support of the drinking customs of Society, while the deep, broad principles of God's being and government are so often forgotten'.<sup>57</sup> Temperance principles, including prohibition, were based upon 'the broad facts of Divine-Human relationships. God is our Father: all we are brethren-Brotherhood.... Christian duty is binding; the stumbling-block must be taken up out of the way, the weak brother's burden must be lifted – all this in fulfilment of the law of Christ. Mark: *The law of Christ*'.<sup>58</sup>

This appeal to principles became axiomatic. The New Zealand Alliance was founded in 1886 and became the prohibition movement's leading organisation and mouthpiece. Its *No-License Handbook* admitted that Scripture sanctioned the use of intoxicating drink, especially 'by Christ's example, by the miracle at Cana, by the

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<sup>54</sup> PGA, 1902, pp.148-49; cf. Matthew 25:31-46.

<sup>55</sup> *Outlook*, 2 January 1928, pp.17, 19; cf. Matthew 15:11-13. Ironically, this text describes Jesus responding to the Pharisees' offence at his claim that 'What goes into a man's mouth does not make him "unclean", but what comes out of his mouth, that is what makes him "unclean".'

<sup>56</sup> T.J. Wills, *The Church and the Liquor Traffic*, Christchurch: T.E. Fraser, 1894, p.18.

<sup>57</sup> Wills, *Liquor Traffic*, p.14.

<sup>58</sup> Wills, *Liquor Traffic*, pp.18-19 (original italics).

Lord's Supper, and by St. Paul's advice to Timothy'. However, the Bible was upheld and understood as a 'unique record of man's progressive apprehension of God'. Jesus did not issue direct commandments, like those of the old Law, but laid down principles to be applied. The *Handbook* claimed that Jesus' emphasis on the infinite value of the human soul had been the starting principle of historical social reforms including the abolition of slavery. Opposition to the liquor trade was consistent with 'the mind and spirit of Him who said: "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me." Self-sacrifice for the sake of others is the norm of Christian ethics'.<sup>59</sup>

Nonetheless, opponents' appeals to Jesus posed significant problems. Catholic ambivalence to prohibition was partly based on sectarian, sociological and demographic factors related to occupation and class. However, sacramental use of fermented wine was also an issue.<sup>60</sup> Whereas many Protestant groups used unfermented wine at the communion service, the Catholic position on Mass was less adaptable. Catholics argued that use of wine was necessary to faithful observance of the tradition inaugurated by Jesus: 'The Catholic Church... insists strictly on the requirements of the ordinance as instituted by the Lord Himself; and for the purpose of the Mass the fermented juice of the grape must be used'.<sup>61</sup> Concerned that prohibitionists would ultimately deny the use of wine for sacramental and medicinal purposes, Archbishop Redwood petitioned Catholic clergy to urge parishioners to oppose national prohibition.<sup>62</sup> Those Catholics who did support prohibition, like Bishop Cleary of Auckland, tended to argue on the basis of alcohol's detrimental social effects.<sup>63</sup>

In 1911, the national election included a national licensing poll for the first time.<sup>64</sup> With this forthcoming poll in view, Professor William Salmond launched a

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<sup>59</sup> Dash (ed.), p.58.

<sup>60</sup> Grigg, 'Attack', pp.82-84.

<sup>61</sup> *NZ Tablet*, 30 November 1911, p.2409.

<sup>62</sup> *NZ Tablet*, 7 December 1911, p.2479.

<sup>63</sup> J. Cocker and J. Malton Murray (eds), *Temperance and Prohibition in New Zealand*, London: Epworth Press, 1930, p.161; *NZ Tablet*, 15 August 1918, pp.15-16; *NZ Tablet*, 10 April 1919, pp.25-26.

<sup>64</sup> In proportional terms, the result of the 1911 poll represented the high point of support for prohibition in New Zealand

withering attack on the prohibition movement.<sup>65</sup> As Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy at the University of Otago, Salmond's opinions carried weight. His booklet stimulated a spirited response, including replies by A.S. Adams and the Rev. A. Wood for the New Zealand Alliance.<sup>66</sup> James Cocker later claimed that the output of literature during the 1911 campaign 'has never been equalled for quality and quantity during any other Prohibition fight in the Dominion'.<sup>67</sup> The arguments on each side were exemplary.

Salmond's attack incorporated moral, philosophical and practical objections, but his appeals to Jesus carried the greatest rhetorical force. Prohibition campaigners claimed that the movement spoke for 'the Evangelical Church' in New Zealand.<sup>68</sup> Recognising this, Salmond challenged its biblical foundation – especially in relation to Jesus:

Seeing that Prohibition is extensively preached in the name of Christ and of Christianity... and is used by so many who regard Christ's personal life as the pure moral ideal of conduct, I begin with this affirmation: *The thought and sentiment prevalent in the prohibition-camp in regard to wine and its use is at variance with that which pervades the Old and New Testament.*<sup>69</sup>

Salmond agreed that Christians should be guided by Jesus' example, but considered prohibitionists' appropriation of him ill-founded. Christ's attitude toward wine was consistent with the 'attitude of ordinary men in all generations until now', and current interest in prohibition would soon pass. If Christ had appeared 'wearing the garb of a Prohibitionist, or harping on any dogma of sectarian morals, He would have frustrated His own mission. He counted wine among the good gifts of God, none the less so because men abuse it, nor the less so because it is the product of human skill applied to the raw products of nature'.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> W. Salmond, *Prohibition A Blunder*, 3rd ed., Dunedin: Jolly & Braik Printers, 1911.

<sup>66</sup> A.S. Adams, *Professor Salmond's Blunder. Prohibition: An Effective Social Reform*, Wellington: New Zealand Alliance, 1911; A. Wood, *A Reply to 'Prohibition a Blunder', by a Presbyterian Minister*, Wellington: New Zealand Alliance, 1911.

<sup>67</sup> See Cocker and Murray (eds), p.106.

<sup>68</sup> Wood, p.21.

<sup>69</sup> Salmond, *Prohibition*, p.12 (original italics).

<sup>70</sup> Salmond, *Prohibition*, p.14; cf. George Bailey, *The New Heresy, or, Scripture Teaching Regarding the Use and Abuse of Intoxicating Liquors*, Invercargill: George Bailey, 1897.

Responses to Salmond included attempts to discredit him. Reviving suspicions about his theology, Wood referred to *The Reign of Grace* as a 'sensational attack' on the doctrinal position of the Presbyterian Church and attributed Salmond's views to his 'constitutional temperament and proclivity'.<sup>71</sup> Wood and Adams both emphasised the biblical underpinnings of prohibition, and proclaimed its consistency with historic evangelical reforms. Opponents were cast as anti-progressive, anti-scientific, and anti-evangelical. They were even accused of naïve biblical literalism:

The exegetical torturing and twisting of the Bible to find sanction for our present-day use of alcohol as a beverage and to block the progress of the temperance reformation is on all fours with the efforts of those in the past who attempted to make the Bible support slavery and resist abolition; attempted to make the Bible settle the question in favour of the ptolemaic cosmogony and resist the progress of astronomical science; attempted to make the Bible declare that the world was made in 144 hours, and that the voice of geological science had no right to be heard.<sup>72</sup>

Salmond's use of the generic term 'wine' in biblical references was criticised as obfuscating the nature of alcoholic drink in biblical and contemporary times. Adams argued that alcoholic drinks were not sanctioned in the Bible, while Wood claimed Timothy and Paul as biblical proponents of abstinence.<sup>73</sup>

It was also impossible to avoid discussion of Jesus, since he figured prominently in Salmond's argument and appeals to him resonated in the community. Adams and Wood accepted that Jesus probably drank wine. However, they particularised his actions to their historical context. Accentuating the gulf between Jesus' world and modern society, Jesus was presented as a moderate drinker of weak beverages in a temperate culture. By contrast, modern drink had much higher alcohol content, and New Zealand was awash in the consequences of intemperance.<sup>74</sup> Historicising Jesus' actions left the question of how he might act in contemporary New Zealand open.

Specific events like Jesus' miracle at Cana remained problematic as they suggested encouragement of drinking to excess. According to Adams, the assumption

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<sup>71</sup> Wood, p.2.

<sup>72</sup> Wood, pp.10-11.

<sup>73</sup> Adams, *Salmond's Blunder*, p.96; Wood, pp.8-9.

<sup>74</sup> Adams, *Salmond's Blunder*, pp.9-11, 96.

that the wine at Cana was alcoholic was a 'perversion of the text'.<sup>75</sup> Woods agreed. Moreover, he also rejected common assumptions concerning the quantity of drink involved: 'Christ gives to a young married couple 126 gallons of alcoholic beverages! The very suggestion that He did so is a desecration of religion'.<sup>76</sup> On the Lord's Supper, Adams argued that alcohol was not necessary since the word 'wine' was never used in the text, only the 'fruit of the vine'. Wood added that Christians should no more be slaves to principle on wine than with unleavened bread. The emblems were historically contingent: 'If our Saviour had appeared in the Arctic regions as man's Redeemer, he would have used the common articles of diet as memorials of His death, and these might have been dried fish and water'.<sup>77</sup>

With Jesus contained historically, appeals became a question of principles. Prohibition was faithful to Jesus insofar as it adhered to the 'law of Christ' to 'love thy neighbour'.<sup>78</sup> This approach cohered with the wider language of reform, but created certain difficulties. After all, the argument could be turned the other way. In 1919, the Baptist minister J.G. Hughes claimed that prohibition was an attempt to violate man's moral nature. Moreover, it contravened 'the great law of love and the golden rule' by denying alcoholic beverages to those who desired them:

It is untrue and un-Christian to hold that because a man drinks at all therefore he cannot, like Christ, drink to the glory of God. Christ was a moderate drinker, but the bigots of his day dubbed Him a "wine-bibber," as though he drank to excess. By all means let us have Christian Temperance, but may we be delivered from the bigotry, fanaticism, and intolerance which masquerade under that name.<sup>79</sup>

The teaching and example of Jesus remained a sensitive point during the interwar years. The Youth Movement Against Alcoholism (YMAA) arose out of the Wellington Area Convention of the New Zealand Alliance in September 1927. Isabel McCorkindale, a former Education Director for the WCTU in Australia and temporary assistant with the YMAA in New Zealand, indicated that Jesus' lack of teaching on alcohol troubled some young people. Her response was that Jesus' general teaching

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<sup>75</sup> Adams, *Salmond's Blunder*, p.13.

<sup>76</sup> Wood, p.9.

<sup>77</sup> Adams, *Salmond's Blunder*, p.13; Wood, p.11.

<sup>78</sup> Adams, *Salmond's Blunder*, pp.21-22.

<sup>79</sup> *EP*, 6 December 1919, p.9.

indicated his attitude and the appropriate solutions for contemporary social problems: 'It has been asked why Christ said nothing about alcohol, about child labour, slavery, and other customs.... What Christ did say was "Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and thy neighbour as thyself." If you follow this advice the problems will be solved soon enough. We should be actuated by His will and not by consideration of things he did not say'.<sup>80</sup>

Interwar religious leaders continued to proclaim that the prohibition movement was evangelical. According to James Cocker, 'The more evangelical is a church the more keenly does she fight the liquor trade'. If revival took hold, prohibition would inevitably follow. Moreover, prohibitionists were 'moved by a passion which they had received at the Cross. Because they loved Christ they loved man'.<sup>81</sup> Appeals to Jesus' teaching and principles still occurred. However, the prominence of philosophical, social and moral arguments in Cocker and Murray's history of prohibition was striking. Prohibitionists had always marshalled evidence of the social ills caused by alcohol and the successes of no-licence districts. However, they appeared increasingly sensitive about claims like William Thomson's that restriction of alcohol infringed individual liberty and undermined morality: 'An agitation, political only in its object, fostered by emotionalism and externalism, must in the very nature of things work against morality'.<sup>82</sup> Responses required more than the usual vocabulary of social Christianity. Significantly, A.R. Atkinson's chapter justifying prohibition in Cocker and Murray's history was entitled 'The Logic of Prohibition'.<sup>83</sup> Atkinson denied that prohibition was inimical to liberty, and put the prohibition case in social and philosophical terms with reference to John Locke and Edmund Burke.

Despite the weight attached to Jesus' authority, prohibition exemplified the difficulties of using him to settle social questions. The declining popularity of the movement may have worked against religious argumentation. After the failure in 1911, and again under more favourable conditions in 1919, the prohibition campaign lost

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<sup>80</sup> *Freedom*, January-March 1929, p.12.

<sup>81</sup> *NZMT*, 18 April 1931, p.8.

<sup>82</sup> William Thomson, *Prohibition Fatal to Liberty, Temperance, and Morality*, Wellington: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1911, p.36.

<sup>83</sup> See Cocker and Murray (eds), pp.15-19.

momentum. In 1928, the vote for National Prohibition was only 294,453 (40.2%), which was less than the vote for National Continuance (374,502, or 51.1%) and well short of a simple majority.<sup>84</sup> From that time, the movement drew from an increasingly narrow base of support from the churches. Declining religious argumentation may have reflected this weakened position, and a concomitant recognition that the public battle could not be waged effectively on an explicitly religious basis. Moreover, prohibitionists faced the difficulty that they could not enlist Jesus directly without fear of contradiction. His example was particularised historically, and biblical principles invoked instead. The language of principle alone, however, was not especially persuasive.

## **LABOUR, RELIGION AND SOCIALISM**

Much Christian social analysis therefore focused on social issues that could be linked to moral failure. However, the rise of labour and working-class interests also encouraged more direct engagement with social and economic structures. Socialism provided the crucial overall ideology, but there was no single agreed expression of it and therefore no settled approach. 'Moderate' forms, like Fabian socialism, encouraged progressive amelioration of society. These were sometimes understood as forms of 'ethical' socialism, and on that basis attracted support among social Christians of various kinds. On the other hand, the militant industrial unionism of the Red Feds and Marxist approaches encouraged direct confrontation, but garnered little support from the churches.

The domains of religion and socialism frequently intersected. Striking similarities between the structures of socialism and Christianity have often been noted.<sup>85</sup> Henry Pelling has argued that 'Where religious feeling was still comparatively strong, Socialism took on most completely the guise of religion'.<sup>86</sup> Evidently, this feeling was important in New Zealand for socialism frequently utilised religious language and ideals. Studies on the dissemination of socialism in New Zealand have highlighted the quasi-religious language that permeated discourse during the late

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<sup>84</sup> *ENZ*, vol. 2, pp.874-75.

<sup>85</sup> For example, Alasdair MacIntyre, *Marxism and Christianity*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971.

<sup>86</sup> Pelling, p.151.

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, the question of whether socialism represented a rejection of Christianity, an alternative to it, or simply a practical expression of religious commitment remained a point of debate.

From the 1890s, the idea of the 'religion of socialism' circulated widely. Yet, the religion of socialism was multivalent and could indicate rejection of Christianity for an alternative, or the Christian quality of socialist ideals. In 1911, the *Maoriland Worker* cited Dora B. Montefiore's claim that, 'In its essence Socialism is a religion, standing for the harmonious relating of the whole life of man; and that is the reason why it has caught the heart and understanding of the twentieth-century workers, and is developing among them self-discipline, and fidelity, and a call to elemental righteousness'.<sup>88</sup> For a small group, the religion of socialism supplanted all alternatives. The 1911 national census included 107 individuals who nominated it as their religion.<sup>89</sup> In a similar vein, John A. Lee proclaimed after World War Two that the labour movement had been 'the great religious movement' of his lifetime.<sup>90</sup> For W.S. McClure, socialism was a religion to workers in the sense that it was a 'vision of the Kingdom of Heaven come to earth' that allowed them to rise above the struggle for mere animal existence.<sup>91</sup>

Some advocates were adamant that socialism was materialistic and therefore independent of religion. According to 'Deucalion', 'All Gods have been and are but phantasms of men's brains.... To say that Socialism is atheistic is to utter a truism'.<sup>92</sup> Others agreed, arguing that socialism and religion should be kept separate. Progress was 'a record of the slow retreat of God before the march of Man.... Socialism means

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<sup>87</sup> McArthur, 'Collectivist Tracts'; V.J. Smith, 'Gospel of Hope or Gospel of Plunder: Socialism From the Mid 1890s Up to and Including the Blackball Strike of 1908', BA Hons Research Exercise in History, Massey University, 1976; Olssen, *Red Feds*; Josephine F. Milburn, 'Socialism and Social Reform in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', *Political Science*, 12:1, 1960, pp.62-70; Herbert Roth, 'How Marxism Came to New Zealand', *Political Science*, 5:1, 1953, pp.56-59; Pat Moloney and Kerry Taylor (eds), *On the Left: Essays on Socialism in New Zealand*, Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2002.

<sup>88</sup> *MW*, 12 May 1911, p.14.

<sup>89</sup> *Census*, 1911, p.103.

<sup>90</sup> John A. Lee, *Rhetoric at the Red Dawn*, Auckland: Collins, 1965, p.8.

<sup>91</sup> *MW*, 5 May 1911, p.1.

<sup>92</sup> *MW*, 27 June 1913, p.5.

scientific industry and public ownership – that’s all’.<sup>93</sup> However, even materialism did not require active hostility. For pragmatic reasons it was often considered unnecessary to offend believers by repudiating religion. An old school of thought aimed to keep religion and socialism distinct out of concern to preserve unity.<sup>94</sup> Correspondents to the *Maoriland Worker* like H. Leger of Weraroa drew on Marxian ideas, but encouraged cultivation of all aspects of life to complement the socialist ideal – so long as the ‘barnacles of supernatural ghosts’ were scraped clear.<sup>95</sup> Others, like F.D. Baucke of Westport, objected to attacks on religion because they lacked basic courtesy.<sup>96</sup>

### ***Ethical Socialism and Practical Christianity***

Left-liberalism, Fabianism, and other ‘moderate’ expressions of socialism were among the most important influences in the early labour movement. Some of these, like Robert Blatchford’s *Clarion* movement, were not sympathetic to religion.<sup>97</sup> However, interpreted as ethical socialism, other expressions attracted support from social Christians. Ideals of socialism as an ethical system built on assumptions about a correlation between religion and morality, but also the supremacy of Christ’s moral example. By 1900, the idea that socialism was the practical expression of Christianity had become a virtual cliché. Invariably, such assertions emphasised Jesus’ life and teaching, notions of brotherhood and ideals of co-operation.

To the extent that it considered Jesus, Arthur Desmond’s early tract on the socialism of Jesus related him to notions of duty and social equality. Jesus came from the ‘toiling masses’, and remained a champion of the underdog. He was the ‘defender of all those who in the world’s unequal battle are weary or wounded or sore’. The historical Jesus was also apparently a democrat: ‘That He preached the very essence of democracy there is not the shadow of a doubt, if we are to believe anything relative to

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<sup>93</sup> MW, 12 May 1911, p.3.

<sup>94</sup> For example, Ben Tillett, *Socialism: Being an Address to Comrades Given Before the Members of the Socialist Church and their Friends in Christchurch, on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1897*, Christchurch: T.E. Fraser Printer, 1897, pp.5-6.

<sup>95</sup> MW, 24 February 1915, p.7.

<sup>96</sup> MW, 12 May 1911, p.3.

<sup>97</sup> Blatchford and his weekly newspaper *The Clarion* were very influential in New Zealand in promoting a humanist form of Fabian ethical socialism. He became increasingly preoccupied with attacking religion, which he regarded as inimical to humanity’s best interests. See, for example, Robert Blatchford, *God and My Neighbour*, London: Clarion Press, 1903.

Him that is recorded in the four Gospels.... His aim was both religious liberty and social equality'.<sup>98</sup> The Christianity of Christ was an ethic of brotherhood and simple virtues like being 'unselfish, kind, brave and true'.<sup>99</sup>

Trades Council leaders were seldom extremists and often supported causes like compulsory arbitration. Like J.T. Paul, many were critical of the churches, but urged them to more practical expressions of Christian faith. In 1903, Paul chided fellow Christians for making a bogey of 'socialism' without considering its meaning. The churches diligently taught Jesus' commands to 'Love our neighbour' and 'Do unto others', but condemned themselves by 'so much preaching and so little action'.<sup>100</sup> According to Paul, they were duty-bound to apply their principles to worldly affairs. It was no longer acceptable to preach 'the brotherhood of man' while upholding a system that was 'the embodiment of a selfish individualism'.<sup>101</sup> Paul replied emphatically to complaints that he was turning Jesus into a unionist:

It is not new to me to hear that Christ was not a unionist. We live in different times, and perhaps had Christ's teaching been followed or applied to industrial affairs trades unionism would not have been needed. Trades unionism is an effect. "Individual Christian" should know the cause. Christ was a Communist, and that is the opposite of an Individualist. Christ was an agitator.<sup>102</sup>

Paul was not a Marxist, and his Christ did not propose class warfare. His response to criticism escalated the claim, and used Jesus to place the onus of explanation on his opponents. However, Paul was primarily pressing for a co-operative ethic consistent with Jesus' teaching.

Conceptualisations of socialism as Christian brotherhood were expressed in influential international sources. Edward Bellamy's novel *Looking Backward* was most important during the 1890s but had an enduring effect in New Zealand.<sup>103</sup> Bellamy eschewed the term socialism, but supported socialistic principles. His utopian vision

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<sup>98</sup> Desmond, pp.8-9

<sup>99</sup> Desmond, p.13.

<sup>100</sup> J.T. Paul, *The Duty of the Church to the Labour Movement*, Dunedin: Otago Trades and Labour Council, 1903, p.2.

<sup>101</sup> Paul, *Duty*, p.3.

<sup>102</sup> 'The Working Man and the Churches', in Newspaper Clippings Book, 1903-1906, J.T. Paul Papers.

<sup>103</sup> See H. Roth, 'New Zealand', in S. Bowman (ed.), *Edward Bellamy Abroad*, New York: Twayne, 1962, pp.231-57.

involved religious change rather than abatement,<sup>104</sup> and imagined a new democratic society in which 'The only coin current is the image of God'.<sup>105</sup> According to Mr Barton, a favoured preacher in the novel, nominal followers of Jesus had been slow to recognise the importance of human brotherhood but that situation had changed: 'The dawn has come since then. It is very easy to believe in the fatherhood of God in the twentieth century'.<sup>106</sup>

The leading British Labour politician Keir Hardie was another crucial influence in early New Zealand labour. Hardie also promulgated the notion that socialism was Christianity at work. His views were set alongside those of the American millionaire Rufus Weeks in one widely circulated pamphlet of the decade prior to World War One.<sup>107</sup> Hardie denied that socialism was a religious creed. However, the merits of socialism were presented in relation to the Sermon on the Mount and the socialist-proletarian leaning of 'the Carpenter of Nazareth'. Arguments like these established Hardie's reputation locally as a leading twentieth-century witness to Jesus' humanity.<sup>108</sup> They also demonstrated a concern to construct socialism in ethical terms. As Densil Morgan has noted, Hardie's version of socialism was essentially ethical: 'It was above else a moral code rather than an economic dogma and was commended as such'.<sup>109</sup> Others have emphasised the important relationship between religious faith, socialism, and welfarism during the early twentieth century on the basis that the latter were conceptualised as essentially moral doctrines.<sup>110</sup> Melanie Nolan has questioned the importance in Australasia of the British idealist T.H. Green, whose ideas fitted this nexus. However, she notes that ideas like his were also in circulation.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> See Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward from 2000 to 1887*, (electronic version), Champaign: Project Gutenberg; NetLibrary, (1888), p.111.

<sup>105</sup> Bellamy, p.53.

<sup>106</sup> Bellamy, p.115.

<sup>107</sup> Keir Hardie and Rufus Weeks, *Christianity and Socialism: Two Views: The Miner's and the Millionaire's*, Wellington: New Zealand Times, for the editor of *Commonweal*, 1908.

<sup>108</sup> North, 'Me a Christian!!', p.13.

<sup>109</sup> Densil D. Morgan, "'The Essence of Welshness'? Some Aspects of Christian Faith and Identity in Wales, c.1900-2000', in Robert Pope (ed.), *Religion and National Identity: Wales and Scotland c.1700-2000*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001, p.147.

<sup>110</sup> Mark Bevir, 'Welfarism, Socialism and Religion: On T.H. Green and Others', *The Review of Politics*, 55, 1993, pp.639-61.

<sup>111</sup> See Melanie Nolan (ed.), *Revolution: The 1913 Great Strike in New Zealand*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2005, p.35.

Such associations enabled some religious commentators to embrace the language of socialism whilst rejecting its political tenets. For example, the Protestant Robert Luke claimed that he had come to appreciate socialism as a consequence of his conversion, and that socialism was part and parcel of authentic Christian faith:

I was standing meditating, looking straight ahead of me, when I saw a round white face about five yards from me.... There was a great love went through my whole being, and I knew I had seen Christ face to face: and in that few moments He showed me the whole world governed by His Spirit – and it was Socialism. I saw all the world in Socialism, and every person was in his right mind, and foolishness had vanished.... I changed from that moment as regards Socialism.<sup>112</sup>

Luke claimed to have been ‘quickened by the Spirit of Socialism’. In his apocalyptic vision, true socialism was distinguished from prevailing counterfeit forms. True socialism meant cultivation of virtue, which involved equal sympathy for rich and poor based on concern for human souls. It required conversion. Socialism was ‘the true state of the affairs of the world being manifested to some by the Spirit of Christ’.<sup>113</sup> Luke hoped that constructing socialism in these terms would make faith understandable to working men, even if it stripped the term of political content.<sup>114</sup>

Overall, advocates of the Christian ethical tradition greatly outnumbered secularists in the early New Zealand labour movement.<sup>115</sup> Even the Labour Church movement that appeared to promote socialism as an alternative to Christianity was not especially hostile. According to Henry Pelling, the movement emerged in Britain during the 1890s in protest at a recently established link between nonconformity and the Liberal Party.<sup>116</sup> Though this indicated a strong nonconformist influence within British labour, Pelling interprets the labour churches as a symptom of religious decline.<sup>117</sup> The movement appeared in New Zealand when H.A. Atkinson founded the

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<sup>112</sup> Robert Luke, *The Definition of Socialism and Democracy*, Dunedin: The Budget, 1914, p.8.

<sup>113</sup> Luke, pp.11-13, 23-29.

<sup>114</sup> Luke, p.25.

<sup>115</sup> Barry Gustafson, *Labour's Path to Political Independence: The Origins and Establishment of the New Zealand Labour Party 1900-19*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1980, p.120.

<sup>116</sup> Pelling, pp.149-51.

<sup>117</sup> Pelling, p.142; cf. Stanley Pierson, ‘John Trevor and the Labor Church Movement in England, 1891-1900’, *Church History*, 29:4, 1960, pp.463-78.

Christchurch Socialist Church in 1896.<sup>118</sup> Atkinson claimed that it was partially formed in order to recognise that 'in itself the effort for betterment inherent in the labour movement was religious'. Overtly religious language was limited, 'but the feeling was similar, that the movement was deeply and in a very real sense religious'.<sup>119</sup> The church provided fellowship, based on brotherhood and equality, and promoted the principle that 'only as we learn to lead purer and better lives can we benefit by any measure of Social Reform'. This practical, ethical principle was integral to religion.<sup>120</sup>

Like Pelling, Herbert Roth viewed the New Zealand movement as more of a propaganda organisation than a church. He noted that the organisation faded after the Socialist Party formed in Christchurch in 1904, and was resurrected only as a Fabian Society in 1908.<sup>121</sup> This secularist interpretation has been challenged recently, particularly in Mark Bevir's claim that 'The origins of the Labour Church lay not in the decline of religion and the rise of class but in a shift in the content of religious belief.'<sup>122</sup> Notably, Bevir relates this shift to the rise of immanentist theology, with its emphasis on the doctrine of the Incarnation and the humanity of Jesus. The movement was a form of ethical socialism grounded in immanentist faith. This faith promoted socialism by rendering social life a religious matter and emphasising the divine presence within humanity as a whole.<sup>123</sup>

Bevir's argument has relevance for the Christchurch situation. First, the membership there included many committed Christians. Albert Métin reported that Atkinson's 'church' was partly designed to appeal to workers who were both very religious and distrustful of socialism.<sup>124</sup> Prominent members like James McCombs maintained involvement with organisations like the Church of England Men's Society.

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<sup>118</sup> See Herbert Roth, 'The Labour Churches and New Zealand', *International Review of Social History*, 4, 1959, pp.361-66. Atkinson had been influenced by John Trevor, a pioneer of the movement, during a stay in Manchester.

<sup>119</sup> Letter from H.A. Atkinson to H. Roth, 17th February 1954, cited in Roth, 'Labour Churches', p.363.

<sup>120</sup> Socialist Church, *Monthly Leaflet*, 1, February 1897, p.1.

<sup>121</sup> Roth, 'Labour Churches', pp.365-66.

<sup>122</sup> Mark Bevir, 'The Labour Church Movement, 1891-1900', *Journal of British Studies*, 38:2, 1999, p.219.

<sup>123</sup> Bevir, 'Labour Church', p.222-23.

<sup>124</sup> Albert Métin, *Socialism Without Doctrine*, Russel Ward (trans.), Sydney: Alternative Publishing Co-operative, 1977 (1901), p.54.

Melanie Nolan has noted that a leading figure in the church, Jack McCullough, was an atheist who held to a materialist conception of history. However, he grew up in an active Christian family, and maintained close relations with them and other socialist Christians. Moreover, McCullough followed Keir Hardie in claiming that his socialism was learnt in the New Testament. This Christian form of socialism marked a phase in his development toward secular class-conscious activism, but continued to shape his thinking.<sup>125</sup> McCullough's protests against materialist denigration of socialism's ethical basis could have been uttered by any Christian socialist of the period: 'To preach exclusively the economic basis is to put it mildly shortsighted, and unity, the ideal of universal love and Brotherhood, will never be built up upon selfishness'.<sup>126</sup>

In Christchurch, Ben Tillett had tried to keep religion separate from socialism when addressing the Socialist Church. However, at other times he referred to Christ freely, and was greeted warmly for doing so.<sup>127</sup> Christ's teaching represented uncorrupted religion, and few required convincing of the merits of a society based on this. Moreover, the growth of the Fabian Society was not proof of the complete collapse of religious feeling. Many socialist Christians viewed Fabianism as a political expression of Christian principles.<sup>128</sup> Indeed, Christians within the Fabian Society were largely responsible for founding the Christchurch Church Socialist League (CSL) in 1913.<sup>129</sup>

Despite considerable sympathy for Christ and the religious basis of 'ethical' socialism, organised Christian Socialism was actually very weak in New Zealand. In fact, the CSL in Christchurch was one of few groups to transplant from the late nineteenth-century Christian Socialist revival in Britain. High church and liberal Anglicanism were not especially strong in New Zealand, which may be one reason

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<sup>125</sup> Melanie Nolan, *Kin: A Collective Biography of a Working-Class Family*, Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2005, p.104.

<sup>126</sup> J. McCullough, 'The Moral Aspects of Socialism', cited in Nolan, *Kin*, p.63.

<sup>127</sup> Tillett, *Socialism*, pp.5-6; cf. *British Weekly*, 5 November 1891, cited in Pelling, p.141.

<sup>128</sup> British Christian Socialist leaders contributed a number of Fabian Essays in which the teaching of Christ featured prominently. For example, S.D. Headlam, *Christian Socialism: A Lecture*, London: The Fabian Society, 1892; J. Clifford, *Socialism and the Teaching of Christ*, London: The Fabian Society, 1897; P. Dearmer, *Socialism and Christianity*, London: The Fabian Society, 1907; J. Clifford, *Socialism and the Churches*, London: The Fabian Society, 1908.

<sup>129</sup> See E.W. Plumridge, 'Labour in Christchurch: Community and Consciousness, 1914-1919', MA Thesis in History, University of Canterbury, 1979, p.223.

why the Guild of St Matthew (1877) and Christian Social Union (1889) never took hold locally. On the other hand, the CSL had formed in Britain after the 1906 general election to unite socialist and Labour Party supporters within the Church of England.<sup>130</sup> Christchurch was arguably the strongest centre of Christian Socialist support. Given the strength of Anglicanism in the city, and Bishop Churchill Julius' sympathy with socialist ideals, it is perhaps unsurprising that a CSL formed there. This body participated in national politics in a small way. There were occasional references to it in the *Maoriland Worker*, and the Rev. H.C. Money acted as the League's delegate at the Wellington Labour Conference of 1913.<sup>131</sup> The CSL emerged locally at a point of increasing interest in Guild Socialism.<sup>132</sup> However, there is little evidence of significant influence. The New Zealand organisation remained small, and prominent labour figures like Ted Howard suspected that it was merely a Church of England propaganda organisation.<sup>133</sup>

Christian expressions of socialism were usually highly generalised, and this was reflected in representations of Jesus. Often Christian socialism simply implied a commitment to co-operation, social amelioration and reduction of inequality. The focus was on humanising the social order, especially through the transforming potential of co-operation. Churchill Julius claimed to find socialism 'in every page of the New Testament'.<sup>134</sup> Yet, even he was decidedly vague on the social and economic implications of his faith. Julius disavowed individualism, and correlated socialism with social cohesion. Even before the advent of industrialism, disapproval of conflict led him to oppose unions which he considered exclusive and un-harmonious. In this

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<sup>130</sup> See Gary Taylor, *Socialism and Christianity: The Politics of the Church Socialist League*, Sheffield: IHS Press, 2000.

<sup>131</sup> E.W. Cunningham, *The Lectures and Letters of E.W. Cunningham*, edited by her children, Christchurch: Lyttelton Times, 1918, pp.138-39; *MW*, 1 August 1913, p.7; cf. Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, p.120.

<sup>132</sup> Guild Socialism had been a central focus for the CSL in Britain from about 1912. Taylor, *Socialism and Christianity*, pp.29-49; cf. Jack Vowles, 'From Syndicalism to Guild Socialism: Some Neglected Aspects of the Ideology of the Labour Movement, 1914-1923', in Martin and Taylor (eds), pp.283-303.

<sup>133</sup> *MW*, 26 April 1913, p.6.

<sup>134</sup> Cited in Gertrude Elworthy and Anthony Elworthy, *A Power in the Land: Churchill Julius 1847-1938*, Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1971, p.129.

tradition, Christian socialism remained focused on moral and spiritual concerns more than the economic ones. Class analysis was not a significant factor.

Some self-professed Christian socialists were prominent in the wider labour movement. Among these, J.K. Archer, Moses Ayrton, and Clyde Carr were drawn from the Baptist, Methodist, and Congregationalist ministry respectively. Others like Walter Nash and William Jordan were prominent lay contributors. Margaret Thorn recalled that Nash's Christianity, and the early Christian tradition of communal ownership, informed his socialism, though she was scornful of the intrusion of this faith into public and private life: 'I couldn't go along with Jesus and the "grand old book, we must all get everybody reading" .... I really wondered how anybody as intelligent as Walter Nash could wrap himself round in it'.<sup>135</sup> On the other hand, Jordan and Nash were hardly precise in explaining the relationship between Christianity and socialism. Nash was not keen on theology, and claimed to aver dogmatism. The content of his belief was notoriously obscure, but his 'practical Christianity' clearly correlated ideals like truth, equality, justice and mercy with the 'Social Principles of Christ'.<sup>136</sup> Jordan, a Methodist lay preacher and Labour MP, was similarly vague. Socialism and Christian socialism were a mood or attitude that prioritised the social. Thus, Jordan argued, 'Socialism as I see it is a certain state of mind of the people, a realisation of our interdependence and a determination to be of service to society'. Religious supports derived from general principles: 'Man is a social being and we cannot consider a way of life for an individual apart from our organised society; the biblical adage "No man liveth to himself" is undoubtedly correct'.<sup>137</sup> Jordan did hold more specific theological and political views than he publicly expressed. However, broad and uncontroversial principles suited public discourse. The morality of Jesus' teaching was largely unquestioned and provided an ideal reference. Thus, while Nash doubted Christ's divinity, he claimed that Christ's methods were 'infallible' if obeyed literally. Divinity lay in Christ's Wisdom rather than his Person.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>135</sup> Thorn, *Stick Out*, p.62.

<sup>136</sup> Keith Sinclair, *Walter Nash*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1976, p.65.

<sup>137</sup> 'A Way of Life', in Sir William Jordan Papers A-178, Box 4 Folder 3, University of Auckland Library. Copy supplied by Carina Hickey.

<sup>138</sup> Cited in Sinclair, *Nash*, pp.18-19.

New Zealand Christian socialists drew on eclectic sources. Anglicans were particularly aware of Charles Gore and William Temple, while politicians like Jordan possessed controversial works like *Christianity and the Social Order* by the British Congregationalist R.J. Campbell.<sup>139</sup> In fact, George Fowlds claimed that Campbell had been a crucial disseminator of ideas to 'the common people'.<sup>140</sup> However closely he was actually read, Campbell provided theological support for socialism that could be referenced when necessary. He viewed socialism as a swing back to the gospel of the Kingdom as expressed in the earliest Christian preaching.<sup>141</sup> Though aware that primitive Christianity and contemporary socialism were not identical, he associated socialism with the Kingdom and offered startling endorsements of the British Labour Party.<sup>142</sup> Campbell's Christology linked divinity and morality. As Robert Pope explains, 'It was in living the perfect life of service and self-denial that Jesus had reached the heights of human personality and had thus revealed the divine life in himself. This meant that any human being could emulate Christ's efforts and achieve divinity, for the truly human was also the truly divine'.<sup>143</sup> This was immanentist theology in full flower, and harmonised with optimistic humanism and moderate 'ethical' socialism. In many ways, it was also indistinguishable from most other expressions of social Christianity.

### ***The Confrontational Christ and the Proletarian Gospel***

More radical representations also circulated of Jesus as socialist and controversialist. These were evident in the *Maoriland Worker*, especially during periods of unrest, including industrial conflict and war. That he characteristically appeared at such times suggests that his primary functions were to disarm criticism and frustrate opposition. Jesus provided moral stature and respectability in the context of threat.

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<sup>139</sup> R.J. Campbell, *Christianity and the Social Order*, London: Chapman & Hall, 1907; cf. Carina Hickey, 'Man in His Time Plays Many Parts: Life Stories of William Jordan', MA Thesis in History, Massey University, 2003, p.144.

<sup>140</sup> Fowlds, *Drift*, p.3.

<sup>141</sup> See Phillips, *Kingdom on Earth*, pp.13-14.

<sup>142</sup> For example, 'Go with J. Keir Hardie to the House of Commons, and listen to his pleading for justice to his order, and you see the Atonement'. Cited in Wilkinson, *Christian Socialism*, p.62.

<sup>143</sup> See Robert Pope, *Seeking God's Kingdom: The Nonconformist Social Gospel in Wales, 1906-1939*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1999, p.14.

Attempts to construct a socialist Jesus were not unique to New Zealand, and New Zealanders drew from these international sources. Jay Bergman has noted the interest of Russian Marxists and revolutionaries in Jesus, his disciples and gospel Christianity.<sup>144</sup> Russian populists venerated Jesus' ethics, hailed his revolutionary heroism, and presented his followers as peasants. This radical Jesus became a proto-proletarian leader of the urban poor whose resurrection prefigured the new and immortal Soviet Man. Apparently, even sceptics saw similarities between gospel Christianity, socialism and communism, though they considered that progressive Christianity died early. New Zealand socialists' ideas sometimes derived directly from Russian sources. For instance, the utopian reformism of Leo Tolstoy became influential during the interwar years as socialists looked for less militant models.<sup>145</sup> Jesus also featured in American and Australian discourses of socialism. The International Workers of the World (IWW) presented Jesus as a muscular critic of capitalism and organised religion.<sup>146</sup> Marian Quartly has highlighted that labour cartoonists in Australia regularly invoked Christ in the name of class.<sup>147</sup>

The proletarian Jesus was especially evident when revolutionary socialism was most active. Revolutionary socialists were particularly apt to associate religion with 'the establishment', so that anti-Church critique figured prominently. Thus, Jesus' command to love God and neighbour was constructed as 'Socialism, and nothing but Socialism... brotherhood, and nothing but brotherhood', but contrasted with the failures and self-absorption of the churches.<sup>148</sup> Some attempts to enlist Jesus were more light-hearted. The *Maoriland Worker* playfully used Reginald Heber's hymn to suggest a long history for the red flag as the emblem of internationalism:

The Son of God goes forth to war,  
A kingly crown to gain;

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<sup>144</sup> Jay Bergman, 'The Image of Jesus in the Russian Revolutionary Movement: The Case of Russian Marxism', *International Review of Social History*, 35:2, 1990, p.247.

<sup>145</sup> See *MW*, 7 September 1921, p.7; *MW*, 5 October 1921, p.8; Chapple, *Divine Need*, p.47; Margaret McClure, *A Civilised Community: A History of Social Security in New Zealand, 1898-1998*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1998, p.60; Faulkner, *Decisive Decade*, p.4.

<sup>146</sup> Winters, pp.61-81.

<sup>147</sup> Marian Quartly, 'Making Working-Class Heroes: Labor Cartoonists and the Australian Worker, 1903-16', *Labour History*, 89, 2005, pp.167, 171-72.

<sup>148</sup> See *MW*, 7 September 1921, p.6, citing Harold Begbie; cf. Harold Begbie, *Religion and the Crisis*, London: Cassell & Company, 1913.

His BLOOD-RED BANNER streams afar;  
Who follows in his train?

The 'Carpenter of Nazareth' had apparently used the symbol for at least twenty years.<sup>149</sup>

Ironic images were partly designed to tease alarmed Christians who often took militant socialism to be the only form. There was an enduring perception among the Evangelical community that politically revolutionary ideas were virtually synonymous with an unconverted soul.<sup>150</sup> Offended by the anti-religious tone of radicalism, Christians used Jesus to counteract it. Thus, the Methodist Home Missionary Herman Foston's novel, *In the Bell-Bird's Lair*, associated socialism with youthful naivety and immorality. The book detailed Edward Strangemuir's entanglement with labour, and his repudiation of faith and subsequent fall. Following an epiphany, he returned to evangelical faith: 'A great change had come over our hero from the time he left the "South" a fallen despised "Labour Leader." Then he was a "Socialist" and blazed away against labour being in the hands of "Capital." He has found, as many others have found, that in theory it may be high sounding, but it does not work out in practice'.<sup>151</sup> Reflecting on the views of a Christian character in the novel, Strangemuir further admits that,

"There is nothing worth having in the world apart from Jesus Christ." That atheism, public-house influence, and the liquor traffic were all on the same level, and were bad. He determined more than ever that he would follow in the footsteps of the "Man of Galilee," Who, though He was rich, yet for man's sake became poor that he through His poverty might become rich.

For Evangelicals like Foston, the religion of Jesus was presented as the alternative to unwholesome socialist enthusiasm.<sup>152</sup>

In any case, radical images of Jesus utilised a set of favoured themes. In particular, the crucifixion was stripped of doctrinal significance to become a symbol of suffering and struggle. Notions of righteous persecution, crucifixion and redemptive martyrdom all featured in labour rhetoric, and furnished a universal metaphor for

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<sup>149</sup> MW, 5 May 1911, p.15.

<sup>150</sup> J. Edwin Orr, *All Your Need: 10,000 Miles of Miracle Through Australia and New Zealand*, London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1936, p.40.

<sup>151</sup> Foston, *Bell-Bird's Lair*, p.63.

<sup>152</sup> Foston, *Bell-Bird's Lair*, p.64.

representing socialism. Martyr language provided an important rallying point. In 1911, the *Maoriland Worker* claimed that 'the torch of capitalism has kindled the martyr fire', and that modern 'wage slaves' were only the most recent victims of tyrannical capitalist 'oppressors'.<sup>153</sup> References to martyrdom were meant to inspire workers in the fight against injustice.<sup>154</sup> Prior to 1913, however, this language lacked any distinctively local feeling. The death of Fred Evans at Waihi changed this. In the account of the Waihi strike written by H.E. Holland and R.S. Ross the redemptive lessons of Jesus' death were explicitly applied to Evans in the book's concluding sections:

No fight for human freedom is ever wholly lost. Therefore, no strike is ever wholly lost. It lives in its educational results. The sun may go down in blood on what seems to us a lost cause – just as it is alleged to have gone down in darkness on a day 2000 years ago when the ruling-class prevailed and the foremost figure in what was then undoubtedly a movement of the working-class was nailed to a cross and done to death after the manner of the worst criminal.... in every 'civilized' country, black night has been ushered in behind a setting sun that reflected the red of the shed blood of men murdered in Humanity's cause; but, as surely as worlds revolve and night's shadows fade and days glow, so surely shall the radiant sun of working-class victory rise resplendent on the horizon of our industrialism.<sup>155</sup>

Jesus appeared frequently in the *Maoriland Worker* in the wake of industrial conflict at Waihi and on the waterside in 1913. In cartoons and commentaries, he was represented as a victim of brutal state authority. One recurring motif placed Jesus at the mercy of the justice system. In August 1913, a cover image had him standing dolefully before a judge in court. His passivity and posture emphasised the power imbalance between 'the authorities' and 'the people', and juxtaposed Jesus' harmlessness with the severity of the court. The caption questioned, 'What chance would he have in a Court to-day?' Apparently the image struck a chord, for it was reprinted 'by request' the following February.<sup>156</sup> A similar cartoon by Ryan Walker from 1914 placed Jesus, a poor man, in a court representing the capitalist system. The

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<sup>153</sup> *MW*, 20 April 1911, p.13.

<sup>154</sup> *MW*, 19 May 1911, p.3; *MW*, 28 July 1911, p.3; *MW*, 10 November 1911, p.10.

<sup>155</sup> H.E. Holland and R.S. Ross, *The Tragic Story of the Waihi Strike*, Wellington: Printed by The Worker, 1913, p.193.

<sup>156</sup> *MW*, 29 August 1913, p.1; *MW*, 18 February 1914, p.7. The cartoon was attributed to the American reforming journal, *The Coming Nation*.

judge was presented as a puppet of capitalism, presiding behind a bench emblazoned with the symbol of the pound. The accompanying commentary railed against 'pompous judges' who knew nothing of the reality of the poor lives they judged.<sup>157</sup>

Themes of victimisation and corrupt authority were played up in other articles. Writing as 'the Vag', E.J. Howard cited the American Congregationalist and radical social Christian George D. Herron to the effect that Jesus was killed by 'religious teachers and prudent men of the state'. By contrast, strikers on the waterside and at Waihi lived out 'applied Christianity'. Imitating Christ, they had forfeited work and 'sacrificed themselves' in sympathy with their brother-workers. Like Christ, they were victims of unsympathetic, authoritarian state power: 'Jesus, the God of Love, the Carpenter, was crucified by the "best people" of His day, is hid away, and we have got instead the Deified Policeman with a stopwatch and measuring tape and hardwood baton in his hand'.<sup>158</sup>

Jesus was not merely a victim, however. He was also a resister. During the conflicts of 1913, some Christian ministers allegedly offered to act as strike-breakers. In response, the *Maoriland Worker* invoked Jesus in support of the labour position, asking, 'If Christ were upon earth at the present time, and an industrial upheaval took place, would he scab?' Apparently not. The Carpenter of Nazareth was a 'Friend of the poor and the outcast', and actively supported them despite brutal opposition: 'Stripped of mysticism, with all controversial aspects of Christ's life for the moment placed on one side, it is abundantly clear to any student that the Gospel Hero was a man who fought for the oppressed against the oppressor'.<sup>159</sup> As a working-class hero, Jesus represented the strength of the people. He was a working man, and the founder of a communitarian movement. Moreover, he traced poverty to its root – the evil of property, and appropriation by 'an idle and a privileged class' of the fruit of other men's labour.<sup>160</sup> This Jesus enjoyed the support of the common people, and was the essence of Christianity.

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<sup>157</sup> *MW*, 8 July 1914, p.1.

<sup>158</sup> *MW*, 15 April 1914, p.1.

<sup>159</sup> *MW*, 26 September 1913, p.7.

<sup>160</sup> *MW*, 11 July 1913, p.3.

During periods of turmoil, the socialist Jesus appeared as a Judean agitator, and leader of a hobo army.<sup>161</sup> Yet, even as the Great Agitator, the threatening possibilities of the image were often restrained. Jesus' radicalism was romanticised, and framed as a message of love. He was 'a dreamer of dreams a friend of the lowly, a lover of little children. ... He taught that love, and not brute force, was God's great fundamental. He would not set up – as His peasant followers hoped – a kingdom founded on the sword'.<sup>162</sup> Elsewhere, the 'rescued and real' proletarian teaching of Jesus provided strength and inspiration for the working class. It promised inevitable victory, and called for love, strength and sacrifice on the path to revolution. However, even revolution was constructed in peaceful terms. It was neither destructive, nor hateful, but merely sought the conditions for true religion to flourish:

The proletariat does not wish to destroy religion, but to give it real life.... Men cannot come into communion with God so long as they are compelled to live contrary to his natural laws. God cannot be a God of hate, but must be a God of love, and only by following the natural laws of his world can men fit themselves for that higher life which will make them one with God.<sup>163</sup>

As a man of the people, Jesus was both an 'irreducible rebel' and a 'gospel-bringer of justice'.<sup>164</sup> He exhibited creative genius and force of personality, but confrontation was softened by good character. As an apologetic for labour, the argument highlighted a dilemma. While rhetoric was often combative, the movement was not strong enough for unqualified self-assertions. Traditions of righteous rebellion were employed largely as a defensive strategy. Jesus was often invoked to placate critics and win the equivocal. Critics might balk at confrontation, but they could hardly quibble with virtue.

Opposition to war and militarism provided another context for images of a radical Jesus. Passion imagery featured prominently in anti-war literature. The title of Harry Holland's study of pacifist opposition to World War One, *Armageddon or Calvary*, starkly posed the alternatives he believed young men faced.<sup>165</sup> This imagery had been

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<sup>161</sup> MW, 20 May 1914, p.7.

<sup>162</sup> MW, 5 May 1915, p.1.

<sup>163</sup> MW, 9 June 1911, p.14.

<sup>164</sup> MW, 11 July 1913, p.3.

<sup>165</sup> H.E. Holland, *Armageddon or Calvary: The Conscientious Objectors of New Zealand and 'The Process of their Conversion'*, Wellington: H.E. Holland, 1919.

popularised before the war as the Government prosecuted pacifist objectors during 1913 and 1914. According to R.L. Weitzel, Friday became known in Christchurch as 'Crucifixion Day', since it was the day the courts dealt with cases involving breaches of the Defence Act.<sup>166</sup> Objectors to World War One were drawn in largest numbers from those opposed on socialist and Christian principles. Jesus provided a bridge between these. Some Christian opponents remarked that it was hard to imagine Jesus leading a bayonet charge,<sup>167</sup> while the *Maoriland Worker* employed Christian imagery to express disapproval of the war. Christ's gospel of peace was contrasted with war's destruction.

Even before the war, Jesus had been invoked to oppose Christian militarism. In 1913, one commentator claimed that,

Wherever men go to war a preacher in uniform is found; only he keeps out of the firing line. Let us reiterate that the founder of Christianity opposed war, accepted no salary, founded no church, had no ritual, wore no robe of office, did not take pains to associate with respectable people, was a carpenter who felt certain truths so intensely that he left his bench for a time and went forth speaking to men in the streets, the market-places, and by the sea-shore.... He sought to fan the dying embers of love into a glowing passion for humanity.<sup>168</sup>

Criticisms were particularly pronounced at Christmas time. One cover cartoon of cavalymen carried the ironic caption 'Peace on Earth and Goodwill'. The same issue carried a half page review of work by the American socialist historian C. Stewart Barnes under the title 'Was Jesus a Revolutionary?'<sup>169</sup> Inside, a translation from a German discussion of 'The Redeemer' claimed that Christian redemption was initially materialist, and criticised bourgeois celebrations of 'the Redeemer of the poor': 'The red banner – the symbol of our redemption – from the tumults of the fight again and again flies victoriously.... The first ramparts of the old society begin to totter. The Red Flag victoriously carries the first storm. And thus we celebrate our Christmas, separated by an abyss from the hypocritical fetes, its insincere prayers, and its sounding bells'.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> R.L. Weitzel, 'Pacifists and Anti-Militarists in New Zealand, 1909-1914', *NZJH*, 7:2, 1973, p.147.

<sup>167</sup> *NZMT*, 8 July 1916, p.12.

<sup>168</sup> *MW*, 11 July 1913, p.3.

<sup>169</sup> *MW*, 24 December 1913, p.1.

<sup>170</sup> *MW*, 24 December 1913, p.6.

The Christmas message of peace became a particularly potent symbol during wartime. Nativity scenes were juxtaposed with the 'Hell going out from Bethlehem in the present day'.<sup>171</sup> Christian anti-militarists presented their message as the application of Christ's teaching, and were supported in the socialist press.<sup>172</sup> The churches were also berated for their betrayal of Jesus' teaching.<sup>173</sup> Sometimes the images for these became quite confused. In 1915, one cartoon in the *Maoriland Worker* depicted a weeping angel resting on a cross surrounded by scenes of war, while the accompanying verse noted that thorns pressed hard on the human brow. Herbert Williams' Yuletide musings noted Christianity's long history of cruelty, and oppression of 'scientific research, intellectual endeavours and social reforms'.<sup>174</sup> The churches apparently rejected the Christ of peace.<sup>175</sup> However, Jesus was also used simply to highlight the discrepancy between war and moral idealism. In September 1914, another issue featured a cartoon credited to the *Australian Worker* that placed Jesus beneath explosion clouds of 'war', with a commentary noting: 'Nineteen hundred years ago and Bethlehem, Gethsemane, Calvary. Heaven's message: Love, Peace, Brotherhood, Fatherhood. Is it all a dream? Is the Cross a failure? Can it be that the message has miscarried?... Oh, the tragedy of it! Oh, the blasphemy of it!'<sup>176</sup>

Jesus continued to appear in the context of interwar peace activism – often, again, at Christmas or moments of particular pressure. In December 1921, the *Maoriland Worker* published Catherine Markham's poem 'The Sorrowful Christ', in which 'The Man of Peace' appeared and witnessed the human devastation wrought by war. Suffering, injury and death were the folly of braggarts, lordlings and statesmen. To this, Jesus responded as an outraged mother:

And Then I heard the tender Christ make moan,  
The Mothering One who makes all grief His own.  
His face was drawn with pain; I heard him say;  
'And after all the ages, this to-day:  
Bloodshed and blare and blaze of battle flame,

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<sup>171</sup> MW, 22 December 1915, p.5.

<sup>172</sup> MW, 19 December 1917, p.1.

<sup>173</sup> MW, 12 August 1914, p.1.

<sup>174</sup> MW, 23 December 1914, p.1.

<sup>175</sup> MW, 22 December 1915, p.4.

<sup>176</sup> MW, 2 September 1914, p.1; also, MW, 22 December 1915, p.10.

Ravage and rage, and yet they take My name!' <sup>177</sup>

In the same issue as Markham's poem, contributions from J.K. Archer, Moses Ayrton and James Gibb also appeared. James Thorn had recently become editor of the journal, and invited these on the grounds that many of the paper's most loyal supporters were Christian believers.<sup>178</sup> Each contributor emphasised the compatibility of Christianity and labour, and called for closer relations. According to Archer, the process was already underway: '2,000 years ago the Church and Labor were married. Since then they have been divorced.... Now they are courting again. Their remarriage is the supreme economic need of the world'. Thorn's decision to open space for religious commentary created a ruckus. Significantly, however, the decision indicated a desire for rapprochement with religious supporters at a time of pressure for the labour movement. Divided internally, and under pressure from the Government, Thorn was adopting a moderate approach in an effort to stabilise the movement and broaden electoral support.<sup>179</sup> Correspondents recognised these electoral factors, with one complaining that 'Churchism' was infantile science but that 'votes are votes'.<sup>180</sup>

Jesus continued to be deployed in other ways during the interwar years. Herbert Stead was Warden of the Browning Hall settlement in England from 1894 to 1921. A number of his tracts on social Christianity circulated in New Zealand, including *The Proletarian Gospel of Galilee*, which was promoted in Wellington by the Clarte Book Shop run by Walter Nash. According to the *Maoriland Worker*, the book was a 'refreshing' interpretation of Jesus that presented him as 'the supreme propagandist of the proletariat'.<sup>181</sup> Most representations of Jesus within this context stressed his humble origins. The motif could be used to emphasise Jesus' solidarity with the 'working class', though it could also be used to relativise his significance: 'To

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<sup>177</sup> MW, 14 December 1921, p.11.

<sup>178</sup> MW, 14 December 1921, p.11.

<sup>179</sup> The magazine had earlier broken from the NZLP and moved closer to the Alliance of Labour's industrial unionism. See Bruce Brown, *The Rise of New Zealand Labour: A History of the New Zealand Labour Party from 1916 to 1940*, Wellington: Price Milburn, 1962, pp.46-48.

<sup>180</sup> See the letters in MW, 1 February 1922.

<sup>181</sup> F. Herbert Stead, *The Proletarian Gospel of Galilee in Some of its Phases*, London: The Labour Publishing Company, 1922; MW, 22 March 1922, p.4.

Jesus I doff my cap. A member of the working class.... The annals of the working-class have produced many such as He'.<sup>182</sup>

A tendency to cast labour leaders as Christ-figures formed another characteristic of interwar imagery. Patrick O'Farrell has noted the way that Harry Holland became estranged from organised religion after a breach with the Salvation Army in 1892, but retained a religious attitude and an abiding affection for Jesus.<sup>183</sup> Both these tendencies had been apparent during his editorship of the *Maoriland Worker* between 1913 and 1918. Therefore, when he finally died in 1933, Eileen Duggan's association of Holland with Christ seemed curiously apt.<sup>184</sup> More strikingly, Holland's successor as leader of the NZLP, the first Labour Prime Minister Michael Joseph Savage, was similarly hailed when he died in office in 1940. In a column in the *New Zealand Tablet*, Duggan once more compared his life and death with that of Jesus:

Just before the last election he rode in state from his train to the Parliamentary Buildings, followed by a huge retinue. And who were in that procession behind his car? Artisans, toilers, wharf-labourers in their working clothes, as they left the saw, the ship, the anvil! The kind of crowd that would have followed the Man on the ass going into Jerusalem. He passed at the very season when the greatest Idealist of all died, on a gibbet.<sup>185</sup>

In fact, this kind of imagery could be applied in various ways. At the same time, and perhaps in response to such associations, John A. Lee interpreted his expulsion from the Labour Party in similar terms:

During Easter, season of hatred, vindictiveness, persecution and crucifixion, John A. Lee, M.P., D.C.M., was expelled from the New Zealand Labour Party.... So Mr. Lee was expelled for telling the truth. But Easter, the time of vindictiveness and crucifixion, is also the time of resurrection.<sup>186</sup>

The timing at Easter provided an obvious opportunity. Yet, Lee was merely reiterating an image that had been well aired in other contexts.

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<sup>182</sup> Reprinted in *Warring Against Christianity: The Menace of the Socialist Sunday Schools*, Wellington: The Newsletter, 1922, p.5.

<sup>183</sup> P.J. O'Farrell, *Harry Holland: Militant Socialist*, Canberra: ANU, 1964, pp.6, 85, 95.

<sup>184</sup> See 'A Leader Passes', *New Zealand Worker*, 8 November 1933.

<sup>185</sup> 'Requiescat', *NZ Tablet*, 3 April 1940, p.8.

<sup>186</sup> John A. Lee, *Expelled from the Labour Party for Telling the Truth*, Auckland: Grey Lynn Democratic Labour Party, 1940.

Appeals to a socialist Jesus, and typological application of Christ's Passion, served a variety of purposes. At one level, these were designed to press claims and boost credibility. Association with Jesus and religious moral foundations may have reflected some desire to secure respectability. It certainly indicated that the movement operated within a cultural flow in which Jesus and religious symbols were deeply embedded.<sup>187</sup> Even where the religious framework was used ironically to mock religion, an underlying respect for Jesus seemed to persist. His story provided an interpretive structure for experience as the Passion narrative was exploited to affirm notions of common humanity and struggle. That the radical Jesus appeared so often during points of conflict and pressure suggested that part of his appeal was as a symbol of hope. Indeed, identification with Jesus could reinforce interpretations of progress and potency in the face of apparent vulnerability. Jesus validated the cause. To some extent he was also unthreatening and respectable. He provided a rebuke to the establishment, but was more often invoked against actual class conflict.

## CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

The most persistent religious criticisms of socialism during the first half of the twentieth century derived from Catholic leaders who worried about threats to religion and social order. From the nineteenth century, Catholic responses to socialism emphasised its anti-religious aspects. Pope Pius IX (1846-78) denounced socialism and communism frequently, most notably in the Syllabus of Errors (1864). Pope Leo XIII (1878-1903) reiterated many of his predecessor's themes, especially in *Rerum Novarum* (1891) which defended the legitimacy of private property.<sup>188</sup> However, *Rerum Novarum* also rejected laissez-faire liberalism. It defended workers' right to organise, the principle of a just wage, and the need for limited state intervention. As Owen Chadwick has noted, such concessions allowed a 'great deal of latitude to Catholic minds who wanted to baptize Socialist ideals'.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>187</sup> See Bob James, 'Labour Banners: What Can They Tell Us?', in Martin and Taylor (eds), p.236.

<sup>188</sup> See Charles E. Curran, *Catholic Social Teaching, 1891-Present: A Historical, Theological and Ethical Analysis*, Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2002.

<sup>189</sup> Owen Chadwick, 'Great Britain and Europe', in John McManners (ed.), *The Oxford History of Christianity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, p.372.

Guided by papal warnings, Archbishop Francis Redwood of Wellington became the most influential and outspoken local Catholic critic of socialism. In a series of pastoral addresses he openly attacked socialism. In 1892, he cited Pope Leo XIII's claim that socialist agitation was 'One of the greatest and most formidable dangers of Society at the present day'.<sup>190</sup> According to Redwood, radical contemporary socialism sounded attractive, but required the total overthrow of society. In particular, it threatened to destroy property, family and religion – the threefold foundation of the social structure.<sup>191</sup>

Redwood repudiated the materialist basis of socialism, and its denial of the doctrine of Original Sin. He also appeared troubled by socialist references to Jesus in support of their cause, and challenged the 'impious audacity' of those who compared their 'destruction of Society' with the reformation brought by Christ:

But Jesus Christ assailed nothing by violence, and destroyed nothing by force. He sowed truth in minds and hearts as the husbandman scatters seed on the furrowed soil. No doubt He spoke severely to the rich, or rather to the abuse of riches, to riches devoid of compassion, fellow-feeling, or affection; but He never stirred up the poor against the rich, while He set charity between them as a meek and powerful mediatrix. He never armed the slave against his master, but, as His doctrine gained sway over the master's heart, the chains fell spontaneously from the bondman's limbs, without shock or perturbation. His divine work was a creation, not a destruction. He founded the kingdom of souls and thereby exalted civil Society, and, instead of fanning the lurid fire of hatred and envy, He introduced social devotedness and the animation of a new love.<sup>192</sup>

Jesus was neither agitator nor social revolutionary. He advocated harmony and organic processes of amelioration, not destructive activism.

Redwood's reflections on Jesus were shaped by disapproval of socialist appropriation. Jesus was an alternative to socialism, and correlated with the benefits of Christianity in general and Catholicism in particular. In this sense, the mystical Christ was crucial. Thus, in blaming secularisation for impending socialist catastrophe, Redwood argued that previous Christian generations found a 'common centre of love

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<sup>190</sup> See Francis Redwood, *Lenten Pastoral on Socialism*, Wellington: Catholic Times, 1892, p.1. Redwood referred to *Rerum Novarum*, but was quoting from the encyclical epistle *Dall'alto Dell'apostolico Seggio* ('On Freemasonry in Italy').

<sup>191</sup> Redwood, 1892, pp.2-3.

<sup>192</sup> Redwood, 1892, p.2.

in the heart of Jesus Christ. *There* was the meeting-place of all classes.... The love of Christ, or Christian charity, expelled that hatred and envy which is now a menace to social order'.<sup>193</sup> Later pastorals took up similar themes. In 1906, Redwood discounted differences between so-called Scientific and Moderate Socialism, judging that all forms were in 'open antagonism with the Catholic Church and true Christianity'.<sup>194</sup> Only the Church that Jesus founded could solve the great social problem: 'She can change the present state of things by changing the hearts and minds of men, by bringing back society to the feet of the Restorer of mankind, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God'.<sup>195</sup> The focus was on the divine Christ's role in growing the social organism of the Church.

By 1912, growing industrial unrest, labour militancy, and Catholic workers' participation in it provoked another caution. Redwood reiterated that socialism would destroy society's foundations, including 'Church Authority'.<sup>196</sup> His pastoral sparked a riposte from E.R. Hartley, organiser and lecturer for the New Zealand Socialist Party.<sup>197</sup> Once described as a 'rabid critic of religion',<sup>198</sup> Hartley assailed impotent 'Christian civilisation' for its failures: 'Socialism would make class hatred an impossible thing. Christianity has failed to do so!'<sup>199</sup> He defended socialist opposition to Christianity as destroying the enemies of 'Truth and Justice'.<sup>200</sup> Notably, he appealed to Jesus in condemning support for the prevailing system: 'By what part of the teachings of Christ can such robbery of your fellows as the foregoing be justified? It would be difficult to imagine the Christ of Nazareth a shareholder under conditions like these. It is equally difficult for anyone who professes to be his follower'.<sup>201</sup>

Hartley's attacks provoked debate, and criticism.<sup>202</sup> J. Bowater, a 'Christian Socialist' from Westport, chastised him for doing more harm than good. Somewhat

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<sup>193</sup> Redwood, 1892, p.3 (original italics).

<sup>194</sup> Francis Redwood, *Pastoral Letter on Socialism*, Dunedin: Tablet Reprint, 1906, pp.11-13.

<sup>195</sup> Redwood, 1906, p. 15.

<sup>196</sup> Francis Redwood, *Pastoral on Socialism*, Dunedin: NZ Tablet Print, 1912, p.5.

<sup>197</sup> See MW, 8 March 1912, p.7; MW, 15 March 1912, p.7; MW, 22 March 1912, p.7; reprinted as Edward R. Hartley, *A Catholic Pastoral on Socialism. An Open Letter to Archbishop Redwood*, Wellington: Maoriland Worker, 1912.

<sup>198</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, p.157.

<sup>199</sup> Hartley, p.22.

<sup>200</sup> Hartley, p.5.

<sup>201</sup> Hartley, p.12.

<sup>202</sup> See MW, 26 April 1912, p.5; MW, 3 May 1912, p.4; MW, 17 May 1912, p.4.

confusingly, he argued that 'Christianity is not simply going to church or listening to a minister preach a sermon. Nor is Socialism Christianity, but every Christian is a Socialist, though every Socialist is not a Christian'. Wrongdoing cloaked by churchgoing was not true Christianity; Hartley should focus on the cloak instead of attacking Christ, the creator and the hereafter.<sup>203</sup> In reply, Hartley reiterated that Christianity should mean 'living according to the life and teachings of Christ' – something impossible under present social conditions. Rather disingenuously, he claimed that he was merely attacking 'Churchianity', not true Christianity.<sup>204</sup> Hartley's appeals were ironic and rhetorical, and designed primarily to shame religious leaders. His recourse to a social Jesus contrasted with favoured Catholic language.

Other early Catholic responses followed Redwood in emphasising the role of the Church. In 1908, Frederick Maples provided a sophisticated account of socialism that noted the range of positions from philosophical or theological denial of the doctrine of Original Sin, to extreme 'practical and scientific' Marxist collectivism, and milder theories of land nationalisation and state socialism. Against them all, Maples contended that inequality could be rationalised on industrial, intellectual, political and religious grounds. Christians should seek fair treatment for the poor, but inequality created the environment for practice of virtue, which was the 'immediate end of man'. The argument was based in Natural Law, but perfected by Christianity.<sup>205</sup> Maples' argument was ultimately an apology for Catholicism. It argued that Protestant individualism had destroyed a golden age of Catholicism, and the natural 'Christian Socialism' of church life after Pentecost. History demonstrated that Catholicism met socialist aspirations: 'Liberty! Equality! Fraternity! They are grand and noble names, rightly interpreted; they have ever been the watchwords of the Catholic Church, and

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<sup>203</sup> MW, 26 April 1912, p.5.

<sup>204</sup> He also insisted that the evidence for Jesus' birth, death and resurrection was so flimsy as to be unhistorical, and that Christ was not all-powerful to save. MW, 26 April 1912, p.5; cf. 'Organiser's Notes', MW, 29 March 1912.

<sup>205</sup> Frederick G. Maples, *Socialism from a Catholic Point of View. A Paper Read at the Opening of the Winter Session of the Literary and Debating Society of the Petone Catholic Club*, Petone: Hutt and Petone Chronicle Office, 1908, pp.13-16.

the text of her preaching'.<sup>206</sup> Christ was an 'Elder Brother', but otherwise hardly featured.<sup>207</sup>

To some extent, Joseph the Carpenter fulfilled the role that Jesus the Worker did for Protestants – and devotion to St Joseph the Worker expanded considerably during the nineteenth century under Pius IX and his successors. However, Jesus did become more evident, especially in Catholic anti-socialist argumentation. At the height of the conflict between Hartley and Redwood, J.A. Scott also articulated the basis for Catholic condemnation of socialism. As editor of the *New Zealand Tablet*, he aimed to provide answers to common questions put to 'Catholic working men by their Socialist fellows'. He highlighted Catholicism's remedies for social problems and its historical sympathy for the victims of these ills. Pope Leo XIII and the German bishops were indicative of Jesus' spirit and teaching: 'The Church, like her Divine Founder, "has compassion on the multitude." She loves her working man, and to-day, as ever, shows herself as the Good Samaritan to the wounded humanity'.<sup>208</sup> Whatever they thought of the economic system, socialist hostility to religion focused Catholic opposition. Scott highlighted the stance of leading international socialists like the increasingly anti-Christian Robert Blatchford, and accused the *Maoriland Worker* of publishing 'irreligious piffle'.<sup>209</sup> Tellingly, he also cited G.D. Herron's observation that 'People cannot separate Christ from Christianity. And Christianity to-day stands for what is lowest and basest in life'.<sup>210</sup>

In this context, Jesus was used to counter labour rhetoric and present Catholicism as the golden mean between the extremes of socialism and unrestrained capitalism. In 1920, the *Tablet* argued,

We are told from all sides that the revolution is coming quickly.... On Catholics, as followers of the Worker of Nazareth, lies the obligation of striving for the reform of social abuses. All the virtues that Socialism claims are the virtues of pure Christianity. The Gospel of Christ teaches us to hate dishonesty and chicanery and injustice. Our Lord set the world the highest example of tender regard for the poor and the unfortunate. In His own life He proved that

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<sup>206</sup> Maples, p.25.

<sup>207</sup> Maples, pp.25-26.

<sup>208</sup> J.A. Scott, *The Church and Socialism*, Melbourne: The Australian Catholic Truth Society, 1912, p.29.

<sup>209</sup> Scott, *Socialism*, p.14.

<sup>210</sup> Scott, *Socialism*, p.32.

the condition of the laborer is the true nobility, and He taught us to despise luxury and useless wealth. His voice is still as strong in condemnation of those who oppress His poor as it was when He walked by the Lake of Galilee. His foster-father was a carpenter, but it was the powers of the State that hung Him on the Cross. .... Between the limits of Capitalism and Socialism the middle way is marked out by the law of Christ.<sup>211</sup>

Christ featured more prominently in some of Redwood's post-war warnings. Thus, he claimed, 'our present-day struggles, our rampant evils, and our dreadful situation of unrest and rivalry, of class hatred and of fight for bigger dividends and higher wages, are very largely due to apostasy from God, and revolt against Christ and His Christianity.... Our alternative must be either "Back to Christ" or "On to Socialism."' <sup>212</sup> Communism emerged as a distinct foe in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, and continued to be a focus of criticism throughout the interwar years. In 1933, Redwood attacked communism as a new form of paganism. Reiterating the principles of Pope Leo's 'Worker's Charter', he argued that 'the only solution of the social question lies in a return to the principles laid down in the teaching of Christ'. Specific teachings were seldom identified, except that resistance to State supremacy followed the principle of 'rendering to God'. On the other hand, individual ownership was founded simply in 'the Divine law of the Gospel'.<sup>213</sup>

Yet, Catholic attitudes to socialism did soften in some respects. An improving relationship with the NZLP after 1916 was one important factor. A strong Irish and working-class base in New Zealand Catholicism contributed to support for the NZLP. This increased after the party began courting the Irish vote in the wake of the Easter Rising of 1916 in Ireland.<sup>214</sup> Other changes helped. When a New Zealand Communist Party formed in 1921 the perception of the NZLP as a bastion of communism began to diminish. Labour also increasingly abandoned formal socialist positions from the mid-

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<sup>211</sup> *NZ Tablet*, 6 May 1920, p.26.

<sup>212</sup> *NZ Tablet*, 26 August 1925, p.27.

<sup>213</sup> Francis Redwood, *Lenten Pastoral Letter*, Wellington: Tolan Print, 1933; cf. *Month*, 1 March 1933, p.27.

<sup>214</sup> Gustafson, *Labour's Path*, p.125; cf. *NZ Tablet*, 6 May 1920, p.21; Richard P. Davis, *Irish Issues in New Zealand Politics 1868-1922*, Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1974, p.190. Davis, p.207, notes that Peter Fraser employed the idea of 'the crucifixion of Ireland' to great effect.

1920s.<sup>215</sup> Moreover, Catholics increasingly differentiated between definitions of socialism based on the abolition of private property and milder expressions.<sup>216</sup>

This development made Catholic social teaching appear compatible with the increasingly moderate socialism expressed in Labour Party objectives.<sup>217</sup> In 1931, Pope Pius XI rejected 'Christian socialism' as a contradiction in terms, claiming that 'no one can be at the same time a good Catholic and a true socialist'.<sup>218</sup> However, his alternatives to socialism and capitalism were sympathetic to labour. *Quadragesimo Anno* criticised exploitation of workers, and the failure to practice justice and charity by assisting 'brothers in need as Christ the Lord Himself'. The encyclical called for a 'full restoration of human society in Christ'.<sup>219</sup> These themes were taken up locally, especially in the social study clubs formed later in the 1930s. Commending these, Father L. Brice of Wellington argued that much of the Labour government's social legislation accorded with Christianity. Socialism was radically opposed to the teachings of Christ, but watered-down application of socialist principles was not.<sup>220</sup>

## THE INTERWAR SOCIAL GOSPEL

Social problems and social order continued to concern the Protestant churches during the interwar years. Conservative social Christianity persisted, though Jesus became an important touchstone in moderating expectations around causes like Sabbath observance.<sup>221</sup> In general, however, social Christianity became increasingly associated

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<sup>215</sup> Though some groups continued to regard labour, socialism and communism as an essentially singular and anti-religious entity. See Loyalty League, *What is the Red Menace? The Secret History of the Forces Behind Socialism and Communism: An Exposure of the So-Called 'Labour Party'*, Wellington: Loyalty League, 1925.

<sup>216</sup> *NZ Tablet*, 13 November 1929, p.3; *NZ Tablet*, 3 June 1931, p.3; cf. *NZ Tablet*, 15 January 1936, p.5.

<sup>217</sup> See Christopher van der Krogt, 'A Catholic-Labour Alliance? The Catholic Press and the New Zealand Labour Party 1916-1939', *Australian Catholic Record*, 78:1, 2000, pp.16-29.

<sup>218</sup> See *Quadragesimo Anno*, 1931, n.120. URL:

<http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Pius11/P11QUADR.HTM>, accessed 2 June 2006.

<sup>219</sup> *Quadragesimo Anno*, 1931, nn.138, 125; Curran, pp.10, 198-200.

<sup>220</sup> *NZ Tablet*, 7 July 1937, p.8.

<sup>221</sup> Belich, p.164, argues that Sabbatarianism persisted in New Zealand to a remarkable extent. However, the churches were also aware that strict application was increasing out of step with social expectations. In the search for a compromise between the 'Puritanical Sabbath' and the 'Continental Sunday' the Presbyterian Public Questions Committee looked to Jesus. See 28 October 1930, Minute Book (11.11.25 – 24.3.32), Public Questions Committee, PCNZ/GA 21: Location AE 6/3, PCANZ Archives, Dunedin.

with liberal theology and left-wing political causes. Based on the American experience, Ronald White and Howard Hopkins distinguish between evangelical liberalism and modernist liberalism within the social gospel movement. They claim that the former was thoroughly Christocentric; Jesus was the knowledge and saving power of God, and the climax of revelation was found in him. The moral and religious fruit in believers' lives validated claims about him. Modernist liberalism was less Christocentric; Jesus illustrated universally relevant truths, but was not the source of religious norms.<sup>222</sup> Interwar social gospel ideas in New Zealand tended more toward the former in being reformist but not theologically Modernist. The place of Jesus within social gospel thinking highlighted how strongly evangelicalism had shaped New Zealand Christianity.

Interwar approaches were influenced by a belief that the disruptions of industrial unrest and war threatened the social fabric. In this context, Christian social commentators often argued that application of Jesus' teaching was the only alternative to complete social turmoil. Thus, the Methodist Annual Conference of 1921 noted, 'In this hour of crisis the only alternatives before the world are CHRIST and chaos'.<sup>223</sup> Crucially, however, such observations were often accompanied by recognition that the churches were experiencing severe pressure.<sup>224</sup> In many ways, the social Christ represented a vision in which the churches' social and moral influence was preserved. Emphasis on Jesus' social principles reflected anxieties about social order, and concerns about waning Christian influence.

Yet, references often sounded optimistic, almost triumphal, in touting Jesus as the remedy for social problems. As the Methodist Social Creed of 1922 declared,

in the message and mission of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ – a message of goodwill and of brotherhood – will be found the only power for promoting effectively the reconstruction and regeneration of society. Hence we seek to secure the recognition of the Golden Rule and of the Mind of Christ, as the supreme law of society and the sure remedy for all social ills.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> White and Hopkins, pp.246-49.

<sup>223</sup> MAC, 1921, p.49.

<sup>224</sup> MAC, 1922, p.72.

<sup>225</sup> MAC, 1922, p.76.

Presbyterian statements exhibited a similar tone. In 1922, a report to General Assembly affirmed the centrality of the 'Gospel of the redeeming love of God' and the 'Message of the Kingdom'. Amidst social unrest, this gospel was 'the world panacea'.<sup>226</sup>

Commentators highlighted a threat, but also an opportunity. The Spirit of Jesus was confronting churches with the challenge of the Kingdom of God. New applications for eternal principles would settle the prevailing confusion: 'In the social realm the challenge of Jesus means the fearless acceptance and application of truth, justice, and service.... It is Christ or discord'.<sup>227</sup>

The social gospel arguably became associated with Methodism more than any other denomination. Methodists had a long tradition of interest in social issues. However, concern about the changed situation and falling numbers, especially among their traditional working constituency, encouraged a shift away from more conservative approaches. Susan Thompson describes a re-evaluation of mass evangelism and strengthening of social gospel ideas. The Social Creed was adopted, while ministry training increasingly emphasised the 'actualities of human life and experience, broadened by instruction in modern literature, philosophical thought, and economic theory'.<sup>228</sup> Jesus and the Kingdom became focal points in hopeful projections of the denomination's future. As one commentator noted, 'There is much active and articulate hostility to religion... A little less insistence upon the dark side of things, and how much it might mean for courage and confidence and the Kingdom of God!'<sup>229</sup> Such encouragements often lacked specific suggestions, but functioned as calls for greater dedication and exertion among church members. Thus, M.A. Rugby Pratt argued that 'Jesus never sought to dazzle men with glowing visions of life in a happy land "far, far away". He directed their gaze to the Kingdom of God on earth. In that thought Jesus embodied and expressed His social ideal'. Bringing in the Kingdom would require

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<sup>226</sup> *PGA*, 1922, p.179.

<sup>227</sup> *Outlook*, 21 March 1927, pp.13-14.

<sup>228</sup> Susan J. Thompson, 'Knowledge and Vital Piety: Methodist Ministry Education in New Zealand from the 1840s to 1988', PhD Thesis in Theology, University of Auckland, 2002, pp.76-77.

<sup>229</sup> *NZMT*, 29 March 1924, p.12.

devotion, but the effort would be repaid because the world's welfare was 'wrapped up in the religion of Jesus'.<sup>230</sup>

Kingdom language drew from various sources. It was often associated with social gospel figures like Walter Rauschenbusch, though there is little evidence that New Zealanders actually read him much. However, another liberal, H.E. Fosdick, was sufficiently influential that he provoked P.B. Fraser's ire.<sup>231</sup> Less often noted, though arguably as important, were the interpretations of Toyohiko Kagawa. A Japanese Christian, Kagawa became admired in New Zealand from the late 1920s. Interest waxed during a tour in 1936. Kagawa was associated with the Kingdom of God Movement and revered for his practical social commitment. He was described an 'Asian idealist and social reformer... and one of the few living men... who take – and live – the Sermon on the Mount literally'.<sup>232</sup> Kagawa's Christocentrism was widely acknowledged, and his blend of conversionism and social action appreciated. Martin Sullivan later reflected that Kagawa's visit had influenced many of his contemporaries, especially in emphasising ministry to both body and soul.<sup>233</sup>

New Zealanders were impressed by Kagawa's authentic faith, and delighted that his Christianity was 'modelled upon that of Christ rather than from any Western replica'.<sup>234</sup> His vocabulary also resonated. Kagawa claimed to be socially radical 'because Christ my Saviour was very radical'.<sup>235</sup> He criticised Christian traditionalism that ignored the spirit of the New Testament, and was praised for humanising 'modern industrial, capitalistic society'.<sup>236</sup> There were also conspicuously evangelical emphases. In accounting for 'The Motive of the Kingdom of God Movement', Kagawa explained that Christ was the centre of the movement, and the cross the centre of Christ:

The cross is the motive of the Kingdom of God Movement. The motive is that Christ died for us. We are unworthy of that precious fact. Pursued by that love, we cannot but become heirs of Christ's blood and death.... The Christ depicted by Paul is a Christ Who has paid the debts of the whole human race as if they were His own. And this sort of thing is necessary to genuine social

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<sup>230</sup> NZMT, 19 January 1924, p.8.

<sup>231</sup> *Biblical Recorder*, August 1931, p.226.

<sup>232</sup> NZMBC Link, 5 August 1929, p.4.

<sup>233</sup> Martin Sullivan, *Watch How You Go*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1975, p.70.

<sup>234</sup> NZMT, 27 June 1931, p.2.

<sup>235</sup> NZMT, 10 June 1933, p.2.

<sup>236</sup> NZMBC Link, 5 October 1929, p.6.

organisation. The Kingdom of God does not actually get established anywhere without the working of this cross-principle. Christ says, "If any man would come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."<sup>237</sup>

Part of Kagawa's appeal, then, lay in the combination of social activism and evangelical faith. Jesus was exemplary, but also the source of regenerative life.

### ***The Social Gospel, Liberalism and the Left***

Kingdom language remained attractive partly because it offered broad and deliberately generalised principles. It connoted an ideal Christian society, and was applied formulaically to all kinds of issues. Thus, in 1925, the Presbyterian General Assembly Committee on Dancing's report concluded, 'the only solution of modern social problems lies in the positive preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom'.<sup>238</sup>

Like their British counterparts, New Zealand evangelicals were interested in social issues, but became uncomfortable with the social gospel movement.<sup>239</sup> By the early 1930s, conservatives had become concerned about the collectivist and theologically liberal connotations of social Christianity. Isaac Jolly complained that Christianity was individual, and Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom was intended to have a purely personal application.<sup>240</sup> As divisions between conservative and Modernist Christians sharpened in the late 1920s, conservatives reacted against exaltation of Jesus' humanity. At the height of the depression, Bower Black contended as a 'plain matter of experience' that it was 'not so much the Jesus of Galilee who binds up the broken in heart but the Christ of the Cross. It is not the Sermon on the Mount that brings healing to your soul, but the Sacrifice on the Hill. It is at the Cross of the world's Saviour that life's deepest needs can be met, and the wounds of the broken hearted find healing for evermore'.<sup>241</sup>

The emphasis on Jesus in social gospel thinking became increasingly identified with the politics of the left. Percy Paris was one of the most influential Methodist

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<sup>237</sup> NZMT, 22 August 1931, p.8.

<sup>238</sup> PGA, 1925, in Dennis McEldowney (ed.), *Presbyterians in Aotearoa, 1840-1990*, Wellington: The Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1990, p.96.

<sup>239</sup> See Ian M. Randall, 'The Social Gospel: A Case Study', in John Wolfe (ed.), *Evangelical Faith and Public Zeal: Evangelicals and Society in Britain, 1780-1980*, London: SPCK, 1995, pp.163-70.

<sup>240</sup> *Outlook*, 15 July 1935, pp.5-6; *Outlook*, 29 July 1935, pp.3-4.

<sup>241</sup> W. Bower Black, *The Waters of Healing*, Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, 1933, p.10.

figures of the interwar years, and a leading advocate of the social gospel.<sup>242</sup> In 1924, he became editor of the *New Zealand Methodist Times*. Significantly, the lead article in the first issue of his editorship was simply headed 'Jesus':

Jesus – this is the first word which we, the new Editorial Staff, write as we take on the task assigned to us by the recent Conference. Its place at the beginning of these notes is symbolical... We shall always put Jesus Christ first.... It is His Spirit, we trust, that shall be the inspiration of all our effort. It is for His greater glory that we shall write. On all sides to-day evidence is piling up that Jesus is the only hope of this world: Jesus Christ and Him crucified. There is no alternative.<sup>243</sup>

At this stage, Paris' agenda addressed relatively conventional established concerns, including discontent with the social ills of drink, gambling and immorality that 'gripped our age'. Moreover, economic, political, and educational solutions had all been found wanting without the new heart that Jesus could create.

Through the late 1920s and 1930s, social gospel commitment to Jesus became correlated with the political ideals of Labour. Paris cited extracts from 'The Socialism of John Wesley' with approval.<sup>244</sup> By the late 1930s, he was identifying distribution of wealth as 'The fundamental problem today, next to the conversion of men and women to God through Christ'. Competing vested interests and speculators blocked solutions to social problems and turned the world into a den of thieves: 'Oh, for the Master and His scourge, and the overturning of the evil system once more'.<sup>245</sup> Paris' inaugural address as President of Methodist Conference in 1938 was controversial, and highlighted major rifts within the denomination. However, it also provided an exemplary statement of late interwar social gospel thinking. Jesus featured prominently in what Kevin Clements has described as a theological justification for Labour's proposed social security system.<sup>246</sup>

Anti-war sentiment after the Great War and the depression of the 1930s both aided this leftward movement of social Christianity. This was expressed in considerable sympathy for bodies like the League of Nations from its earliest days. The

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<sup>242</sup> See O.E. Burton, *Percy Paris*, Wellington: The Friends of Percy Paris, Wesley Church, 1963.

<sup>243</sup> *NZMT*, 12 April 1924, p.1.

<sup>244</sup> A.N. Faulkner, *The Socialism of John Wesley*, London: Robert Culley, 1908; Burton, *Percy Paris*, p.63.

<sup>245</sup> Cited in Burton, *Percy Paris*, p.64.

<sup>246</sup> See Kevin P. Clements, 'Paris, Percy Reginald, 1882-1942', *DNZB*, accessed 19 June 2006.

Congregational Union remarked favourably on the League's 'vast potentialities as an instrument for the manifestation of the mind of Christ and the realisation of the Divine Kingdom on Earth'.<sup>247</sup> Similarly, the General Assembly encouraged Presbyterians to 'ally themselves with the forces that are earnestly seeking to abolish war'. Members were urged 'in the name of Jesus' to give bodies like the League and the International Court of Justice their 'interest, sympathy and prayers'.<sup>248</sup> In 1935, the Rev. Harold Peat from Hamilton confidently claimed that Jesus was increasingly the inspiration for 'thinking men': 'Nationalism is yielding to internationalism under the urge of the doctrine of the brotherhood of man, which is the doctrine of the Christ'.<sup>249</sup>

As the tone of the churches' anti-war statements sharpened during the period, so did the strength of appeals to Jesus. In 1927 an interdenominational peace committee reported that 'war as a means of settling disputes between nations is utterly opposed to the mind of Christ'. It called on the various churches to make an 'outspoken and uncompromising declaration that the war system and the Gospel of Christ are diametrically and irreconcilably opposed'.<sup>250</sup> Little immediate action resulted, but the rhetoric became established in subsequent statements. By 1935, Presbyterian declarations were even stronger, with Jesus operating as an intensifier. According to the Public Questions Committee, 'just war' was no longer conceivable. War was 'a crime against humanity and contrary to the mind and spirit of Jesus Christ.... In view of the sanctity of human life implied in the Fatherhood of God, the slaughter of men, women and children involved in modern warfare is intolerable to the Christian conscience.... War does not fit into Christ's Gospel of love'.<sup>251</sup>

The Christian peace movement was strongest among Christian youth. As David Grant has noted, resolutions demanding unilateral disarmament became almost *de rigueur* at Methodist Bible Class conferences from the mid-1920s.<sup>252</sup> Studies related Jesus'

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<sup>247</sup> YCU, 1923, p.15.

<sup>248</sup> PGA, 1922, p.33.

<sup>249</sup> NZMT, 9 November 1935, p.219.

<sup>250</sup> The committee included representatives from the Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, and Congregational churches, as well as the Salvation Army, the Church of England, the Church of Christ, and the Society of Friends. See PGA, 1927, pp.198-99.

<sup>251</sup> PGA, 1935, p.164.

<sup>252</sup> David Grant, *A Question of Faith: A History of the New Zealand Christian Pacifist Society*, Wellington: Philip Garside, 2004, p.21.

life and teaching to social issues like war. In 1932-33, one Methodist camp reflected on what 'A Sermon on the Mount Christian' should be like.<sup>253</sup> A report of a later gathering noted the 'times of heartsearching... spent in study and discussion, as the challenge of the Way of Jesus was reconsidered in the light of the standard of conduct set for the Christian by Jesus Himself'. Some attenders concluded that 'Peace on earth could not come until men of good will inspired by the spirit of Jesus were prepared to follow Him all the way of love in all human relationships, domestic, business, social and international'.<sup>254</sup> Bible Class magazines highlighted Jesus' attitudes, noting that Christians simply followed his teaching.<sup>255</sup> However, the churches denounced war more readily than they adopted specific alternatives. A pacifist lobby had some influence, but adopted a position that was more radical than the mainstream of church membership. Where opinion was sharply divided, Jesus provided a focal point for unity and a rallying point for what could be affirmed – namely, that war was undesirable.

Reservations about pacifism partly derived from discomfort with the idea. However, connections between pacifism and Christian socialism were also a factor, as many prominent Christian pacifists were also socialists and applied Jesus' teaching to each doctrine in similar ways. Campaigning in the 1928 election, Ormond Burton contended that competition and war were equally 'alien to the spirit and teaching of Christ'.<sup>256</sup> Burton believed that politics was a branch of ethics, and Christianity the highest ethical system. Logically, therefore, 'the practical application of Christian principles' provided 'the only right solution' for political problems.<sup>257</sup> Burton's principles were drawn from three maxims of Jesus: 'Love Thy Neighbour as Thyself', 'To seek and save that which was lost', and 'Love Your Enemies'. These were supposed

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<sup>253</sup> NZMBC Link, 5 February 1933, p.13; also Hector Maclean, *Jesus' Teaching About the Kingdom of God: A Bible Study Book Handbook for Conferences and Institutes*, Dunedin: NZ Young Women's Presbyterian Bible Class Union, 1935.

<sup>254</sup> NZMT, 2 February 1935, p.11.

<sup>255</sup> For example, NZMBC Link, 5 March 1934, p.7; NZMBC Link, 5 August 1934, p.1; NZMBC Link, 5 November 1938, p.4.

<sup>256</sup> O.E. Burton, *Christian Socialism*, Auckland: Wright & Jaques Printers, 1940 (1928), p.3; cf. Ormond Burton, *Christian Action*, Levin: Kerslake, Billens & Humphrey Printers, 1970.

<sup>257</sup> Burton, *Christian Socialism*, p.1.

to form a policy basis for everything from industrial to international relations.<sup>258</sup> Other Christian pacifists like Ron Howell urged for more activist Christian pacifism, agreeing with Burton's socialist orientation: 'To-day Capitalism is the greatest obstacle to human progress, its existence means, not the likelihood but the inevitability of recurring wars, and it must go'. Pacifists should work towards its replacement by 'a revived and invigorated Socialism'.<sup>259</sup>

The Sermon on the Mount and loving self-sacrifice were essential elements of Christian discourse during the depression of the 1930s. Initial religious responses focused on improving community standards, solidarity, and relief work rather than structural change. Andrew Picard has noted that some denominations also viewed the crisis as an opportunity for gospel preaching.<sup>260</sup> In 1932, the Presbyterian Public Questions Committee claimed that spiritual and moral failure lay behind the economic crisis: 'It is because the world has made a travesty of the principles of Christ in the past that humanity is suffering from the evils of the present day'. It praised Presbyterians' Christ-like relief work and called for brotherliness, co-operation, and 'a spirit of hopefulness'.<sup>261</sup> Writing to the *New Zealand Baptist*, Frank Brookbanks urged Christians to follow Jesus' example by comforting the needy.<sup>262</sup>

Responses to the depression changed after the riots of 1932, especially from the following year.<sup>263</sup> Serving the community remained a focus, but the churches increasingly highlighted structural issues. Even the usually tentative Anglican General Synod urged use of 'every effort to transform our social order so as to bring it nearer the mind of Christ'.<sup>264</sup> From mid-1933, Methodist leaders were more forthright in challenging the unequal distribution of resources within the community. Paris blamed ruthless economic and political retrenchment.<sup>265</sup> A.J. Seamer was equally critical, but

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<sup>258</sup> Burton, *Christian Socialism*, p.2.

<sup>259</sup> Howell, *Christian Pacifism*, p.11.

<sup>260</sup> Andrew Picard, 'Church Responses to Social Issues in Depression New Zealand, 1933', *New Zealand Journal of Baptist Research*, 9, 2004, pp.35-36.

<sup>261</sup> *PGA*, 1932, pp.98-99.

<sup>262</sup> *NZB*, June 1933, p.174.

<sup>263</sup> See Kevin P. Clements, 'The Churches and Social Policy: A Study in the Relationship of Ideology to Action', PhD Thesis in Sociology, Victoria University of Wellington, 1970.

<sup>264</sup> *PGS*, 1934, p.50.

<sup>265</sup> *NZMT*, 10 June 1933, p.1.

further posited the principle of mutual sacrifice found in the cross. Equality of sacrifice would bring improvement.<sup>266</sup> Some congregations also invoked Christ in denouncing government policy. One described the situation for the unemployed as 'preventable evidence of spiritual inhumanity, and political and economic injustice'. The statement chided political indifference, which defied 'the great Command of Christianity found in the sociology of the Good Samaritan and the Golden Rule.'<sup>267</sup>

Jesus and the Kingdom became associated with the churches' prophetic function. At a point of social pressure, Jesus provided a voice of protest. He was used to express hopes for a revival of Christian influence. 'Crisis' literature illustrated that these themes became more prominent with increased political engagement.<sup>268</sup> In 1936, J.D. Salmond's edited booklet *Christ and Tomorrow* was influenced by neo-orthodox writers like Karl Barth and Emil Brunner, and considered sufficiently radical that John Dickie pressed to have it withdrawn.<sup>269</sup> Some religious opinion-formers believed that Christianity could contribute by purifying 'Socialistic ideals' in accordance with their Christian aim.<sup>270</sup> Socialism was never completely popularised among Christians, but the main Protestant churches in particular became more willing to work with moderate socialism as an alternative to the status quo.

By 1935, many religious leaders suspected that the churches would survive better in tandem rather than in opposition to Labour's national project. Significantly, the NZLP had also largely become reconciled to the value of religious support by this time and began courting religious endorsement. As A.J.S. Reid has noted, the NZLP perceived a political opportunity in the churches' responses to the depression. Church statements created a sympathetic atmosphere, and the party responded by presenting

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<sup>266</sup> NZMT, 1 April 1933, p.10.

<sup>267</sup> Cited in James Thorn, *Peter Fraser: New Zealand's Wartime Prime Minister*, London: Odhams Press, 1952, p.106.

<sup>268</sup> For example, J.D. Salmond and Alex Salmond, *The World Crisis and the Gospel*, Dunedin: Otago Daily Times Print, 1931; J.D. Salmond and Alex Salmond (eds), *Facing Vital Issues: A Study Book for the Times*, Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, for the Youth Committee of the Council of Religious Education, 1932.

<sup>269</sup> J.D. Salmond (ed.), *Christ and Tomorrow: A Study Book for the Times*, Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, 1936; cf. Ian Breward, *Grace and Truth: A History of Theological Hall Knox College, Dunedin 1876-1975*, Dunedin: Theological Education Committee, Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1975, p.47.

<sup>270</sup> See John A. Allan, *Christianity and Communism*, Wellington: Publications Committee of St John's Young Men's Bible Class, 1936, pp.37-65.

the 1935 election as a tussle between the Christianity of Labour and anti-Christianity.<sup>271</sup> Michael Joseph Savage and Peter Fraser seemed to become more sympathetic to the Christianity of their respective Catholic and Presbyterian roots.<sup>272</sup> Even John A. Lee played up harmonious values, claiming that 'there is no antagonism between the Labour movement and the Church. Socialism has never been advocated as an alternative religion'. Despite occasional difficulties, 'a radical Church in this time and day makes few enemies in a democratic country, and a radical party advancing a policy which will humanize the machine age has more friends than enemies in Church congregations'.<sup>273</sup>

The language of Jesus and the Kingdom supported this rapprochement. It validated reform, principles of social action, and Christian engagement with social issues. Yet, it was also deliberately unspecific. Thus, reports to the Presbyterian General Assembly denied the possibility of a Christian social order, yet urged for social expressions of 'brotherly love directing and interpreting justice'.<sup>274</sup> Assembly's role was to rouse the Church's conscience 'in regard to necessary social change in harmony with the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, rather than the formulation of specific economic and social proposals'.<sup>275</sup> Mid-1930s Labour humanitarianism synchronised well with generalised principles associated with Jesus and the Kingdom. Savage's renewed interest in religion during the last years of his life was partly aroused through reading the New Testament and discovering similarities between his philosophies and Jesus' teaching.<sup>276</sup> His discourse of 'applied Christianity' traded on reverence for Christ, who he referred to in 1938 as the 'The greatest man that had ever lived'. He even constructed social policy in terms of helping to establish the Kingdom of God on earth.<sup>277</sup> In its own way, the discourse was as moralistic as the churches' social

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<sup>271</sup> Reid, 'Church and State', pp.133-36.

<sup>272</sup> Barry Gustafson, *From the Cradle to the Grave: A Biography of Michael Joseph Savage*, Auckland: Penguin, 1988, pp.212-14; Thorn, *Peter Fraser*, p.107.

<sup>273</sup> John A. Lee, *Socialism in New Zealand*, London: T. Werner Laurie, 1938, p.268.

<sup>274</sup> PGA, 1934, p.182.

<sup>275</sup> PGA, 1937, p.242.

<sup>276</sup> Gustafson, *Cradle*, p.212.

<sup>277</sup> See Gustafson, *Cradle*, pp.213-14, 216, 227, quote p.213.

Christianity. However, it provided a basis for Christian co-operation on 'specific purposes of immediate importance'.<sup>278</sup>

By the mid-1930s, some Christian commentators were worrying that interest in Jesus and his teaching was not translating into support for church life. In 1934, Clarence Eaton's address to the Methodist Conference bemoaned this fact: 'Our social reforms claim Christ as their leader. Philanthropists pay tribute to Him as their inspirer and example.... Yet the Church is treated with indifference and organised religion given the cold shoulder'.<sup>279</sup> Later interpreters have suggested that the practical Christianity of Labour became increasingly secularised, and that Savage supplanted Jesus as the Christ-figure of the movement.<sup>280</sup> Michael Bassett has described visiting a 'simple, Catholic, working class home' to receive a portrait of Savage from the elderly occupant: 'There he was in the hall next to the crucifix. She picked him down, kissed him, and told me that Savage was the nearest thing to Christ in her life'.<sup>281</sup> The anecdote demonstrates strikingly how established the ideal of a social Christ had become. For the point is not that Christ was supplanted by a secular alternative, but that Savage was held to approximate an image of Jesus that had become virtually unquestioned. In short, Savage's kindly humanitarianism was considered the embodiment of Jesus' teaching and example. Thus, the portrait interpreted the crucifix, but both belonged together.

Invocation of Jesus in the cause of social reform was an important characteristic of debates about social issues in the first half of the twentieth century. For Christians, these contests were arguably a crucial influence in shaping the pattern of increasing

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<sup>278</sup> Gilbert Cope, *Christians in the Class Struggle*, Wellington: Progressive Publishing Society, 1944, pp.28-32, quote p.32. This was published originally as *Christians in the Class Struggle*, Birmingham: Council of Clergy and Ministers for Common Ownership, 1942. In this, Cope, an Englishman, argued that modern Christians increasingly recognised the radical social content of Jesus' teaching and early Christian practice. He doubted that a rapprochement with Marxist socialism was likely, but suggested co-operation between Christians and socialist political groups on specific issues as a productive strategy.

<sup>279</sup> MAC, 1934, p.8.

<sup>280</sup> Reid, 'Church and State', p.136.

<sup>281</sup> Michael Bassett, 'How Ideal was the Savage Ideal', M.J. Savage Memorial Lecture, La Trobe University, 4 September 1998. URL: [http://www.michaelbassett.co.nz/article\\_savage.htm](http://www.michaelbassett.co.nz/article_savage.htm), accessed 2 June 2006.

Jesus-centredness. The social Jesus was put to work for various ends, but provided a language that proved amenable to humanitarian concerns. In some ways, the prevalence of the language indicated the extent to which Christianity continued to flavour the wider culture. It may also suggest some success in Christian efforts to influence society. The language appeared often within labour rhetoric, and arguably influenced Catholic discourse to a limited extent. Malleability aided this success. For the churches, Jesus-centred social concern seemed to provide an acceptable but distinctively Christian framework. For labour, the language supplied a tool for provocative critique, but also respectability and a moral tone. In this context, the social Jesus was generally less threatening than the rhetoric. However, malleability brought limitations. The social Christ was often a positioning device that lacked substantial content. His attractiveness to such disparate constituencies suggested pliability. In this sense, Eaton's observations were on the mark. Value and clarity were easily sacrificed to broad dissemination. The Jesus of social campaigning provided a common language but limited real influence.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# THE CHILDREN'S JESUS

In many ways, New Zealand's Jesus was the children's Jesus. First acquaintances with him came almost universally in childhood, and this was also the time when he was most regularly invoked. Children probably had more occasions to consider Jesus than any other group, and beliefs about the nature of childhood, religion and society ensured that these representations were enduring. This chapter argues that Jesus and childhood were strongly correlated. Jesus featured prominently in the religious idiom associated with children, and became an increasingly important focus in the religion of Protestant children during the first half of the twentieth century. Given that messages for children are excellent indicators of cultural values, this growing prominence provides strong support for the contention of the increasingly Jesus-centred nature of New Zealand Protestantism during this period.<sup>1</sup>

Representations of Jesus for children were shaped by wider social and religious patterns. While certain aspects of the history of childhood are fiercely contested, there is reasonably wide agreement that increasingly pluralistic urban societies favoured 'the gradual emergence of a prolonged version of childhood and adolescence'.<sup>2</sup> In the nineteenth century, childhood lengthened alongside education. By the twentieth century, the concept of 'adolescence' extended childhood still further, while scientific considerations also became more important. Alongside the philosophies of Locke and Rousseau, and Romantic ideals, psychological ideas about human development and smaller families altered age relations.<sup>3</sup> Together, these helped soften attitudes toward children and encouraged gentler, more sympathetic, child-centred ideals.

Religious ideals were also important. Christian concern for children was often inspired by the New Testament. The gospel texts suggested that Jesus elevated their status within the family, and generally, by describing them as exemplary entrants into

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<sup>1</sup> On children and cultural values, cf. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *1914-1918: Understanding the Great War*, Catherine Temerson (trans.), London: Profile, 2002, p.110.

<sup>2</sup> Colin Heywood, *A History of Childhood: Children and Childhood in the West from Medieval to Modern Times*, Cambridge: Polity, 2001, pp.19-20, 30-31, quote p.30.

<sup>3</sup> Heywood, pp.23-30.

the Kingdom of God.<sup>4</sup> Later Puritan and evangelical traditions tended to stress the doctrine of Original Sin in relation to the child, though attitudes and practices were not always as severe as the rhetoric. Belief in the convertibility of the child meant that it was equally permissible to frighten or reassure them.<sup>5</sup> From the mid-nineteenth century, Horace Bushnell's *Discourses on Christian Nurture* encouraged a move away from authoritarian models and suggested a new aim in Christian education: 'That the child is to grow up a Christian, and never know himself as being otherwise'.<sup>6</sup> Child conversion was stressed alongside the gradual enlightenment of children from within Christian experience. Bushnell's view was that parents should rather 'teach a feeling than a doctrine; to bathe the child in their own feeling of the love of God, and dependence on him'.<sup>7</sup>

These broad influences were shaped by local factors. In the colonial setting, children's fate tested the veracity of myths about the land's Arcadian abundance.<sup>8</sup> From the late nineteenth century there were initiatives to regulate working conditions for children and provide protection for them. However, as the history of the Child Welfare Act of 1925 demonstrates, such changes were slow and hard fought.<sup>9</sup> Religious communities shared these concerns, but awareness that children represented 'the nursery of the Church' also encouraged care for their moral, physical and spiritual welfare. Introduction of the Education Act of 1877 prompted an expansion of religious

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<sup>4</sup> Mark 9.37 and Mark 10.13-16; cf. Judith M. Gundry-Volf, 'The Least and the Greatest: Children in the New Testament', in Marcia J. Bunge (ed.), *The Child in Christian Thought*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001, pp.29-60; Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, New York: Crossroad, 1983, pp.147-48; David Archard, *Children, Rights and Childhood*, London: Routledge, 1993, pp.37-39.

<sup>5</sup> See Catherine A. Brekus, 'Children of Wrath, Children of Grace: Jonathan Edwards and the Puritan Culture of Child Rearing', in Bunge (ed.), pp.300-28; Richard P. Heitzenrater, 'John Wesley and Children', in Bunge (ed), esp. pp.279-82.

<sup>6</sup> Robert Bruce Mullin, *The Puritan as Yankee: A Life of Horace Bushnell*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002, pp.99-126, Bushnell quote, p.117.

<sup>7</sup> Cited in Margaret Bendroth, 'Horace Bushnell's Christian Nurture', in Bunge (ed.), p.353.

<sup>8</sup> On Arcadian myths and New Zealand, see Miles Fairburn, *The Ideal Society and Its Enemies: The Foundations of New Zealand Society, 1850-1900*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1989.

<sup>9</sup> See Jeanine Graham, 'Child Employment in New Zealand', *NZJH*, 21:1, 1987, pp.62-78; Bronwyn Dalley, *Family Matters: Child Welfare in Twentieth-Century New Zealand*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1998, esp. pp.64-90.

education facilities that helped concentrate religious activity in childhood.<sup>10</sup> This influenced the extent and manner of Jesus' appearance – both in the state education system and within the churches.

The first section of this chapter addresses the correlation between Jesus and children, and the bonds of reciprocal love that were believed to hold them in close relation. Such notions were based on Romantic ideas of children's religiousness and innocence as much as ideas about Jesus, but created a characteristic discourse. The remainder of the chapter highlights different contexts in which children encountered Jesus. One section on domestic piety explores the contexts of family religion, prayer, and forms of religious literature for children. Further sections focus on the state education system and the Protestant Sunday School movement. These demonstrate that Protestant attempts to improve the reach and efficiency of religious education encouraged the application of modern scientific principles. Developmental approaches helped shape the Jesus that children encountered, but did not resolve the most problematic aspects of the correlation between Jesus and child.

## **THE PECULIAR BOND BETWEEN JESUS AND CHILD**

Representations of Jesus were profoundly influenced by belief that Jesus and children enjoyed a special relationship. The relationship was two-way, though it depended largely on Jesus. He was characterised as a warm and inviting individual who especially loved children. He was also the Great Personality to whom children were instinctively drawn.

### ***Jesus' Love for Children***

The notion of a singular relationship was partly predicated on Jesus' special love for children, which was celebrated and recited from earliest ages. The ubiquity of music and its capacity to evoke and interpret experience made it particularly important in children's lives.<sup>11</sup> So it was significant that the love of Jesus formed the simple core of

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<sup>10</sup> Geoffrey Troughton, 'Religion, Churches and Childhood in New Zealand, c.1900-1940', *NZJH*, 40:1, pp.39-56.

<sup>11</sup> On the influence of music, see A.L. Austin, *The Beckoning Land: The Diary and Memoirs of A.L. Austin, 1920-7*, Christchurch: Pegasus, 1979, p.11; Margaret Robins and Brian Shaw (eds), *A Different Kind of Home: The Masterton Methodist Children's Home, Homeleigh 1921-78*, n.p., 2003,

many of the most popular songs for the young.<sup>12</sup> At one level this reflected something ontological, as Jesus was the embodiment of love. But children held a special place in his affection, and his love was especially directed towards them. As one early advocate of religious work among children observed, 'the lambs are so dear to the heart of the Good Shepherd'.<sup>13</sup> As this suggests, the idea of Jesus' special love for children, and the images that conveyed it, derived in part from the New Testament. The most important ideas were those of Jesus as Saviour and Friend, and each was reinforced through favoured metaphors.

Jesus as Saviour was fundamental and foremost. This theme was frequently expressed in relation to the 'Dear Lord's' death on the cross to redeem the wayward. The Saviour was also the 'Lord' – or, just as frequently for children, 'Master'. The central corresponding image of Jesus as 'the Good Shepherd' was a favourite subject for stained-glass windows, songs and prayers.<sup>14</sup> The un-denominational school worship book edited by the leading Presbyterian educationalist and minister J.D. Salmond was a good indicator of popularity.<sup>15</sup> Songs needed to be reasonably popular to be included in this, though selection also reinforced familiarity. Salmond's choices were probably influenced by the formal and controversial setting of the state school environment. Consequently, the bulk of the songs were either rousing and patriotic or asserted reasonably uncontested themes like the splendour of Creation and the

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p.34; Lauris Edmond, *An Autobiography*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1994, p.19. On children's hymns, see Soper, p.37; cf. Robin Hyde, *The Godwits Fly*, Patrick Sandbrook (ed.), Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2001 (1938), p.46. Two important musical collections for children were *Golden Bells*, London: Children's Special Service Mission, 1878, and *The Sunday School Hymnary*, Carey Bonner (ed.), London: National Sunday School Union, 1905 (hereafter *GB* and *SSH*, with references to song numbers).

<sup>12</sup> 'I am so glad that Jesus loves me', *SSH*, 29; 'Jesus loves me, this I know', *SSH*, 30.

<sup>13</sup> *New Zealand Methodist*, 15 October 1887, p.5.

<sup>14</sup> Favourite Shepherd hymns included, 'Saviour like a shepherd lead us', *SSH*, 238; 'The Lord's my shepherd', *SSH*, 408; 'Jesus, tender shepherd, hear me', *SSH*, 46; 'Jesus is our shepherd', *SSH*, 237; 'The king of love my shepherd is', *SSH*, 84.

<sup>15</sup> First published in 1936, it was expanded for publication by the Bible in Schools League as, *Services of Worship (Undenominational) For Use in the Public Schools of New Zealand Under the Present Voluntary System*, Wellington: Bible-in-Schools League, 1940 (references to song number). J.D. Salmond became Assembly Youth Director and lecturer in religious education at the Theological Hall, Knox College, from June 1931. He exerted enormous influence on Presbyterian educational thinking from this time, and spearheaded co-operative efforts to update the church's education programme. See Ian Breward, 'Salmond, James David, 1898-1976', *DNZB*, accessed 4 April 2003.

greatness of God.<sup>16</sup> Significantly, songs that did refer to Jesus were mostly for younger children, or referred to him as Shepherd.<sup>17</sup>

The Shepherd image had a long history in Christian tradition and reflected a range of ideas about the Saviour. Though widely utilised, it was particularly favoured in relation to children; where the New Testament referred to sheep, popular usage more often mentioned lambs. The influential Romantic tradition idealised children and rusticity, which helped popularise the connection. Children were weak and vulnerable, and Jesus' love for them reflected his sensitivity and goodness. But there were also soteriological and moral dimensions, as the Redeemer was himself the Lamb of God.<sup>18</sup> The Shepherd connoted tenderness, guidance and rescue. He ensured safety, and brought the wayward back to the fold. Use of Sybil Parker's well known image of 'The Good Shepherd' on a Rechabite calendar clearly signalled these protective and directive aspects of salvation.<sup>19</sup>

The other crucial image was that of Jesus as the Friend of little children. As one young contributor to the *Outlook* argued, understanding Jesus as Saviour should not obscure his relationship as 'Friend and elder Brother'.<sup>20</sup> As popular children's hymns indicated, the notion of Jesus' friendship was multivalent. 'What a friend we have in Jesus' emphasised that he was helpful, comforting and reliable in times of need. 'Jesus friend of little children' articulated childhood fear of abandonment, but implied that Jesus could be an intimate companion: 'Take my hand, and ever keep me close to Thee.... Never leave me, nor forsake me; ever be my Friend'. On the other hand, 'There's a friend for little children' asserted the eternal other-ness of Jesus and the

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<sup>16</sup> On the former, see *Services of Worship*: 'Fight the good fight', 15; 'God of our fathers', 30; 'Land of our birth', 33; on the latter, 'All things bright and beautiful', 2; 'God who made the earth', 6; 'For the beauty of the earth', 19; 'All creatures of our God and king', 21; 'All people that on earth do dwell', 27.

<sup>17</sup> *Services of Worship*: (for younger children) 'Jesus, friend of little children', 5; 'When mothers of Salem', 8; 'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild', 9; (as Shepherd) 'The king of love', 18; 'The Lord's my shepherd', 23.

<sup>18</sup> *Reaper*, February 1930, p.295.

<sup>19</sup> Independent Order of Rechabites Friendly Society, *No. 86 District, New Zealand Central (Christ the Good Shepherd Calendar)*, 1908. Eph-D-ALCOHOL-Temperance-1908-01, ATL. Parker's portrait was widely reproduced; for example, Arthur Mee, *The Children's Bible*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924.

<sup>20</sup> *Outlook*, 12 May 1900, p.7.

glorious promise of heaven.<sup>21</sup> Jesus' warm presence could console and fortify. Friendship with him was necessarily unequal, since it rested primarily on his capacities. However, it usually implied a reciprocal obligation to love and service.

Children were often reminded that they experienced the love and friendship of Jesus in very tangible ways. Their lives were better for living in a country where the teaching of Jesus was heeded. The special Children's Year issue of the *New Zealand Methodist Times* argued that 'Wherever the message of Christianity has been preached, the welfare of the child has been regarded as a matter of special concern'.<sup>22</sup> On occasions the alarming implications of this were made explicit. The Rev. James Cocker invited children to remember the blessings of Jesus in their lives by contrasting the fortunes of the young elsewhere: 'In countries where Jesus is not known little children are often cruelly treated. Some are thrown into the rivers and drowned, and others are left in the woods and fields to die. But Jesus is the children's best Friend, and where His teaching is followed children are loved and cared for'.<sup>23</sup> As F.W. Frankland explained, knowledge of Jesus' teaching accounted for the kindness of New Zealand parents and teachers to children.<sup>24</sup>

Jesus' love was perhaps best exemplified in his blessing 'the little children'.<sup>25</sup> This action was memorialised in one of the most popular children's hymns of the period, 'When mothers of Salem'.<sup>26</sup> Frequently used as a baptismal hymn, it contrasted 'stern disciples' with a kind and sweetly smiling Jesus. The gospel words of Jesus, 'Suffer the children to come unto Me', formed the hymn's refrain and were inscribed on baptismal fonts around the country. Popular artistic renderings of the incident depicted adoring children surrounding Jesus – often accompanied by their mothers. Where present, men looked on critically and were spatially removed from Jesus.

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<sup>21</sup> SSH, 528; SSH, 274; GB, 640.

<sup>22</sup> NZMT, 20 January 1923, p.1.

<sup>23</sup> J. Cocker, *Keep Climbing: Twenty-Five Stories of Great Men and Heroes*, London: H.R. Allenson, 1929, p.86.

<sup>24</sup> F.W. Frankland, *Bible-Religion the Most Important Thing in the World: An Address to the Sunday School Scholars of All Saints' Parish, Foxton, New Zealand*, Palmerston North: Watson Eyre & Co. Printers, 1909, p.3.

<sup>25</sup> Matthew 19.13-15.

<sup>26</sup> SSH, 22.

Invariably, Jesus was holding a baby, laying hands on an infant's head, or in some way touching a child.<sup>27</sup>

The element of touch was crucial, as with the Shepherd image where lambs lay quietly on the Shepherd's back or safely in his arms close to his heart. The children's missionary hymn, 'I think, when I read that sweet story', blended both images to evoke a yearning for intimacy with Jesus. After recalling how Jesus 'called little children, as lambs to his fold' the singer exclaims, 'I should like to have been with them then. I wish that His hands had been placed on my head, That His arm had been thrown around me'.<sup>28</sup> Physical touch betokened warmth and intimacy. It also indicated tenderness characteristically identified with Victorian femininity. Victorian differentiation between the love of mothers and discipline of fathers was often expressed through the presence or absence of touch between parent and child.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the 'touch of Jesus' always connoted stereotypically feminine qualities like kindness, sympathy and compassion.<sup>30</sup> The prevalence of physical intimacy suggested that the children's Jesus was highly feminised, and his relationship with the child conceived in essentially maternal terms.

### ***Children's Love for Jesus***

Just as Jesus loved children, they responded warmly to him. The positive reception by children of Jesus' day was set forth as an enduring model. As Martin Sullivan explained, 'They loved Him when He was here and trusted Him, and came readily to Him. *They* didn't crucify Him. He was killed by evil men who forgot what it was like to be as children'.<sup>31</sup> A.H. Reed concurred that children had always loved Jesus, and expanded the Biblical narratives to prove it: 'Jesus called a child who was playing about. "Come here a minute, will you, Son?" All children loved Jesus. This one ran to

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<sup>27</sup> NZMT, 20 June 1936, pp.53, 57; NZMT, 15 July 1939, p.81.

<sup>28</sup> SSH, 223; cf. Austin, p.11.

<sup>29</sup> Meredith Veldman, 'Dutiful Daughter Versus All Boy: Jesus, Gender, and the Secularization of Victorian Society', *Nineteenth Century Studies*, 11:6, 1997, p.6; McDannell, p.81.

<sup>30</sup> *Christian Outlook*, 21 January 1899, p.616; *Outlook*, 3 January 1927, p.17; *Harvest Field*, February 1940, p.10.

<sup>31</sup> Martin Sullivan, *Children, Listen: Talks to Boys and Girls*, Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1955, p.100 (original italics).

Him and was taken upon His knee'.<sup>32</sup> Elsewhere, mothers and children 'flocked around Jesus. There was hero-worship in the looks of the boys.... The girls rested affectionately against him'.<sup>33</sup>

Contemporary children were expected to respond to Jesus with similar enthusiasm. The Methodist religious educationalist C.T. Symons argued that children should respond to Jesus as they did in Palestine where they 'clustered about His knee in glad confidence, trust and love. They were "thrilled" to be in His presence. They loved Him spontaneously with joy and abandon'.<sup>34</sup> This was especially true of the very young. One Sunday School training manual argued that young pupils were very loyal, and would say 'I love Jesus' very easily. In view of this, teachers should encourage them to 'do the thing that is right because it is right and because Jesus loves the children'.<sup>35</sup> Love and good behaviour were always closely allied. T.T. Garland explained how he witnessed modern children emulating their forebears. He described children's responses to an artistic rendering of Jesus being rejected. This showed Jesus leaving a village at evening because nobody would allow him to stay, with only the children looking at him. Garland noted the profound effect this had; all the children viewing 'stood very quietly' before the picture.<sup>36</sup>

Children's love for Jesus was thought to be instinctive and universal. It reflected Romantic notions of the natural and of childhood innocence. As G. Hamilton Archibald expressed, 'A child instinctively loves that which is good. Tell a child about an admirable man and he intuitively admires and reverences that character'.<sup>37</sup> Children were believed to be naturally religious.<sup>38</sup> Instinctive love for Jesus confirmed this impulse. Since they were also relatively unsullied by the taint of sin, children's

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<sup>32</sup> A.H. Reed (ed.), *The Isabel Reed Bible Story Book*, Wellington: A.H. & A.W. Reed, 1944, p.272 caption to facing illustration. Authorship here and following is attributed to A.H. Reed on the basis of his editorship, and because he was one of the main contributors to this volume.

<sup>33</sup> Reed (ed.), p.285.

<sup>34</sup> C.T. Symons, *Junior Worship*, Wellington: Youth Board, Methodist Church of New Zealand, 1940, p.3.

<sup>35</sup> *Sunday School and Bible Class at Work: Text-Book for Teacher-Training Classes, Study Groups, and General Use*, 2nd ed., Melbourne: Joint Board of the Graded Lessons of Australia and New Zealand, 1936, pp.114-15.

<sup>36</sup> T.T. Garland, *Judy Carries On*, Auckland: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1936, p.112.

<sup>37</sup> Cited in *Sunday School Teachers' Guide*, Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, for the Youth Committee of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1940, p.3.

<sup>38</sup> *War Cry*, 12 December 1908, p.7.

intuitive responsiveness to Jesus confirmed the truth of religion in general and Christianity in particular.

These assumptions influenced approaches to ministry. When Presbyterians were concerned about older children moving out of church life they prescribed more opportunities to learn about Jesus. General Assembly suggested that the Junior Bible Class should seek to bring Sunday School drifters back by offering Sunday morning meetings to 'study the life of Jesus Christ' – in addition to regular afternoon meetings.<sup>39</sup> Decision Day was an annual event in most churches, and widely understood as a mechanism to promote church membership by assisting the transfer of children as they graduated out of Sunday School.<sup>40</sup> Occasionally, however, more idealistic emphases were suggested. For instance, some Methodists felt it was better viewed as a simple opportunity for children to express 'their love and promise of loyalty to Jesus Christ'. Yet they were also anxious to clarify that failure to sign decision cards 'does not necessarily mean that the child does not love Jesus'.<sup>41</sup> Because they already loved him, Decision Day was conceptualised as *expressing* commitments rather than necessarily making them.

### ***Death and the Child***

The relationship between Jesus and children was especially evident in the context of death. The deceased were commonly said to have 'gone to be with Jesus'. The lyrics of Fanny Crosby's popular hymn celebrated his motherly love for everyone, but 'Safe in the arms of Jesus' was also a quintessentially childhood epitaph. In *The Godwits Fly*, Robin Hyde describes reactions to the death of a child in a household with mixed attitudes to religion: "'What did he die of?" asked Carley, awed. Her mother said, "He was just taken quietly away to Jesus," but John snorted behind a newspaper, and ejaculated, "Water on the brain."<sup>42</sup> To say that a child was 'with Jesus' was to say that they were 'at home', secure in a place of comfort and care.

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<sup>39</sup> PGA, 1909, p.132.

<sup>40</sup> PGA, 1908, p.66.

<sup>41</sup> NZMT, 4 November 1939, p.222.

<sup>42</sup> Hyde, pp.14-15.

More sentimental images portrayed Jesus in terms approximating a spiritualised lover. The *New Zealand Tablet* described the exemplary life of Noreen, 'Another "Imelda"', who took daily Mass while at boarding school, and was self-effacing, self-sacrificing, and full of affection and cheerfulness. These virtues bade well for a great life ahead until Jesus intervened: 'But He Who feeds amidst the lilies, was enamoured of this soul and wished to take it to Himself, in its unsullied beauty'.<sup>43</sup> Jesus the Lover could not be parted from such perfection. To be loved by Jesus in this way was an affirmation of piety and character.<sup>44</sup> This elevated the memory of the child and provided a positive and comforting interpretation of their death.

A perusal of burial inscriptions for this period demonstrates the close association between Jesus and children in death. Inscriptions on children's tombs often included references to Jesus. Examples in the Terrace End cemetery at Palmerston North include New Testament references to Jesus' words, like 'Suffer Little Children' and 'Such is the Kingdom of God', and more general associations in statements like 'Called to Jesus' and 'Asleep in Jesus'. Another popular inscription and its variants made Jesus' unsurpassed love explicit: 'We loved him well, but Jesus loved him best'.<sup>45</sup>

Inscriptions on children's graves at the small Bunnythorpe cemetery in the Manawatu were much more likely to include religious epitaphs than those of other age groups.<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, where religious references were present they usually referred to Jesus. By 1985, when burial inscriptions were published on microfiche, the Bunnythorpe cemetery had 254 graves, with some 411 bodies interred. Of these, 35 were children aged 12 years or under, with 16 children's deaths recorded for the years 1900-40. If the 1890s are included, the number increases slightly to 22. During the whole period, all religious references for all years amounted to just 58 out of 411 (14.1%), with only 22 (5.3%) referring to Jesus. Thus, references to Jesus accounted for 37.9% of all religious references during the period. Excluding children, there are 48

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<sup>43</sup> *NZ Tablet*, 13 April 1932, pp.18-19. St Imelda was a child saint who yearned for Holy Communion before she was of an age to receive it.

<sup>44</sup> Therese O'Connell describes stories that circulated about people who were so pure and good that after First Holy Communion they died and went to heaven. See Jane Tolerton (ed.), *Convent Girls: New Zealand Women Talk to Jane Tolerton*, Auckland: Penguin, 1994, p.152.

<sup>45</sup> Terrace End, *New Zealand Cemetery Records*, L04.03.

<sup>46</sup> Bunnythorpe, *New Zealand Cemetery Records*, L04.01.

religious references (12.8%) and 14 to Jesus (3.8%) out of 376 burials. Religious inscriptions seem to have been the province of the conscientiously devout or those with the financial means to pay for such embellishments, or both.

Religious inscriptions occurred on children's graves in significantly higher rates than the overall average, and among these references to Jesus were very high.<sup>47</sup> For the period 1890-1940, direct reference to Jesus was a feature of 6 out of 22 (27%) child burials. For the period to 1985, the total was 8 out of 35 (23%), representing a slight decline. References to Jesus accounted for 6 out of the 8 religious references up until 1940, and 8 out of 10 for the whole period. When the large number of children buried in multiple graves with other family members is included, the relative incidence of religious reference is noticeably more significant. Half of all children were buried in family graves with no epitaph additional to basic personal and family details. Religious references were evident for 5 of the 25 multiple graves for children up until 1985. However, only 8 of the 25 had any inscription, and 4 of these referred to Jesus.<sup>48</sup>

This admittedly small sample illustrates a striking differentiation between the frequency of religious inscriptions for children and the general population. The language utilised makes this differentiation even more clear. Jesus' name was much more likely to be invoked in relation to children, while adult references tended to quote Jesus, or cite Biblical references referring to him.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, where children's inscriptions openly addressed 'Jesus', adult inscriptions typically preferred 'Christ' and showed greater interest in the Resurrection. The thought of being with Christ was evidently better once three score years and ten had been reached.<sup>50</sup> The appeal to Jesus in relation to the death of children illustrated the importance of religious sentiment in

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<sup>47</sup> The children's religious inscriptions were 'Safe in the arms of Jesus' (4 of 5 in total), 'Suffer the little Children' (1), 'Blessed are they who die in the Lord' (1), 'Asleep in Jesus' (1 of 2), 'Budeth on earth and bloometh in Heaven' (1).

<sup>48</sup> Prior to 1940 there were 5 inscriptions on 14 multiple graves. Two of these were religious, and both referred to Jesus.

<sup>49</sup> The only other references to Jesus were 'Asleep in Jesus' (1), and the biblical references, 'Jesus Wept' (1), 'Even so come Lord Jesus' (1), and 'This is a faithful saying, and worth of all to accept, That Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners' (1). Other adult references to Jesus were 'With Christ which is far better' and variations (3), citation of Jesus' words 'Thy Will be done' (3) and 'Blest are the Pure in Heart' (2), a biblical reference, 'The dead in Christ shall rise first - 1 Thess 4.16' (1), and 'Departed to be with Christ' (1).

<sup>50</sup> Bunnythorpe, *New Zealand Cemetery Records*, graves 188, 222, 236.

the ecology of tragedy. It suggested comfort and promise in the face of uncertainty. Equally, it provided a salient reminder of Jesus' love for children and the truth of the Christian religion. Children were often referred to as 'Christ's little ones'.<sup>51</sup> Association with him in death was a reminder that children belonged to Jesus.

## CONTEXT AND MESSAGE

Children's religious life was cultivated in numerous ways and contexts, and to varying degrees the Jesus that children encountered was made known in each of these. Fundamental aspects of Jesus' love, redemption and friendship were consistently expressed. However, the content of representations was also shaped by context.

### *Domestic Piety*

The home was widely considered the most important site for nurturing religion, so it was generally assumed that children would encounter Jesus there first.<sup>52</sup> Presbyterians argued that the family was the 'true unit of human society'. Religion was encouraged in this context because 'it is the revival of a strong and pure domestic life that is to save the earth from a curse'.<sup>53</sup> Home and family were the most formative elements in children's lives and the shaping of their futures. Methodist parents were frequently reminded that they stood in closest relation to their children and therefore had the great responsibility and privilege of securing their allegiance to Christ.<sup>54</sup>

### Family Religion

Jesus featured most prominently where activities were designed specifically for children, rather than in the formal structures of family religion. Family devotions, or family worship, were central elements in formal home religion. Catholic family worship was not especially common in the mid-nineteenth century, but strengthened

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<sup>51</sup> NZMT, 20 March 1915, p.14.

<sup>52</sup> See Martin Sullivan, *Listen Again: More Talks to Boys and Girls*, Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1956, p.56.

<sup>53</sup> 'Preface', *Prayers for the Home Circle. With a selection of Bible Readings*, Dunedin: Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1917.

<sup>54</sup> MAC, 1901, p.19; MAC, 1906, p.27.

during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>55</sup> Where practised, family devotions tended to use standard prayers since extempore prayer was not highly valued.<sup>56</sup> These seldom addressed Jesus directly. One publication outlined five requisite prayers for night and morning.<sup>57</sup> Of these, the 'Confiteor' and 'Act of Contrition' made no mention of Jesus. The 'Lord's Prayer' quoted him, while the 'Angelical Salutation' acknowledged him as the fruit of Mary's womb. Significantly, the 'Apostles' Creed' was the only 'prayer' that concentrated on his life, though doctrine was the essential focus. Recitation of the rosary was the central element in home worship for many families.<sup>58</sup> Twelve of the fifteen aspects for meditation concerned events in Jesus' life, but the prayers did not reinforce a sense of his personality.<sup>59</sup> The rosary emphasised the 'mysteries' of Jesus' life, which focused on his birth, death and resurrection.

Protestants expressed considerable anxiety about domestic religious activity. Concern that interest in family devotions was declining had been mentioned periodically during the nineteenth century, especially among Presbyterians.<sup>60</sup> By 1900, there were real though somewhat exaggerated fears that family worship was on the verge of total collapse.<sup>61</sup> This led to numerous attempts to reinvigorate it. Methodist congregations were exhorted to make 'Family Religion, or Parental Responsibility' the subject of a special Children's Year service in 1923.<sup>62</sup> In 1917, Presbyterians produced a book of prayers for use in the home.<sup>63</sup> Then, in 1927, the Life and Witness Committee of

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<sup>55</sup> H.R. Jackson, *Churches & People in Australia and New Zealand, 1860-1930*, Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1987, p.165.

<sup>56</sup> See Jim Sullivan (ed.) *Catholic Boys: New Zealand Men Talk to Jim Sullivan*, Auckland: Penguin, 1996, pp.131, 187-88.

<sup>57</sup> A Parish Priest in New Zealand, *Conversations on Christian Re-Union*, Dunedin: N.Z. Tablet, 1924, pp.66-68.

<sup>58</sup> Sullivan (ed.), *Catholic Boys*, pp.118, 134, 163. Some reinvigoration in practice of the rosary may be attributable to Father Payton's later Rosary crusade; see p.118.

<sup>59</sup> This suggests that Catholic devotion perceived something meritorious in the recitation of particular words, even if divorced from conscious mental processes. See J. Neville Ward, 'Rosary', in Gordon S. Wakefield (ed.), *A Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, London: SCM, 1983, pp.339-40.

<sup>60</sup> *PGA*, 1890, p.66; *PGA*, 1893, p.94.

<sup>61</sup> *Proceedings of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Otago and Southland*, 1900, p.47.

<sup>62</sup> *NZMT*, 6 January 1923, p.5. Similar appeals were commonly made at Sunday School anniversary celebrations.

<sup>63</sup> See *Prayers for the Home Circle*.

the General Assembly began promoting the Family Altar Card system of the Australian Presbyterian Church. This aimed to promote family worship and home religion through an annual cycle of prayers and readings and an 'examination of conscience' based on the Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes. This focus was not Christocentric, but highlighted beliefs about the relation between religion, morality and social order.<sup>64</sup> By 1928, about 2,000 Family Altar Cards had been sold. This was a significant though not overwhelming response given that adult membership and attendance for that year were 83,869 and 52,121 respectively.<sup>65</sup>

Evangelicals were often great advocates for family worship. The Rev. Joseph W. Kemp of Auckland's Baptist Tabernacle, and founder of the Bible Training Institute, was an ardent supporter.<sup>66</sup> He believed in paternal leadership of family worship and advocated relatively formal methods. While he argued that children's participation was essential, there was little sense that methods were recommended with children's needs in mind. Nor was Jesus' life a major focus. On the contrary, popular devotional books like *Daily Light* and *My Counsellor* were compendia of inspirational verses drawn from the Bible as a whole. The Bible was a valued element in most Protestant family worship. Kemp was personally enthusiastic about R.M. McCheyne's Bible reading plan, in part because it allowed 'younger members of the families [to] become familiar with every part of the Bible'.<sup>67</sup> But while Bible reading was important, prayer was always considered more basic. Evangelical prayer was generally extempore, though aids to prayer and prayer plans were common. In prayer, Jesus' lordship and the salvation offered through his death were constantly reiterated.<sup>68</sup>

As the popularity of family devotions waned, Christian educators increasingly encouraged less prescribed forms of domestic religion. Home religion became more acceptably defined as fundamentally a question of 'atmosphere'.<sup>69</sup> By 1940, resources

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<sup>64</sup> *PGA*, 1927, p.189.

<sup>65</sup> *PGA*, 1928, p.198.

<sup>66</sup> *Reaper*, July 1926, pp.131-34; *Reaper*, August 1926, pp.157-60.

<sup>67</sup> *Reaper*, August 1926, p.158. McCheyne's plan included three or four Bible chapters a day, thus covering the whole Bible once, and New Testament twice, each year. From 1927, monthly readings from this plan were published at the back of the *Reaper*.

<sup>68</sup> *Reaper*, August 1926, pp.157, 159.

<sup>69</sup> See F.N. Peloubet and A.R. Wells, *Select Notes on the International Lessons for 1914*, Boston: W.A. Wilde, 1914, p.18.

and guides still asserted the centrality of the home, but emphasised love and healthy activity in the initial stages of the child's life.<sup>70</sup> One important consequence of this was a prioritisation of maternal domestic influence. Praying and loving were the essential principles of religious life. Because of this, mothers were encouraged to let 'the beauty and simplicity of Christ's example' control their daily life. Such shifts reflected the waning of formal home religion, and perhaps the shift of priority from words to action that characterised much social Christianity. However, the trend was wider. By 1939, J.D. Salmond was affirming Horace Bushnell's dictum that religion never permeates the life of a nation until it becomes domestic. Though family worship was valued, it was not more significant than precept and example. Parents' own faith and growing religious thinking was emphasised, together with parental respect for children's personality.<sup>71</sup> Expressing Christ's character was becoming as important as naming him.

### Children's Prayer

Prayer was an important and persistent aspect of domestic religion. Bedtime prayer often endured, even where other forms of religious activity were limited. It was particularly important for younger children, with whom simple and repetitive prayers were frequently used. Such rituals could have a profound effect. In later life, Martin Sullivan claimed that he could still recall the first prayer his mother taught him:

Jesus, tender shepherd, hear me,  
Bless Thy little lamb tonight,  
Through the darkness be thou near me,  
Keep me safe till morning light.<sup>72</sup>

Prayers for children were often prayed to Jesus, and regularly contrasted the foolishness and naïveté of the child with divine goodness and reliability. Jesus' help and presence was often invoked, especially, though not only, at night.<sup>73</sup> In fact,

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<sup>70</sup> *God and the Little Child*, Wellington: Youth Department, Methodist Church of New Zealand, n.d., pp.1-4.

<sup>71</sup> J.D. Salmond (ed.), *The Church and Her Young People*, Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, for the Youth of the Church Committee, Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1939, p.19.

<sup>72</sup> Sullivan, *Children, Listen*, p.39; cf. *Prayers for the Home Circle*, p.67.

<sup>73</sup> See *Services of Worship (Undenominational)*, pp.27-32. For example,

Be Thou with us every day,  
In our work and in our play;

protection formed the theme of the simplest and perhaps most ubiquitous prayer: 'Now I lay me down to sleep: I pray the Lord my soul to keep'. Associations with maternal tenderness and comfort made the bedtime Jesus intimate. Emphasis on his protection at night was common to Protestant and Catholic devotion, though Catholic prayer seemed both more formal and overtly preoccupied with death: 'Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit: Lord Jesus, receive my soul... preserve me from a sudden and unprovided death and from all dangers, and bring me to life everlasting with Thee'.<sup>74</sup> After night prayers, the catechism instructed the Catholic devout of all ages to 'occupy myself with the thoughts of death; and endeavour to compose myself to rest at the foot of the cross, and give my last thoughts to my crucified Saviour'.<sup>75</sup>

Day or night, children learned prayers that encouraged them to be good, kind and gentle like Jesus.<sup>76</sup> They were taught to turn from selfishness to service, like him. Material in religious periodicals reflected notions of what was appropriate, and the tenor of prayers that were often prayed:

"All for Jesus" Good Lord! I ask that this short day  
Be spent for Thee and Thine;  
Beloved! grant its every hour  
May reach Thy Heart Divine.  
Let not my foolish love of praise  
Rob work or prayer from Thee.  
Jesus! from pride, from self, from sin,  
May this one day be free.<sup>77</sup>

Children's own efforts to construct prayers, though sometimes affected, revealed their impressions of the important ideas. Eileen Soper remembered that the first fruit of her father's encouragement to produce poetry took the form of a prayer: 'Oh Jesu, Oh Jesu,

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When we learn and when we pray,  
Hear us, holy Jesus.

Make us brave without a fear,  
Make us happy, full of cheer.  
Sure that Thou art always near,  
Hear us, holy Jesus. Amen.

<sup>74</sup> See *A Simple Prayer Book*, Wellington: Catholic Enquiry Centre, 1964, p.13, and also p.8; cf. H.T. Cafferata, *The Catechism Simply Explained*, rev. ed., London: Burns & Oates, 1954, p.164.

<sup>75</sup> Cafferata, p.164; cf. Sullivan (ed.), *Catholic Boys*, p.187.

<sup>76</sup> *Prayers for the Home Circle*, p.66.

<sup>77</sup> *NZ Tablet*, 13 April 1932, p.24.

Majesty of Love / Look down on Thy people from Heaven above'.<sup>78</sup> This Jesus was exalted and rather romanticised, though belief in his love remained essential.

### The Child Jesus and Ideal Childhood

Jesus' childhood was a significant feature of the religiosity cultivated for children, and was often consciously set forth as the exemplar and ideal.<sup>79</sup> Catholics tended to view the childhood of Jesus within the setting of the Holy Family, though this often focused on the role of Mary. By contrast, Protestants were drawn more to Jesus in general, and by extension to his childhood. Yet, the New Testament provides little detail concerning Jesus' childhood and family. Consequently, representations of his childhood tended to be heavily shaped by contemporary values and assumptions.<sup>80</sup>

Images of Jesus' birth and infancy provided the most frequent references to his early years. Christmas was a major event in the Christian Year, and a popular cultural festival. Unsurprisingly, the season encouraged reflection on the doctrine of the Incarnation. Reflections on the 'wonder' of his birth focused on him as a helpless baby. At times, this preoccupation was nothing short of mawkish. 'Isn't it lovely when birthdays come', Sister Mabel mused, 'and Jesus' birthday is the loveliest of all. It is so lovely that He was a baby – for babies are so sweet, and such lots of people are so glad that Jesus wasn't born in a palace. Don't you think it's the sweetest story to hear about Jesus being born in a stable?'<sup>81</sup> On the other hand, more radical Protestants were often suspicious of festivals and placed less emphasis on Christmas and Jesus' infancy; Bethlehem was merely a milestone on the road to Calvary.<sup>82</sup>

Images of the Child Jesus were closely tied to domestic expectations on children. For Catholics and Protestants alike, the primary virtue of the child Jesus was his obedience – most often expressed in helpfulness around the home. Readers of the

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<sup>78</sup> Soper, p.17.

<sup>79</sup> 'Although He lived like the other boys of the village, we must remember He presented the ideal type of boyhood, for He was without sin; always unselfish in work or play, showing interest in the occupation of the moment, always "playing the game," never priggish, yet ever standing for the right'. *Notes on the Scripture Lessons for the Year 1920*, London: Sunday School Union, 1919, p.32.

<sup>80</sup> Christopher van der Krogt, 'Imitating the Holy Family: Catholic Ideals and the Cult of Domesticity in Interwar New Zealand', *History Now/Te Pae Tawhito o te Wa*, 4:1, 1998, p.16.

<sup>81</sup> See the 'Young Folks' page, *NZMT*, 23 January 1915.

<sup>82</sup> *Reaper*, December 1926, pp.262-63; *War Cry*, 22 December 1900, pp.4-5.

*Month* were informed that if 'Catholic children wish to be like the obedient Jesus, they must strive to be truthful, unselfish and obedient, watching for opportunities of doing things for others, as Jesus did for Mary and Joseph'.<sup>83</sup> The story of Jesus lost in the Temple had the potential to disrupt the image of obedient childhood. However, such tensions were usually resolved by explaining the incident as a lapse on Mary and Joseph's part. Even still, Jesus was polite and courteous. As A.H. Reed explained, Mary 'must have been pleased and proud' of his 'gentle but straightforward reply'.<sup>84</sup> Such domestic obedience illustrated Jesus' 'pure aspirations and gracious tendencies'.<sup>85</sup>

Another value, often related to his obedience in home life, was Jesus' industry. For many years the *New Zealand Tablet* included a 'Family Circle' page, whose title included an image of the child Jesus working alongside Joseph at a carpentry bench with Mary looking on. The Holy Family was an economic unit to which Jesus actively contributed. Despite increasing attempts to protect children and limit their work in the twentieth century, Jesus remained a conscientious worker in the family enterprise.<sup>86</sup>

Perhaps the most illuminating exposition of Jesus' childhood was proffered by the Methodist layman and publisher A.H. Reed. Reed was responsible for compiling what was probably New Zealand's first Bible Story Book for children. The Children's Bible or Bible Story Book genre has been described as a 'combination of social utility and soul-saving'.<sup>87</sup> According to Ruth Bottigheimer, Children's Bibles seem authoritative and authentic but are actually highly selective. They tend to use only the narrative sections of the Bible, and freely add other material.<sup>88</sup> Reed's discussion drew a wide portrait of ideal childhood that involved enthusiasm for nature, diligence in work, and both virtue and responsibility in relationships.<sup>89</sup> Like a good New Zealand child, Jesus apparently loved to play in the outdoors: 'Jesus loved the countryside, its

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<sup>83</sup> *Month*, 1 November 1932, p.8, cited in van der Krogt, 'Holy Family', p.16.

<sup>84</sup> Reed (ed.), p.199. In this Reed goes further than other contemporary lives of Jesus for children in attempting to exonerate Jesus; cf. Mathews, *Little Life*, pp.42-43, and Smyth, *People's Life*, pp.56-57.

<sup>85</sup> *Reaper*, April 1930, p.27.

<sup>86</sup> *NZ Tablet*, 20 January 1916, pp.33-34; cf. Graham, 'Child Employment', pp.62-78; Dalley, esp. pp.13-168.

<sup>87</sup> Ruth B. Bottigheimer, *The Bible for Children: From the Age of Gutenberg to the Present*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996, p.4.

<sup>88</sup> Bottigheimer, xi, and epilogue.

<sup>89</sup> See, Reed (ed.), p.196.

birds, and beasts, and flowers.' But, perhaps unlike many New Zealand children, his play was always contained to its proper time and place. Like industrious modern children Jesus had schoolwork to do: 'Jesus had to work hard at his lessons, just as boys and girls must do to-day, if they want to get on, and make themselves useful in the world, and bring credit to their parents and friends'. In addition, he had to help his father in the workshop and his mother in the home. This was done diligently: 'we may be sure no job he was ever called upon to do would be scamped'. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of Jesus' childhood was his unerring virtue. He was a 'real boy' who held work and play, character and responsibility in consummate balance: 'He would not hesitate to stand up to a bully in aid of a smaller boy, and always had courage to say No to anything wrong. Though we know little about his boyhood, we do know that he was manly and true, kind and courteous, obedient to his parents, and always showed respect to women and girls'.

### **Children's Religious Literature**

As discussions of Jesus' childhood illustrated, religion was often conflated with moral guidance and its contribution conceptualised in ethical terms. For children in particular, it provided valuable moral frameworks. In the period following First World War One the churches attempted to reach into the home to strengthen religious life. One consequence was a significant increase in the volume of locally-written religious literature for children. Religious educators expressed confidence that as children learnt about Jesus, they would 'consciously and unconsciously take Him as their model and judge actions by His standard'.<sup>90</sup> Unsurprisingly then, Jesus featured in this material as not only the children's Saviour and Friend, but also their chief moral guide. Where named in children's literature, Jesus was frequently cited as the standard for virtuous behaviour. Children could draw inspiration from his example of kindness, service and love. They could also receive encouragement from his promises – including supposed pledges to provide guardian angels. Relationship with Jesus provided the ultimate means for children to be good: 'Because I am the Child of God, I MUST be Good. I

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<sup>90</sup> C.T. Symons, *Teaching Temperance: A Guidebook for Youth Workers*, Levin: Youth Department of the Methodist Church, n.d., p.13.

CAN be Good. I WILL be Good'.<sup>91</sup> On the other hand, being 'kind and good' was occasionally suggested as the way to procure Jesus' blessing.<sup>92</sup>

In the period after World War One, the Rev. John E. Parsons regularly contributed material for children to Christian periodicals. In particular, he was closely associated with the League of Young Methodist's (LYM) page in the *New Zealand Methodist Times*.<sup>93</sup> This began in May 1921, and replaced a 'Boys and Girls' page contributed by the Rev. A.C. Lawry. Though some recent critics find Parsons' stories overly moralistic, they were widely appreciated in his own time.<sup>94</sup> In 1923, his story *The Splendid Quest* was reprinted from the LYM page 'by popular demand', while *Three Wonderful Keys* was published in 1931 from contributions to the same source and the *Australian Christian World*.<sup>95</sup>

A Bunyan-esque allegory, *The Splendid Quest* follows a faltering member of the League of Young Methodists called Oliver in his 'Splendid Quest of finding the Love in everybody'.<sup>96</sup> After conversing in a dream with 'a Stranger', Oliver sets out gallantly on his journey dressed in knightly attire. Circumstances force him to lay his armour aside piece by piece until he reaches his destination bereft of all his possessions. Resting in a hut, the kindly-faced 'Stranger' returns and helps interpret his journey before revealing himself as Jesus: "Then he heard the Stranger, who was no longer a Stranger, saying: "Love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.""<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> *New Zealand Church News*, February 1911, p.18 (original emphasis).

<sup>92</sup> See Joan Gale Thomas, *If Jesus Came to My House*, London: A.R. Mowbray, 1941, which was endorsed in *God and the Little Child*, p.16.

<sup>93</sup> For a reflection of its ethos, see *NZMT*, 7 May 1921, p.10; *NZMT*, 21 May 1921, p.10. By February 1923 the LYM had 2,235 members, though membership surpassed 6,000 at one point. See *NZMT*, 3 February 1923, p.10; also the LYM pamphlet, 'The League Emblem', Christchurch: Lyttelton Times Print, n.d. (copy viewed at the Methodist Archives, Christchurch).

<sup>94</sup> Betty Gilderdale, *A Sea Change: 145 Years of New Zealand Junior Fiction*, Auckland: Longman Paul, 1982, p.228.

<sup>95</sup> John E. Parsons, *The Splendid Quest: A Story for Children*, Auckland: Unity Press, 1923; John E. Parsons, *Three Wonderful Keys*, London: H.R. Allenson, 1931.

<sup>96</sup> The 'League of the Splendid Quest' is a pseudonym for the LYM. Oliver's quest reflects the aim and motto of the League, which were to 'find the love in everybody', and 'love conquers all'.

<sup>97</sup> Parsons, *Splendid Quest*, p.23.

The *Splendid Quest* presented Jesus as a personable stranger. He was warm and kindly, affectionate and wise – indulging misguided enthusiasm, and offering reassurance. He appeared victorious and promised Oliver victory too. Yet, he was also sorrowful, and bore the scars of sacrifice. Parsons' Jesus was loving and optimistic, like the Jesus of social Christianity. He was a fellow sufferer, an example, brother and guide. Similar themes were evident elsewhere. 'Three Wonderful Keys' claimed that bearers of faith, hope and love would have the faith to know that God is like Jesus, the hope to see 'goodness and happiness' everywhere, and the love to 'fill his life with the strength and beauty of Jesus'.<sup>98</sup> Jesus was good to everyone, saw the good in everyone, and helped children to do their very best.<sup>99</sup> His example was that of 'kindness born of love'.<sup>100</sup>

According to Betty Gilderdale, Rita Snowden and T.T. Garland were possibly New Zealand's two most 'outstandingly successful religious children's writers'.<sup>101</sup> Without overt sermonising, Snowden and Garland both presented Jesus as the benchmark for children's behaviour. Jesus was introduced in incidental situations and everyday terms that communicated a moral vision. Though also active in Methodist Sunday Schools and broadcasting for many years, Garland was best known as 'Uncle Tom' on 1ZR and 1ZB's 'Friendly Road' radio.<sup>102</sup> His immensely popular *Judy* books consisted of short homilies drawn largely from this radio work and reflected the Friendly Road emphasis on helpful everyday morality. Practicality was paramount, and Garland avoided conventional religious expectations or overly-religious characters.<sup>103</sup> One rare reference to Jesus presented him as the epitome of Christian neighbourliness. Thoughtfulness was his essential characteristic: 'If I had to rewrite the Ten Commandments I would put in, "Thou shalt not be thoughtless" .... anyone who reads the Bible must be struck with the thoughtfulness of Jesus. He was so careful

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<sup>98</sup> Parsons, *Wonderful Keys*, pp.15-17.

<sup>99</sup> Parsons, *Wonderful Keys*, pp.56, 98, 128; J. Ernest Parsons, *The Mouse That Stopped the Train: and Other Stories and Parables Told to Children*, 2nd ed., London: H.R. Allenson, n.d., pp.96, 101-2.

<sup>100</sup> J. Ernest Parsons, *The Lost Santa Claus: Twenty-Five New Addresses*, London: H.R. Allenson, n.d., p.14.

<sup>101</sup> Gilderdale, p.225.

<sup>102</sup> See Patrick Day, 'Garland, Thomas Threader, 1877 - 1964', *DNZB*, accessed 31 July 2003.

<sup>103</sup> Garland, p.285.

about the feelings of other people. He would not hurt the most sensitive, and most of His time was spent moving stumbling-blocks out of the other people's way.'<sup>104</sup>

Like Garland, Rita Snowden was an active Methodist.<sup>105</sup> Though a committed believer in Jesus' divinity, Snowden also aimed to communicate a clear sense of his humanity in order to produce a rounded portrait.<sup>106</sup> Snowden drew moral principles from all kinds of situations, but believed in the superiority of Jesus' character and the attractiveness of his virtue – especially his empathy and love.<sup>107</sup> Children were encouraged to emulate Jesus' character in a spirit of quest and adventure. Jesus was not a 'half-and-half measure' person, but was committed. Christlikeness consisted in having 'His big love for men and women' and a degree of moral courage.<sup>108</sup> Jesus' goodness also provided motivation; the unbearable prospect of letting down the greatest Friend was a stimulus to give your best.<sup>109</sup> Loyalty and commitment to Jesus were important too. As one poem in her book *Through Open Windows* suggested:

He has no hands but our hands  
To do His work today,  
He has no feet but our feet  
To lead men in his way.  
He has no voice but our voice  
To tell men how He died,  
He has no help but our help  
To lead them to His side.<sup>110</sup>

Martin Sullivan's booklets highlight that, after the 1930s, religious literature for children seemed almost entirely concerned with Jesus. Sullivan was the Anglican Dean of Christchurch from 1952 to 1962, during which time he conducted radio broadcasts that were subsequently published in two widely-distributed booklets.<sup>111</sup> Like Parsons

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<sup>104</sup> Garland, pp.285-86.

<sup>105</sup> In addition to her children's writing, Snowden was an internationally renowned writer of devotional works for adults. On her life, see Rita F. Snowden, *As the Sun Climbs*, London: Epworth, 1952; Rita F. Snowden, *The Sun is High*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1974. See also Gilderdale, pp.225, 228.

<sup>106</sup> Rita Snowden, *Story-Time Again*, London: Epworth, 1951, p.26.

<sup>107</sup> Snowden, *Story-Time Again*, p.96.

<sup>108</sup> Rita Snowden, *Through Open Windows*, London: Epworth, 1940, pp.15, 33; Snowden, *Story-Time Again*, pp.32-33.

<sup>109</sup> Snowden, *Open Windows*, p.98.

<sup>110</sup> Snowden, *Open Windows*, p.25.

<sup>111</sup> See Sullivan, *Children, Listen*, and Sullivan, *Listen Again*.

and others, Sullivan's Jesus was extraordinarily virtuous; he was never unkind, but 'always saw the best in the people'.<sup>112</sup> He was the best man that ever lived – the greatest teacher, a wonderful healer and storyteller, 'the Son of the Living God'.<sup>113</sup> The prominence of Jesus in Sullivan's talks was particularly striking. His booklets contained 41 addresses, all but seven of which dealt with gospel readings addressing aspects of Jesus' life and teaching. All talks that used a reading were based on the New Testament. While Jesus was mentioned in every story, he was less prominent in five of the seven stories not based on a gospel reading. Significantly, Sullivan's talks were based on a syllabus produced by an interdenominational Children's Religious Advisory Committee.

Close attention to Jesus reflected the belief that he provided the highest example of virtue, and the moral guidance children needed. The cover blurb to *Children, Listen* commended it by noting that, 'The book not only presents the challenge of Christian behaviour, but also touches on the life and ministry of Jesus'. According to Sullivan, Jesus was always helping and healing people, and 'if everyone believed in Jesus, and everyone prayed to Him and tried to follow His example, loving his neighbour as himself... we would see hundreds of miracles being performed'.<sup>114</sup> It was not always clear how the particular Biblical passages chosen connected with the virtues espoused. In one story Sullivan advanced the rather curious suggestion that Jesus was 'the most courteous person the world has ever known'.<sup>115</sup> Jesus was also honourable, restrained and sociable; he kept his promises, put people at ease, and never got angry or anxious. His embodiment of forgiveness was perhaps the most demanding quality, though even this was encouraged primarily because of its social desirability.<sup>116</sup>

### **State Education**

Following the demise of the provincial system of government, New Zealand's education system was nationalised through the Education Act of 1877. By making it compulsory and free the state increased access to education, whilst also strengthening

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<sup>112</sup> Sullivan, *Children, Listen*, p.23.

<sup>113</sup> Sullivan, *Children, Listen*, pp.90-91.

<sup>114</sup> Sullivan, *Children, Listen*, p.28.

<sup>115</sup> Sullivan, *Children, Listen*, p.23.

<sup>116</sup> Sullivan, *Children, Listen*, pp.12, 29, 72-73.

its influence. Though private church schools continued to function, state schooling predominated.<sup>117</sup> As a crucial element in New Zealand childhood experience, state education became an important site for contest over the place of religion.

State education was compulsory and free, but also secular. This aspect of the Act sparked considerable debate, but was ultimately accepted in the interest of national harmony – provided it helped circumvent sectarianism and the impression of Establishment. The New Zealand legislation extended a pattern that had existed in most of the provinces.<sup>118</sup> Nevertheless, it spurred the churches to further action. Catholic and Protestant responses diverged sharply. While the former expanded their independent schooling, Protestants sought to bolster the efficiency of their Sunday Schools and strengthen voluntary organisations for youth. They also embarked on a vigorous campaign to provide religious instruction in state schools, especially from 1911 through a reinvigorated Bible in Schools movement. As these attempts failed, the Nelson system became more popular. This allowed for instruction, rather than uninterpreted reading, outside schools hours under the guidance of volunteers. Jesus occupied an increasingly important space within these debates. In particular, his life and teaching became progressively more prominent as part of the search for an acceptable curriculum.

Interpretation of the secular clause limited the forms and extent of religious material for children. Jesus was generally a casualty of these strictures. But secular education did not entirely banish religion from school. As Colin McGeorge has noted, the secular clause did not exclude God, the clergy, or incidental religion, but ruled out formal religious instruction.<sup>119</sup> References to Jesus were rare, but they did exist. L.M. Isitt, the leading parliamentary supporter of the Bible in Schools movement, once

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<sup>117</sup> Precise figures for private primary education are difficult to establish, though enumeration improved from 1908 when private institutions could apply to the Education Department to be inspected. In 1925, there were 25,933 students enrolled in private primary schools, of whom 20,582 were in Catholic schools. This compared with 214,724 in public state schools. By 1940, there were 203,869 children in public schools; 28,454 were in private schools (with 24,049 Catholic). See *AJHR*, 1926, E-1, pp.5-8; *AJHR*, 1941, E-2, pp.9-13.

<sup>118</sup> Ian Breward, *Godless Schools? A Study of Protestant Reactions to Secular Education in New Zealand*, Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, 1967, pp.18-19.

<sup>119</sup> Colin McGeorge, 'Religious Aspects of the Secular System Before the Great War', in Roger Openshaw and David McKenzie (eds), *Reinterpreting the Educational Past: Essays in the History of New Zealand Education*, Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1987, p.167.

claimed that it was illegal to mention Christ at school.<sup>120</sup> Though this was not technically correct, Isitt's scaremongering had some basis. McGeorge notes the absence of any Scripture paraphrase in use at this time, and that religious subject matter was confined largely to older prose.<sup>121</sup> In time, suspicion about public religion and diminishing reliance on British materials made even incidental references less acceptable. According to Archbishop Redwood, 'God and Christ' were 'locked out, crushed out of the schoolrooms'.<sup>122</sup>

## The School Journal

The *School Journal* was established by New Zealand's Department of Education in 1907 and quickly became the leading education publication. Designed as a basic reading resource for core areas of the curriculum, it was distributed free to all children. Consequently, it had a massive circulation and influence. By 1919, 175,000 copies per issue were printed, and in many schools it had become the chief reading matter. Even private schools were purchasing as many as 15,000 copies per month.<sup>123</sup> As the leading figure in the Department at this time, George Hogben was instrumental in its establishment.<sup>124</sup> A committed Congregationalist, Hogben had been a controversial appointment as Inspector-General of Schools and Secretary for Education in 1899.<sup>125</sup> He initiated widespread reforms within the Education Department, including the introduction of a new syllabus in 1904. The *School Journal* was supposed to support this syllabus in lieu of a uniform textbook.<sup>126</sup>

Religious education was not a part of the general curriculum, so despite Hogben's own religious convictions there was little room for Jesus within the pages of the *Journal*. There were occasional intimations of his existence, and his cultural and

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<sup>120</sup> See D.V. MacDonald, 'The New Zealand Bible in Schools League', MA Thesis in Education, Victoria University of Wellington, 1964, p.208.

<sup>121</sup> McGeorge, 'Religious Aspects', pp.162-66.

<sup>122</sup> *NZ Tablet*, 15 May 1919, p.22.

<sup>123</sup> *AJHR*, 1920, E-1, p.11.

<sup>124</sup> Indeed, the *School Journal* was seen as one of Hogben's great achievements. See Ian Cumming and Alan Cumming, *History of State Education in New Zealand 1840-1975*, Wellington: Pitman, 1978, p.183.

<sup>125</sup> Herbert Roth, *George Hogben: A Biography*, Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research, 1952, pp.1-8, 83-84.

<sup>126</sup> J.C. Dakin, *Education in New Zealand*, Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1973, p.26.

historical significance, but only when addressing the very young. For instance, the start of an article on the 'Children of the Holy Land' questioned junior readers about their knowledge of that place: 'Have you heard of a country called Palestine, or the Holy Land? It was in that land that many great things of which we read in the Bible took place long, long ago. It was there that Christ was born, lived, and died, and that is why it is called the Holy Land. It is only a very small place, and did not rule over other nations, but it has given us the great Bible which has ruled in the hearts of men'.<sup>127</sup>

Christ appeared seasonally, in relation to special events. Yet references at these times were similarly cautious and oblique, and only occurred early in the twentieth century. The November edition was always the last for the year. In recognition of impending Christmas celebrations early editions of the *Journal* cited religious verse in its 'Quotations Worth Remembering'.<sup>128</sup> During World War One, passing reference was made to the 'faith, hope and joy' of Christmas because 'a Child was born'.<sup>129</sup> However, by the 1920s, even such generalities had disappeared as religious aspects were supplanted by images of a present-laden Father Christmas and wishes of 'A Merry Christmas to you all'. No extant evidence has been uncovered to indicate that the Christ-child's disappearance followed a conscious change in policy.<sup>130</sup> However, the change appeared to be permanent. It is possible that the aftermath of a vigorous Bible in Schools campaign coincided with renewed concerns about sectarianism to harden interpretations of secularity in state education.

The incidental references to God that McGeorge noted in the period prior to World War One continued in some contexts. As long as Empire Day endured it was marked in a special edition of the *Journal* in which dignitaries recited 'patriotic' messages. These frequently utilised a sense of shared Christian identity to extol the virtues of Empire. Yet this identity was defined only in generalised categories. It was more likely to turn on concepts of 'Christian civilisation' and 'faith and trust in God'

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<sup>127</sup> *School Journal*, Part 1, 5:9, October 1911, p.136; cf. *School Journal*, Part 1, 12:2, February 1918.

<sup>128</sup> *School Journal*, Part 3, 11:10, November 1917, pp.307-8.

<sup>129</sup> *School Journal*, Part 3, 10:10, November 1916, p.297.

<sup>130</sup> Archival material pertaining to *School Journal* policy was apparently excised from the Department of Education in a major reorganisation of their files in 1914. Later reports in the *AJHR* provide no evidence of such a change in policy.

than anything more specific like the life and teaching of Jesus.<sup>131</sup> By 1940, Methodists were campaigning unsuccessfully to redress this exclusion of religion from the *Journal* by having Bible passages included in its pages.<sup>132</sup>

### **Bible Reading and Religious Instruction in Schools**

Protestant commitment to children's religious instruction led to a long-standing campaign for Bible reading in state schools. Enthusiasts for this cause considered that the preservation of Christian civilisation was at stake.<sup>133</sup> From the time 'secular' state education was first mooted, the Bible was celebrated as an essential factor leading to morality and civilisation. 'What', one writer inquired, 'but the Gospel subdued the savagery and influenced the proud spirit of the Maori Chiefs of these islands, to cede the Sovereignty to the British Crown, without a struggle'. In view of this, public reading of the Bible in state schools was supported as 'the only sure foundation of public virtue and prosperity, and the best guarantee of private morality, happiness and security'.<sup>134</sup>

Proponents of Bible reading highlighted the historical, literary and above all the ethical value of the Bible.<sup>135</sup> Thus, P.B. Fraser argued that exclusion of the Bible amounted to 'moral and intellectual mutilation' of the nation's children.<sup>136</sup> For Fraser, the very act of Bible reading was morally uplifting. Cardinal Manning articulated the outcome that Christian supporters most feared, should Bible reading in school fail to gain the necessary support. He argued that, 'A Christian people can be perpetuated only by Christian education. Schools without Christianity will rear a people without

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<sup>131</sup> *School Journal*, Part 3, 13:3, May 1919, p.83; *School Journal*, Part 3, 23:5, June 1929, p.134. Some religious verse did continue to appear; for example, *School Journal*, Part 4, 52:4, Summer 1958, p.10.

<sup>132</sup> *MAC*, 1941, p.82.

<sup>133</sup> Breward, *Godless Schools*, p.49.

<sup>134</sup> S. Kempthorne, *The Holy Scriptures, the Only Sound Basis for the Education of Youth: A Letter to the Committee of the Auckland Bible Association*, Auckland: William Atkin Printer, 1870, pp.6, 8.

<sup>135</sup> See *The Bible in Schools: A Criticism of the Proposed Text-book by the Wellington State Schools' Defence League*, Wellington: Evening Post, 1905, p.3.

<sup>136</sup> P.B. Fraser, *Mental Mutilation of the People's Children by the Exclusion of the Bible from Schools*, Oamaru: Andrew Fraser, for the North Otago Bible in Schools Association, 1892, p.9.

Christianity. A people reared without Christianity will soon become anti-Christian'.<sup>137</sup> Thus, the religious education of children was inextricably linked with notions of morality and Christian civilisation.

Proposed textbooks and syllabi for religious education indicated changing ideals. By the 1930s, they also provided a reasonably reliable guide to use under the voluntary system. Within these, a trend toward greater emphasis on Jesus' life and example was evident. This corresponded with general shifts in Protestant religious education and a move away from older imported textbooks. Textbooks and syllabi reflected, perhaps more clearly than any source, the increasing emphasis on Jesus in religion for children.

From 28 to 30 April 1903 a national Bible in Schools conference was held in Wellington under the Rev. James Gibb's direction.<sup>138</sup> Soon after, Gibb transferred from Dunedin to St John's Presbyterian in Willis St, Wellington where he gave leadership to the Bible-in-Schools Referendum League that arose from the conference. The League articulated a scheme for religious instruction, and developed a textbook that mirrored one used in Victoria.<sup>139</sup> Strangely, this text also had similarities to the formerly-favoured 'Irish Scripture Books' that had been savaged by Parliament's Education Committee in 1895. Compiled earlier in the nineteenth century, the Irish texts had emphasised Old Testament history, the prophetic and the miraculous.<sup>140</sup>

The proposed textbook of 1904 also relied heavily on Old Testament selections. Younger children were more likely to hear about Jesus than older children but would also hear more from the Old Testament than the New, since selections for Junior readers favoured the Old by 59 to 44.<sup>141</sup> The Old Testament portions were largely drawn from narrative in Genesis and Exodus, but spanned from Creation to the conquest of Canaan. The entire New Testament selection came from the gospels, the vast majority being from Mark. Intermediate-aged students had more New Testament

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<sup>137</sup> Cited in W.N. Willis, *Bible Teaching in State Schools*, Auckland: Wilson and Horton Printers, 1911, p.2. Originally published as *The Battle for the Bible* in 1902, this became a key text for the movement.

<sup>138</sup> See the report of the conference in *Outlook*, 9 May 1903.

<sup>139</sup> *The Bible-in-Schools Text Book, As Approved by the Wellington Conference*, Wellington: C.M. Banks Printers, 1904. It retained 402 out of the 408 readings found in the Victorian textbook.

<sup>140</sup> Breward, *Godless Schools*, pp.32-33.

<sup>141</sup> *Bible-in-Schools Text Book*, 1904, pp.7-12.

lessons than Old by a margin of 55 to 45.<sup>142</sup> Their New Testament lessons also focused on the life of Christ from Matthew and Luke, while Old Testament lessons focused on David and Saul. Senior classes had only 39 Old Testament lessons, and 65 from the New Testament.<sup>143</sup> Of the latter, only the first 26 were concerned with the life of Jesus, drawn from John, while the remaining majority came from the book of Acts. The epistles were excluded on grounds that their dogmatic and theological content made them too susceptible to sectarian controversy. Though widely considered the most 'theological' of the gospels, John was still considered valuable. Reservation of these selections for older children reflected the assumption that doctrine and theology were most appropriate for adults. Narrative, including Jesus' life, was primarily for children.

Bible instruction had largely been rationalised as promoting public morality. However, the Old Testament raised as many questions on these grounds as it answered. The emphasis on these sections for junior students was particularly perplexing. One critique questioned the appropriateness of beginning with Genesis 1-3: 'What meaning [is] intended to be conveyed by the chapters from which these extracts are taken? and what meaning will the lessons convey to the mind of a child?'<sup>144</sup> While some passages concerned Jesus' life, the lack of selections from his teaching seemed to contradict the stated concern for moral instruction. Aside from the Beatitudes in the Junior section, the Sermon on the Mount was absent – as were many parables with obvious ethical overtones. By contrast, the textbook reflected widespread belief in the ethical and symbolic value of the Ten Commandments.<sup>145</sup> Significantly, one of the few amendments to the original Victorian text involved repetition of the Ten Commandments.<sup>146</sup>

By the time the Bible in Schools campaign re-emerged under the Rev. D.J. Garland's leadership, Jesus was becoming more central in the movement's discourse. Earlier convictions persisted to some extent, but there was greater emphasis on Jesus'

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<sup>142</sup> *Bible-in-Schools Text Book*, 1904, pp.12-20.

<sup>143</sup> *Bible-in-Schools Text Book*, 1904, pp.20-27.

<sup>144</sup> *Bible in Schools: A Criticism of the Proposed Text-book*, p.5.

<sup>145</sup> Education Boards could permit posting of copies of the Ten Commandments on classroom walls. See *AJHR*, 1909, E-2, p.46; also, *AJHR*, 1905, I-14B, p.3.

<sup>146</sup> *Bible in Schools: A Criticism of the Proposed Text-book*, p.4.

teaching and example. A Bible in Schools League was formed in 1911.<sup>147</sup> By 1914, it had widespread support and appeared likely to be successful. In December, New Zealand's Anglican Bishops even agreed to 'put the Bible in Schools Question above all political party issues at the next General Election'. Promoting candidates who supported the *Religious Instruction Referendum Bill* would help redress the 'wounded' conscience of 'the majority of the people of this Christian country'.<sup>148</sup>

The Bishop of Wellington, the Rev. T.H. Sprott, was an important advocate for the Bible in Schools campaign. He articulated the rationale for his support at the Wellington Synod in 1913.<sup>149</sup> Sprott argued that the Bible was the moral force underpinning a civilised Christian nation. Christian morality was the agreed form in New Zealand – even if it was imperfectly practised – and the Bible was the source of that morality. Crucially, the morality espoused in the Bible was that of the life and teaching of Jesus. His life and character were the 'highest and only exemplification' of Christian morality, and the Bible was necessary only as the context for encountering it: 'Now our Lord, by His own Life, showed what He meant by His moral teaching; and His morality cannot be effectively taught apart from the commentary of His life'.<sup>150</sup> Sprott argued that, while there was some moral significance in the Old Testament, it was distinguished by the 'Spirit of Christ'. This sole criterion should determine the passages used in any syllabus.<sup>151</sup> Jesus had found a niche within the matrix of moral instruction.

The outbreak of World War One stripped the Bible in Schools campaign of momentum at its most promising moment. However, by 1923, L.M. Isitt was promoting his own *Religious Exercises in Schools Bill* in the House of Representatives. Isitt's Bill marked a further change in the direction of Sprott's argument, as the main

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<sup>147</sup> A full account of legislative developments and the role of the Bible in Schools League can be found in MacDonald, 'Bible in Schools League'.

<sup>148</sup> See, 'Pastoral from the Anglican Bishops to the Members of their Flock in the Present Crisis', Supplement to *Church Gazette*, December 1914.

<sup>149</sup> T.H. Sprott, *Bible in State Schools: Presidential Address Delivered by Thomas Henry Sprott, D.D., Bishop of Wellington, at the Opening of the Third Session of the Nineteenth Synod of the Diocese of Wellington, in St. Paul's School Wellington, on the Afternoon of Tuesday, 1st July, 1913*, Wellington: Wright & Carman, 1913.

<sup>150</sup> Sprott, *Bible in State Schools*, p.5.

<sup>151</sup> Sprott, *Bible in State Schools*, p.6.

component was clearly gospel reading. Supporting Isitt's initiatives, the Women's Division of the New Zealand Farmers' Union argued that Bible reading in schools served the interests of 'good literature, morality, and charity towards all others'. They therefore supported a programme based on recitation of the 'Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments, by the pupils, and the reading (without comment) of the Gospel and Psalms for five or ten minutes'.<sup>152</sup>

Isitt's Bill, like others before and a succession after, failed. But while legislative efforts stalled, the churches increasingly took up the opportunities for voluntary instruction that did exist. In effect, this meant utilisation of the Nelson system, the legality of which had already been upheld. In 1925, the Nelson System was limited to a handful of schools catering for not more than about 4% of primary school children.<sup>153</sup> By the time the *Religious Instruction and Observances in Public Schools Act* of 1962 legalised the system it already operated in about 80% of state primary schools.<sup>154</sup>

From the late 1920s, a flurry of texts were produced for use 'under the present voluntary system'. These were dominated by Bible passages concerning Jesus' life. In 1928, the Manual Committee of the Bible in Schools League presented a scheme written largely by the Rev. J. Paterson of Wanganui. The six-part syllabus for junior students was framed entirely around Jesus, even though the second section addressed the Old Testament: '1. The Childhood of Jesus. 2. Stories Jesus would have heard when a boy. 3. Kind deeds of Jesus. 4. Stories told by Jesus. 5. Great sayings of Jesus. 6. The story of His Death and Resurrection'.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> New Zealand Farmers' Union, Women's Division, to Minister of Education, 6 August 1926, in Syllabus and Instruction – Bible in Schools, 1925-26, Education Department, Series 2: E2/1926/1a\_8/4/32, ANZ.

<sup>153</sup> C.J. Parr to L.M. Isitt, 5 October 1925, in Syllabus and Instruction – Bible in Schools, 1925-26, Education Department, Series 2: E2/1926/1a\_8/4/32, ANZ. Parr estimated that the Nelson System was utilised in only 40 of 2,700 schools, catering for about 10,000 of the nation's 230,000 students.

<sup>154</sup> Colin McGeorge and Ivan Snook, *Church, State and New Zealand Education*, Wellington: Price Milburn, 1981, pp.24-25. This Act was incorporated into the Education Act of 1964.

<sup>155</sup> MacDonald, 'Bible in Schools League', p.142.

From this point, proposals for religious instruction in state schools increasingly reflected developments within the Sunday School movement.<sup>156</sup> Cross-fertilisation reflected conscious policy, and the practical reality that the churches' educational efforts were directed by a relatively small group of people. In 1929, the New Zealand Council of Religious Education sponsored a 'Unity in Education' conference in Christchurch to promote a more integrated approach to the churches' various education programmes.<sup>157</sup> In 1930, Mary Salmond, J.D. Salmond's sister, produced a book of lesson outlines under the auspices of the Women's Missionary Training Institute of the Presbyterian Church.<sup>158</sup> This formed the basis of the 1933 syllabus produced by the Otago Branch of the New Zealand Council of Religious Education. By 1937, the New Zealand Bible-in-Schools League had adopted another amended version.<sup>159</sup> This co-operation produced increasingly similar materials – so much that by the 1950s the question was raised at the Methodist Annual Conference whether religious instruction in state schools added anything useful for children already acquainted with Sunday School and church.<sup>160</sup>

An increased focus on Jesus was one fruit of this interaction. Lessons for younger children concentrated on the birth and childhood of Jesus, and his love for children. Material beyond his life was still interpreted by it. Thus, 'Stories of God's care that Jesus Learned' introduced scholars to children of the Old Testament. Similarly, children learned to be kind (to animals and others), unselfish, and obedient to parents through lessons on 'What Jesus Would Like Us To Do'.<sup>161</sup> When in doubt, teachers were directed to Jesus. Those working with intermediate-age children were encouraged to

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<sup>156</sup> On this, see further below; cf. *A Syllabus of Religious Instruction For Use in the State Schools of New Zealand Under the Present Voluntary System*, Dunedin: Otago Branch of the New Zealand Council of Religious Education, 1933.

<sup>157</sup> Conference proceedings were published as *Toward Unity in Education: Report of the First Conference on National Religious Education Held in Canterbury College Hall on September 3rd, 4th and 5th, 1929*, Christchurch: New Zealand Council of Religious Education, 1929.

<sup>158</sup> M. Salmond, *Lesson Outlines for Christian Education in New Zealand Schools Under the Nelson System*, Dunedin: Women's Missionary Training Institute of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1930.

<sup>159</sup> *A New Zealand Syllabus of Religious Instruction For Use in the Public Schools of New Zealand Under the Present Voluntary System*, Wellington: New Zealand Bible-in-Schools League, 1937.

<sup>160</sup> MAC, 1959, p.88.

<sup>161</sup> *Syllabus of Religious Instruction*, 1933, pp.8-11.

study the book of Acts and a Gospel if they encountered problems in the syllabus.<sup>162</sup> Teachers in the nation's numerous rural schools generally had to teach across age-groups. For them, the syllabus suggested that, 'Time should be found each year for a short consecutive course of lessons embodying an outline of the story of our Lord'. While actual lessons could be selected freely, a short 'revision course' should deal with '1. Christmas stories. 2. Wonderful Deeds of Jesus. 3. The Teachings of Jesus. 4. Jesus and His Friends. 5. The Stories of the Passion Week. 6. Resurrection and Ascension'.<sup>163</sup>

Young children were introduced to Jesus as the means to understand the nature and character of God, while the heroic aspects of his character were emphasised with slightly older children. Jesus was above all 'The Saviour', as repeated emphasis on the narratives of death and resurrection highlighted. While the precise meaning of this salvation was not always made clear, guidance about what Jesus considered good behaviour was generally explicit. Continued concern for community 'morality' underpinned the syllabus, but the Sermon on the Mount still received little attention. Jesus was an exemplar, but there was evidently reluctance to set him up as merely a moral teacher. Perhaps the demanding nature of the Sermon on the Mount was also deemed unsuitable for children.

By the 1940s and beyond, the Christological imperative was articulated quite self-consciously. The Methodist Rev. O.E. Blamires was a long-time campaigner for religious instruction in schools who had served as Secretary of the Otago Regional Executive before becoming Dominion Secretary of the Bible in Schools League in 1927.<sup>164</sup> Writing in 1960, he pressed the case for religious instruction. Though grateful that the school system had been kept free from sectarianism, Blamires lamented the blight of division within the churches and the want of true religion – 'the religion of Jesus'. Jesus was the 'champion of the children' whose example could only advance the goal of character formation identified by the New Zealand curriculum. Failure to impart knowledge about him undermined children's formation. It estranged them from their great advocate and robbed 'Jesus Christ of His rightful approach to

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<sup>162</sup> *Syllabus of Religious Instruction*, 1933, p.25.

<sup>163</sup> *Syllabus of Religious Instruction*, 1933, p.35. While there was also a suggestion that Old Testament stories could be used, the directive was less explicit.

<sup>164</sup> MacDonald, 'Bible in Schools League', p.137.

children'. The apologetic sustained a correlation between Jesus and child. Significantly, religious education was associated with Jesus and justified in terms of moral formation.<sup>165</sup>

Blamires presented Jesus as the Children's Saviour and Guide, but added that ignorance of the historical Jesus was educationally intolerable. Avoidance of 'polemical theology' was one thing, but denying children knowledge of the historical Jesus was too high a price to pay. Blamires observed that one Professor of History in the University of Cambridge had recently been lecturing students on 'the historical Jesus'. Earlier instruction would have given these students a great advantage. Thus, he argued, upholders of a secular system were denying their own students educational benefits.<sup>166</sup> Though hardly compelling, the argument was understandable in the context of ebbing participation in organised religion. It illustrated an underlying concern, and perhaps an unintended admission, that Christian faith was in danger of becoming an historical artefact.

### ***Sunday School***

The Catholic response to the expansion of state education focused on developing an alternative system to strengthen religious identity and foster wellbeing.<sup>167</sup> In addition to influencing the state education system, Protestants also worked to strengthen their own facilities – especially in the form of the Sunday Schools. Prior to World War Two, association with a Sunday School was a normal experience for many New Zealand children. Participation in the Sunday School movement grew steadily during the late nineteenth century, reaching a height in the decade prior to World War One when up to 70% of children were connected. Numerically, Sunday School rolls did not decline significantly until the 1960s, though the proportion of children in contact with a school had dropped to around 42% by 1960.<sup>168</sup> The most detailed investigations of attendance suggest that rates of about 75% were consistently reached, at least around the end of

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<sup>165</sup> E.O. Blamires, *A Christian Core for New Zealand Education*, Auckland: Printed by Whitcombe & Tombs, 1960, p.20.

<sup>166</sup> Blamires, *Christian Core*, p.21.

<sup>167</sup> *NZ Tablet*, 5 February 1920, p.15.

<sup>168</sup> Troughton, 'Religion', p.40; cf. *Census*, 1906, p.329; *Census*, 1911, p.221, and Appendix D, xlvi.

the nineteenth century.<sup>169</sup> By contrast, church attendance generally was never higher than 29.8% in 1896. Thus, vastly more children went to Sunday School than came from active church-attending families.

For many parents who did not attend church, sending children to Sunday School was a way to fulfil religious responsibilities and inculcate socially-accepted moral values. Additionally, in an age of limited opportunities, the Sunday School was a locus for social participation and an important source of leisure. To an extent, it may have provided families a break from parental responsibilities. However, this factor can be easily exaggerated; the break was rather limited, and association with a Sunday School entailed further responsibilities.<sup>170</sup> Whatever motivations encouraged involvement, Sunday Schools could be influential in children's lives even where domestic religious influence was slight.<sup>171</sup> Most children simply attended the nearest accessible school. Though they were organised denominationally, for most people the fact of the school mattered more than its denominational allegiance. Children could quite happily change their association as circumstances required.<sup>172</sup>

Despite the obvious numerical success of the movement, Sunday Schools were under considerable pressure. Continual calls for reform reflected the sense of competition with an increasingly well-funded and professional state education system, and the difficulty of keeping pace with an expanding population. Sunday Schools were supposed to help convert children and prepare them for life in the church. Many still regarded education as the key to 'destroying sin in the midst of us – even within the children'.<sup>173</sup> There was also an essentially evangelistic and evangelical impulse. As one writer expressed in 1936, 'The school has an evangelical message of the redeeming love of an ever-present Friend.... The supreme task of the Sunday School is to bring every scholar into vital relationship with the Living Christ'.<sup>174</sup> The growth of child-centred

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<sup>169</sup> Keen, p.291.

<sup>170</sup> Jim Sullivan (ed.), *As I Remember: Stories From 'Sounds Historical', Volume 3*, Auckland: Tandem, 2002, pp.119-21. Sunday Schools also had active social and fundraising programmes in which families were expected to participate.

<sup>171</sup> *Watch How You Go*, pp.24-25.

<sup>172</sup> Ernest Crane, *I Can Do No Other: A Biography of Ormond Burton*, Auckland: Hodder and Stoughton, 1986, pp.4-5.

<sup>173</sup> *NZ Church News*, January 1900, p.17.

<sup>174</sup> *Sunday School and Bible Class at Work*, p.16.

approaches in education and the waning appeal of austere commandment-based forms of religion led to important changes during the early twentieth century.<sup>175</sup> George Tiller's introduction of innovations like the Cradle Roll, sand table, and other forms of expression work to Methodist Sunday Schools in 1900 provided an early indication of these trends.<sup>176</sup>

Catechism had been a central element in nineteenth-century Sunday School instruction. According to David Keen, the function of catechism changed and its use diminished. He argues that catechism was viewed more as a supplement for shaping converts than an aid to children's conversion by the twentieth century.<sup>177</sup> While Keen rightly notes the move to a more 'Christological' rather than 'dryly catechetical' syllabus, catechism did have a strong Christological element.<sup>178</sup> It helped fix the boundaries of orthodox belief, which was in some ways a form of protection. Catechism was one way to learn about Jesus, though his personality was not the focus.

Modern teaching methodologies disparaged rote learning, which raised questions about catechism's value. In 1908, for instance, a sharp dispute erupted over its continuing usage in the new educational environment.<sup>179</sup> Nevertheless, catechism did persist, even if it was never as important as in Catholic education.<sup>180</sup> It remained a component of Presbyterian Sunday School examinations as late as 1932, although students were required to recall no more than half the questions they had at the turn of the century.<sup>181</sup> From 1923 examinable catechism content had been reduced to make way for the inclusion of Scripture memory work. Though the syllabus changed frequently,

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<sup>175</sup> See Helen May, *The Discovery of Early Childhood*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1997.

<sup>176</sup> *NZMT*, 11 April 1925, pp.8-9; also *NZMT*, 14 July 1928. Tiller was greatly influenced by observations on a trip abroad – especially in America where he had seen 'a modern school where the improved educational principles were being applied'. This was John Wanamaker's school in Philadelphia, but the emphasis on 'expression' and appropriate facilities were in sympathy with the ideals espoused by Froebel, Dewey and others.

<sup>177</sup> David Stuart Keen, 'Feeding the Lambs: The Influence of Sunday Schools on the Socialization of Children in Otago and Southland, 1848-1901', PhD Thesis in History, University of Otago, 1999, p.172.

<sup>178</sup> Keen, p.164.

<sup>179</sup> *Outlook*, 11 January 1908, p.4; *Outlook*, 30 May 1908, pp.14-15.

<sup>180</sup> Pat Lawlor, *The Demanding God: Some Boyhood Recollections*, Dunedin: NZ Tablet, 1972, p.14; Tolerton (ed.), pp.188, 214.

<sup>181</sup> See *Sunday School Exam Committee Minute Book, 1893-97*, PCNZ/GA: Location AD12/4, PCANZ Archives, Knox Hall, Dunedin, which contains Sunday School examination sheets to 1932.

selection of sections was always based on pragmatic considerations. Junior classes learnt the first questions, while the overall aim was to ensure that children had covered the whole catechism in the course of their Sunday School education. There was no indication that particular sections were deemed more easy or appropriate for different children on account of their age.

Despite its persistence, catechism was increasingly at odds with shifts in religious education, where the trend toward child-centred methodologies was accompanied by increasing focus on Jesus. Sunday School syllabi indicate that gospel content had long been prevalent, while examinations were dominated by questions concerning his life and teaching.<sup>182</sup> Accompanying notes also reflected this.<sup>183</sup> Yet, there was an increasing feeling that Jesus should be more prominent. Thus, in 1940, the Methodist Youth Department reported to Conference, 'That while recognising the value of certain O.T. passages for Sunday School Scholars, we recommend a much greater place be given to the life and teaching of Jesus'.<sup>184</sup> In some ways this resolution merely confirmed a well-established trajectory.

### **Jesus and Developmental Theory**

In June 1926, the *New Zealand Methodist Times* printed an article by the leading American social gospel theologian Shailer Mathews on 'Present Tendencies in the Religious World'.<sup>185</sup> According to Mathews, the contemporary religious world was characterised by four key trends: a revolt from authority, a new emphasis on Christ, social reform, and new conceptions of religious education. In particular, Mathews argued that historical study of Jesus' life had laid the emphasis 'upon Jesus Christ and his teaching rather than upon dogma and the Bible'. As a consequence, 'It was inevitable that such a change of emphasis from dogma to life, from the Bible to Jesus Christ, and from the individual to the individual in society, should have led to new

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<sup>182</sup> Examinable content was always based on the syllabus lessons for the third quarter of the year. In every year, either the Memory Work or Scripture Section, or both, were drawn directly from the gospels. Gospel subject matter was only scarce in the essay section for seniors. See *School Exam Committee Minute Book*.

<sup>183</sup> For example, *Notes on the Scripture Lessons for the Year 1920*, pp.31-32.

<sup>184</sup> MAC, 1940, p.70.

<sup>185</sup> NZMT, 5 June 1926, p.9.

conceptions of religious education'. Though written in America, the observations were pertinent in New Zealand. As Mathews suggested, social and theological factors helped shape these changes. Psychological notions of the self were also important, and these became influential in Protestant representations of Jesus for children.<sup>186</sup>

There was considerable interest in the growth of psychology, particularly after 1918 when psychoanalytic methods were used to treat 'shell-shocked' soldiers. The attitude of religious leaders and leaders in religious education was generally positive, despite some anxiety over the potentially corrosive influence of the 'psychology of religion'.<sup>187</sup> Initial interest was limited to a smaller educated group who had access to these ideas, but there were attempts to bring the basic tenets of psychology into the mainstream. As early as 1923, the *Outlook* carried an article that attempted to explain the ideas and methods of psychoanalysis, including discussion of Freud, Jung and Adler.<sup>188</sup>

It was probably more than coincidence that the *Outlook* article was published only a week before the launch of Children's Year in the Presbyterian Church.<sup>189</sup> Part of the interest in psychology followed from belief that religious education would be bolstered by a stronger scientific foundation. Thus, in discussing the merits of psychology one contributor to the *Australasian Intercollegian* enthused that education based on the 'results of experiment and trial' would soon replace 'haphazard inherited ideas'.<sup>190</sup> Psychology promised a more 'efficient', professional and scientific basis that would allow the Sunday School movement to compete with the state education system. Child psychology was a relatively new field.<sup>191</sup> Though child psychology incorporated a range of methods, techniques and approaches, the developmental model was perhaps the most influential aspect for religious education. Developmental theory

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<sup>186</sup> See Geoffrey Troughton, 'Religious Education and the Rise of Psychological Childhood in New Zealand', *History of Education Review*, 33:2, 2004, pp.30-44.

<sup>187</sup> *CC*, August 1929, pp.128-34.

<sup>188</sup> *Outlook*, 5 March 1923, pp.16, 25. This was at a point where Clarence Beeby claims not to have heard the names of Freud, Jung, or Spearman in four lectures on psychology. See 'Psychology in New Zealand Fifty Years Ago', in R. St. George (ed.), *The Beginnings of Psychology in New Zealand*, Palmerston North: Department of Education, Massey University, 1979, p.2.

<sup>189</sup> See *Outlook*, 12 March 1923.

<sup>190</sup> *Australasian Intercollegian*, 23:1, 1920, p.18.

<sup>191</sup> Hugh Cunningham, *Children & Childhood in Western Society Since 1500*, London: Longman, 1995, pp.169-71.

posited that children were biologically propelled, in a continuous and universal process, through increasingly advanced stages to adulthood.<sup>192</sup> The essential educational imperative was to understand those discrete developmental stages, and ensure that teaching content and methodology was appropriately targeted.

While it often took time before new ideas were incorporated into teaching practice, opinion-formers in religious education circles were remarkably open to developmental ideas.<sup>193</sup> Methodists introduced 'graded' Sunday School lessons in 1903 partly because of the system's scientific credentials.<sup>194</sup> In 1908, A.B. Chappell delivered a keynote address on 'Child Psychology' at the first Dominion Conference of Methodist Sunday School Workers. Delegates were urged to study William James and John Dewey, and the psychological and developmental basis of the graded system was highlighted as one of its chief advantages.<sup>195</sup> When a furore erupted over adoption of the Australasian Graded Lessons in the 1920s, the issue was no longer about grading *per se* but of the best graded lessons for New Zealanders. By 1936, the Rev. J.C. Jamieson was reaffirming that the great merit of the graded system was its adaptation 'to the child'; grading recognised that life is composed of different 'stages or seasons' of the soul, with each needing 'suitable food'.<sup>196</sup>

Sunday School teachers from the late 1920s were expected to have an elementary awareness of psychology. By 1939, a module on 'Youth Psychology' was also included in the Leadership Training Course for the Bible Class Movement.<sup>197</sup> Books on child psychology and religious education were frequently found among recommended reading lists. D.F. Wilson's *Child Psychology and Religious Education* and A.A. Lamoreaux's *The Unfolding Life* were the most commonly commended. Wilson's book was particularly influential. Published in London in February 1928, it was

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<sup>192</sup> Archard, pp.32-34.

<sup>193</sup> cf. May, pp.181-84.

<sup>194</sup> See Erasmus Francis Ian Hanson, 'The Relationship Between Sunday School and Church in the History of New Zealand Methodism', DTheol Thesis, Melbourne College of Divinity, 2002, p.148; cf. PGA, 1910, p.146; PGA, 1916, p.127.

<sup>195</sup> See A.B. Chappell (ed.), *The Church and the Children. Official Report of the First Dominion Conference of Methodist Sunday School Workers*, Christchurch: Lyttelton Times, 1909; *Sunday School and Bible Class at Work*, p.9; Robert W. Lynn and Elliott Wright, *The Big Little School: 200 Years of the Sunday School*, 2nd ed., Birmingham: Religious Education Press, 1980, pp.125-27.

<sup>196</sup> *Sunday School and Bible Class at Work*, p.9.

<sup>197</sup> See NZMBC Link, 5 May 1939.

recommended in the Presbyterian training guide for teachers published later that year. Revised often, the book was considered essential reading into the 1930s and beyond.<sup>198</sup> To some extent, interest in this literature reflected the growth of interest in psychology in New Zealand educational circles generally from the 1920s. While psychological interpretations of childhood became particularly important after World War Two, the seeds of this change were planted much earlier.<sup>199</sup> As Bronwyn Dalley has indicated, scientific study played an increasingly important part in thinking about children's welfare in the interwar years, even if the psychology was rather superficial at times.<sup>200</sup>

Interest in child psychology and developmental theory shaped representations of Jesus for Protestant children. To take developmental theory seriously Jesus had to be interpreted not only for children in general but for the different stages of childhood. While children would respond positively to Jesus, their response would vary according to the image offered and the stage of the child. The teacher's task was to match carefully the representation with the stage, in order that children might understand. As Symons argued, "'the Eternal" to whom children respond... is "like Jesus," and like Jesus as comprehended by the child'.<sup>201</sup> By the 1930s this was outlined within a reasonably clear ideological framework. Details of nomenclature and grade definition varied between denominations, and were subject to constant refinement. However, D.F. Wilson differentiated between Infancy, Early, Middle and Later Childhood, each separated by about three years up to the age of 12. These roughly corresponded with the Cradle Roll, Beginner, Juniors and Intermediate Departments.<sup>202</sup> According to G. Hope Kane, as children passed through these stages they would have a different picture of Jesus – from first impressions of him as 'Friend and Helper', to the 'Greatest

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<sup>198</sup> Antoinette Abernethy Lamoreaux, *The Unfolding Life: A Study of Development with Reference to Religious Training*, Chicago: Religious Publishing Company, 1907; Dorothy F. Wilson, *Child Psychology and Religious Education*, London: SCM, 1928; cf. *Sunday School Teachers Guide*, p.25; *Sunday School and Bible Class at Work*, p.120; *Syllabus of Religious Instruction*, 1937, p.44. Wilson's book was originally an Oxford research project that was published on the recommendation of one of its examiners, the theologian B.H. Streeter.

<sup>199</sup> See D.G. McDonald, 'Children and Young Persons in New Zealand Society', in Peggy G. Koopman-Boyden (ed.), *Families in New Zealand Society*, Wellington: Methuen, 1978, pp.44-56; cf. Claire Toynbee, *Her Work and His: Family, Kin and Community in New Zealand 1900-1930*, Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1995, pp.181-82.

<sup>200</sup> Dalley, *Family Matters*, esp. pp.40, 98-99, 114.

<sup>201</sup> Symons, *Junior Worship*, p.3.

<sup>202</sup> Wilson, *Child Psychology*, pp.123-26; *Sunday School Teachers' Guide*, pp.9-18.

of all Heroes' in Junior years, and ultimately as 'Divine Master, the Incarnate Son of God'.<sup>203</sup>

Developmental theory suggested that the infant years and Early Childhood were characterised by appreciation of 'concrete' objects. Rita Snowden called this the 'Realistic' period.<sup>204</sup> In light of this, Jesus was considered well-suited to the pedagogical needs of early childhood. Being interested in tangible objects, children's concept of God would be anthropomorphic. Therefore, it was important to present God as a 'Loving Father...Inviting Friend...Friendly Protector...and...Creator'.<sup>205</sup> Jesus functioned as the concrete representation of God. Representations of Jesus for the very young emphasised concepts of God that they would most readily apprehend. In essence, this consisted of Jesus' friendliness and helpfulness: 'The concept which the child needs of Jesus is of His surpassing goodness, His unselfish courage, and His loving service. Ground the child in knowledge that is rich and fruitful, for it is making God and Jesus real to him'.<sup>206</sup> Jesus would be known through his character and deeds rather than his teaching. As Kane's comments suggested, Jesus was much warmer and closer than adult 'religion'. Religion would ultimately take root through the appeal of personality.

According to Rita Snowden, Middle Childhood could be characterised as the 'Imaginative Period'.<sup>207</sup> From about six to nine years of age children learned to play together more freely and were fascinated by 'make-believe'. Development of their imaginative faculties was the major priority, which made exposure to stories essential. Wilson considered that this was the time for 'carrying the children away into the surroundings and events of the bible stories in a way which leaves an indelible impression on their minds'.<sup>208</sup> At this stage children could immerse themselves in the world of the Holy Land where they would meet a Jesus who 'went about doing good', which it was hoped they would emulate. The character, or 'spirit', of Jesus could be encountered directly in the action of the gospel stories. During Middle Childhood,

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<sup>203</sup> G. Hope Kane, *Beginners' Department*, Wellington: Youth Board, Methodist Church of New Zealand, 1941, p.17.

<sup>204</sup> Snowden, *Story-Time Again*, p.10.

<sup>205</sup> *God and the Little Child*, p.10.

<sup>206</sup> *God and the Little Child*, p.10; Kane, *The Cradle Roll*, p.17.

<sup>207</sup> Snowden, *Story-Time Again*, p.10.

<sup>208</sup> Wilson, *Child Psychology*, p.124.

children were prone to question incessantly, which made introduction of details concerning the context of Jesus' life appropriate. Insights into his environment, ancient ways of life, and geographical and historical information were offered to sate hungry minds and make Jesus appear lively and interesting.

Later Childhood, the Intermediate stage from about eight or nine to 12 years of age, was dominated by love of adventure and interest in personality. Children were thought to be particularly active physically, and unhindered by the imbalances of rapid body growth. Their logical faculties were also developing to a point where real and ideal could be distinguished. For Snowden, this was the 'Heroic Period', characterised by a love for stories of 'courage, daring and action'.<sup>209</sup> Children of this age were considered susceptible to 'hero-worship' as they developed out of more dependent forms of love and attachment to parents.<sup>210</sup> Because they were responsive to the heroic, all manner of stories and subjects were admissible – stories from the Old and New Testaments, as well as from extra-biblical sources. Heroic examples would excite similar endeavour.<sup>211</sup>

Later Childhood was also a moment of opportunity. It was *the* period when children could be 'brought to consider decision for Christ'.<sup>212</sup> As parental attachment weakened, children sought ideals and models to aspire to. J.D. Salmond argued vigorously that religious educators needed to take better advantage of the crises in children's lives at this point, whilst avoiding the dangers of 'promiscuous evangelism'.<sup>213</sup> Later Childhood was quite challenging in some respects. The Intermediate Department was commonly considered 'the problem department' of the Sunday School – the age of 'leakage', where children drifted out of organised religious association. There were hopes that developmental psychology could provide answers to these issues.

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<sup>209</sup> Snowden, *Story-Time Again*, p.11.

<sup>210</sup> See *Sunday School Teachers' Guide*, p.14; Symons, *Teaching Temperance*, pp.14-16; Wilson, *Child Psychology*, p.107; cf. Chapman Cohen, *Freethought and the Child*, London: Pioneer Press, n.d., p.14.

<sup>211</sup> NZMT, 3 March 1923, p.13.

<sup>212</sup> *Sunday School Teachers' Guide*, p.18; Wilson, *Child Psychology*, pp.125-26.

<sup>213</sup> Salmond (ed.), *The Church and Her Young People*, p.21.

To appeal to this hero-worshipping stage, Jesus needed to be the greatest hero: 'If the boys and girls of this age are hero-worshippers, then they need to have set before them Jesus as the Supreme Hero'.<sup>214</sup> As R.E. Fordyce argued, 'From the age of eight to fourteen or sixteen years the child readily responds to the call of the heroic. Should we not, during that period, try to win his love and devotion for Jesus Christ, "the world's Supreme Hero?"'<sup>215</sup> While developmental ideas were meant to be universally applicable, this Jesus was primarily for boys. Jesus the Hero was almost exclusively constructed in masculine terms. Rita Snowden considered that heroes could include scientists and social workers, but it was exceptional to find this given expression.<sup>216</sup> More often heroes were adventurers or military figures, and Jesus was presented as the epitome of knightly or soldierly virtues.<sup>217</sup> Jesus laid 'the spell of His adventure' upon his followers, and dared to go with them.<sup>218</sup>

Evangelicals expressed some uneasiness about the potential hazards of applying developmental ideas too rigorously. Despite his enthusiasm for aspects of the graded system, J.C. Jamieson worried that an emphasis on 'good deeds' could undermine evangelical belief: 'Over-awed by psychologists, some of whom have only a sub-Christian faith, teachers have been teaching to boys and girls a religion of works instead of the Gospel of the grace of God'.<sup>219</sup> Though not a New Zealander, Hudson Pope was an influential thinker in the Children's Special Service Mission. He was similarly concerned at a tendency to draw deterministic conclusions from developmental ideas. In particular, he expressed alarm at one claim in a Sunday School resource that 'You must teach the children of Jesus as Helper, Companion, and Friend,

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<sup>214</sup> Symons, *Teaching Temperance*, p.16.

<sup>215</sup> NZMT, 3 March 1923, p.13; also Symons, *Teaching Temperance*, p.16; E.A. Osmer, 'The Psychology of the Adolescent', in New Zealand Anglican Bible Class Union, Christchurch Diocesan Committee. Report of a Refresher Course for Bible Class Leaders and Senior Members, October 1938. ANG 062/5/2, Kinder Library, Auckland.

<sup>216</sup> Snowden, *Story-Time Again*, p.13.

<sup>217</sup> James Cocker's stories provide classic examples of this. In particular, see Cocker, *Keep Climbing*; also *The Date Boy of Baghdad: Thirty-Five Story Talks to Young People*, London: H.R. Allenson, 1925.

<sup>218</sup> Rita Snowden, *The Wind Blows*, London: Epworth, 1939, p.146.

<sup>219</sup> *Sunday School and Bible Class at Work*, p.19.

but *not as Saviour*, for the child has no sense of sin'. According to Pope, this effectively denied the doctrine of the Atonement.<sup>220</sup>

Evangelical representations of Jesus tended to prioritise his redeeming work as Saviour. Furthermore, evangelical thought did not make distinctions between levels of spiritual need. Especially in its more Calvinistic forms, it emphasised the total corruption of humanity, and redemption 'solely by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ'.<sup>221</sup> In a sense, Jesus was conflated with the Gospel of the Cross. Consequently, children tended to be viewed as 'little adults' equally in need of the Saviour. Underlying teleological assumptions shaped developmental theory. When applied to religious education, this could suggest that real religious commitment was located in later stages of development where capacity for abstract theological thought was greatest. Appreciation of Jesus as 'Divine Master, the Incarnate Son of God' was reserved for late childhood.<sup>222</sup> Evangelicals were wary of such assumptions.

Despite the apparent strength of the Sunday School movement, many evangelicals were concerned that it was not 'reaching' the children. The Scripture Union and Children's Special Service Mission provided perhaps the most important evangelical response to this need.<sup>223</sup> The methodologies and theologies of such organisations militated against taking developmental approaches too seriously. On the one hand, the evangelical kerygma was relatively fixed, centring as it did on the Fall and Redemption through the Cross. On the other hand, groups like these had only occasional contact with children. Beach missions, for example, were seasonal and dependent on favourable weather. They often addressed crowds that were drawn as much in search of entertainment as from a religious quest.<sup>224</sup> Limited time and occasional contact tended to concentrate the message with less concern about precise definitions of the stages of childhood.

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<sup>220</sup> R. Hudson Pope, *To Teach Others Also*, London: CSSM, 1953, p.17 (original italics).

<sup>221</sup> *Reaper*, June 1923, pp.96-97.

<sup>222</sup> Kane, *Beginners' Department*, p.17.

<sup>223</sup> On the Scripture Union, see Peter J. Lineham, *No Ordinary Union: The Story of the Scripture Union, Children's Special Service Mission and Crusader Movement of New Zealand 1880-1980*, Wellington: Scripture Union in New Zealand, 1980.

<sup>224</sup> Sullivan (ed.), *As I Remember*, p.159.

Nevertheless, evangelicals did present Jesus in warm and invitational ways. Evangelistic messages focused on the saving death of Christ, but children also learnt about a Jesus who experienced the same pressures and troubles as present-day children.<sup>225</sup> The children's pages of the *Reaper* affirmed that no child was too young to apprehend Jesus' love; even a four-year old could understand the 'terrible' meaning of the crucifixion.<sup>226</sup> Consequently, youngsters needed to be reminded of eternal realities – even if the details were rather graphic. Given what was at stake, and the fact of their mortality, children were encouraged to consider their ultimate fate. The options, as one *Reaper* column described it, were simply to be 'burned or blessed'.<sup>227</sup> Stories about six-year olds becoming caught in railway tracks were morality tales, but they were also reminders of the urgent need for decision.<sup>228</sup> Ultimately, such horrors were also a vivid contrast with the glory and goodness of the Saviour. Jesus was still their loving champion, willing and able to save.

By the time New Zealand children left formal education, most had become well acquainted with Jesus. The children's Jesus was a very human figure, and a Great Personality who especially loved them. The aspect of personality was critical, for it provided a fittingly mild form of religion that cohered with attempts to move away from stricter, law-based, moral-commandment forms of Christianity. Yet morality was still a crucial factor. The value of religion was often related to notions of social morality, and this was true for children as much as any other group.

Representation of Jesus in such moral and personal terms was not unproblematic. In the first instance, it made the children's Jesus highly susceptible to forms of 'degree Christology' wherein Jesus simply became the supreme example of conventional values and virtues.<sup>229</sup> Belief in Jesus' sinlessness and moral excellence meant that he was supposed to perfectly embody virtue. Yet the virtues Jesus

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<sup>225</sup> B. Clark, 'CSSM History, Answers to Questions. Folder: Early History of the Movement', pp.2, 6-7, Historical Documents from the 1930s Box, Scripture Union Archives, Wellington.

<sup>226</sup> *Reaper*, January 1926, p.308.

<sup>227</sup> *Reaper*, March 1928, p.23.

<sup>228</sup> *Reaper*, August 1928, p.143.

<sup>229</sup> On 'degree theology', see Colin E. Gunton, *Yesterday and Today: A Study of Continuities in Christology*, 2nd ed., London: SPCK, 1997, pp.15-17.

purportedly exemplified often bore little resemblance to New Testament pictures of him. This could effectively strip Christianity of much that made it distinctive. Biblical claims concerning Jesus' divine identity and the more challenging counter-cultural aspects of his message did not fit comfortably within the paradigm. On the other hand, the ideal of Jesus as a moral guide ultimately rested on belief that he was faultless. This could make him less easy for children to relate to, however much they might admire him. As the link between humanity and the divine, a perfect Jesus was potentially a rather daunting, distant and even disconnected figure.<sup>230</sup> Moreover, Ian Dixon recalls knowing that Jesus was 'wonderful' and 'perfect in every way', but that he experienced him as a snoop. Jesus' interest in every detail of a child's life was supposed to be comforting, but could be invasive and unsettling.<sup>231</sup> Paradoxically, this may explain some of the enduring appeal of the Old Testament stories, where characters exemplified action and daring despite their failings and weaknesses.

The strong correlation between Jesus and children raised other problems related to patterns of secularisation. Religious activity was heavily concentrated in childhood, but by the end of the years of primary education much of this dissipated. As Lauris Edmond observed, the disjunction between high rates of Sunday School participation and lower adult attendance reinforced the association of religion with childhood: 'God was apparently for children, like bread and milk when you were sick, or going to bed early'.<sup>232</sup> The great emphasis on Jesus during these years meant that he was linked with this pattern. In short, it was all too easy to 'grow out' of Jesus. Representation of him in overtly maternal terms suggested that one could outgrow Jesus as surely as one outgrew childhood dependencies. Religion provided basic moral orientations, but once these were established children were free to leave the nest and make their own way. Furthermore, by focusing on the heroic, Jesus could potentially become another fictional character whose historicity was actually quite peripheral. The stories of Jesus could be *just* stories. Moreover, they could strengthen perceptions that religion was altogether too naïve, sentimental and sanctimonious for the adult world.

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<sup>230</sup> See Blaiklock, p.63.

<sup>231</sup> See *Growing Up in New Zealand Part 28: Sundays and Church Going Before 1925*. URL: <http://www.nzine.co.nz/features/guinz28.churchgoing.html>, accessed 14 July 2005.

<sup>232</sup> Edmond, *Autobiography*, p.19.

This may help explain why the human Jesus was frequently less important to adults, even among the avowedly religious. Comparatively speaking, adult religion was often more comfortable with a divine Christ and general talk about God, faith and morality. It was significant that developmental constructions of Jesus were teleologically-oriented towards more abstract theological conceptions. They also reflected an underlying belief that true evangelical commitment to the 'Divine Master and Incarnate Son of God' properly occurred after childhood.<sup>233</sup> This raised difficult questions. For, if messages to children really reflect societies' deeply held beliefs, why did children hear so much about a human Jesus that adults were less comfortable with? The disjunction reflects the influences that made personalisation attractive, as well as tensions inherent in the religion New Zealanders sought. The increasing centrality of Jesus in children's religion reflected a general pattern within Protestant religion, and was perhaps its most striking example. Yet, this buttressing of a correlation between Jesus and childhood also posed risks, since the children's Jesus often represented the kinds of moralising and sentimental religion that were coming under fire. In particular, he seemed to offer little for men, whose perceived irreligion was also a focus of attention.

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<sup>233</sup> For example, the Christian Endeavour was sometimes conceived as a 'Half-Way House' bridging the 'dangerous gap between conversion and Church membership'. See, F.E. Clark, *The Society of Christian Endeavour: What It Is: How It Works*, n.p., The National Christian Endeavour Union of Australia and New Zealand, 1936, p.2.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# THE MASCULINE JESUS

In late 1903, the Rev. George T. Marshall concluded an address to the Warkworth Literary Society with the proclamation that 'Jesus stands supreme as the Ideal Man.... At the same time he is not more supreme than imitable, and his life repeats in winning accents his own words, "Follow Me!"'<sup>1</sup> Marshall's belief in Jesus as the archetype and model of humanity was commonly held by a broad spectrum of Christian believers. However, from the late nineteenth century, claims that Jesus was the 'Ideal Man' connoted a more specific meaning. In particular, they affirmed his masculinity and exemplification of manhood.<sup>2</sup> Interest in the masculinity of Jesus was closely bound to anxieties about the place of men in society, especially as it manifested in an apparent gender imbalance in religious activity. Colonial environments seemed to weaken the bonds of religion generally, but the effect upon men seemed particularly pronounced.

Many attempts to redress this situation and increase men's participation in organised religion involved appealing to their supposed dispositions. Examples of this endeavour included establishment of groups for men, and association of male religiosity with heroic masculinity. As the Ideal Man, Jesus was frequently invoked as the standard of both religiosity and masculinity, and attempts to improve the appeal of religion for men readily turned to him. Marshall's exposition focused primarily on aspects of Jesus' character, including his piety, steadfastness and self-sacrificing service. These facets remained important, but were increasingly cast in heroic terms. Though Frederick Nietzsche had once questioned the possibility of Christian heroism, Protestant New Zealanders positively embraced it – especially when framed by appeal to Jesus as 'the Leader and perfect Example'.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Outlook*, 24 October 1903, pp.23-24; *Outlook*, 31 October 1903, pp.22-23; *Outlook*, 7 November 1903, pp.23-24.

<sup>2</sup> See Geoffrey M. Troughton, 'Jesus and the Ideal of the Manly Man in New Zealand After World War One', *JRH*, 30:1, 2006, pp.45-60.

<sup>3</sup> On Nietzsche, see Brian S. Hook and R.R. Reno, *Heroism and the Christian Life: Reclaiming Excellence*, Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000, pp.2-3; cf. *War Cry*, 6 June 1908, p.2.

This chapter considers the rising importance of a masculine Jesus in the context of widespread concerns about men's religion during this period. These were articulated throughout European and English-speaking Christianity and were particularly evident within the Protestant churches. Having examined this wider context, the chapter addresses three settings in which these anxieties were particularly pronounced; namely, in response to working-class men, returning soldiers and youth. Ideas about Jesus' manliness were expressed in these settings, but were also in turn shaped by them. In practise, and in keeping with the general emphasis on children and youth at this time, much of the effort in reaching men was expended on younger males. Ideals were often most clearly expressed in that context. The strategy of constructing a manly Jesus to reach men indicated the pattern of Protestant Jesus-centredness, and was made possible because of his appeal. Notions of personality and strength were essential elements of Jesus' purported masculinity. However, these did not entirely supplant older preoccupations with Christian character and morality. Thus, while discourses of heroic masculinity exaggerated stereotypes of manly prowess, the hyper-masculine rhetoric associated with Jesus supported more conventionally religious priorities.

## **MASCULINITY, RELIGION AND FEMINISATION**

Attempts to project Jesus in more 'masculine' terms were embedded in wider concerns about a feminisation of religion and society in the nineteenth century. This process is thought to have elevated feminine images and modes of piety, and altered patterns of religiosity.<sup>4</sup> Evangelicalism had promoted the value of domesticity for men, but by the later part of the nineteenth century women increasingly usurped men's role in the moral and religious instruction of the family.<sup>5</sup> A preponderance of women among churchgoers may well have been typical in places since at least the beginning of the

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<sup>4</sup> Margaret R. Miles, *Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West*, New York: Vintage, 1989.

<sup>5</sup> John Tosh, 'Domesticity and Manliness in the Victorian Middle Class: The Family of Edward Benson', in Michael Roper and John Tosh (eds), *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800*, London: Routledge, 1991, pp.44-73; John Tosh, *A Man's Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.

nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> However, by the 1890s this reality aroused reaction among those who believed that women's undue influence was marginalising men from religion. In America, such views were bolstered by church attendance surveys which revealed that the composition of churches was often only one-third male, or less. Similar proportions were apparently also evident through much of Western Europe.<sup>7</sup>

By the late nineteenth century, masculinism was resurgent in Anglo-American culture. The years from 1870 to 1914 have been characterised as a time of waning respect for ideals of male domesticity. In Britain, altered patterns of work and the economic and military exigencies of Empire may have contributed to a 'flight from domesticity'.<sup>8</sup> In the American context, interpreters have linked the 'hyper-masculinity' of the Progressive Era to a range of factors including the Civil War, Social Darwinist ideas, the expansion of leisure and the encroachment of women on previously all-male preserves.<sup>9</sup>

Recent studies on masculinity emphasise notions of hegemony, but also the historical plurality of constructions of masculinity.<sup>10</sup> It now seems clear that the flight from domesticity was not absolute. Moreover, variables of class, sexuality, ethnicity and belief also shaped ideals and experiences of masculinity.<sup>11</sup> Religious conceptions were similarly variegated, though concern about the role and place of men transcended those differences. Anxiety about the threat of social disorder was a factor, but denominational and theological variations also added complexity to religious ideals.<sup>12</sup> Nonetheless, religionists of various stripes, from revivalists to social gospel radicals,

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<sup>6</sup> Hugh McLeod, *Religion and the People of Western Europe, 1879-1970*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981, p.29.

<sup>7</sup> Prothero, p.93; McLeod, *Religion*, p.29.

<sup>8</sup> See Martin Francis, 'The Domestication of the Male? Recent Research on Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century British Masculinity', *Historical Journal*, 45:3, 2002, pp.637-52.

<sup>9</sup> Prothero, pp.91-92.

<sup>10</sup> On hegemonic masculinity, see R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*, St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1995, pp.77-78; also Robin Law, Hugh Campbell and Ruth Schick, 'Introduction', in Robin Law, Hugh Campbell and John Dolan (eds), *Masculinities in Aotearoa/New Zealand*, Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 1999, pp.24-27.

<sup>11</sup> Francis, p.643; also Lynn Abrams, "'There was Nobody Like my Daddy": Fathers, the Family and the Marginalisation of Men in Modern Scotland', *The Scottish Historical Review*, 78:2, 1999, pp.219-42.

<sup>12</sup> See Andrew Bradstock, Sean Gill, Anne Hogan and Sue Morgan (eds), *Masculinity and Spirituality in Victorian Culture*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000.

seemed eager to reconfigure religion in more male-friendly terms. Indeed, quite disparate religious groups occasionally supported co-operative efforts to combat male indifference.<sup>13</sup>

Victorian masculinities have been widely discussed in recent years.<sup>14</sup> In particular, muscular Christianity, the role of Empire and the 'Arnoldian' public school ethos have often been suggested as formative influences on British Christian masculinity, though these were probably most important in 'elite' circles initially. The chivalry, austerity and physicality of muscular Christianity was supposed to remedy the chaos of urbanisation. In this, Jesus was often aligned with the development of manly character. Thomas Hughes' *The Manliness of Christ*, published in 1879, was part a wider attempt to counter the 'strange delusion' of religious effeminacy. A Christian Socialist, Hughes depicted Christ as a courageous combatant against evil. Yet, the athletic and physical dimensions of Jesus' manliness were offset by concomitant insistence on his 'tenderness, and thoughtfulness for others'.<sup>15</sup> This brand of muscular Christianity appealed to a broad constituency. The revivalist D.L. Moody cultivated sentimental forms of spirituality and expounded the nurturing aspects of Christ's nature. Yet, he was also a firm supporter of the YMCA and its physical brand of manliness and health.<sup>16</sup> It was Moody's successors at the Moody Bible Institute who

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<sup>13</sup> For example, Gary Scott Smith, *The Search for Social Salvation: Social Christianity and America 1880-1925*, Lanham: Lexington, 2000, pp.333-62; Gail Bederman, "'The Women Have Had Charge of the Church Work Long Enough': The Men and Religion Forward Movement of 1911-1912 and the Masculinization of Middle-Class Protestantism", *American Quarterly*, 41, 1989, pp.432-65.

<sup>14</sup> Notably, Donald E. Hall (ed.), *Muscular Christianity: Embodying the Victorian Age*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994; J.A. Mangan and James Walvin (eds), *Manliness and Morality: Middle-Class Masculinity in Britain and America, 1800-1940*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987; Herbert Sussman, *Victorian Masculinities: Manhood and Masculine Poetics in Early Victorian Literature and Art*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; Norman Vance, *The Sinews of the Spirit: The Ideal of Christian Manliness in Victorian Literature and Religious Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. On America, see Mark C. Carnes and Clyde Griffen (eds), *Meanings for Manhood: Constructions of Masculinity in Victorian America*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990; E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity From the Revolution to the Modern Era*, New York: Basic Books, 1993.

<sup>15</sup> See Peter Gay, 'The Manliness of Christ', in R.W. Davis and R.J. Helmstadter (eds), *Religion and Irreligion in Victorian Society: Essays in Honor of R.K. Webb*, London: Routledge, 1992, pp.102-116, esp. pp.102-9.

<sup>16</sup> Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880-1920*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001, pp.2-3.

encouraged Warner Sallman to produce his paintings of a manly Jesus that became ubiquitous in the twentieth century.<sup>17</sup>

### ***The Man Problem in New Zealand Religion***

Despite the difference in conditions between colonial New Zealand and the urban industrial north, these patterns were replicated locally. Concern about the impact of men's tendency to impiety and immorality had been evident from the outset of colonisation.<sup>18</sup> Many men strongly resisted church attendance, and masculinism flourished in New Zealand as it had in Australia when church leadership became more sensitised to male negativity.<sup>19</sup>

In purely demographic terms, the gender balance in colonial New Zealand favoured men. In 1861, 61.67% of New Zealand's population was male. With the inducements offered to single women and families during the migration boom years from the 1870s to 1890s the balance evened. By the time of the 1901 census there was only a small differential, with the male population being 52.54%.<sup>20</sup> Except during wartime, this small gap continued to narrow. The gender imbalance was sharpest in the country, and evened earliest in urban areas.<sup>21</sup>

This numerical advantage was not reflected in organised religion where the churches' leadership was largely male but the flock seldom was. Anecdotal evidence suggesting more active church attendance by women is supported by a range of data.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Apparently, E.O. Sellers of the Moody Bible Institute had first encouraged Sallman's art in the hope that he might produce a 'manly' portrait of Christ that would speak to the 'ordinary man.' See Morgan, *Visual Piety*, p.119.

<sup>18</sup> See Raewyn Dalziel, 'Women in New Societies', in Jock Phillips (ed.), *New Worlds? The Comparative History of New Zealand and the United States*, Wellington: NZ-US Education Foundation/Stout Research Centre, 1989, p.16.

<sup>19</sup> Anne O'Brien, "'A Church Full of Men': Masculinism and the Church in Australian History', *Australian Historical Review*, 29:3, 1993, p.439.

<sup>20</sup> Uneven sex ratios were common in settler societies generally. For a caution against overstating the extent and significance of the preponderance of men in colonial New Zealand, see Charlotte Macdonald, 'Too Many Men and Too Few Women: Gender's "Fatal Impact" in Nineteenth-Century Colonies', in Caroline Daley and Deborah Montgomerie (eds), *The Gendered Kiwi*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1999, pp.17-35. See also, David Thomson, 'Marriage and Family on the Colonial Frontier', in Ballantyne and Moloughney (eds), pp.119-41.

<sup>21</sup> For example, E.J. von Dadelszen, *Report on the Results of a Census of the Colony of New Zealand Taken for the Night of the 5th April, 1891*, Wellington: Government Printer, 1893, pp.14-15.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Blaiklock, pp.41-42; Marsh, p.67; Bob Lowe, *That's Me Without the Tie*, Christchurch: Whitcombe & Tombs, 1974, pp.16-17.

For example, women tended to be more evident in churches where attendance was most greatly valued. In the 1906 census, 53.01% of the total population and 52.98% of those making religious profession were male.<sup>23</sup> Yet it was only in the three largest churches that affiliation at this level was recorded. Significantly, the Church of England (53.06%), Presbyterianism (52.49%), and Roman Catholicism (52.89%) in New Zealand were all derivative of 'national churches' where affiliation was least likely to translate into frequent attendance.<sup>24</sup> Notably, the smaller Protestant groups placed a higher priority on active membership. Female affiliation tended to be higher in these. In general, the smaller the sect, the less likely men were to affiliate. In the largest group, the Methodist Church of Australasia, 49.61% out of 31,554 affiliates were men; Baptists (8,537) had 48.10% men, the Salvation Army (4,024) 47.97%, Congregationalists (3,532) 47.99%, and the Church of Christ (3,304) 46.79%. Among the fledgling Seventh Day Adventists (990) only 40.3% were men. Men still made religious profession, but their affiliation suggests lower rates of participation.

Recent analyses of the gender composition of church attendance support the impression of greater participation by women. Caroline Daley's research on Taradale during this period demonstrates that women attended church more often than men. Participation was highest among single women, and lowest among single men.<sup>25</sup> Similar patterns existed in urban South Dunedin where women were more frequent participants across denominations, often constituting between two-thirds and three-quarters of active communicants or churchgoers.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> E.J. von Dadelszen, *Report on the Results of a Census of the Colony of New Zealand Taken for the Night of the 29th April, 1906*, Wellington: Government Printer, 1908, p.25. The 1906 census has been chosen because it provides a full set of data. It also represents an unremarkable date past the point when the major imbalances of gender in society had evened.

<sup>24</sup> For discussion on churchgoing, see Jackson, 'Churchgoing', pp.43-59 – though this does not address gender in any detail. Presbyterian attendance was generally substantially higher than among Anglicans, though still somewhat less than other Protestants.

<sup>25</sup> Caroline Daley, *Girls & Women, Men & Boys: Gender in Taradale, 1886-1930*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1999, p.96.

<sup>26</sup> John Stenhouse, 'God, the Devil, and Gender', in Brookes, Cooper and Law (eds), pp.326-27.

The records of Knox Presbyterian Church in Lower Hutt confirm these trends.<sup>27</sup> Knox was a well established church by the turn of the century, but experienced considerable change and growth during the period. In 1903, there were only 59 names on the communicant roll. Between 1931 and 1936 there were 323.<sup>28</sup> In 1903, 61% (36) of the communicant roll was female. Nine of these were unmarried single women. The largest single group were women designated as 'Mrs' (30.5%), but for whom no corresponding marriage partner was evident on the roll. Many of these would have been widows, though other causes could have contributed – for instance, spouses could have belonged to another denomination. If treated as 'once married' but now single, as seems most likely, the proportion of single women rises to 45.8% of all communicants. Single men accounted for 14 out of 23 men, but just 23.7% of the communicant membership. By the later period, the proportion of women had increased to 66.6% (215). Single women, including those possibly once married, still accounted for 44% of the communicant roll while the proportion of single men dropped to 10.8%.

Evidently, men were less likely to become communicant members, but attended Knox slightly more regularly.<sup>29</sup> While the total attendance rate at Quarterly Communion was 53.7% in 1903, a rate of 56.5% for men compared favourably to 51.9% for women. Single men had the highest rate of attendance by group at 61.5%, while single unmarried women were the lowest at 46.9%. By 1931-36, the situation had changed. The overall attendance rose slightly to 55.6%. Men still attended more frequently, at a rate of 56.5%, but this was only marginally more regular than women at 55.2%. The greatest shift was the sharp rise in single unmarried women's attendance.

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<sup>27</sup> The following analysis is based on the records of Knox Presbyterian, Lower Hutt held at the Alexander Turnbull Library. See Communicants Register and Attendance Book, 1903-26, MSX-4214, ATL; Communicants Register and Attendance Book, 1926-31, MSX-4215, ATL; Communicants Register and Attendance Book, 1931-50, MSY-4071, ATL.

<sup>28</sup> This was the total for that period. In any given year there were less communicants, due to variables such as membership transfer and death.

<sup>29</sup> Attendance rates have been calculated on attendance at Quarterly Communion as a proportion of potential attendance. Potential attendance is determined by tabulating the total number of Quarterly Communions for which each member remained on the roll, since they could join or leave at any time during the sample periods. Maximum potential attendance for the 1903 sample was four communions, and 21 for the period between 1931 and 1936. In Presbyterian churches about half to two-thirds of church-attenders were members; slightly less took communion.

At 63.8%, they had by far the highest rate of attendance, followed most closely by married men (57.4%) and single men (54.5%). At the other end of the spectrum, the lowest attendance came from those possibly once married. Accounting for 21.4% of the communicant roll, these attended only 48.1% of potential communions for the period, possibly as a consequence of age or infirmity. Despite the persistence of slightly higher male attendance rates, the congregation was predominantly female. By the mid-1930s, there were still nearly two women for every man taking communion.

Around the country expressions of concern about this kind of imbalance were common. Explanations for the situation varied. Some argued that men found church dull, though others regarded this as a symptom rather than a cause.<sup>30</sup> By 1908, one Presbyterian discussion about the lack of ministerial candidates quickly broadened into a more general debate about men and religion. Contributors asserted that women's interests and tastes dominated church life. Men were different, and needed to encounter religion in ways that reflected this distinctiveness. The Rev. J. Clark's hypotheses on the subject were received sympathetically.<sup>31</sup> One columnist argued that the churches focused too much on children, the elderly and women. Comparing a plethora of men's groups abroad, they noted a paucity of local initiatives: 'How many churches have a meeting where the subject of the meeting is masculine, where the treatment is masculine in view point, and the conduct of the meeting is adapted to masculine tastes? Generally speaking, the kind of subject and the style of meeting do not specially appeal to the every-day thoughts and likings of men'.<sup>32</sup> The Presbyterian Assembly's committee on the State of Religion also highlighted the issue. Its convener, the Rev. Dr Frank Dunlop, succeeded William Salmond in the Chair of Mental and Moral Philosophy at Otago University from 1913-32. His report in 1908 urged for 'A more robust and manly type of Christianity amongst the men of the Church', 'Organised work for men by men', and greater enthusiasm in proclaiming 'those elements in the Gospel which appeal to men'.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> CC, February 1921, p.28.

<sup>31</sup> See *Outlook*, 2 May 1908, p.6; *Outlook*, 9 May 1908, pp.6-7; *Outlook*, 6 June 1908, p.7.

<sup>32</sup> *Outlook*, 13 June 1908, p.3; cf. *Outlook*, 5 March 1923, p.3.

<sup>33</sup> PGA, 1908, pp.59-61.

The relative absence of men was the culmination of a widening gender gap that began with adolescence.<sup>34</sup> While boys and girls attended Sunday School in reasonably even proportions, many boys' religious participation ended with childhood. According to the *New Zealand Church News*, young people's tendency to 'abandon Church as soon as they leave the Sunday-school' was symptomatic of wider spiritual malaise.<sup>35</sup> Even so, the loss of boys was problematic, not only as a failure in the work of the Sunday Schools generally but also in relation to the religious potential of late childhood. The problem of 'leakage' was widely recognised. However, frequent references to a 'Boy Problem' made plain where it was particularly acute.

Concern about boys was not limited to religious communities.<sup>36</sup> A rise in larrikinism associated with late nineteenth-century urban growth focused attention on younger males in New Zealand.<sup>37</sup> Writing of the Australian situation, Martin Crotty has argued that the 'Boy Problem' was symptomatic of the declining authority of religion, as well as a tendency to project hopes and fears onto young men.<sup>38</sup> Various organisations had been tackling delinquency and irreligion abroad for some time. The YMCA was one of the earliest, but others based on religious ideals were operating by the twentieth century. In 1893, the Rev. W.B. Forbush founded the popular Knights of King Arthur in America. His book of 1901, *The Boy Problem*, was widely cited in New Zealand and did much to consolidate the terminology.<sup>39</sup>

Appeals to the heroic became a staple ingredient in attempts to solve the 'boy problem'. Heroic masculinity was widely celebrated and applied intentionally to Jesus. Forbush had claimed that the Incarnation provided the pattern for solving the 'Boy Problem'. On the one hand, this meant entering the world of the boy: 'we shall save our boys as Jesus did the world, by incarnation. For them we must go down into the Galilee of simple-heartedness and the Samaria of the common-place, and dwell at the

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<sup>34</sup> Troughton, 'Religion', pp.50-51.

<sup>35</sup> *NZ Church News*, March 1900, p.11.

<sup>36</sup> Harry Hendrick, *Images of Youth: Age, Class, and the Male Youth Problem 1880-1920*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990.

<sup>37</sup> P.A. Gregory, 'Saving the Children: A Study of Social Attitudes Towards Larrikinism in the Later Nineteenth Century', BA Hons Dissertation in History, Massey University, 1975.

<sup>38</sup> Martin Crotty, *Making the Australian Male: Middle-Class Masculinity 1870-1920*, Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2001, esp. pp.10-20.

<sup>39</sup> For example, *PGA*, 1908, pp.66-67.

Nazareth of childish toil and struggle, and kneel in the Gethsemane of intercession, yea, and climb the sacrificial mound of Calvary'.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, the principle of the doctrine of the Incarnation also meant making Jesus more masculine. As Frank Dunlop explained, 'the strongest man meets in Christ one who is beyond controversy his Master in Manhood. In all the essential constituents of active heroism Jesus stands supreme. Inspiration for forceful, virile character and energetic living is here in abundance. To give its due place in the Christ ideal to this muscularity of soul cannot but be helpful'.<sup>41</sup>

## THE MANLY JESUS AND THE SOCIAL CHALLENGE

Social unrest and the rise of working-class interests provided one important catalyst for attempts to make Jesus more masculine. This impetus derived from a general perception that the churches had failed to connect with the working classes, and working-class men in particular.

According to Erik Olssen, Protestant laments about their failings in this regard became a refrain from the 1890s.<sup>42</sup> There is clear evidence that some church leaders were anxious to remedy the situation. In 1905, the Rev. R.S. Gray of Oxford Terrace Baptist Church, Christchurch, organised special meetings to elicit workingmen's perceptions of the obstacles between them and church attendance. From this he concluded that the leading complaints were Christian hypocrisy, difficulty with Christian doctrine and the anti-labour stance of the churches.<sup>43</sup> Churchgoers agreed, though they also considered class distinction and unattractive services problematic.<sup>44</sup> In Dunedin, the Rev. W.A. Sinclair of the Methodist Central Mission organised similar meetings around the same time.<sup>45</sup> These consultations confirmed that working-class participation in church life was limited, but were less clear about where responsibility

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<sup>40</sup> *PGA*, 1908, pp.66-67.

<sup>41</sup> *Outlook*, 30 May 1908, p.5.

<sup>42</sup> Erik Olssen, 'The "Working Class" in New Zealand', *NZJH*, 8:1, 1974, p.44.

<sup>43</sup> *NZB*, August 1905, p.121, cited in Brian Smith, "'Wherefore Then This Thusness": The Social Composition of Baptist Congregations in New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of Baptist Research*, 3, 1998, p.76.

<sup>44</sup> For example, *Outlook*, 13 June 1908, pp.2-3; *NZB*, August 1909, pp.391-93; *Outlook*, 5 March, 1923, p.3.

<sup>45</sup> See *Otago Liberal*, 9 September 1905, p.7; *Otago Liberal*, 16 September 1905, p.7; *Otago Liberal*, 23 September 1905, p.5.

lay. However, by 22 April 1906, Sinclair was organising Sunday afternoon men's meetings at the Mission. The aim was to provide a service where 'where men could meet with men, discuss the questions closely affecting men, and especially those who labour'. According to a report in the *Outlook*, 200 attended the initial gathering and they were 'working men without exception'.<sup>46</sup>

John Stenhouse has recently questioned how alienated from organised religion the working classes actually were.<sup>47</sup> Some contemporary Protestants also dissented from the majority view of a disconnection between working men and the churches. W.H. Uttley, a Congregationalist and President of the Dunedin Trades and Labour Council, considered that the assumption of working-class men's absence was mistaken. He argued that workers were the backbone and mainstay of most churches, including his own which was 'all working men'.<sup>48</sup> Following the lead of the Chicago YMCA, New Zealand Presbyterians conducted a survey to ascertain whether working men attended church in the same proportions as others. According to 72 of the 97 responding churches they did.<sup>49</sup> Nonetheless, the very existence of a survey indicated less certainty than the results implied. Even Uttley grudgingly accepted that there was widespread apathy, indifference and criticism among working men. In ascribing causes, William Booth's reported observations about working-class religion were more characteristic. Booth detected a falling-off from religious observance around the Christian world. While he attributed this to indifference rather than irreligion, political agitation and excessive concern for material advancement were identified as barriers to religious commitment.<sup>50</sup>

Rapid unionisation of manual workers and growth in the more militant expressions of unionism prior to World War One sharpened concerns about working men. As Fran Shor has demonstrated, part of the ethos of radical organisations like the IWW included the assertion of 'alternative masculinism'. Syndicalism promoted

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<sup>46</sup> *Outlook*, 2 June 1906, p.45.

<sup>47</sup> John Stenhouse, 'Christianity, Gender, and the Working Class in Southern Dunedin, 1880-1940', *JRH*, 30:1, 2006, pp.18-44. Part of Stenhouse's argument concerns historians' failure to recognise high levels of participation by working-class women. However, he also argues that working-class men's participation has also been misunderstood and underestimated.

<sup>48</sup> *Otago Liberal*, 23 September 1905, p.5.

<sup>49</sup> *PGA*, 1909, p.53.

<sup>50</sup> *War Cry*, 21 January 1911, p.2.

virility and solidarity as alternatives to the encroachments of 'managerial capitalism and the servile state'.<sup>51</sup> It projected a masculinity that was far more aggressive than that of the Romantic 'toiler'. In particular, it was popularised during the industrial unrest of 1911 to 1913. According to Shor, standing up to employers became a new mark of manliness during the massive strikes at Waihi, Wellington and Auckland.<sup>52</sup>

However, confrontation with employers was just one part of a wider engagement with traditional forms of authority that included 'scoffing at religion'.<sup>53</sup> While a masculine Jesus could be enlisted in the revolutionary cause,<sup>54</sup> correlation of masculinity with antagonism to religion was another rhetorical strategy. Anti-Church language was sometimes couched in gendered terms. One correspondent to the *Maoriland Worker* described the churches and clergy as the 'celestial police' of the privileged classes. The churches allegedly resisted change that would benefit the poor and ordinary working men.<sup>55</sup> On the other hand, where church leaders made pronouncements sympathetic to labour they were characterised as 'manly and outspoken'.<sup>56</sup> Arguments in support of socialism often utilised a quasi-religious masculinist tone: 'We need Men', the *Maoriland Worker* declaimed, 'Men! Real men. Strong men. True men.... Men who are not afraid to die for what they believe to be the right.... We stand for the working class, for freedom, for the truth, for justice. We have nothing to fear. We are fighting the battles of the Almighty's own children and the gates of hell cannot prevail against us'.<sup>57</sup>

Given the gulf in men's religious participation, religious communities were sensitive to this kind of language. Derision of Christian masculinity was not entirely new. A long Protestant tradition within Christianity had denigrated Catholicism as a

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<sup>51</sup> Fran Shor, 'Bringing the Storm: Syndicalist Counterpublics and the Industrial Workers of the World in New Zealand, 1908-14', in Moloney and Taylor (eds), p.60.

<sup>52</sup> Shor, pp.64-65.

<sup>53</sup> See the Waihi engine drivers manifesto, *MW*, 31 May 1912, cited in Stanley Roche, *The Red and the Gold: An Informal Account of the Waihi Strike, 1912*, Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1982, p.62. Though see Winters, p.22.

<sup>54</sup> Winters, pp.61-81.

<sup>55</sup> *MW*, 1 July 1914, p.6.

<sup>56</sup> *MW*, 22 March 1912, p.4.

<sup>57</sup> *MW*, 20 April 1911, p.13.

form of 'corrupting effeminacy'.<sup>58</sup> This was sustained in radical De Leonite socialism, and continued in the John A. Lee tradition in New Zealand.<sup>59</sup> However, socialist application of this discourse against Christians generally represented a significant challenge. Radical attacks on imperialism, capitalism and religious masculinity were understood as part of a wider assault on Christian civilisation.<sup>60</sup> The perceived scale of this threat partly explains the effort expended in reconfiguring ideal religious manhood. Strident groups asserted a necessary opposition between organised religion and political agitation, and then framed the divide in terms of masculinity. In response, religious communities attempted to overcome the stigma of effeminacy by connecting Christianity with manliness.

### ***The Manhood of the Master***

Concerns about 'feminisation' were often expressed within social gospel Christianity. According to Susan Curtis, social gossellers reconstructed the gentle Saviour of feminised evangelicalism into a hearty carpenter between the 1880s and 1920s.<sup>61</sup> By the early twentieth century, young audiences frequently heard about the authority and strength of Jesus' manliness. Thereafter, a stream of literature by social Christians bemoaned Jesus' emasculation and rehabilitated him as a model of robust manliness.<sup>62</sup> Paradoxically, then, social Christianity may have produced a gentler Christianity but a more forceful, physical and heroic Jesus.<sup>63</sup> However, heroic formulations were often

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<sup>58</sup> See Michèle Cohen, 'Manliness, Effeminacy and the French: Gender and the Construction of National Character in Eighteenth Century England', in Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen (eds), *English Masculinities, 1660-1800*, London: Longman, 1999, p.57; Jeremy Gregory, 'Homo Religiosus: Masculinity and Religion in the Long Eighteenth Century', in Hitchcock and Cohen (eds), p.110.

<sup>59</sup> K.A. Kirwin and P.J. Weber, 'Daniel De Leon's Anti-Catholicism', *Mid-America*, 58, 1976, pp.20-30. On John A. Lee's attitude to Catholicism, see *The John A. Lee Diaries, 1936-40*, Christchurch: Whitcoulls, 1981, p.31: 'The church would still slay and burn and flog and torture if it could. But religion as organised, like witchcraft, is about at the end of its tether'.

<sup>60</sup> MW, 22 December 1911, p.4.

<sup>61</sup> Susan Curtis, 'The Son of Man and God the Father: The Social Gospel and Victorian Masculinity', in Carnes and Griffen (eds), pp.67-78.

<sup>62</sup> For example, R. Warren Conant, *The Virility of Christ: A New View*, Chicago: R. Warren Conant, 2nd ed., 1915; Barton, *A Young Man's Jesus*, and Barton, *The Man Nobody Knows*. See Morgan, *Visual Piety*, pp.111ff. On knowledge of Barton in New Zealand, see NZMT, 15 January 1927, p.11; NZB, December 1927, back cover; *Dunedin Manhood*, October 1935, p.36.

<sup>63</sup> Veldman, p.8.

complemented by emphasis on Jesus' practical goodness and the moral basis of religion as well its benevolent functions.<sup>64</sup>

The leading American liberal Protestant H.E. Fosdick's *The Manhood of the Master* was arguably the most important twentieth-century religious text framed by notions of Jesus' masculinity.<sup>65</sup> The book was widely advertised and cited in New Zealand and contributed to keen local interest in Fosdick's work.<sup>66</sup> Crucially, it responded to a climate of collective unrest by casting Jesus as a social visionary. In the introduction to the 1958 edition, Fosdick reaffirmed that Jesus was the 'eternal contemporary' whose character and ethics made him 'a pioneer, still far ahead of us'.<sup>67</sup> Fosdick's interest in the relation between Christianity and social life was matched by an enthusiasm for personality, the value of which he once declared to be 'the key to the understanding of all life'.<sup>68</sup> He had been heavily influenced in his early career by Borden P. Browne's *Personalism*, and what he called the 'back to Christ' movement inspired by Ritschl's emphasis on the historical revelation of Christ.<sup>69</sup> For Fosdick, the historical Jesus provided a way to avoid excessive literal Biblicism and metaphysical speculation. The notion of personality was intimately connected with the relation between individual and society, and proved amenable to the ideals of brotherhood and friendship favoured by social Christians.

*The Manhood of the Master* was essentially a devotional aid, intended more as a character study than a biographical 'life'. Each chapter focused on a particular quality that Jesus exemplified. Discussion was organised around daily readings and commentary, with each chapter providing reflection for one week. For Fosdick, Jesus' character was more important than creeds. Jesus' practicality put him in touch with ordinary men's needs, and provided a basis for tackling social problems. Fosdick's

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<sup>64</sup> *Outlook*, 22 December 1900, p.25, quoting from the liberal nineteenth-century Bostonian, Phillips Brooks: 'I dare say there has been no age since Jesus lived when the character of Jesus, in his unsullied purity, its calm inconsistency, its high-toned heroism, has been more proudly acknowledged; there has been no age when the moral power of Christianity, as the great social salvation of states and communities, has been more profoundly felt.'

<sup>65</sup> Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Manhood of the Master*, rev. ed., London: Wyvern, 1958 (1913).

<sup>66</sup> *Echo*, 20 September 1921, p.6; *NZMBC Link*, 5 June 1933, p.3; *NZMBC Link*, 5 June 1939, p.3.

<sup>67</sup> Fosdick, *Manhood*, pp.7-8.

<sup>68</sup> Cited in Prothero, p.110.

<sup>69</sup> Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Living of These Days: An Autobiography*, London: SCM, 1957, p.63.

ideals of manliness affirmed the anthropocentrism of social Christianity, and a simple romanticised message of love. In 1925, the *Methodist Bible Class Link* carried an article entitled 'I Believe in Man' in which Fosdick argued that one could not believe in Jesus' God without his idea of humanity. Wrestling with Kant, Spinoza, and Hegel would not lead to the 'distinguishing characteristics of Jesus' God'. However, painters like Millet who could see the worth in the peasant could as they reflected on the 'love behind His love'. True Christianity was practical love in action.<sup>70</sup> Wherever the 'Manhood of the Master' was taken seriously, friendship and solidarity abounded.<sup>71</sup>

Local 'Puritan fiction' picked up on similar ideas, but focused particularly on itinerant workers who were considered susceptible to anti-religious socialist agitation and represented the kind of 'manly men' to whom a manly Christ would appeal.<sup>72</sup> Much of this writing was fanciful and overdrawn. Even a reviewer for the *New Zealand Methodist Times* expressed doubts about Herman Foston's *At the Front*, remarking candidly that he had 'some distance to go yet before he can take the rank of a first-class novelist'.<sup>73</sup> Nevertheless, the book illustrated the genre and the way that a masculine Jesus could be used to counter the 'Socialist threat'.

*At the Front* followed Ralph Messenger from his wanderings in the wilderness of socialism and irreligion to his regeneration in the railway construction camps and subsequent career. Messenger's rise was based on a combination of conversion and self-help, and was marked by involvement in moral campaigning and eventual influence and fame.<sup>74</sup> His religion – the 'religion of Jesus' – was defined in masculine terms. As the narrative explained, 'Ralph went into the subject more fully, and found

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<sup>70</sup> NZMBC Link, 24 October 1925, p.5.

<sup>71</sup> For example, John Johnson, *'Thou Shalt Love': Study for Summer and Winter Schools of the Methodist Young Men's Bible Class Movement*, Wellington: Wright & Carman, 1935, pp.25-26.

<sup>72</sup> The nomenclature and corpus of 'Puritan fiction' are adopted from Kirstine Moffat, 'The Puritan Paradox: An Annotated Bibliography of Puritan and Anti-Puritan New Zealand Fiction, 1860-1940. Part 1: The Puritan Legacy', *Kotare*, 3:1, 2000, pp.36-86; also 'Part 2: Reactions Against Puritanism', *Kotare*, 3:2, 2000, pp.3-49.

<sup>73</sup> See Herman Foston, *At the Front: A Story of Pluck and Heroism in the Railway Construction Camps in the Dominion of New Zealand*, London: Arthur H. Stockwell, 1921; cf. NZMT, 13 May 1922, p.3.

<sup>74</sup> Ralph progresses from labouring in the railway camps to working as a civil engineer. Towards the end, he becomes a Member of Parliament, serves as President of the YMCA, and speaks out against gambling the liquor trade. As Minister for Public Works in a moral government he takes a stand on the liquor issue. On retirement, a statue is erected in his honour.

that the present-day religion may be, and is too often, an effeminacy, a mere parody of the religion of Jesus Christ and the heroic obedience, self-sacrifice, and valour of His early and true disciples'.<sup>75</sup> Contemporary Christianity needed greater militancy. Jesus was strong and vigorous, and the religion of his followers should be also. Through the idea of Jesus' sympathy Foston related manliness with the solidarity of workers: 'Men, Jesus Christ was the Great Sympathiser. Let us look at Him as such...as we study His life from the "manger to the Cross" we find it to be one of intense sympathy'.<sup>76</sup> This involved fellow-love and duty, but was paradoxically condescending. Jesus was the supreme example of manly brotherhood and camaraderie, yet he was never truly 'one of the boys'. His propensity to fix other men's problems always placed him above them. However, the religion of Jesus provided a model of social advancement based on 'pluck and industry'. Thus, 'manly self-reliance' was favoured over a political socialism that tended toward feminising dependency.<sup>77</sup> Jesus' manliness was characterised by moral steadfastness, independence, and entrepreneurship, and could be imitated through 'heroic deeds, bravery, and self-sacrifice'.<sup>78</sup>

Though set in the bush 'frontier' rather than the public works schemes, Guy Thornton's semi-autobiographical *The Wowser* worked with similar ideas. Its central character was Sinclair, a worker converted through 'plain, and unadorned' nonconformist bush service preaching, a Nature-inspired religious experience, and a vision of 'Christ blotting out the past by His death upon the Cross and now living to save and keep me'. Classical evangelical conversion led to Christocentric faith: 'Looking away from self to Christ, I found Him all-sufficient'.<sup>79</sup> On becoming a Baptist preacher, Sinclair learnt the value of rugged masculinity in the bush, including a handy pair of fists. Thus, conventional piety made way for robust manliness. In the most important sermon in the book, Sinclair preached from the favoured masculinist passage, 'Quit you like men', before speaking on 'the manliness of Christ'. This exposition highlighted Jesus' 'superior courage, allied with the utmost gentleness; His

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<sup>75</sup> Foston, *Front*, pp.84-85.

<sup>76</sup> Foston, *Front*, p.110.

<sup>77</sup> Foston, *Front*, p.119.

<sup>78</sup> Foston, *Front*, p.229.

<sup>79</sup> Guy Thornton, *The Wowser: A Tale of the New Zealand Bush*, London: H.R. Allenson, 1916, pp.57, 73.

intense love for men; His burning desire that the men for whom He died should live lives that would prove a blessing and not a curse to their fellows'. This was manliness that issued forth in service.<sup>80</sup>

Jesus' heroic masculinity was often linked with more conventional priorities. In *The Wowser*, Christian opposition to the sly-grog trade became the forerunner to bush revival, and provided the immediate context for one panegyric on the 'heroism and mighty love of the Crucified One'. Christ's heroism was allied to moral reform, and stood alongside pity for those who ignored his love, death and 'precious promises'.<sup>81</sup> The heroism of the Saviour's redeeming love made an impact, even on Ned the archetypal hard-case against religion: 'He had served in the ranks of the South African War, and had all but received the D.S.O. for an act of signal bravery. A splendid rider, an absolutely fearless man, an out-and-out gambler, and a hard drinker, he was wholly indifferent to Christianity'. Faced with the plain testimony of other blokes, Ned repented, married, and embarked with his wife on a famous adventure for Christ.<sup>82</sup>

Significantly, *The Wowser* highlighted the evangelistic and moral imperatives that drove so much Christian social reform at this time. In this context, the manly Jesus provided inspiration in the Christian battle against social vices. Thus, A.S. Adams' argument that Jesus' moral teaching illuminated social conditions, while the 'spirit of the Saviour' provided the fount for drawing the necessary heroism to respond.<sup>83</sup> The formulations of Christian masculinity in these Puritan novels highlighted the fundamental importance of strength, which was allied to moral character, brotherhood and neighbourliness. The idea of Jesus as a strong man did not produce a distinctive Christology, but provided a trope to challenge the claims of the apparently irreligious. Jesus' strength was commensurate with 'definite religion', in which moral character and dogged persistence provided the basis for a good life and a good society. This

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<sup>80</sup> Thornton, *Wowser*, pp.123-24; cf. 'Quit You Like Men': NZ Methodist Young Men's Bible Class Movement Study for Easter Camps 1939, n.p., 1939.

<sup>81</sup> Thornton, *Wowser*, p.203.

<sup>82</sup> Thornton, *Wowser*, pp.210-14.

<sup>83</sup> Adams, *Relation of the Church*, p.4.

vision of Jesus' heroism meshed with notions of male reformers as guardians of the weak.<sup>84</sup>

### ***Organisations for Men***

Establishment of religious organisations for men formed another important response. Homo-social contexts often provided a context in which male identity could be affirmed, and groups of this nature sought to do this in distinctively Christian terms.<sup>85</sup> Significantly, the rise of denominational organisations for men corresponded with periods of particularly sharp social unrest and economic hardship. The Church of England Men's Society (CEMS) began in New Zealand in 1904 at a time of intense debate about working-class men's religiosity.<sup>86</sup> In 1912, the *Church News* responded to the great strike in Wellington by deploring socialism's absurdity in the light of such violent and destructive unreason. By contrast, it hoped that Christian men would exhibit 'brotherhood as it is in Christ', 'not self-serving, but self-sacrifice', and that through friendship and practical work the CEMS might help bridge the gap between labour and the churches.<sup>87</sup>

The Methodist Men's Fellowship formed some twenty-five years later in 1931, though the setting during a period of deepening economic recession was not too dissimilar.<sup>88</sup> According to its constitution, the fellowship was designed to 'enlist the co-operation of Christian men in the active promotion of the work of the Church... and especially to cultivate the social aspects of Christian life'.<sup>89</sup> Some hoped that the organisation would help invigorate provision of social services in the wider community. This happened to a limited degree, but social and educational activities tended to be more common.<sup>90</sup> Indeed, the *Laymen's Handbook* highlighted that the

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<sup>84</sup> Margaret McClure, 'Body and Soul: Heroic Visions of Work in the Late Nineteenth Century', in Bronwyn Dalley and Bronwyn Labrum (eds), *Fragments: New Zealand Social & Cultural History*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2000, p.107.

<sup>85</sup> cf. Cohen, 'Manliness', p.60.

<sup>86</sup> See G.A. Ammundsen, *The Anglican Men's Society in New Zealand 1904-1979. A Short History of the First Seventy Five Years*, Wellington: National Council of Society, 1980.

<sup>87</sup> *Church News*, March 1912, pp.3-4.

<sup>88</sup> MAC, 1931, p.160.

<sup>89</sup> MAC, 1932, p.127.

<sup>90</sup> MAC, 1940, p.59.

Fellowship placed a priority on the 'culture of the spiritual, mental and social life of its members'.<sup>91</sup>

Jesus was not pivotal in either the language or modus operandi of these organisations, but he was invoked. Elimination of profanity against Jesus' name was ostensibly central to the Holy Name Society that provided a Catholic version of the cult of manliness. However, the main focus was usually the Holy Name man, whose 'simplicity and rugged religiousness' was 'the unanswerable argument to any and all objections against his Christ and his Church'.<sup>92</sup> Even in this context, ecclesiology could trump Christology.

In general, men's organisations were more taken with 'practical religion' and 'brotherhood' than notions of heroism.<sup>93</sup> Thus, it was a practical, benevolent Christ who featured most prominently. The chaplain to the Archbishop of York's contention that the CEMS should be a 'practicalizing' agent within the church was ostensibly grounded in Christology. According to Mr Woollcombe, 'religion ought to appeal to every practical man', since Jesus did not address men's intellects, but went 'straight to their consciences and to their common sense'. Men needed more religion because they needed 'more of the inspiration and power of Christ'.<sup>94</sup> When debate erupted concerning the need for reform of the organisation in 1927 there was widespread feeling that the overly 'spiritual' basis of the CEMS was limiting its success. Members were required to affirm and adhere to the CEMS Rule: 'In the Power of the Holy Spirit: To pray to God every day; to be a faithful communicant; and by active Witness, Fellowship, and Service to help forward the Kingdom of Christ'. According to Archdeacon Russell of Oamaru, the CEMS 'Rule of Life' set the standard too high, stunting the organisation's growth.<sup>95</sup> The Rev. W. Bullock concurred, arguing that it was only 'practical work' that kept the organisation alive: 'Our Lord was the Master of life because he was the most practical man who ever lived: Let us get the "spirituality"

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<sup>91</sup> W.A. Burley, *Laymen's Handbook*, Christchurch: Methodist Church of New Zealand, n.d., p.14.

<sup>92</sup> *Month* July 1927, p.11, cited in Buckley, p.25.

<sup>93</sup> The activism of the CEMS appealed to politically-minded Anglicans like Walter Nash, though the extent of activism depended greatly on the initiative of individual branches. See Sinclair, *Walter Nash*, pp.17-18; also Sweetman, *Spire on the Hill*, p.87, which suggests that 'the CEMS branch was searching for a role, besides reading "practical papers" and visiting new arrivals'.

<sup>94</sup> *NZ Church News*, April 1910, pp.11-12.

<sup>95</sup> See *Men*, 10, June 1924, p.1.

out of the Society, and express our spirituality through practical works... and let the world see us showing the Spirit of Christ in our lives'.<sup>96</sup>

Religious organisations for men were only moderately successful. Like the Wellington Congregational Men's League, many struggled for existence let alone continuity or strength.<sup>97</sup> Denominational organisations provided fellowship and support in varying degrees, but were competing against more established groups offering similar rewards. Reform movements, including unions, had stolen the march as advocates for workers' welfare. A variety of other organisations offered tangible material benefits as well as social networks, frequently expressing their purpose in quasi-religious terms whilst avoiding accompanying religious restrictions.

Friendly societies and workingmen's clubs offered sociability and financial services. The Returned Servicemen's Association, which was built on similar principles of practical care, expanded rapidly after World War One.<sup>98</sup> Friendly societies were never a majority enterprise, but grew significantly during the social unrest of the early twentieth century. By 1915, at least a quarter of New Zealand men belonged to a friendly society. One in five continued to do so till 1940.<sup>99</sup> Though strongest among 'upper working class and the respectable artisans',<sup>100</sup> they were also prominent in some working-class areas.<sup>101</sup> In providing social and material benefits these groups competed for space with religious organisations. The St John's Workingman's Club in Wanganui offered leisure activities that ranged from drinking and cards to billiards and bowls, and much larger social events. In 1893, its inaugural year, the club had 221 members on its roll, but later picnics attracted as many as 1,000 participants.<sup>102</sup> Most friendly

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<sup>96</sup> *Men*, 20, July 1927, p.11.

<sup>97</sup> See Wellington Congregational Men's League, Minute Book, 1925-30, MS-Group-0159, MSY-4037, ATL. The League operated in short bursts prior to 1930.

<sup>98</sup> The RSA was formed in 1915 and had 57,000 members by 1920. See *ENZ*, vol. 3, p.67.

<sup>99</sup> David Thomson, *A World Without Welfare: New Zealand's Colonial Experiment*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1998, pp.38-39.

<sup>100</sup> Heather Shepherd, 'The Nature and Role of Friendly Societies in Later Nineteenth Century New Zealand', BA Hons Research Essay in History, Massey University, 1976, p.17; also, Thomson, *World Without Welfare*, p.40-41.

<sup>101</sup> Olssen, *Building the New World*, p.38; though see Thomson, *World Without Welfare*, p.41.

<sup>102</sup> See Noel Mahoney, *Phoenix on the Corner: The Life and Times of the St John's Club, 1893-1993*, Wanganui: The St John's Club, 1993.

societies were much smaller,<sup>103</sup> but this could actually enhance a feeling of community. The principle of mutual care was expressed through a range of social security measures which were perceived as expressions of practical spirituality.<sup>104</sup> By contrast with the 'practical Christianity' operating in these 'secular' organisations, the earnest (and temperate) attention to social, moral and religious questions in Christian men's organisations could seem much less practical or desirable.<sup>105</sup>

## THE MANLY JESUS, WAR AND SOLDIERLY IDEALS

From the later part of the nineteenth century, attempts to correlate ideals of soldierly manliness with religion featured strikingly in discourses of men's religion. The Salvation Army provided perhaps the greatest example of association of religion with militarism. However, its use of martial motifs indicated that appeals to heroic soldierly manliness were essentially evangelistic. It only superficially harmonised Jesus with supposedly masculine ideals. The Army's favoured imagery was supposed to help it reach working-class men, since military language asserted strength that favoured brawny masculinity over effeminacy. In fact, the organisation opposed most aspects of working-class male leisure, and used military jargon as a way to assert the 'true manliness' of doing so. Salvationists promoted self-restraint and religious conviction as the true marks of strength.<sup>106</sup> Laura Lauer argues that the Salvation Army adopted the nomenclature of militarism but not its essence, since the physical was a diversion from God and violence a mark of the unredeemed.<sup>107</sup> Jesus was used to support masculine ideals that actually subverted conventional military values. Thus, true 'patriotism' was an echo of Jesus' self-sacrificing service of humanity,<sup>108</sup> while 'true manhood'

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<sup>103</sup> Thomson, *World Without Welfare*, pp.36, 40.

<sup>104</sup> Jennifer Carlyon, 'Friendly Societies 1842-1938: The Benefits of Membership', *NZJH*, 32:2, 1998, p.132.

<sup>105</sup> See the programme notes for the Men's Fellowship at Knox Presbyterian Church. Knox Presbyterian, Lower Hutt, Men's Fellowship, 1942-45, 96-111-6/01, ATL.

<sup>106</sup> Pamela J. Walker, "'I Live But Not Yet I For Christ Liveth in Me": Men and Masculinity in the Salvation Army, 1865-90', in Tosh and Roper (eds), pp.92-112, esp. p.107.

<sup>107</sup> Laura Lauer, 'Soul-Saving Partnerships and Pacifist Soldiers: The Ideal of Masculinity in the Salvation Army', in Bradstock et. al. (eds), pp.194-208.

<sup>108</sup> *War Cry*, 1 August 1908, p.7.

repudiated harsh judgement for Jesus' example of 'tolerance and liberality of spirit'.<sup>109</sup> In many ways, the Salvation Army's usage set the pattern for other Protestants.

Connections between religion and heroic manliness were strengthened during the South African War. In February 1900, the *Outlook* greeted news that a chaplain would be sent with the Otago Contingent with the headline 'Religion and Heroism'.<sup>110</sup> After that war, a review in the same newspaper commended one veteran's poetry for exhibiting the 'soldier spirit – the spirit of brave, strong, dauntless, dogged endurance'.<sup>111</sup> However, the militant and moral aspects of religious masculinity were often bound together. Thus, writing around the same time Frank Dunlop argued that in order to attract men to the churches it was necessary to,

Call out the active impulses towards the morally beautiful! Bring into play the chivalrous instincts and the lust of battle! Appeal to the latent heroic in men!... Say this to him: 'There is a fight going on; come on.' and you will come out very much the wiser with the heat of battle upon you.... Yes, there is martial music in Christ's voice, there is the shiver of the trumpet in His tones; and he who responds to its challenge will discover that the heroism of man postulates the inspiration of God.<sup>112</sup>

Association of military virtues with manliness continued to be important. In particular, World War One provided the context for a marked upsurge in efforts to construct manliness in soldierly terms.<sup>113</sup> As religious communities were shaped by these trends it became common to represent Jesus as a heroic soldierly figure. However, as in earlier times, the heroic Jesus of the post-World War One years remained conventional in many respects.

### ***The Crisis of the Returning Soldiers***

The churches' engagement with the war demanded religious rationalisation. Historically, Jesus' teaching posed a problem for Christian justifications of war. Indeed, the first Christians characteristically adopted a pacifist stance, based in part on their

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<sup>109</sup> *War Cry*, 17 March 1906, p.3.

<sup>110</sup> *Outlook*, 17 February 1900, p.4.

<sup>111</sup> Review of Frank Hudson, *The Song of the Manly Men*, in *Outlook*, 9 January 1909, p.7.

<sup>112</sup> *Outlook*, 6 June 1908, p.3.

<sup>113</sup> World War One, and war generally, plays a critical role in Jock Phillips' history of men in New Zealand. He considers that by 1914 'Pakeha men had been taught that war was the acid test of their masculinity'. See Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male – A History*, rev. ed., Auckland: Penguin, 1996, pp.158-198, quote p.158.

appeal to Christ's example.<sup>114</sup> On the eve of World War One some still denied that Jesus' teaching could be used to justify war.<sup>115</sup> Not the Life and Work Committee of the Presbyterian General Assembly, however, which noted that 'The same message which proclaims peace to men of good-will implies strife and misery to all the rest. "I am not come to bring peace, but a sword," was the hard saying of Him of Whom the Gospels tell.... And the searching Gospel message, while it brings peace and healing on its wings to the good man, is a two-edged sword to the selfish, mean, and bad'.<sup>116</sup>

The churches overwhelmingly cast Germany in the latter category. While it was difficult to appeal to the historical Jesus, supporters frequently aligned war with the demands of righteousness and the cause of Christ. Militaristic Germany was guilty of pride and aggression. By contrast, the British Empire 'being, in practical righteousness, the largest instalment of the Kingdom of God that has yet arisen among men', was divinely charged to resist.<sup>117</sup> Indeed, Germany had initiated an essentially spiritual conflict by obscuring the 'onward path of evolution as pointed by Christ'.<sup>118</sup> As the leading Presbyterian the Rev. James Gibb warned, the 'great malignant nation' had 'thrown down the challenge to Christ, and it was inexorably doomed'.<sup>119</sup> Jingoistic language like this aligned the cause of Empire with that of God in Christ. Others were conscious of the difficulties raised by associating man's war with God's, and expressed more ambivalence. However, even then, the sense of an essentially spiritual conflict led to claims that a militant Christ was incarnate in war. Addressing the opening of Theological Hall, Dunedin, R.E. Davies asserted that 'Christ has come to destroy the power of the devil and give the captives their freedom. He is here for war'.<sup>120</sup>

There were early hopes that war might help revive religion – both among the troops and at home. On the one hand, war was thought to lead to greater penitence

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<sup>114</sup> See Roland H. Bainton, *Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace: A Historical Survey and Critical Re-Evaluation*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1960, pp.61-65, and 66ff.

<sup>115</sup> *Outlook*, 4 August 1914, p.4.

<sup>116</sup> *PGA*, 1914, p.57.

<sup>117</sup> *MAC*, 1915, p.117.

<sup>118</sup> *Outlook*, 12 January 1915, p.5.

<sup>119</sup> *Press*, 26 April 1915, cited in L.H. Barber, 'The Social Crusader: James Gibb at the Australasian Pastoral Frontier, 1882-1935', PhD Thesis in History, Massey University, 1975, p.196.

<sup>120</sup> *Outlook*, 6 April 1915, p.8.

and dependence on the Almighty, and had a healthy, purifying effect.<sup>121</sup> On the other, war provided an opportunity to exhibit the sacrificial love of the Lamb.<sup>122</sup> Some even hoped that the righteous basis of the war would give rise to the blessing of a wider spiritual awakening. The Presbyterian Life and Witness Committee was more cautious. In 1915 its report to Assembly noted that war had not been good for the Church historically, but had previously led to indifference.<sup>123</sup> By 1917, it expressed concern that patriotic causes seemed to be displacing religious activity at home, whilst there remained no evidence of a 'work of grace' among soldiers. Consequently, it urged the church 'to concentrate on her growing lads, in the hope that before they enter camp she may see them taking their stand for Jesus Christ'.<sup>124</sup> The YMCA's wartime magazine the *Triangle Trail* provided a realistic assessment. Answering the question, 'Is the Average Soldier Religious?', it suggested that 'there were "keen" men, and there were hard cases – neither, however, a numerous class. The average man came in between'. Nonetheless, they concluded that 'behind his indifferent, somewhat graphic, language, and his apparent coldness in spiritual matters, the average soldier has true faith'.<sup>125</sup>

By 1919, it seemed more certain that war had done little to revitalise organised religion, despite continued yearning in some quarters.<sup>126</sup> Books on life after death found a ready market, though not among troops who had presumably already reflected on these questions and perhaps had their fill of death.<sup>127</sup> The prevailing religious mood among returning soldiers was disinterest. In part, this perpetuated an existing trend. It may have signalled general feelings of alienation from civilian society, though particular issues also rankled.<sup>128</sup> Some, though not all, chaplains and YMCA

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<sup>121</sup> *Outlook*, 3 November 1914, p.3; cf. *MW*, 12 August 1914, p.1.

<sup>122</sup> *Outlook*, 5 January 1915, pp.3-4.

<sup>123</sup> *PGA*, 1915, p.121.

<sup>124</sup> *PGA*, 1917, pp.55-56.

<sup>125</sup> *Triangle Trail*, 2, 16 February 1918, p.7.

<sup>126</sup> *PGA*, 1919, p.62; cf. *Australasian Intercollegian*, 1 March 1920, p.15, which noted, 'After all the war appears to have had very little vitalising effect on religion. There were those who hoped that a new era would dawn as the result of that mad four years of uprooting of the established things. But it simply hasn't happened.'

<sup>127</sup> E.W. Hames, *Coming of Age: The United Church 1913-1972*, Auckland: Institute Press, 1974, p.40.

<sup>128</sup> Belich, p.107.

officers had alienated themselves by parading their officer status.<sup>129</sup> The churches' leading role in the prohibition polls of 1919 probably added to disaffection, as servicemen's votes played an important role in preventing New Zealand from going dry. In December 1919, 'continuance' prevailed by a mere 3,263 votes.<sup>130</sup> As one observer ruefully noted, 'The fact must be faced that five-sixths of the men voted against Prohibition, and they know that the majority of Church people probably voted for it'.<sup>131</sup> Moreover, some felt the continuing scorn of religious attitudes to drinkers.<sup>132</sup> Another factor was a rising sense that the war represented a failure of Christian civilisation.<sup>133</sup> The *New Zealand Tablet* considered that it was a failure of Protestantism, not Christianity. However, this simply highlighted the extent to which religion was held to be implicated.<sup>134</sup>

While the churches recognised that returning soldiers faced a range of difficulties,<sup>135</sup> the apparent spiritual indifference of the troops aroused great concern. Observers noted that experiences at the front and at home had left men embittered, and religious communities felt this in the rejection of church life.<sup>136</sup> In the early 1920s, the question of men's non-attendance at church activities continued to be posed in denominational literature.<sup>137</sup> Presbyterians were arguably the most active in addressing the 'problem of the returning soldier'. Seeking an informed deliberation, the General Assembly commended the Rev. A. Herbert Gray's pamphlet, *As Tommy Sees Us*, for study.<sup>138</sup> This was one of many books by ex-chaplains relaying their impressions of church work among the soldiers and analysing returnees' needs. These frequently

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<sup>129</sup> Jock Phillips, Nicholas Boyack and E.P. Malone (eds), *The Great Adventure: New Zealand Soldiers Describe the First World War*, Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1988, pp.199-200, 206.

<sup>130</sup> Phillips, *A Man's Country?*, pp.65-74; *ENZ*, vol. 2, pp.876-77.

<sup>131</sup> H.W. Burridge (ed.), *When the Boys Come Home: The Problem of the Returned Soldier and the Church*, Christchurch: Presbyterian Bookroom, 1919, p.14.

<sup>132</sup> Phillips, *A Man's Country?*, pp.65-74; Nicholas Boyack and Jane Tolerton (eds), *In the Shadow of War: New Zealand Soldiers Talk About World War One and Their Lives*, Auckland: Penguin, 1990, p.44.

<sup>133</sup> *MW*, 22 December 1915, p.4.

<sup>134</sup> *NZ Tablet*, 6 May 1920, p.33.

<sup>135</sup> William Walker, cited in Hames, *Coming of Age*, pp.32-33.

<sup>136</sup> See Donnelly, p.16; Phillips, Boyack and Malone (eds), p.231.

<sup>137</sup> *CC*, February 1921, p.28.

<sup>138</sup> A. Herbert Gray, *As Tommy Sees Us: A Book For Church Folk*, London: Arnold, 1918. The book was endorsed elsewhere too. For example, the Anglican military chaplain P.C. Davis promoted it in 1919 while he was still on service in Egypt. See *Church Gazette*, May 1919, p.80.

pointed to the estrangement soldiers felt from civilian society, and urged churches to replicate the sense of 'brotherhood' experienced on active service. For evangelical controversialists like P.B. Fraser, Gray's attitude to the Bible and call for simplicity in religious teaching reeked of 'Modernism'.<sup>139</sup> Other reviewers like Lester Smith suspected that the book would shock many church folk, but encourage socialists. Gray's 'Tommy' had no respect for the Church due to its blots on civilisation and disregard for the Sermon on the Mount. Conversely, soldiers' discovery of co-operative and communal life portended imminent socialist rebellion.<sup>140</sup>

When the General Assembly convened at Christchurch in February 1919 it decided that the problem of returning soldiers required further investigation. H.W. Burridge co-ordinated this, and his findings were published later that year in *When the Boys Come Home*. The pamphlet candidly acknowledged the churches' failings and called for sympathetic treatment of returnees.<sup>141</sup> For present purposes, the critical feature was the culmination where Burridge appealed to Jesus Christ as the cord that tied his observations together. Burridge pleaded extendedly for a radical re-presentation of Jesus as a man's man to reach returning soldiers by showing them 'the real Jesus'.<sup>142</sup> Tellingly, he bemoaned the fact that few returning soldiers associated their ideal qualities with 'the Man of Nazareth, the Head of the Christian Church':

They do not know that the very traits of character which go to make up a good soldier, a brave man, and a true gentleman – traits which they have seen exhibited in the fierce crucible of war, and which they admire at heart – such reached their highest in the life and character of Jesus. "He was a man, and a complete man – strong, virile, and courageous. He had all the great masculine virtues which men already love and admire – of loyal hearts the most loyal, of generous hearts the most generous, and of all hopeful and cheerful spirits His was the greatest. He had the dignity that comes from a quiet reserve. He neither paraded His emotions nor asked others to parade theirs." Such is not the generally accepted picture of Jesus of Nazareth. But the tradition that contradicts it is false, and must be broken through - by our preaching, and by our life.

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<sup>139</sup> *Biblical Recorder*, January 1919, p.7. The same article also criticised Gray for praising the Scottish modernist movement's derision of 'mechanical and superstitious' views of the Bible.

<sup>140</sup> *MW*, 31 July 1918, p.1.

<sup>141</sup> cf. Michael Grimshaw, "'Loud Talk and Little Faith": The Presbyterian Church and New Zealand Society 1919-1929', Dissertation in Church History, Faculty of Theology, University of Otago, 1993, p.18.

<sup>142</sup> Burridge (ed.), p.30.

The Church's great task was to persuade returning soldiers to follow Jesus as someone who would have made an ideal 'copper' in the front line and a fierce 'stunt':

His Church and her representatives may often fail to present in actual life this picture of our Great Leader, yet it still is true that He was the manliest man who ever walked this earth. And His cause calls for the display of just such qualities to-day, and is willing to enlist all men in its service who desire to make such a one their example.... There are deeper conceptions of Christ and His work, we know. But it is on these lines of hero worship that we can first appeal to many men and influence them to enlist in the service of Christ and His Church. They will respond to the call of such a Leader if they know Him as such. It is our task to so present Him.<sup>143</sup>

Burridge recognised that hero worship resulted in inadequate Christology.

Nonetheless, the idealism and personalised basis of hero worship was seen as the most likely means to arouse religious sentiment. Not surprisingly, the manly Christ that Burridge advocated fitted neatly with the dimensions of the ideal soldier. This image was consolidated in the 1920s as the churches employed Jesus in their attempts to 'enlist' men.<sup>144</sup>

### ***Jesus and Soldierly Ideals***

Greater focus on Jesus was potentially shrewd. There is evidence that some New Zealand soldiers found Jesus attractive even when they were uncertain about Christianity and its teaching on the afterlife.<sup>145</sup> Visions and apparitions were apparently common in wartime,<sup>146</sup> and Jesus featured prominently in these.<sup>147</sup> Some experiences

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<sup>143</sup> Burridge (ed.), pp.30-32; cf. P.C. Davis, inspired by Gray, in *Church Gazette*, May 1919, p.80: 'To win the returned soldiers she must prepare for them a bright and simple service, plenty of manly hymns – if the term may be used – short prayers full of reality and vim, and straight-out talks on the glories of pure and noble manhood, so that men may be led to realize that the call, "Follow Me," is the call of the "Man" to his fellow men'.

<sup>144</sup> For similar remarks in the Methodist context, see W.E. Leadley's contributions in *NZMT*, 18 January 1919 and *NZMT*, 12 April 1919. On this, and the negative reactions it aroused, see Allan Davidson, 'New Zealand Churches and Death in the First World War', in John Crawford and Ian McGibbon (eds), *New Zealand's Great War: New Zealand, the Allies and the First World War*, Auckland: Exisle, 2007, pp.465-66.

<sup>145</sup> See Glyn Harper (ed.), *Letters from the Battlefield: New Zealand Soldiers Write Home, 1914-18*, Auckland: HarperCollins, 2001, pp.159-60.

<sup>146</sup> Much of this was associated with spiritualism. See Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, esp. pp.54-77.

emphasised the comfort Jesus could offer soldiers and their families.<sup>148</sup> Images depicting a mystical Jesus as the soldier's friend were plentiful at home and on the front. Of these, James Clark's *The Great Sacrifice* (1914) presented Jesus as a fellow-sufferer, while the Jesus of George Hillyard Swinstead's *The White Comrade* (1915) provided help amid trouble.<sup>149</sup> By the early twentieth century postcards had developed as a cheap and convenient form of communication. Reproductions of paintings like *The White Comrade* were used on cards designed to connect troops with families and friends at home.<sup>150</sup>

As opposition to the hostilities increased, Jesus' teaching was invoked against the war. On the other hand, he was also taken to embody a form of masculinity that conformed to military values. Soldiers were widely honoured as the cream of New Zealand's manhood, and the manly Jesus reflected this image of the ideal soldier. Thus, World War One stimulated a process that made soldiers into Christ figures and Christ into a soldier.<sup>151</sup>

Association of Jesus with soldierly values was achieved in a variety of ways. One was through military titles. The idea of Jesus as Captain pre-dated World War One, but became more popular at that time. In one sense, the term was simply an equivalent to the more conventional title of 'Lord'. It implied deference, obedience and whole-hearted commitment. Thus, the inaugural issue of the Bible Class periodical *Four Square* contended that 'The nominal, luke-warm or half-and-half Christian is utterly unworthy of his Captain'.<sup>152</sup> The term affirmed qualities of leadership and authority, but it also supposed more personal emphases since Captains were in direct

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<sup>147</sup> Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male Body: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996, pp.230-35.

<sup>148</sup> Lauris Edmond (ed.), *Women in Wartime: New Zealand Women Tell Their Story*, Wellington: Government Printer, 1986, p.51.

<sup>149</sup> Alan Wilkinson, 'Changing English Attitudes to Death in the Two World Wars', in Peter C. Jupp and Glennys Howarth (eds), *The Changing Face of Death: Historical Accounts of Death and Disposal*, New York: St Martin's Press, 1997, p.150; Bourke, pp.212, 232; Barbara Jones and Bill Howell, *Popular Arts of the First World War*, London: Studio Vista, 1972, p.59.

<sup>150</sup> An example of a wartime postcard of *The White Comrade* can be found in the Glen Historical Collection, Bible College of New Zealand, Auckland (copy supplied by Dr Frank Glen, 13 May 2005); cf. Allen J. Frantzen, *Bloody Good: Chivalry, Sacrifice, and the Great War*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004, p.159.

<sup>151</sup> See Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, p.127.

<sup>152</sup> *Four Square*, November 1920, p.3; cf. *Four Square*, April 1921, p.75.

command of men and relied heavily on respect earned through example. Therefore, appeal to Jesus as Captain preserved a sense of his superiority and conferred qualities of courage, character and strength without the taint of privilege.

The concept of sacrifice provided a more important point of interaction, and formed the basis of Belich's description of 'A cult of 18,000 Kiwi Christs'.<sup>153</sup> Representation of Jesus as a self-sacrificing leader had been common around the world from the outset of war, and was associated with manliness and soldiering.<sup>154</sup> In wartime, it was relatively easy for religious communities to align Jesus' sacrificial death with those of believers who likewise had 'sealed their sacrifice with their blood'.<sup>155</sup> But the relationship between Christ and the soldier was never entirely parochial since all were potentially agents of atonement. Thus, R.E. Davies suggested that 'On the battlefields of Europe to-day Christ is, in a mystical sense, shedding His blood for the sins of the world'.<sup>156</sup> Indeed, the apparently irreligious were even occasionally exalted. One correspondent to the *Outlook* suggested that the average 'seemingly Godless, careless and thoughtless' soldier often displayed 'Christ's spirit in the trenches' more than 'professors of religion'. Their love of neighbour was truly Christ-like.<sup>157</sup> It expressed a sacrificial quality that recalled John 15.13: 'Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends'. After the war, this text became a widely cited in commemorative activities, and a favoured inscription on war memorials.<sup>158</sup>

Anzac Day provided opportunities to reflect on the suffering and sacrifice of New Zealand soldiers. The motif of the sacrificial life became a favourite theme in Anzac commemorations. For Pastor E. Nicholls, Anzac Day honoured those New Zealanders who had gone out with 'high endeavour to take their places in the deadly breach for others' sake', supplying 'heroic proof of their manhood'. Moreover, 'The bereaved, the maimed, the mentally unhinged, are bearing still the cross that the war-

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<sup>153</sup> Belich, p.116.

<sup>154</sup> See Stuart Owen, 'Great War', in Houlden (ed.), vol. 1, pp.323-25.

<sup>155</sup> *Outlook*, 23 November 1915, p.5.

<sup>156</sup> *Outlook*, 6 April 1915, p.8.

<sup>157</sup> *Outlook*, 1 January 1918, p.25.

<sup>158</sup> Chris Maclean and Jock Phillips, *The Sorrow and the Pride: New Zealand War Memorials*, Wellington: GP Books, Historical Branch, Department of Internal Affairs, 1990, p.106, indicates that the text appeared on 10.5% of recorded memorials.

makers cruelly fashioned and thrust upon their guiltless hearts'. If their self-sacrifice imitated Christ, the challenge to 'be an Anzac for Christ' presented the soldier as a type of the true Christian. Anzac soldiers were archetypes of submission to God, and standard-bearers of courage, sacrifice and love.<sup>159</sup> For some interpreters, even the form of the Anzac Day ceremony was – from Last Post to Reveille – symbolic of the death and resurrection of Christ.<sup>160</sup> Contrary to Maureen Sharpe's contention, such sentiments suggest that the Anzac story was highly amenable to Christian interpretation.<sup>161</sup>

Association of Christ with soldiering manliness was also mediated through notions of chivalry and crusade. Such neo-medievalism had been widespread in the English-speaking world prior to 1914.<sup>162</sup> In New Zealand, 'crusades' for social purity were well established, and chivalric language permeated many organisations.<sup>163</sup> The incidence of crusading imagery rose notably in the early years of the war. Some recent analyses identify the idea of a holy crusade against barbarism as one of the war's central motifs.<sup>164</sup> In New Zealand, Ormond Burton noted that this view prevailed among his contemporaries: 'We were convinced it was a righteous war. ... We went to fight for the Kingdom of God and for the future peace of the world, in much the same spirit as that in which the finest chivalry of Europe followed Peter the Hermit to the Holy Land'.<sup>165</sup> The modern crusade incorporated notions of adventure, heroism, virtue and valour. The World War One soldier became the new crusader.

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<sup>159</sup> *Reaper*, June 1923, pp.117-18.

<sup>160</sup> The Rev. W.F. Nichol address at Waimate, 1937, *NZRSA Review*, November 1937, cited in Keith Sinclair, *A Destiny Apart: New Zealand's Search for National Identity*, Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1986, p.184.

<sup>161</sup> Maureen Sharpe, 'ANZAC Day in New Zealand: 1916 to 1939', *NZJH*, 15:2, 1981, pp.97-114, esp. p.109.

<sup>162</sup> Michael C.C. Adams, *The Great Adventure: Male Desire and the Coming of World War I*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990, pp.62-72.

<sup>163</sup> The cover of the *War Cry*, 14 July 1906, even utilised crusading imagery to advocate neighbourly generosity.

<sup>164</sup> See Frantzen; also Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, esp. pp.115-16.

<sup>165</sup> O.E. Burton, *Shall We Fight?*, Auckland: Clark & Matheson Printers, 1923, p.7; cf. Don Wright and Eric G. Clancy, *The Methodists: A History of Methodism in New South Wales*, St Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1993, p.131.

Interest in chivalry and crusade declined in some places following the war,<sup>166</sup> but not in New Zealand religion. Alignment between the soldier-crusader and Christ was particularly evident in visual imagery. Medieval motifs were ubiquitous in memorial stained glass windows, and many of these interacted with figures of Christ. One example was the two-panelled memorial to the Wellington Regiment of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force at All Saints Anglican Church in Palmerston North. In this, the right hand panel of a New Zealand version of Clark's *Great Sacrifice* balanced one of a crusader on the left. The crusader, also with helmet off, kneels deferentially before an altar, gazing upward to the altar cross and to Christ on the facing panel. The text below was John 15.13. The window presented the World War One soldier as a modern crusader, serving and imitating Christ. The severe losses suffered at Chunuk Bair, and in other conflicts, helps explain the suggestion of Christ-like self-sacrifice even surpassing that of the soldier's medieval forebear.

Alignment of Christ and Christ-like character with chivalry and crusade was especially evident in relation to young people. During the war, a guild began for Ladies and Knights in the 'Young Folks' pages of the *New Zealand Methodist Times*.<sup>167</sup> After the war, the League of Young Methodists expanded the metaphor considerably. The Bible Class movement and the YMCA appropriated the language, and one evangelical organisation even styled itself as the Crusader movement. Young people were expected to exhibit the zeal and self-sacrificing commitment of crusaders. The first volume of *Methodist Manhood* claimed that the Bible Class message was one of 'unselfishness, of chivalry, and of service'. Young Bible Class men were to exemplify 'The manliness which consists in self-control, a trained and self-disciplined will, a right heart with Jesus Christ enthroned within', resulting in 'chivalry, nobility, and Christian knightliness'.<sup>168</sup> Christian 'knights of chivalry' reflected Christ's character as they stood in the 'shadow of the Cross'.<sup>169</sup> According to the *Methodist Times*, 'Real Christianity' was the religion of Jesus Christ, 'adventurous and purposeful, a gallantry that takes

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<sup>166</sup> Wilkinson, 'Changing English Attitudes to Death', pp.151-52.

<sup>167</sup> See NZMT, 23 January 1915.

<sup>168</sup> *Methodist Manhood*, 25 August 1922, pp.7-8.

<sup>169</sup> *Methodist Manhood*, 17 November 1922, p.8.

risks and exults in them, a chivalry that makes daring appeal to men's manhood and courage and foolhardihood'.<sup>170</sup>

Appeal to chivalric imagery provided a way to imbue militarism with heroic righteousness, and helped resolve any tensions inherent in martial depictions of Christ. Chivalry was connected with military values, but it also softened them by displacing valour into the 'safe haven of agreeable fantasy'.<sup>171</sup> Within post-war heroic religious discourse, the alignment of Christ and chivalry was therefore a significant approach. It made the warrior Christ a more dignified and respectable figure. Chivalrous masculinity was heroic, but less demonstrative than the toughness implied by muscular Christianity. As Sean Gill has suggested, nostalgic Victorian neo-medievalism embodied a compromise between feminine self-abnegation and masculine assertiveness.<sup>172</sup> The persistence and development of this ideal in the post-war context demonstrated the limits and ambivalences involved in applying heroic models to Jesus. The tropes of chivalry and crusade favoured notions of honour, adventure, duty, righteousness, and holy restraint. In other words, the underlying ideals of 'Christ-likeness' still emphasised morality and purity. Ironically, for soldiers like Burton, it was precisely these associations that were most difficult to square with their experience.

## **YOUTH, HEROISM AND THE MASCULINE JESUS**

Though there was much talk about reaching returned soldiers and men, most interwar attempts to project a masculine Jesus were actually directed at youth. This partly reflected intense interest in children during the first half of the twentieth century, and especially after World War One, when provision for them formed a central focus of social policy. However, the churches had particular incentives. Perceptions of a 'boy problem' and the loss of older boys from religious association meant that reaching

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<sup>170</sup> NZMT, 27 July 1929, pp.8-9.

<sup>171</sup> John Tosh, 'The Old Adam and the New Man: Emerging Themes in the History of English Masculinities, 1750-1850', in Hitchcock and Cohen (eds), p.222; also Mark Girouard, *The Return to Camelot: Chivalry and the English Gentleman*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981.

<sup>172</sup> Sean Gill, 'Ecce Homo: Representations of Christ as the Model of Masculinity in Victorian Art and Lives of Jesus', in Bradstock et. al. (eds), p.170.

them was an important strategy for strengthening men's religion generally.<sup>173</sup> These concerns were longstanding, but sharpened after the war.

Fears about the feminine threat to male religiosity were reflected in debates about portrayals of Jesus for children. The tendency to portray Jesus in feminine terms had been observed previously, but received much more regular attention during the interwar years. Commentators argued that the damage to men was done early by exposure to feminised images of Jesus in childhood. These created misperceptions in boys' minds that were carried into adulthood, predisposing them against religion. Thus, the young men of Dunedin's YMCA were challenged whether they really knew Jesus at all, since 'all the pictures ever drawn misrepresent Him. They have made Him out a weakling, a woman's features with beard...' In fact, Jesus was a man's man, with 'muscles of iron, made strong by many years of labour and a spirit that never once knew fear'.<sup>174</sup>

Early in 1933, the *New Zealand Methodist Times* endeavoured to advance the ideal of 'Christ as Hero' for youth.<sup>175</sup> It printed a fictional exchange between a minister's wife and a Mrs Maxwell whose boys were more interested in Scouts and Rovers than churchgoing. The minister's wife expressed sadness at such 'weakening loyalty to Christ', and attempted to interpret the problem. Surely Christ ought to appeal especially to boys since 'He was a young man Himself and withal a young man of great courage and force of character'. This being so, the obvious remedy was to present Christ as the hero he was: 'Jesus versus the world, fighting the greatest of all battles, and moreover a losing battle, yet never giving in'. Adventurous boys would be attracted because 'the battle isn't by any means over.... We should explain to our boys that Christ no longer fights alone; He needs soldiers who will dare to stand and fight for His principles in the word. God's will cannot be achieved without the help of young men. When they realise this surely many who are indifferent now will be keen to serve in the army of Christ?' A little less 'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild' and the boy problem would be solved.

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<sup>173</sup> NZMT, 3 February 1923, p.4.

<sup>174</sup> *Dunedin Manhood*, October 1935, p.1, citing Bruce Barton.

<sup>175</sup> NZMT, 27 May 1933, p.9.

A short time later the same paper covered a prominent debate in England concerning religious art for children. The controversy arose when several leading educationalists sent a letter to *The Times* arguing that children were exposed to too many sentimental and effeminate representations of Jesus. The writers contended that 'One glimpse of a picture of Christ which suggests that He was effeminate or weak or merely depressed may easily destroy a living interest in Him, and many discourses on the real manhood of our Lord will not restore it'. It called on teachers to use pictures that would 'win the hearts of the young', and artists to remedy the situation.<sup>176</sup> Consequently, from 14 to 17 March 1934, the Council of Christian Education in Britain organised an opportunity for religious publishing houses to exhibit their art in Euston Road, London. Each day religious leaders and educationalists were invited to speak giving their opinions of the work.

The London exhibition of 1934 concluded with participants selecting their preferred portraits from the images available. The overall favourite was Harold Copping's 'The Saviour of Men', and his art was hailed as a triumph of virility and masculinity.<sup>177</sup> Copping was well known in New Zealand through various religious portraits and especially the Copping Bible – an illustrated edition of the Authorised Version published by the Religious Tract Society.<sup>178</sup> This commendation only enhanced his reputation.

### ***Youth Movements***

Much of the attention focused on boys during the years of transition to independent adulthood, since this was identified as the critical period of 'leakage'. As has been previously noted, late childhood was also the stage when children were considered developmentally most ready for conversion. Emphasis on converting older children had been an important strategy since well before the war. Thus, when the Salvation

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<sup>176</sup> The background to the debate, the original letter published on 18 February 1933, and the addresses given at the exhibition were eventually reproduced in Council of Christian Education (ed.), *Pictures of Jesus for Children: Addresses by Eight Leading Educationists*, London: Religious Tract Society, 1935.

<sup>177</sup> NZMT, 9 June 1934, p.1; Council of Christian Education (ed.), pp.14-18, 26, 29.

<sup>178</sup> Copies were widely distributed, and had already been recommended as an essential Sunday School supply. 'The Saviour of Men' did not feature in the Copping Bible. See, *Sunday School Teachers' Guide*, p.12.

Army prepared for an 'Extension Campaign' in 1911, it argued that it had a particular duty to 'go after the boys and girls just on the threshold of manhood and womanhood'. It especially sought the young men, among whom undeniably large percentages were 'without proper religious training'.<sup>179</sup>

Programmes for youth were not solely focused on conversion, but also more broadly on socialisation. Mutual Improvement Societies, Young Men's Institutes and Literary Societies were characteristic nineteenth-century initiatives. By the end of the nineteenth century, churches were increasingly responding to contemporary interest in physical culture by incorporating it into their programmes.<sup>180</sup> Endeavours along these lines occasionally proved successful. In 1899, the Anglican parish of St Mark's in Remuera reported a Confirmation service where 28 male and 12 female candidates were presented. The relatively large number of males in this group was attributed to the 'zeal and energy' of H.D.A. Major, at that time curate in the parish, and the interest he had shown in the parish's young men. This included conducting mid-week gymnastic classes for boys, in addition to more obviously religious pursuits.<sup>181</sup>

The YMCAs and the Bible Class movement were becoming the most prominent and influential forms of church provision for youth by the beginning of the twentieth century. Indeed, the latter was often fêted as an 'indigenous' New Zealand contribution to the worldwide Church.<sup>182</sup> Bible Classes were denominationally based, and promoted a 'four-square' programme that combined social, intellectual, physical and spiritual activities. The non-denominational YMCAs espoused a similar ideology.<sup>183</sup> At points the possibility of merging the two movements was raised. However, both were retained in order to occupy 'the whole field'; the Bible Class would cater for young men within the churches and the YMCA those outside.<sup>184</sup> Their increasingly diverse programmes, and emphasis on physicality and adventure, reflected shifting perceptions of young people's needs.

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<sup>179</sup> *War Cry*, 4 March 1911, p.5.

<sup>180</sup> On the physical culture movement, see Daley, *Leisure and Pleasure*.

<sup>181</sup> *Church Gazette*, January 1899, p.7.

<sup>182</sup> For example, W. Donnelly, *Heritage of Methodist Youth*, Wellington: New Zealand Methodist Youth Department, 1954, p.8.

<sup>183</sup> For example, *Dunedin Manhood*, March 1935, p.5.

<sup>184</sup> *Young Men's Magazine*, October 1907, pp.397-98.

Youth organisations grew rapidly in the interwar years, including uniformed movements where notions of martial manhood were widely promulgated. School cadets increased in popularity as did the Scout movement. The Boys' Brigade had been established in New Zealand just eight years after its foundation in Glasgow but was largely defunct by World War One. According to Michael Hoare, the movement was reinvigorated in the 1920s and 1930s. Its second national camp in 1939-40 was attended by 950 boys.<sup>185</sup>

However, the Bible Class and the YMCA remained the most important religious organisations. Bible Classes had been established in the leading denominations prior to World War One, but were particularly strong in the Presbyterian and Methodist churches. The Presbyterian Bible Class was the largest, but its men's section was severely impacted by the war.<sup>186</sup> Efforts to re-energise it led to the creation of a new publication, *Four Square*, which replaced an unpopular supplement in the *Outlook* in November 1920. With a subtitle proclaiming 'Be Strong and Show Thyself a Man', the magazine gave the movement a voice in advancing its work among young men.<sup>187</sup> The YMCA also expanded during this time. The organisation had extensive involvement with the troops during World War One and there were hopes wartime work could be extended by presenting religion 'in a very primitive and naked form' to 'those who have not yet come into vital contact with it'.<sup>188</sup> Both the YMCA and the Bible Class movement were conversion-oriented, and blended devotion to Jesus with promotion of manly Christianity. In the post-war years this was often expressed in terms of soldierly heroism and manly character. The values of muscular Christianity persisted but were modified by the cult of personality.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Michael Edward Hoare, "'Training in Manliness": Some Historical and Contemporary Participants' Perspectives on Boys' Brigade Work in an Australian and a New Zealand Setting', Dip Ed Thesis, Massey University, 1979, p.8.

<sup>186</sup> Women's membership rose from 2,528 in 1913 to 4,738 in 1918, while men's membership declined from 7,208 to 5,380 during the same period. Statistics are taken from *PGA*, cited in Maureen Garing, 'Four Square for Christ. The Presbyterian Bible Class Movement, 1902-1971: Its Background, Its Rise, Its Influence and Its Decline', MA Thesis in Religious Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, 1985, pp.220-24.

<sup>187</sup> *Four Square*, November 1920, p.3.

<sup>188</sup> *CC*, November 1919, pp.163-64.

<sup>189</sup> On muscular Christianity in New Zealand, see J.A. Mangan and Colm Hickey, 'A Pioneer of the Proletariat: Herbert Milnes and the Games Cult in New Zealand', in John Nauright and J.A.

In 1921, the Rev. R.M. Ryburn was appointed Director of Youth Work for the Presbyterian Church. Speaking at his 'Inauguration' the Rev. S.W. Currie, then Moderator of the General Assembly, delivered an address that was described in *Four Square* as a 'masterpiece' that displayed 'the ideals and basic principles' upon which the Bible Class Movement was built. For Currie, the Bible Class stood for 'an all-round manhood'. By this he meant the inculcation of 'right thinking and physical fitness; interest in the welfare of others, for we are social beings, and, finally, the development of their spiritual nature'.<sup>190</sup> This was the four-square gospel inspired by Luke 2.52.

According to Currie, Jesus provided the link between 'all-round manhood' and Christian faith. Being an all-round man himself, Jesus would have approved of the Bible Classes wide-ranging pursuits: 'Jesus was interested in all phases of life, and we believe that to-day He would be interested in the same way. The straight-forward business dealing; the self-denial and discipline of the athletic field; the innocent pleasures of our socials, and the mental training in our classes, are quite consistent with our major aim of the training of the soul.' Bible Class work was to be modelled on Jesus' life because of the paramount duty to serve him. If men were reluctant to serve, they must have misapprehended Jesus' true qualities. Jesus' manly attributes, especially his courage and idealism, were thought to be particularly appealing:

Jesus Christ as "the man of sorrows" may not appeal to us; but we see the man of courage, the man of great ideals, combining every characteristic that appeals to young manhood. In His death, He showed supreme self-sacrifice and courage, so that His claim to Leadership must appeal to every type of young manhood, and His Divine claim is easily understood.

In this approach, accepting Jesus' divinity remained essential to Christian identity. However, faith in his divine person was simplified by removing the emphasis on intellectual and cognitive aspects of doctrine. The doctrine of Jesus' divinity remained,

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Mangan (eds), *Sport in Australasian Society: Past and Present*, London: Frank Cass, 2000, pp.31-48; Justine Smith, "'Dunedin Manhood: Official Organ of the Dunedin YMCA". The "Manufacturing" of Christian Men in Dunedin, 1933-1938', BA Hons Thesis in History, University of Otago, 1999; R. Adin, 'T.K. Sidey: A Good Christian Gentleman. A Study of Christian Masculinity in New Zealand', BA Hons Dissertation in History, University of Otago, 2001; K. O'Connell, "'Be Strong and Show Thyself a Man": Christian Masculinity in Southern Dunedin, 1885-1925', BA Hons Dissertation in History, University of Otago, 2001.

<sup>190</sup> *Four Square*, May 1921, p.93.

but was proven through his lofty ideals, his embodiment of manliness and the appeal of his personality.

This manly Christianity was clearly shaped by World War One. Christian soldiers were held up as examples of Christ-like Christianity, and martial imagery was readily exploited. The image of Jesus as a 'manly man' frequently used the language of battle. As one minister explained, 'During the late war we were gratified at the splendid response of our young manhood to the call of duty. I feel that if our young people could be inspired with the selfsame sort of call, but as a call from Christ, they would nobly respond. The call of Christ is a call to war'.<sup>191</sup> Christianity was a battle, with Jesus Christ in command.

One of the most explicit attempts to address the issue came from the Rev. H. Clark. In a homily to the young men of the Presbyterian Bible Class movement he explicated the manliness of Christ.<sup>192</sup> Framing his topic, Clark noted the many explanations proposed to explain the lack of men in the churches – ranging from dull services and out-of-date theology to the lack of socialistic programme. More important, he claimed, was the sense that ideals of manhood and the Christian life were somehow in opposition. The manly Jesus was Clark's riposte to the 'misconception' that following Christ would 'draw the sap of their manhood'. Clark argued that the churches had traditionally communicated the gentle aspect of manliness to the detriment of other qualities. Gentleness was discernible in Jesus, but only as the lily adorning the pillar. His masculinity was composed of sterner stuff. The primary definition of manliness was bravery. On that score, Jesus was unimpeachable. His disciples had distinguished themselves on account of their bravery, and only a manly leader could only have inspired this. With this credential in place, Clark addressed hypothetical kiwi males' definitions of the 'basic element of manhood', exalting Jesus as the supreme manifestation of each.

Was manhood a question of 'physical courage'? The notion had merit, for cowardice was universally averred. But courage could mean self assertion, or the courage of self-sacrifice shown by a British soldier at the Battle of the Coa in the

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<sup>191</sup> CC, October 1923, p.158.

<sup>192</sup> *Outlook*, 5 March 1923, pp.3-4.

Peninsular War. The latter was the greater form, and was the courage Jesus exemplified. Perhaps 'moral courage', the capacity to live firm in one's own convictions, provided a better definition? This was even more meritorious since war had 'tested the moral courage of every New Zealand soldier'. Here too, 'Jesus Christ stood firm', as the temple incident and his rebukes to 'canting Pharisees and sophist Sadducees' demonstrated. But for Clark, the greatest attribute was 'fidelity and loyalty to the truth' since 'No liar can be a man'. Once again, Jesus was pre-eminent. His success was measurable in his refusal to 'trim and pare and conciliate', and in his capacity to 'be true to himself. How many of us can say that we have been true to ourselves?'

The climax of Clark's exposition turned the question of unmanliness on its head: 'An unmanly Christ! Unworthy of our allegiance is He? The fact is it is the want of real manliness in us and all who condemn Him, lack of real courage, moral and physical, lack of absolute loyalty to the truth that keeps us from His side and the battle He bids us fight'.<sup>193</sup> Jesus' manhood was shown in his ultimate manifestation of military virtues – physical prowess, moral courage, noble and unswerving commitment to truth. The militant Christ deserved allegiance in the call to 'fight'. Non-alignment with Jesus was tantamount to rejection of true manliness. To aver identification with the 'Man's Man' was the way of cowardice, disloyalty and a weak will. It was the path of the 'shirker'.

Similar notions circulated within the YMCA. The concept of Christianity as a 'fight' was important, though notions of chivalry and crusade were less common than in other more churchly contexts. In principle, the notion of a balanced life was essential. In practice, physicality and robust religion were prioritised in the pursuit of self-improvement and personal responsibility. The YMCA had invested heavily in gymnasiums and organised programmes for physical exertion. In the interwar years, this coalesced with the continuing popularity of eugenic ideas and attempts to enhance national health and fitness. For one young devotee, the ideals of the YMCA could be easily summarised: 'Young, Muscles, Christian, Achievement of being a "real man."<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> *Outlook*, 5 March 1923, p.4.

<sup>194</sup> *Wellington Manhood*, June 1934, p.2.

Speaking and writing for the YMCA, Ormond Burton projected the principal soldierly values as characteristics of followers of Jesus: 'The bravest, the most loyal, the truest, the faithful ones and the steadfast ones have followed Him. The gentlest, the tenderest, the most saintly and beautiful souls have been at His feet and in His name have ministered to the weak, and the helpless, and those ready to die'.<sup>195</sup> Jesus evoked bravery, but also more tender ideals. True manliness required discipline and self-sacrifice, though in following the 'Master of Men' the connotations had to be adjusted: 'any man who would follow the Master must take on himself the three-fold vows of Poverty, Obedience and Purity.... Men real men – who count their lives nothing that they may win Christ are the only ones needed'.<sup>196</sup>

The ideal of brotherhood was also important. Burton's *The Stuff of Manhood* was essentially a collection of examples of courage, derived largely from war.<sup>197</sup> According to this, true manhood was characterised by heroism and bravery. Ormond's book confirmed New Zealanders' high opinions about the manhood of their troops, yet his examples were really intended to explain the more fundamental idea of manhood as brotherhood. For many soldiers, the lesson of camaraderie and the bond between 'strangers' provided one of the war's enduring legacies. Thus, throughout the interwar years, young men of the YMCA were urged to 'leave room for Christ in the business, political, and economical life of the world', and pursue the brotherhood ideal.<sup>198</sup>

Proclamations of Jesus' masculinity for youth often required substantial reinterpretation of commonly held ideas. This was evident in relation to the issue of strength. Responding to the notion that Christianity was for weaklings, Lilian Pearce extolled the strength of Jesus in poetry.<sup>199</sup> In the first instance, Jesus was celebrated as a vigorous adventurer-pioneer who relished the physicality of rural outdoors activity. He was 'no weakling' when he 'climbed the hilly slopes of Galilee...'. Yet, wandering the hills constituted a limited part of Jesus' known life and scarcely justified calls for whole-hearted devotion to him. Hence more traditional virtues were appealed to, and

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<sup>195</sup> Ormond Burton, *The Master of Men*, Wellington: YMCA, n.d., p.12.

<sup>196</sup> Burton, *Master*, p.21.

<sup>197</sup> Ormond Burton, *The Stuff of Manhood*, Auckland: Unity Press, 1920.

<sup>198</sup> For example, *Wellington Manhood*, February 1934, p.1

<sup>199</sup> *Four Square*, September 1921, p.174.

reinterpreted within a framework of masculine strength. Thus, Jesus' mercy became evidence of his strength:

And just because You were so strong  
and manful  
You stooped to lift the lowliest to their feet;  
Your strength it was that helped them  
to stand upright...

The atonement remained, but perceptions of helplessness were dismissed. Jesus' premature death was not weakness. Rather, it ensured that neither 'pallid sickness' nor 'decay' ever sapped his masculine strength. That his perfect manhood was given in an act of self-sacrifice was itself the measure of his strength:

And at the end in all Your fullest  
manhood  
You gave Your life when at its  
highest crest;  
Your strength, Your human life in all  
its richness,  
Upon the cross You gave us of  
Your best.

### ***Manliness, Character and Personality***

Constructions of Christian manliness provide a good context for testing Warren Susman's suggestion that the Victorian 'culture of character' was displaced by 'the culture of personality' during the early twentieth century.<sup>200</sup> Notions of personality were certainly a fundamental ingredient in these images. However, the development of character remained a hallowed hallmark of Christian masculinity. Justine Smith has argued that the YMCA even idealised the conditions of the Depression as a context for character building and general masculine development.<sup>201</sup> Well into the 1930s, advertising for the Wellington YMCA presented the organisation as a place for character development: 'Men in the Making... YMCA specialises on Character Building!'<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>200</sup> Susman, pp.271-85.

<sup>201</sup> Smith, 'Dunedin Manhood', p.48.

<sup>202</sup> YMCA (Wellington Branch), Programmes of Activities, 1932-42, MS-Group-0662, MSY-2928, ATL.

Jesus was considered the pre-eminent model of manly character, a quality that was considered an achievement as much as a status. Writing in 1906, the Rev. H.H. Driver of Dunedin reflected that the Apostle Paul's call to 'build up one another's character' was a call to construct an 'enduring temple of manhood'. Thus, cultivation of character was the entire purpose of life and was worth more than doctrinal soundness. It was an 'advancement from infancy to manhood' that would continue 'until we reach the measure of the stature of Jesus Christ'. The ministries of the Church and the character of its members were meant to conform to Christ's pattern: 'The purpose of all the ministries of the church of God is the ennoblement of our manhood, and, if the highest type of manhood is not found among these who bear the name of Christ, they have sadly misunderstood and misrepresented their Master'.<sup>203</sup>

Though Driver never clarified its meaning, 'character' clearly concerned morality and was able to be formed through education. The models used in nineteenth-century organisations for men were shaped around personal devotion and self-improvement. Later movements continued to encourage character formation. However, they developed in a context in which the body and notions of the social were prominent. These emphases were evident in programmes that incorporated social and physical pursuits. Nevertheless, manliness and character remained intrinsically linked in the Bible Class and YMCA ideologies. As one early issue of *Four Square* expressed succinctly, 'The aim of our Bible Class Movement is the complete development of the manly character'.<sup>204</sup> Jesus' example of self-sacrifice suggested that this character would be developed for and by service. Currie's 'masterpiece' asserted that the aim of the Bible Class was 'character building', and prescribed the avenues where the necessary service would be expressed. Young men of character would become leaders of classes, Sunday School teachers, managers and elders, ministers or missionaries. The churches' future depended on it.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> *The Young Men's Magazine*, January 1906, p.77.

<sup>204</sup> *Four Square*, March 1921, p.56.

<sup>205</sup> *Four Square*, May 1921, p.93.

Continued concerns about 'anarchy' and 'unrest' helped encourage a focus on character formation in the post-war period.<sup>206</sup> Writing in the second issue of *Four Square*, D.G. Wilson drew attention to the problem:

The Great War came near to destroying civilisation, and the flames it set alight are not yet wholly extinguished. Bolshevism, a direct result of the spirit that brought about the war, is still pouring the deadly taint of its poison into the very blood of civilisation. The resulting social and industrial discontent visible in every land is still a menace to the social order of the race.<sup>207</sup>

It remained for the Bible Class to produce 'men, real Christian, all-round, red-blooded men to live down this spirit in this our own little country'. Notions of character, citizenship, and social and moral order were closely allied.<sup>208</sup>

In a climate of greater frankness about sexual matters, personal morality was also a concern. Victor French was a prominent Bible Class leader in the years following World War One. A popular Travelling Secretary, French had a reputation for 'Quiet, winsome effective heroism' that was enhanced by stories of his wartime valour.<sup>209</sup> While French promoted military heroism and manliness, he frequently enlisted those concepts in the cause of social purity. Thus, the moral needs of post-war society were often compared with the exigencies of war. According to French, Christ's call to men was 'to battle for clean standards in their country's life'.<sup>210</sup> Such purity was needed because impurity was akin to emasculation: 'Nothing enfeebles manhood more than sin. Every time you commit a sin it makes you less a man, in your own sight and in God's.' By contrast, the real man was the one who, trusting the example and power of Christ, stood against the 'vile contagion' of impurity, 'hating all uncleanness, shrinking from every spot, thinking pure thoughts, forging strong friendships'.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> For example, Lewis A. Barnes, *Oh How I Love Thy Law: Reflections on the Life and Teaching of T. H. Sprott D.D. Vicar of St. Paul's Wellington 1892-1911, Bishop of Wellington 1911-1936*, Hamilton: John Walker Publishers, 1985, p.34.

<sup>207</sup> *Four Square*, December 1920, p.19.

<sup>208</sup> One YMCA branch that promoted itself as a character training organisation displayed photos of its work under the title, 'Christian Citizenship Training'. See YMCA (Wellington Branch), Programme of Activities, 1932-42.

<sup>209</sup> *Four Square*, April 1923, p.266; *Four Square*, June 1923, pp.327-28.

<sup>210</sup> *Four Square*, April 1923, p.280.

<sup>211</sup> *Four Square*, October 1923, p.417.

The emphasis on character formation was not inimical to the culture of personality. Indeed, the two were often allied.<sup>212</sup> For writers like Fosdick, Jesus' personality led to interest in 'His basic principles and His qualities of character'.<sup>213</sup> Yet, the emphasis also led in other directions. During the interwar years, New Zealand YMCA leaders often related the personality of Jesus to a spirit of adventure. Len J. Greenberg was General Secretary of the YMCA, and Honorary Secretary of the Wellington Youth Council at the time of the 'Youth for Youth' campaign in 1932. This campaign had a very high profile and culminated in a 'Procession of Witness' in which 2,700 young participants marched to a 5,000-strong rally at the Wellington Town Hall.<sup>214</sup> For Greenberg, the 'real Jesus' was the essence of Christianity, and the key to engaging young people – not the funereal religious portrait, but the depiction one might find in a modern 'life of Christ'.<sup>215</sup> In Jesus, Christian youth would find a man to challenge their life, stir their conscience and summon their devotion. This would be found in the 'adventure of doing good' alongside Jesus as the 'silent but ever-present Companion along the way'. By reaching out to non-churchgoers, Christian youth could recapture 'some of the thrill and venturesomeness of those lusty young Galileans who, in the face of tremendous odds... grouped themselves around Jesus, and with great heroism pioneered the Christian enterprise'.<sup>216</sup> Similarly, Greenberg urged 'enquirers' to focus their religious quest in a single question: 'What do you see in Christ?... Will you start with that, follow that as far as it carries you, and then go on as you see more? Interpose no objections based on your disbelief in this theological theory or that. Start where you are, and follow what you do see. Christianity is an adventure'.

Interest in personality provided a way to marry social and evangelistic concerns. At this time, the YMCA combined an active social programme with evangelistic enterprise. Jesus was invoked constantly in each of those settings. One of

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<sup>212</sup> cf. Mathew Thomson, *Psychological Subjects: Identity, Culture, and Health in Twentieth-Century Britain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006, pp.42-45.

<sup>213</sup> Fosdick, *Manhood*, p.7.

<sup>214</sup> See the report of this event in *Four Square*, 11 October 1932, p.187.

<sup>215</sup> Len J. Greenberg, *Personal Adventuring For Christ: A Statement of the Principles of Youth Evangelism, With Particular Reference to the Conditions Affecting Young People To-Day*, Wellington: Youth Committee, N.Z. Council of Religious Education, 1934, p.39.

<sup>216</sup> See Len J. Greenberg, *The Great Adventure*, Wellington: Wright and Carman, 1932.

the YMCAs primary aims was 'To bring young men to Jesus Christ'.<sup>217</sup> As such, boys were expected to spend part of their time 'studying the life of Jesus Christ and the Truths of the Bible'.<sup>218</sup> Personality provided the method and the message. Members were encouraged to be active in personal evangelism, which Greenberg described as 'overflowing of consecrated personality'. The focus of this work was to introduce not 'a code of conduct, nor a schedule of beliefs, but a programme for their lives, inspired and directed by the living Personality of Christ'. This entailed drawing particular attention to only the most vital attributes. For it was the love, victory and conquering spirit of Jesus, rather than his wounds, that would inspire legions of young men to live heroically for God.<sup>219</sup> However, evangelism and social activism were closely allied. Consequently, Jesus' personality was touted as the answer to social problems as well as personal salvation. As one piece in *Dunedin Manhood* declared, 'Turn to Jesus – the belief is steadily gaining ground that in His message and Personality are unexplored resources of light and power, and the solution of many of our present-day problems'.<sup>220</sup>

The combination of evangelistic and social concern also appealed to groups like the SCM, whose purpose was described as 'presenting Jesus Christ as the supreme manifestation of God, and of true manhood, and the Saviour of the world'.<sup>221</sup> Representation of Jesus as a Great Personality asserted that he, and therefore religion, was relevant. It was also a statement of significance. Personality betokened power, influence and the capacity to persuade. It linked with heroic affirmations of the power of the individual to effect change, which contradicted accusations that religion was effete, impotent or weak. As The Great Personality, Jesus epitomised qualities of practical action in which his followers might share.

The manly Jesus was primarily constructed to address concerns about the religiosity of youth, 'working men' and returned servicemen. Representations rested on a range of assumptions about masculinity – both of befitting Christian manliness, and the forms

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<sup>217</sup> *Dunedin Manhood*, September 1933, p.1.

<sup>218</sup> *Dunedin Manhood*, April 1934, p.6.

<sup>219</sup> Greenberg, *Personal Adventuring*, pp.7, 10, 17, 40.

<sup>220</sup> *Dunedin Manhood*, June 1934, p.1.

<sup>221</sup> *Australasian Intercollegian*, 1 June 1921, p.91.

to which 'non-religious' men were thought to aspire. Attempts to present a more masculine Jesus aimed to utilise the more appealing aspects of Jesus-centred Christianity in order to win men to religion. Espousing a manly Jesus affirmed men's experiences. Focus on Jesus' life rather than his death was supposed to make religion seem more adventurous and inspire heroic living. It also made religion seem simpler, and appealingly non-sectarian and non-theological. That C.G. Scrimgeour employed motifs of Jesus' manliness so freely suggests that these were probably attractive to some men.<sup>222</sup> By the same token, on this evidence the ideas did not necessarily lead to greater participation in established forms of organised religion.

Indeed, the project was fraught with difficulties, not least due to the tendency to cast masculinity in heroic terms. In the first instance, a heroic Jesus could be considered childish and reinforce the perception that Jesus and religion were primarily for children. Developmental ideas were providing an ideology in which hero worship was linked scientifically with the needs and capabilities of older children. Employing such ideas among young men risked infantilising religion by extending adolescence. Moreover, there was an additional danger after World War One. For many New Zealanders that conflict represented the failure of hero worship, since so many young men had died pursuing it.<sup>223</sup>

As with the children's Jesus, correlation of a manly Jesus with ideal manhood risked promoting degree Christology. The heroic ideal was particularly susceptible to this since the heroic Jesus was often celebrated as the 'supreme' example of every conceivable manly virtue.<sup>224</sup> These often simply reiterated prevailing cultural ideals. Yet, Jesus-centred religion was supposed to make Jesus the source of authority, not merely a reflection of cultural values. There was also the danger that men's actual ideals could be easily misread. For example, militant expressions of manliness sat somewhat uneasily alongside the pacifism and internationalism that also influenced

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<sup>222</sup> *Observer*, 15 February 1934, cited in Reid, 'Church and State', p.142; *Hello Everybody*, 2, 1935, p.6. See Chapter Two above.

<sup>223</sup> Phillips, Boyack and Malone (eds), pp.257-58.

<sup>224</sup> For example, G.M. McKenzie, *Twelve Splendid Men*, Wellington: N.Z. Student Christian Movement, 1934.

religious youth movements during this period. Moreover, a soldierly Jesus risked underestimating returnees' disaffection with many aspects of military life and values.

There were also ambivalences in relation to other Christian priorities. Despite the emphasis on robust religion by some evangelicals, others doubted whether staunch masculinity could be reconciled with spiritual regeneration. Popular revivalist piety continued to encourage sentimentality and emotion that could be regarded as suspiciously feminine. Thus, one minister challenged delegates at a Baptist Young Men's Bible Class camp at Maungatawhiri saying, 'Look here. Maybe you fellows think that we were 'sissies' to break down and cry. Mark my words – some of you who think that you are big he-men will be in tears before to-night is out, for I am convinced that revival will sweep this camp as well'. The meeting finished with songs that included one of the Sankey corpus, 'Pass me not, O gentle Saviour'.<sup>225</sup>

For all the emphasis on strength, virility and personality, moral manliness and character formation remained important priorities. Indeed, even heroism itself was often interpreted within an essentially moral framework. It was frequently used as a kind of shorthand for having the courage of one's conviction, and pursuit of Christian moral agendas. In some ways the notion of character was gender neutral. Moral manliness was not primarily conceived in ideological opposition to femininity, but involved imitation of Jesus through combining the virtues of both sexes.<sup>226</sup> This 'sexless' quality could give the impression that manly Christian character remained essentially 'feminine', especially when it sought to subvert supposed masculine values of strength and prowess by reinvesting them with new meaning.

The manly Jesus was fundamentally instrumentalist and utilitarian. He represented an attempt to reach men who were expected to be resistant to organised religion. The persistence of notions of character, self-discipline, and decency highlights a high degree of consensus concerning the nature of Christian masculinity. There were concessions to other forms, but also considerable continuities between the manly Jesus and his predecessors. This suggested that the Jesus of heroic masculinity was in many

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<sup>225</sup> Cited in Orr, pp.31-32.

<sup>226</sup> Vance, p.1.

ways a new fashion that supported much older priorities.<sup>227</sup> It was a presentation technique rather than a reinterpretation. The move entailed some striking paradoxes. In some senses the manly Jesus was a popularising figure. Yet, as a figure constructed from evangelistic intentions he subverted popular notions. Perhaps his most important function was as a source of confidence for religious men.

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<sup>227</sup> cf. Jeremy Gregory, *'Homo Religiosus'*, pp.85-110.

# CONCLUSION

By the late twentieth century, Jesus still seemed to have a high profile in New Zealand religion. Widely publicised Jesus marches in 1972 provided one example of his prominence,<sup>1</sup> while the growth of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity was also accompanied by a more explicit devotional emphasis on Jesus. One hundred years after *In His Steps* first appeared, Charles Sheldon's question 'what would Jesus do?' was back in vogue, only remarketed for a new generation as WWJD with matching bracelets and assorted paraphernalia. While Sheldon's Jesus had been invoked on behalf of the social gospel, this late twentieth-century personality was overwhelmingly associated with evangelical forms of Christianity.

In some ways, these later representations of Jesus built on earlier patterns. The Jesus of late twentieth-century evangelical religiosity was often highly personalised, and cohered with a tendency to downplay doctrine and theology. Despite these commonalities, however, there were also substantial differences. Most significantly, the early twentieth-century emphasis on Jesus was not simply indicative of an evangelicalisation of religion. Indeed, while it remained an important influence, most commentators rightly note that evangelicalism was fracturing and its influence waning rather than increasing at this time.<sup>2</sup> Jesus-centred religiosity was primarily shaped by a preoccupation with religion and its audiences. In particular, the churches embraced Jesus as a means for navigating their way through the social and cultural changes of the age. He was a tool for addressing the challenges of modernity in a mature colonial society.

As a religious idea and ideal, Jesus became more attractive within a particular context. Broad longer-term influences like the rise of historical consciousness, modern science, Romanticism and ideals of personality contributed to a cultural emphasis on historicity and individuality. Making the humanity of Jesus more prominent clearly accorded with these priorities. For New Zealanders, peculiarly colonial experiences of

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<sup>1</sup> See Trevor Shaw, *The Jesus Marches*, Auckland: Challenge, 1972.

<sup>2</sup> Matheson, in Emilsen and Emilsen (eds), pp.255-71; and less explicitly Ian Breward, *A History of the Churches in Australasia*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, pp.256-58.

social change were compounded with other forms of upheaval associated with modernisation. Together with war and economic fluctuation, these altered the context in which religion operated. These changes upset the basis of connection with the community, and contributed to a sense that the churches' traditional influence was being eroded. In response, they increasingly viewed secularity, rather than rival denominations, as the leading threat to religion. Indeed, the secular world became the primary target of a great deal of Christian discourse. Amidst these concerns, Jesus functioned as a symbol of all that was good in humanity and in religion. He represented the exemplary life, and the basis of morality that was true religion's gift to society. He was also increasingly identified as the essence of religion, and the focal point of religious sentiment and argumentation.

Broadly speaking, revivalism and the social gospel were two of the key international religious responses to the challenges of modernity. Both streams were also very influential in New Zealand, and shared important characteristics. Significantly, each approach made Jesus central to their discourse of religion. In these contexts, appeal to Jesus provided a language of change and of ideals that was more instrumental than doctrinal in orientation. Jesus language built upon assumptions of a shared Christian identity within society, whilst nonetheless summoning the community to greater religious commitment. It was also used to reshape religion to make it more attractive and meaningful in a rapidly changing environment. Crucially, personality-inspired Jesus language in the first half of the twentieth century was not primarily one of inner devotion, nor of liturgy or formal religious occasions. These forms of spirituality came much later with the shift to a less formal society, and alongside influences like the Charismatic movement. Earlier Jesus-centredness refashioned religion in order to enliven it and extend its influence. In this sense, it was focused on mission.

Two particular aspects of Jesus' attractiveness warrant comment here. First, whether conceptualised in terms of personality or not, the focus on Jesus seemed to make religion simpler. Peter Matheson has argued that the 'utopian and bluntly material ambitions of ordinary folk' created a distinctive religious landscape in New

Zealand.<sup>3</sup> Distaste for creeds and suspicion about theology arguably reflected these ambitions. They were expressive of harmonising tendencies within New Zealand society that Jesus seemed to support. As a moral example and source of authority, he circumvented divisive theological and denominational differences. The great historical doctrinal cleavages associated with Arminianism, Lutheranism and Calvinism continued, but tended to be downplayed rather than accentuated – partly out of a desire to avoid replicating Old World divisions. Instead, Jesus was related to ideals of practicality. Criticisms of 'Churchianity' were multivalent, but suggested that religion was about action rather than association, and should be practiced with a minimum of pretension. The religion of Jesus was one of essences. It required no theological qualifications, and could be practiced by all and sundry. Significantly, this simplification of religion was not only fostered by populist visions, but also by Christian leaders who actually did possess theological qualifications.

The second of Jesus' leading assets was his malleability. One feature of the representations discussed in this study is their use for strikingly different ends. Jesus was invoked in a wide range of contexts, and constructed according to the needs of the situation. Thus, he was at once compassionate and courageous, assertive and tender, a socialist and a capitalist, a revolutionary and a loyalist, a pacifist and a military hero, a prohibitionist and a supporter of the liberty of the individual. Moreover, Jesus appeared in support of markedly differing religious visions and competing theological agendas. However, as the debates about social issues highlighted, Jesus could be widely invoked though often to very little effect. This suggests that while Jesus became more central to discourses of Protestant religiosity, in some ways he did not matter much at all. As the universal man, Jesus was almost too malleable to provide an authoritative basis for anything distinctive or specific. Moreover, formulations of his identity were often remarkably similar to ideals and practices that were generated from elsewhere.

On the other hand, that Jesus was invoked in such diverse ways and contexts indicates something about the permeation of religious ideals and values. It highlights that religious modes of argument remained attractive. Jesus' malleability suggests that

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<sup>3</sup> Matheson, in Emilsen & Emilsen (eds), p.260.

religion penetrated the fabric of New Zealand society more extensively than institutional markers like rates of church attendance might imply. In the general historiography, lower rates of churchgoing have often been taken to reflect the limitations of religious commitment among New Zealanders.<sup>4</sup> By contrast, the pervasiveness of Jesus language tends against assumptions that religion was a minor and increasingly marginal influence. Configurations might change, but religion continued to have an important function, especially in processes of attitude formation. This finding generally supports Melanie Nolan's argument that religion was a significant factor in the country's working-class culture. As her study of the McCullough clan demonstrates, for some, these religious connections were expressed in ongoing participation in religious institutions. For others, religious modes of thought and ideals were more formative influences that endured even as formal commitments waned.<sup>5</sup>

In the conclusion to his survey of images of Jesus 'through the centuries', Jaroslav Pelikan observed that reverence for Jesus grew as respect for the organised church declined.<sup>6</sup> To some extent, this process was also evident in New Zealand. Jesus was increasingly differentiated from organised religion as the churches' standing in the community diminished. Within the churches, declining respect for religion could make Jesus seem all the more attractive. In the community at large, the pattern was perhaps more one in which respect for Jesus displaced that for religious institutions. In other words, respect for Jesus was not always equivalent to reverence or devotion. Nor did invocation of him always indicate religiosity.

Yet, even the strength of prophetic anti-Church images indicated that religious sentiments were often attractive when institutional structures were made less important. The extent to which this idea circulated suggested that the churches were subject to considerable criticism during this period. However, the pressure was not all in one direction. As a criticism from detractors, the anti-Church Jesus still signalled that churches were viewed as important social institutions. Targeting them amounted

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<sup>4</sup> Belich, pp.350-51; Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand*, rev. ed., Auckland: Penguin, 1988, p.105.

<sup>5</sup> See Nolan, *Kin*.

<sup>6</sup> Pelikan, *Jesus*, p.232.

to a tacit admission of their significance, and acknowledgement that any serious programme of reform needed to engage them. Furthermore, the extent of anti-Church language also signalled the strength of essentially Protestant modes of thought, including the principle of *semper reformanda*.

The enormous investment in religion for children was a crucial method for extending the churches' influence, and retaining contact with the community at large. Jesus' prominence in the religious discourse of childhood was a distinctive and significant feature. Childhood experiences created a store of perceptions, emotions and correlations. While the enduring sentiments attached to organised religion were seldom positive, those associated with Jesus tended to be more generous. This shaped the tone of diffused religiosity, even if the particular images of Jesus did not always work to the churches' long term advantage. By the end of the twentieth century, religious communities invested less in children and their connection with them diminished greatly. Some mainline Protestant churches ceased running programmes for children.<sup>7</sup> In 1996, only about 15% of children in Auckland retained any association with Sunday Schools in the region.<sup>8</sup> One consequence of this was a decline in shared religious understandings, masked only by the strength of religious activity among some more recent Pacific Island and Asian migrants. An attenuated common religious vocabulary altered the function and meaning attached to Jesus as a religious icon.

In New Zealand, Jesus represented a simpler, adaptable and optimistic form of religion. Yet, he never achieved the cultural prominence or celebrity status of Jesus in America. Writing of the United States, Stephen Prothero has argued that America became a 'Jesus nation' during the twentieth century, but not a Christian one. No consensus emerged around views of him, but Jesus achieved a status as a unifying cultural icon: 'In a country divided by race, ethnicity, gender, class, and religion, Jesus functions as common cultural coin... his popularity only seems to have increased as he has become more human'.<sup>9</sup> Perhaps American approaches were too brash and

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<sup>7</sup> Mary Petersen, 'The Future of Christianity in New Zealand: What is Happening with the Children?', in John Stenhouse and Brett Knowles (eds), with Antony Wood, *The Future of Christianity*, Adelaide: ATF Press, 2004, pp.88-101.

<sup>8</sup> Hugh Dickey, 'The Kids-Count '96 Survey', in Bruce Patrick (ed.), *New Vision New Zealand Volume II*, Auckland: Vision New Zealand, 1997, pp.145-57.

<sup>9</sup> Prothero, pp.300-1, quote p.300.

unrespectable for local cultural tastes. In any case, New Zealand did not become a 'Jesus nation'. Furthermore, for all the diversity of representations, there were also striking points of consensus concerning him during the early twentieth century. In particular, he was an example and symbol of morality, solidarity and cooperation, as well as a prophetic critic of the Church and society. As a mirror to society, these common perceptions of Jesus suggest an admiration for religion that was warm, personal, practical and unpretentious. The prevalence of heroic ideals reflected the hopeful and optimistic tone of a society that was still rather rough and out-backish, despite its increasingly urbanised character.

Language about Jesus was a weathervane that picked up trajectories in culture and society, including shifting priorities. For example, notions of personality, the rise of youth culture, and flourishing masculinity were all signalled in this way. Some changes were more deliberate and self-conscious than others. Representations of Jesus' masculinity were among the most populist, in the sense that they were clearly shaped by ideals that seemed to have wide acceptance within the community. One potential advantage of this approach was that it appeared to affirm experience, and to adopt a sympathetic stance to prevailing social standards and values. It made Jesus quite literally a man of the people. In this sense, Jesus was a contextual creation, though he seemed most fully a cultural artefact when purposefully constructed to meet the challenges of the age.

Tradition and scripture were also in dialogue with culture, helping to shape, reinforce and challenge the images of Jesus that circulated. However, despite these influences, the depictions of Jesus that emerged during this period confirm the sense of a very weak tradition of theological reflection in New Zealand. On the one hand, images like those of a manly Jesus were driven rather opportunistically, in response to genuine though essentially pragmatic concerns. They reflected a preference for effective action over reflection or formal theology. Moreover, they were subjected to limited theological critique. The difficulty, as the Scottish theologian P.T. Forsyth's critique of his fellow Congregationalist R.J. Campbell's *New Theology* highlighted, was that weak theology provided an inadequate support for devotion to the person of

Jesus.<sup>10</sup> It was all very well being an enthusiast for Jesus, but the attachment could prove parlous if its basis was incoherent. The danger was that, in the longer term, either the theology or the devotion must shift or likely give way altogether. The target of Forsyth's observation had been liberal theology, but it had much wider relevance. In the New Zealand context, the rise and later decline of Uncle Scrim's Friendly Road Christianity demonstrated how prescient his admonition was.

The simple overarching argument of this thesis has been that interest in Jesus constituted a distinctive and increasingly pronounced feature of religiosity in New Zealand between 1900 and 1940, especially within Protestant Christianity. It was not that the churches discovered Jesus in the twentieth century – he had after all been central to Christianity for the best part of two thousand years. However, he did become a more important discursive focus and acquired new status as a source of authority. Notions of humanity and personality helped make Jesus a more central focus, but did not comprise the entire range of discourse about him. In some ways, cultivating a sense of historicity and personality was often more important than investigating specific details of Jesus' life.

To those within the churches, and for many nominal Christians, Jesus was primarily humanity's Saviour and Lord. Together with belief in his divinity, this conviction ensured that Jesus-centred religiosity was never entirely focused on his human attributes. Indeed, this thesis has demonstrated that a rich set of language about Jesus existed. These diverse representations testified to his importance, and signalled the complex cluster of influences that shaped contemporary interest in him; to invoke Jesus was to say certain things about him, but perhaps equally about religion, culture and society.

Jesus was an important focal point in New Zealanders' attempts to modernise Christianity and extend its reach. These concerns encouraged particular approaches, and kinds of language. They also created a significant burden of expectation. Emphasis on Jesus was supposed to focus, strengthen and reinvigorate not only the churches, but religion in the community at large. The new emphasis prefigured further changes in

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<sup>10</sup> See B.G. Worrall, *The Making of the Modern Church: Christianity in England Since 1800*, 3rd ed., London: SPCK, 2004, pp.130-31.

Christian spirituality later in the twentieth century – especially from the 1960s during a period of even more demanding social change. However, in both contexts the challenges for organised religion were complex and substantial. Appealing to Jesus was an attractive option, and had clear advantages, but it was not ultimately a panacea. Nevertheless, Jesus-centred religiosity provided evidence of a changing social and cultural situation, demonstrating that religious language and ideals could be sensitive indicators of such shifts. The rise of Jesus as a focal point in religion was a response to change. It also profoundly reoriented Protestant Christianity.

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