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THE SOCIAL CRUSADER: JAMES GIBB AT THE
AUSTRALASIAN PASTORAL FRONTIER, 1882-1935.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in History at Massey University.

Lawrence Harold Barber
1975.

The Social Crusader: James Gibb at the Australasian
Pastoral Frontier, 1882-1935

ABSTRACT

The phrase 'pastoral frontier' is generally used to identify the periphery of farm settlement; the advancing borderland between territory newly won by farmers and a region of untamed virgin land. This thesis is concerned with a different 'pastoral frontier', although related to the former. Using the term 'pastoral' as indicative of the ministrations of priests and ministers to their flocks, this 'pastoral frontier' is the ever changing border area where the Church penetrates society and society re-shapes the Church.

The key figure is James Gibb, who led the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand for over three decades; a Scot who came to Otago after a short ministry in Victoria, and a pastor who faced the 'pastoral frontier' for fifty-three years. Gibb was a church leader par excellence; founding father of a national Presbyterian Church, Moderator, pioneer of social services and founder of church schools. He was a social crusader who emphasised a social ethic and social redemption. His Scottish Presbyterian conviction that the Church was duty-bound to transform the state into a Christian commonwealth led him into a series of public campaigns and political encounters that had as their goal the making of a less sinful New Zealand.

This thesis argues that Gibb adapted the Social Gospel, the new social interpretation of Christianity emphasised by European, British and American theologians from the close of the nineteenth century, to the New Zealand 'pastoral frontier'. His central role in church affairs, and his placement as a campaigner and lobbyist in the political field, allow an assessment of his successes and failures as a social crusader to indicate the successes and failures of the New Zealand Protestant churches in their attempts to penetrate national life and mould society to their own design. The rise and fall of Gibb's social crusades reflect the rise and fall of the Social Gospel in New Zealand.

Gibb's 'pastoral frontier' was not static and during his Australasian ministry he planted his social crusading flag at three

frontiers:-

1. A Limited Frontier, 1882-1903.
2. An Expanded Frontier, 1903-1922.
3. A Contracted Frontier, 1923-1935.

1. A Limited Frontier, 1882-1903

This frontier was circumscribed by the narrow boundaries of Presbyterian interest and opportunity in Victoria and Otago. In the Presbyterian Church of Victoria Gibb found himself embroiled in a fierce conflict between theological revisionists and Calvinist Confessionalists. His ministry in Melbourne was dominated by the Charles Strong affair. In Otago he found himself in a provincial church planted by Free Church of Scotland ministers who lived in the mental climate of the Scottish Disruption of 1843. A provincial perspective, the rigid confessionalism of an imported theology, and attempts to impose Calvinist social controls over marriage, Sabbath observance, drinking and dancing, were the hall-marks of this Church's impact on society. Gibb's leadership of the Bible-in-Schools movement was prompted by a concern to make the state education system accept Biblical studies as a foundation for all other knowledge. Between 1886 (when he arrived in Otago) and 1902 Gibb and his Church were not entirely dominated by intra-mural concerns but they were mainly concerned with polishing their denominational badge and attaching it to others. Towards the close of this period a developing sense of national identity aided Gibb in creating the united Presbyterian Church of New Zealand yet even then some of his Otago supporters were more concerned with Presbyterian hegemony than with the challenge posed by the creation of a national church.

2. An Expanded Frontier, 1903-1922

The 'pastoral frontier' expanded dramatically from 1903. Gibb responded with a more self-conscious programme of nation building. He failed in his attempt to manufacture one national Protestant Evangelical church, incorporating the nation's Presbyterians, Methodists, and Congregationalists. He succeeded in planting a Presbyterian minister and agent in almost every settlement, in town and back-blocks, and broke with traditional Scottish Church polity in so doing, by creating a new order of ministers-home missionaries. This expanded frontier extended to the Pacific Islands and into China with Gibb leading petitions for British

control of the New Hebrides and attacking the opium trade to China. The Church still demanded the right to legislate national social control, and crusades in favour of prohibition and Bible-in-Schools grew in intensity and impact, with Gibb encouraging back-block ministers to rasp-off pioneer rough edges and polish colonial rough diamonds. The 1914-1918 war brought conflict within the Church as imperial patriotism and Christian principles met in tension. Consolidation of settlement and post-war despair and failure to return to 'normalcy' ended an era of self confidence.

3. A Contracted Frontier, 1923-1935

From 1923 the 'pastoral frontier' began to steadily contract. The 'crusades' - Bible-in-Schools, Prohibition, Disarmament, and a united Protestant Church - all failed. The Church's national impact was further weakened by her failure to prevent increasing economic and political polarization within society, her failure to convince an increasingly mobile and pleasure-seeking society, her failure to create a disciplined and coherent national Church, the decline in dynamic that followed the closing of the internal frontier, state acceptance of social service roles, the impact of Barthian theology, and her inability to hold back or accommodate the flood of secularism.

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Abbreviations

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| AJHR | <u>Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives</u> |
| First Church Session | Minutes of the Kirk Session of the First Church of Otago, Dunedin |
| <u>Free Lance</u> | <u>The New Zealand Free Lance</u> |
| <u>General Assembly</u> | <u>Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand</u> |
| NZPD | <u>New Zealand Parliamentary Debates</u> |
| ODT | <u>Otago Daily Times</u> |
| Presbytery of Dunedin | Minutes of the Presbytery of Dunedin |
| Presbytery of Wellington | Minutes of the Presbytery of Wellington |
| St. John's Session | Minutes of the Kirk Session of St. John's Church, Wellington |
| <u>Synod</u> | <u>Proceedings of the Presbyterian Synod of Otago and Southland</u> |

NOTE: All correspondence, unless otherwise indicated, is from the Gibb Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

Glossary

- Arminianism** The doctrine set forth by Jacobus Arminius (1560-1609) and his followers. Arminianism rejects the deterministic logic of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and insists that Divine sovereignty is compatible with free-will in man. Arminius held that Christ died for all men and that each man, when confronted with the gospel, must exercise his free-will to accept or refuse Christ's offer of redemption.
- Classical Calvinism** A broader Calvinism than Scholastic Calvinism (q.v.) and one that attempts to hold in balance the full range of biblical teaching without the conclusive and comprehensive dogmatism of Scholastic Calvinism. The Classical Calvinist regards theology as a never-ending search for truths about God and man. In contrast, the Scholastic Calvinist affirms that the answers are already stated in the Church's Confessions of Faith and regards the Confessions as perfect summaries of Biblical doctrine.
- Confessionalist** One who holds that the official theological statement of his Church is a constitutional document that must be accepted in all parts by Church members on pain of ecclesiastical discipline.
- Declaratory Act** In 1879 the Scottish United Presbyterian Church passed an act relieving its office-bearers from their obligation to subscribe to every item of the Westminster Standards (q.v.). Similar acts were passed by most English-speaking Presbyterian Churches in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

| | |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Evangelical Churches | Non-episcopal and anti-Romanist Protestant Churches that emphasise preaching above the sacraments and aim to awaken in their hearers a deeper personal religious experience. |
| Higher Criticism | The critical study of the literary sources and context of the Biblical documents. This term (in contradistinction to 'Lower' or textual criticism) came into vogue following the publication by W.R. Smith of <u>The Old Testament in the Jewish Church</u> , in 1881. |
| General Assembly | The highest court within the Presbyterian ecclesiastical system. It consists of ministers and elders elected to represent the whole Church, over which it exercises supreme jurisdiction. |
| Interim-Moderator | A minister appointed by a Presbytery to administer the sacraments, provide regular preaching, exercise pastoral oversight, and chair the Kirk Session (q.v.) in the absence of a settled minister. |
| Kirk Session | The local court governing a Presbyterian parish. It is chaired by the parish minister and its members are the parish elders. |
| Moderator | The title bestowed upon the elected chairman of every Presbyterian court. |
| Presbytery | A district Church court comprised of ministers and representative elders from the parishes within its bounds. |
| Preterition | The abandonment to damnation of those not elected by divine decree to salvation. |
| Scholastic Calvinism | The legalistic Calvinism of the seventeenth century Westminster Confession of Faith (q.v.) |

and of those who subsequently have held the Westminster Standards (q.v.) to be immutable definitions of Presbyterian doctrine.

Social Gospel

A Protestant theological movement that sought to bring society as well as the individual into conformity with the teachings of Jesus. The movement was given impetus by a growing nineteenth century appreciation of the evils that attended industrialisation and urbanisation. It was inspired by the theology of Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1899) and Adolf von Harnack (1851-1930). Walter Rauschenbusch (1861-1918), its clearest exponent, held that the Kingdom of God could become an earthly reality to the degree that society was brought into harmony with the teaching and spirit of Christ.

Synod

A provincial ecclesiastical court. The Presbyterian Church of Otago and Southland was governed by a synod.

Westminster Confession of Faith

The statement of belief drawn-up by an assembly of divines summoned to Westminster in 1643 to prepare a scheme to unify the churches of Britain.

Westminster Standards

Beside the Confession of Faith the Westminster Assembly also prepared a Form of Church Government, Directory for Public Worship, and the Larger and Shorter Catechisms. Together these are known as the Westminster Standards.

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James Gibb, Presbyterian elder statesman, 1926.

INTRODUCTION

The Frontier, then, was not only a state of mind; it was a place, quite genuinely, and it was also a process.... Turner recognised, for that matter, that the Frontier was all three of these, shifting metaphorically, from meaning to meaning.

Robin W. Winks¹

Social history, involved as it is in recording changing behavioural patterns, intellectual moods and fluctuating prejudices, is often best measured by a study of the creative drive and reactions of some dynamic contributor to the events under review. This thesis is a study in Australasian social history for the period 1882 to 1935 and its subject, James Gibb, was indeed a leading participant in the social crusades of that time.

What were Gibb's origins and what influences fashioned his personality and character? Nothing is easier than to lay out the bare bones of his early years. James Gibb was born in Old Machar, Aberdeen, on 15 June 1857. He was the second son of James Gibb, a shoe maker, and of Jean Gibb (nee Greig).² His parents were devout members of the United Presbyterian Church, the third largest of the Scottish Presbyterian denominations; a church founded from the union of the Secession and Relief Churches in 1847.

Gibb received his elementary education at the Aberdeen Grammar School where a generation before one of Scotland's greatest educationalists, Dr James Melvin, had been rector. Melvin's influence endured at Aberdeen Grammar where an emphasis on the classics and Scottish literature, legend

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1. R.W. Winks, The Myth of the American Frontier .Its Relevance to America Canada and Australia. Leicester, 1971. pp.13-14.
 2. Daily Free Press, 19 October 1872. George, the second eldest brother, emigrated to Victoria in 1865 and became a leading insurance actuary. William, the youngest of the brothers, became a celebrated Scottish artist. Gibb's sister Jean, later married Gibson-Smith, who followed Gibb to Dunedin in 1888. An account of George Gibb's Australian career is given in the Cyclopedia of Victoria, I, 1903, p.376.

and history continued at a time when the academic tide had turned in favour of modern languages, mathematics and science. G.E. Davie records several acknowledgements by Melvin's students of the enduring impact upon them of his enthusiasm for Greek and Roman literature, and for Scots antiquity. Davie concludes:

It is quite clear that this combined interest...far from being a provincial pedantry...was a genuine prolongation of the Renaissance spirit which cherished the patriotic ambition of bringing the vernacular up to the civilized level of classical Latin as a literary instrument.³

Throughout his ecclesiastical career Gibb retained a deep enthusiasm for literature and gave periodic lectures on the Scots poets. Aberdeen Grammar's influence upon him was lasting.

Records are extant only for Gibb's second year at school and these show him placed second-equal in his class, and first in English, history and geography. He was first-equal in arithmetic and third at Latin.⁴

Gibb left school in 1872 to work for two years in the Union Bank of Scotland. He then returned for ten more months to prepare for the University of Aberdeen's matriculation examinations, intent on pursuing the arts and theological courses leading to ordination into the United Presbyterian ministry. At the Church's matriculation scholarship examinations Gibb took second place and secured himself a bursary of twenty-one pounds.⁵

From 1876 until 1880 Gibb pursued the course of general studies leading to the University of Aberdeen's master of arts. He attended classes in junior and senior mathematics, junior natural philosophy, logic and moral philosophy. Ill health in his final year prevented him sitting two of the graduating examinations and his academic record suggests that mathematics was not his forte.⁶

3. G.E. Davie, The Democratic Intellect : Scotland and her Universities, p.215. James Melvin (1795-1853), was appointed usher at Aberdeen Grammar in 1822 and rector from 1826.

4. Daily Free Press, 25 November 1880.

5. University of Aberdeen academic records: Andrew Walls to L.H. Barber, 22 February 1974.

6. Ibid.

In 1880 Gibb began his theological studies as a student at Kings College, Edinburgh, without his degree. Here he spent two years under the tutelage of Principal John Cairns, a careful and orthodox upholder of all the doctrines of the Westminster Confession of Faith. At the close of 1881 Gibb's health deteriorated further and his physician, suspecting a pulmonary condition, advised him to emigrate to the colonies - a popular medical prescription in nineteenth century Britain. Gibb successfully negotiated with his Church's Foreign Mission Committee for a passage to Victoria where he intended to complete his theological training and offer himself for ordination.⁷ Two weeks before embarkation Gibb married Jeanie, second daughter of David Smith, the provost and chief magistrate of Woodside, at a ceremony at Woodside cottage on 28 December 1881.⁸ On 12 January Gibb, with his new bride, set sail from Gravesend bound for Victoria - and the Australasian pastoral frontier.

Gibb was a Presbyterian political parson who arrived at Victoria in early 1882, moved to Otago in 1886, and from the 1890s until his death in 1935 played a significant part in his Church's attempt to rebuild New Zealand to Protestant specifications. He was a complex personality, adventurous enough to become a pacifist and a Labour party member in his sixty-third year, yet in some areas he remained stubbornly inflexible. He retained his fervent Sabbatarianism throughout his career and for forty years clung to a social crusading tactic, political intimidation, that failed in the 1890s and was still failing dismally in 1935.

For forty-four years James Gibb was first and foremost a minister of the Christian gospel. This thesis is almost exclusively concerned with Gibb the social reformer and politico-parson, but there is 'another' Gibb - the Churchman who for a generation was New Zealand's greatest pulpit orator, a faithful pastor, a devotee and purveyor of English literature, a brilliant committeeman, and a father, husband, and confidant to his friends.

7. J. Grierson Scott (Convener, United Church of Scotland Foreign and Colonial Mission committee) to Gibb, 10 November 1881. Also Personal Interview: The Hon. Sir David Smith, Wellington, 13 February 1974. Gibb was Sir David's uncle.

8. Daily Free Press, 29 December 1881.

Gibb's biography has yet to be written. Hopefully its publication may follow not too far on the heels of this dissertation. Meanwhile, to correct an imbalance, and to prevent a distortion, perhaps even a caricature, of a minister of undoubted genius and tremendous multiplicity of interests, some account must be made of the 'other' James Gibb.

Gibb was a pulpit orator par excellence. From 1886 until the winter of unpopularity that followed his conversion to pacifism at the close of the First World War he preached to packed Churches. He filled the nave and the galleries of the First Church of Otago, and then St. John's Church, Wellington, with congregations drawn by his oratory and impressed by his assurance, clarity and sincerity. Although he read his sermons his manuscript did not come between him and his congregation. His Scottish accent, classical style and sweeping gestures, held his listeners (on one occasion for one hour and a half) as he preached the cardinal claims of his gospel, or applied the Christian message to the social, national and international questions of the time.

Gibb's reputation as a pastor equalled his fame as a preacher. He gained recognition in both his New Zealand parishes for his anticipation of his parishioners' needs and for his speedy appearance at times of death and distress. His closest friend, Rutherford Waddell, spoke for many when he paid tribute to this aspect of Gibb's character: 'While he may have seemed to the outside world a son of thunder, he was to those in need and sorrow a very Barnabas, a son of consolation'.⁹

During his career Gibb founded several literary associations, delivered lectures on the works of leading Victorian writers and studied his sermons with quotations from Browning, Tennyson and Scott. His love for English (and Scottish) literature remained with him until his death. He appreciated the depth and courage explicit in the Victorian portrayal of man and his plight. After the Queen died Gibb remained a Victorian, arguing that:

The Victorian age, with its giants in science and invention, with its splendid writers and poets, its Tennyson and Browning, its Carlyle and Ruskin and Dickens and Thackeray, was too

9. Outlook, 10 May 1926.

decorous and "stodgy" for hair-brained chatterers and vapid voluptaries of a time which one sometimes feared was letting die out of its experience all that made life a regal thing.¹⁰

As a Presbyterian leader and General Assembly and Presbytery committeeman Gibb, at one time or another, held nearly every office within his Church. He was sometime Moderator of the Synod of Otago and Southland, Moderator of General Assembly, several times Moderator of the Dunedin and Wellington Presbyteries, for thirteen years convener of the General Assembly Home Mission committee, and convener and member of a legion of General Assembly and Presbytery committees. While minister of St. John's he raised £11,000 for the Knox College erection fund, and in his retirement he raised large sums for Presbyterian social service work and for the Turakina Maori Girls' College.¹¹

What of Gibb the family man? Gibb's two sons, George and Malcolm, appear only in passing in my dissertation. His three daughters, Jean, Muriel and Dorothy are ignored. Gibb was very much a Victorian male; he was delighted to sit for hours in his study debating theology and politics with his sons, but he quickly banished his daughters to the kitchen. His wife, Jeanie, was an uncomplaining cook and housekeeper. She was expected to present her husband with a hot meal whenever he returned from his pastoral duties, and he expected his favourite dishes - no matter how frugal the family's meal.

Gibb's stature as a Churchman, and his sensitivity toward colleagues with real personal problems, made him the obvious confidant and adviser to many fellow ministers and numerous students. The students who throughout his career enjoyed hours of hospitality in his study did not know that the hours spent with them was time stolen from his family. Throughout his career Gibb showed an intense interest in students - their welfare, interests, problems and views. Many of the contemporary 'fathers' of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand recall with pleasure the hours spent in his study, discussing the world's plight while 'the doctor' lit his pipe a hundred times.

10. Outlook, 16 December 1913.

11. Ibid., 13 September 1933; 24 October 1935.

Taken all in all this tall, burly, bluff and brilliant Scot was a titanic character who well deserved the epitaph pronounced by the editor of the Dominion, who acclaimed him 'a great, grim fighter for God and the right'. He equally deserved Walter Nash's salute to 'a great man of the Church and of New Zealand'.¹² However, Gibb did not accomplish his pastoral goals, and undertake his tasks as an ecclesiastical leader, alone. Throughout his career he was supported by true friends and loyal colleagues and his success as a minister, and his success and failure as a social crusader, was theirs as well. Waddell and John Dickie stood beside him in times of loneliness and perplexity. Waddell remained his friend during the time of vilification and desertion that followed his brave attack on New Zealand's and Britain's military system at the close of the First World War. He received support and friendship from many members of his Kirk Sessions, particularly from John Ramsay, the Dunedin merchant; John Aitken, a Wellington mayor and parliamentarian; and Sir George Troup, founder of the Presbyterian Bible Class movement and doyen of Wellington local body politics.

The 'other' Gibb was a man of great multiplicity of interests. He helped found a hostel for women students, supported the New Zealand Red Cross in its projects to alleviate the sufferings occasioned by war, encouraged poets and writers, was the friend and confidant of several Governors-General, and delighted in his catholic knowledge of cowboy literature. However, Gibb's variety of social and personal interests sprang from one fountain - his dedication to the work of the Christian ministry. His crusades mostly failed but his work as a minister did not. On the occasion of Gibb's retirement from St. John's parish Waddell praised him for his contribution as a national Church leader. Waddell could well have referred to Gibb's impact as a preacher, influence as a pastor and assistance as a friend when he insisted that:

When the history of the [Presbyterian] Church comes to be written it will be found that no one has done more for its moulding and extension than he.¹³

12. Dominion, 25 October 1935.

13. Outlook, 10 May 1926.

The little known cleric has been introduced. Where and what is this 'pastoral frontier' that claimed his interest?

The term 'pastoral frontier' is generally used to identify the periphery of farm settlement, the borderland between settled farm land and a region of as yet untamed virgin territory. Gibb was concerned with a different 'pastoral frontier'. His pastoral frontier was an ecclesiastical pastorate in the Australasian colonies. For fifty-three years he ministered to pioneers, and the sons and daughters of pioneers, who were in part identifying themselves with an Old World heritage and in part had assumed a novel antipodean identity. On this frontier Gibb and his Church faced an identity crisis. The theological dogma of centuries of European church history, time-honoured patterns of ecclesiastical order and traditional liturgical patterns often received scant respect from a pragmatic colonial society. Gibb and his colleagues assumed responsibility as the moral regulators of the Australasian colonial frontier. They attempted to plant and harvest a Christian civilization in Britain's southern colonies, assuming that the New Jerusalem the Church had failed to build in the Old World could more easily be built in the new.

Gibb's frontier was a geographical location - Victoria and New Zealand. It was also a mythologising of that location. Throughout his ministry he was influenced by a myth of rural barbarism that told of émigré Britons reverting to crude and primitive paganism in their isolation in the bush. Gibb believed this myth and to combat the reversion of Anglo-Saxon Christians to barbarism he concentrated much of his time and effort in the provision of ministers and church agents for back-block communities. Gibb hardly exaggerated the isolation and lack of amenities of the true back-block settler. However, he ignored the fact that 80 percent of the settlers on the North Island main trunk line lived within ten miles of railway settlements, and that their shops sold Globe insurance and bowler hats.¹⁴ In concentrating attention on the rhetorical frontier he failed to take seriously the constantly expanding perimeter of suburban life and to meet

14. I am indebted to Mr P.J. Gibbons of Waikato University for allowing me to read the first draft of his doctoral dissertation 'The Making of the North Island Main Trunk Railway, c.1870-1910'. Mr Gibbons reinforces his argument, that the new settlers brought 'instant civilization' with them, by photographic evidence.

the challenge posed by the suburban 'new man' - with his half-an-acre section, his scepticism, preference for beaches above church attendance and his relegation of the clergy to the position of seasonal workers, brought in to mark the festivals of 'hatching, matching and despatching' - a suburban saying.

Gibb's pastoral frontier was also a state of mind, a disturbed and sometimes nearly schizophrenic condition. The main symptom of this condition was the recurrent feuding of churchmen frantic in their struggle for religious certitude in a half-century lashed by gales of secularism, the impact of new scientific theories and reappraisals of old verities. In Victoria the newly ordained Gibb assumed a stockade mentality when faced by theological revisionism and the sceptical attacks of the Melbourne rationalists. A few years later, in Otago, Gibb found the strict adherence to the letter of the Westminster Confession of Faith, held by the fathers of a provincial church, too exacting and in reaction assumed a theological iconoclastic's role that resulted in his being found guilty of heresy.

For most of his career Gibb was a disciple of the Social Gospel. However, Gibb's Social Gospel was an application of Calvinist solutions to New Zealand social problems. He retained a traditional Presbyterian theology of sin and salvation. With the failure of his crusades, the failure of liberalism to find a panacea for the western world's post-war ills and his disillusion with social Darwinist promises that the Millennium would arrive through environmental reform, in his final years he reverted to a ghetto mentality. Gibb died a Barthian, a follower of the Swiss theologian who insisted that theology should be purged of its anthropocentricism and instead announce the judgement of an omnipotent and omniscient God.

Beside being a geographical locality and a state of mind Gibb's frontier was also a process. The Australasian pastoral frontier was not static and during Gibb's ministry three basic movements took place. From 1893 until 1902 he ministered on a limited frontier, while from 1903 to 1922 his frontier expanded as the supporters of the Social Gospel crusaded to mould New Zealand to their vision of a Christian commonwealth. With the close of the First World War, and the failure of European civilization to

achieve the impossible goal of pre-war normalcy, Gibb's frontier contracted again, reaching its narrowest point with his conversion to Barthian neo-orthodoxy.

The first three chapters of this thesis describe and assess Gibb's first twenty years as a minister. During this period his frontier was circumscribed by the narrow boundaries of Victorian Presbyterian and Otago provincial Presbyterian interests. From 1883 to 1886 bitter theological feuds within the Melbourne Presbytery restricted Gibb's vision to the intra-mural issue of the degree of latitude allowed ministers in re-stating the doctrines of the Westminster Confession of Faith. In Otago, from 1887 until 1894, Gibb again found himself involved in a battle over orthodoxy, in a miniscule provincial church founded by Free Church of Scotland ministers whose 'old guard' preferred to retain the mental climate of the Scottish Disruption of 1843. Gibb's Victorian and Otago experiences were not unique, they were two explosions amongst dozens that disturbed the Protestant world in the 1880s and 1890s. In this double decade Biblical literalists and rigid confessionalists fought a rear-guard action against liberal Biblical scholarship, scientific explanations of human and natural phenomena and against historical contextualising of ancient creeds and confessions. He escaped from theological warfare only to immerse himself from 1894 in another intra-mural concern, the union of the colony's Presbyterians into one Church. Between 1883 and 1902 Gibb and the Churches he served in were not entirely dominated by intra-mural concerns - they had time for some social comment and missionary activity as well - but they were mainly concerned with polishing denominational badges and attaching them to others.

Gibb's pastoral frontier expanded dramatically from 1903. In that year he moved from an industrial and commercial city, Dunedin, to New Zealand's administrative and legislative capital, Wellington. In Wellington Gibb embarked on a campaign of lobbying aimed at convincing cabinet ministers that the new nation must be built to Christian specifications. His leadership of the crusades for social reform reflected a pan-Protestant mood rather than a peculiarly nativistic ecclesiastical temper. The Social Gospel was to some extent born of the failure of the Churches to build heaven on earth by the conversion of mankind one by one. It aspired to remake society to a Christian pattern, allowing the Churches wide latitude

in defining how narrow the pattern should be, and appealing to the electorate to legislate the formula for a Christian society into their statute books. This was the great age of temperance, Bible in Schools and anti-vice crusading. This extended frontier reached to the Pacific Islands and into China, with Gibb leading petitions for British control of the New Hebrides and attacking the opium trade. He failed in his attempt to create a Protestant grand alliance, a formal union of the Colony's Congregationalists, Methodists and Presbyterians, but he welded together an informal Evangelical Protestant alliance well able to threaten premiers. He succeeded in planting a Presbyterian minister or agent in almost every settlement, in country town and back-blocks, and broke with traditional Presbyterian polity in so doing by creating a new order of ministers, home missionaries. Back-block ministers were encouraged by Gibb to rasp-off pioneer rough edges and polish colonial rough diamonds.

With the outbreak of the First World War Gibb's frontiers expanded further, to a pastoral connection with parishioners in the trenches of France and in English military hospitals. In Chapters Four and Five of Part Two Gibb still held strong hope for the success of the Social Gospel's crusade to Christianize New Zealand. However, frustration and some doubt emerges in Chapter Six, 'The Christian Patriot's Dilemma'.

The third section of this thesis begins in 1923 and discusses the contraction of Gibb's pastoral opportunity. Between 1923 and 1935 sporadic attempts to rally the voting public to the old banners of Bible in Schools and prohibition failed. The three Evangelical Churches still refused to unite. The traditional Churches further weakened their national impact by their political division. Ecclesiastical supporters of Labour, Douglas Credit and pacifism received scant respect from clergymen who held that the Millennium could not be brought in by politicians - only by the Second Coming. Gibb came down solidly for the Labour party in 1919, supported the party with propaganda, but grew unhappy at the growth of Marxist influence within the party, and the failure of Labour to give the support he believed it should to the League of Nations and disarmament. It was in this period that the remnant of Social Gospel supporters, together with those humanitarian liberals left stranded by the polarization in the Dominion's political life, combined for Gibb's last crusade. From the beginning of the 1920s until his death in 1935 Gibb attempted to rally New Zealand in support of the League of Nations and world disarmament.

In the third section of this thesis Gibb's pastoral frontier contracted to the pursuit of an elitist cause on the periphery of New Zealand political life. His crusade for the League of Nations Union and world disarmament was a Quixotic gesture, for Massey and the major political parties (Labour excepted) preferred a strong Royal Navy and a conscript territorial army to reliance upon the Covenant of the League of Nations. Finally, even the Labour party refused to pledge itself to unilateral New Zealand disarmament. The final chapter marks Gibb's realisation that the Church had failed in its bid to evangelize and socially regulate the nation. Just as in the Middle Ages a baron who failed at home turned his eyes to the Holy Land, so Gibb and some of New Zealand's ecclesiastical leaders, having failed at the pastoral frontier, called for a new crusade - an attempt to rally the peoples of the world in a crusade for international disarmament. However, the inroad of secularism continued. The state encroached more and more on social service roles previously held by the clergy, New Zealand's population became increasingly mobile and pleasure seeking, the last appeals of pre-Billy Graham revivalism were lost amongst the shouts of Labour candidates and in the early 1930s Barthian neo-orthodoxy appeared as a haven of escape for churchmen disillusioned with theological liberalism and the Social Gospel.

Gibb ended his days at a contracted frontier where he renounced his theological liberalism - Social Gospel and all - and embraced the neo-orthodoxy of Karl Barth. During a final visit to Melbourne, having just recovered from a stroke, and only a few months before his death, he attacked theological liberalism from his former pulpit in Footscray. He haltingly warned his congregation that mankind could and should do nothing but prayerfully await the judgment of God. At the end of his life Gibb renounced Christian social activism and left the broader pastoral frontier to be conquered by God and his angels.

In this thesis Gibb emerges as a social crusader who in his quest for theological certitude and the godly society opposed the secularist pragmatism of the politicians. National and world events, together with his penchant for contemporary intellectual moods, led Gibb to make judgments on the 'New Imperialism', Darwinism, resurgent Catholicism, nationalism, socialism and secularism. He was not always consistent but often his inconsistencies reflect those of his times. Gibb saw no incompatibility between his demands for rigorous censorship of the stage and his avowal of a

right of dissent for pacifists. He was both an imperialist and a nationalist, anti-Catholic and an advocate of Protestant reunion, and a city dweller who ignored urban secularization as he battled to save rustic New Zealanders from real or imagined barbarism. From the 1890s until the early 1930s Gibb maintained a social Darwinist belief that society's evils were built by bad environment rather than by bad men. He knew little of economic theory and when forced into an uncomfortable corner by critics, who preferred specific policies to pious dreams, he took refuge in platitudes about supernatural power and brotherly love.

Gibb was usually a secondary character in the drama of New Zealand's social and political development - although he occasionally moved to centre stage. He stood head and shoulders above most other church leaders (both literally and metaphorically), and provides an excellent barometer of the changing temper of ecclesiastical opinion on the New Zealand pastoral frontier, the difficult borderland crossed by a crusading Christian community eager to mould the nation to its models of the kingdom of heaven.

James Gibb was a leader of men rather than a follower. He crusaded when the Social Gospel claimed the loyalty of many Protestants. This being so it is hardly surprising that this thesis takes on something of the character of an analysis of the rise and fall of an advocate of the Social Gospel, and a description and interpretation of the rise and fall of the Social Gospel in New Zealand.

Gibb gains no mention in An Encyclopaedia of New Zealand, although he appears in The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography and three editions of Who's Who in New Zealand.¹⁵ Even though he was from his trial for heresy in 1890 until his death in 1935 New Zealand's most outspoken and contentious Presbyterian minister only one secondary work gives any detailed account of his exploits - a section in Malcolm Wilson's short yet penetrating Three Good Men.¹⁶ No thesis writer has hitherto more than nodded in his

15. G.H. Scholefield (ed.); Who's Who in New Zealand, Wellington, 1908, 1925, 1932. The Dictionary of New Zealand Biography, I (A-L), Wellington, 1940 p.291.

16. M.W. Wilson, Three Good Men, Dunedin, 1945.

direction,¹⁷ Presbyterian church historians have noted his major interests with no attempt to set these within a larger social and ideological context,¹⁸ and the limited size of Ian Breward's Godless Schools?¹⁹ prevented more than a brief introduction to Gibb as a leader in the Bible in Schools crusade. Any writer who makes Gibb the subject of a social history must of necessity begin by telling his readers who Gibb was and what he did.

Cartoons in the New Zealand Free Lance,²⁰ denunciation and eulogy in the correspondence columns of the nation's leading newspapers, repeated editorial mention, personal vilification by Seddon, and evidence of his closet political influence on Massey and Ward, establish Gibb as a politico-parson who for nearly fifty years of New Zealand's history played an important role in moulding public opinion. He lobbied politicians and was a mouthpiece for the Evangelical and Social Gospel crusades to persuade governments to Christianize the nation by social enactments.

Gibb was a Presbyterian minister who exercised an informal leadership over the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand for close on three decades. He was the architect and foundation moderator of the United Presbyterian Church of New Zealand - a union of Presbyterians from north of the Waiaki river with the autonomous Presbyterian Church of Otago and Southland. Despite his unique contribution to New Zealand Presbyterianism the Church he created did little to keep his memory alive. A few plaques hang within the two New Zealand parish churches where he was once pastor. His first parish, Footscray in Victoria, where the present church building owe their existence to his vision and efforts, gave him slight mention in its centenary publication. His name, eroded by time, may be found on numerous foundations stones to

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17. Gibb is briefly mentioned in A.J.S. Reid, 'Church and State in New Zealand, 1930-1935', M.A. thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1961. See also J.S. Murray, 'The Union of the Northern and Southern Churches of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand', M.A. thesis, Otago University, 1927; and L.H. Barber, 'The North Defence Society of Otago and Southland, 1897'. M.A. thesis, Massey University, 1970.
18. See J. Collie, The Story of the Otago Free Church Settlement, 1848-1948. Christchurch, 1948; and J.R. Elder, The History of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1840-1940. Christchurch, 1940.
19. I. Breward, Godless Schools? Christchurch, 1961.
20. The best of these cartoons are reproduced in this appendix.

churches that, partially or wholly, owe their origin to his initiative as his Church's home mission convener. A dormitory block, erected in his lifetime, honours his name at Scots College, Wellington - a college he founded. Immediately following his death the Presbyterian General Assembly established a committee to decide upon a suitable memorial to honour him. In 1936 the committee recommended the establishment of a Gibb lectureship in pastoral theology, but by 1938 only £138.10s.8d. had been received for this purpose and the committee was discharged.²¹

Gibb had lived too long. He was seventy-eight at his death and a generation which knew not Joseph had entered the courts of the Church. His contemporaries had predeceased him. They had known of his Herculean labours for Presbyterian Church union, Evangelical Protestant cooperation, in establishing back-block congregations and in the Social Gospel crusades. The new generation knew only an old man who bored them, in season and out, with his repetitive advocacy for the causes of the League of Nations and disarmament. Gibb left a legacy of defeated crusades behind him and the Church in burying and quickly forgetting him at the same time buried its Social Gospel failures. But James Gibb played a too fascinating role as a grey eminence within New Zealand social and political history to allow him to remain in peace in a Presbyterian heaven. To discover an ante-room figure who led several sizeable social crusades and attempted to manipulate New Zealand's political leaders from the 1890s to the 1930s is a doctoral candidate's dream. When this dream is accompanied by a four year custody of Gibb's personal papers (nearly 1,000 letters carefully preserved for an autobiography that was never written), the desire to give Gibb his due is strengthened. The Jeanie Gibb papers, two volumes of newspaper cuttings preserved by Gibb's wife, have together with the Gibb papers, provided an invaluable insight into Gibb's mind, tactics and assessment of key protagonists. Official church records, ecclesiastical periodicals and secular newspapers have given ample evidence of Gibb's determination that New Zealanders should not remain ignorant of his viewpoint on any and every major and minor public issue.

Gibb died in 1935, the year of my birth, and obviously many who knew him in his latter days remain to provide oral evidence of his views and

21. General Assembly, 1935, p.58; 1936, p.18; 1937, p.152; 1938, p.200.

activities. I have been given generous assistance by a large number of readers of the Outlook who remember, some with pleasure and others with lingering annoyance, the burly, slightly pompous, certainly arrogant, Scots-tongued prince of New Zealand's Presbyterian clerics - James Gibb.

Gibb was never in debt at any stage of his life. This doctoral candidate makes no such boast and hastens to pay some of his debts. I am grateful to the Very Rev. Stanley Read, the Rev. Harold Scott and the Rev. Professor Ian Breward, who separately encouraged me to make Gibb my subject, and led me to the murky depths of a Church office strongroom to prize open the trunk containing the Gibb papers. In Melbourne Mrs Phyllis Gibb, the late Malcolm Gibb's wife, and her daughter, Miss Jeanie Gibb, could not have been more generous with their time and assistance. They have made a permanent donation to New Zealand's history by their gift of the Jeanie Gibb papers to the Alexander Turnbull Library. I have received every assistance from the staff of the General Assembly Library, the Alexander Turnbull Library, the Hocken Library, the Hewitson Library, the State Library of Victoria, the J.C. Williamson Library and the Massey University Library.

During the preparation of this thesis many people have been inflicted with chapters and my requests for their opinion. I have received useful advice, valued criticisms and new insights from their comments. My particular thanks are extended to my supervisors, Professors W.H. Oliver and Ian Breward. I am also grateful for the help given by Dr Dalton West, Dr F.B. Smith, Mr and Mrs Robin Gwynn, Mr and Mrs Graham Butterworth and Mr Peter Gibbons. The 1974 Massey University honours class have given me the benefit of their candour and coffee.

In my request for research facilities I have been given every help by the Clerk and Procurator of the Presbyterian Church of Australia and by the archivist of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria. The Clerk of the New Zealand Presbyterian General Assembly, the General Secretary of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, the Executive Officer, the Master of Knox College, the principals of the Church schools and the Director of the Presbyterian Social Service Association, have placed their records at my disposal. I have also gained valuable information from the minutes of the Presbyterian Synod of Otago and Southland and the Presbyteries of Dunedin, Wangenui and Wellington. The ministers and Session clerks of the First

Church of Otago and St. John's Church, Wellington, have given me generous access to their Church records. The Massey University and Otago University photographic units are responsible for the excellent photographic reproductions that have allowed Gibb to take visible shape.

James Gibb was the last of the giants who towered over the New Zealand Presbyterian Church. His Church has never again allowed so much power to accumulate in the hands of any one leader. It has been impossible to live with Gibb without being impressed by his magnetic personality, especially revealed by his ability to win small crusading armies to his elitist causes. He made his greatest mistake by holding the truths of his gospel to be self-evident to all reasonable men. He refused to allow any place for secularist compromises and this refusal helped to destroy every one of his crusades. The failure of Gibb's Social Gospel causes shattered his self-confidence and the self-confidence of his Church. Gibb died without regaining his self-assurance and in the forty years following his death no comparable Presbyterian Moses has appeared to summon the nation from a secularist wilderness into a Calvinist promised land.

Chapter One

Apprentice Inquisitor, 1882-1886

Church censures are necessary for the reclaiming and gaining of offending brethren; for deterring of others from the like offences; for purging out...that leaven which might infect the whole lump...and for preventing the wrath of God, which might justly fall upon the church, if they should suffer his covenant...to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.

The Confession of Faith¹

James and Jeanie Gibb boarded the Orient Line steamship Chimborazo, bound for Melbourne, on 12 January 1882. Accustomed to the narrow horizons and genteel manners of an exclusive circle of church friends Gibb was horrified and distressed by the conduct of a hard drinking and loose talking body of passengers. Incensed by drunken fighting, foul songs, obscene shouting, the molesting of women, oaths and blasphemy, Gibb prepared a petition (the first of many to be initiated by him). With fifty-three signatures appended, mainly from his fellow steerage class passengers, he approached the captain and demanded that action be taken against the offenders. Once ashore in Victoria Gibb made speed to publicise his dissatisfaction. Writing over the initials 'J.G.', he informed an Aberdeen editor that he had no complaint to make about the food and accommodation on the voyage;

But for any one who had the slightest regard for decency, or the plainest fundamental maxims of morality, a pig-stye should have been as desirable place of abode as the ship Chimborazo.²

Was there serious misconduct aboard the Chimborazo, or did the behaviour complained of exist only in the sensitive imagination of a young student preacher? Gibb's 'pig-stye' analogy may be a rhetorical flourish. Even so, the factual basis for his complaints was vouched for by a company spokesman's admission that the ship's master had been forced to restrain several passengers in irons.³

1. The Confession of Faith, Westminster, 1648, XXX,3.

2. Daily Free Press, Aberdeen. 11 August 1882. A press cutting of this letter is preserved in the Jeanie Gibb papers.

3. Ibid., 16 August 1882.

The newly wed Gibbs arrived in Melbourne in March 1882. Gibb was faced with the immediate task of adapting to a new ecclesiastical ethos and completing his training for the ministry in a newly established colonial theological college.⁴ He and his wife were to remain in Victoria until early 1886 and during his Australian sojourn Gibb was increasingly drawn into the theological wrangling that rent the Presbyterian Church of Victoria. Following his ordination in 1883 Gibb eagerly joined the battles that marked the disintegration of Calvinist confessionalist orthodoxy in Australia's largest Presbyterian Church. Gibb drew his sword in defence of the Presbyterian sabbath, against Christological unorthodoxy and in defiance of secularism's growing challenge to the traditional Christian message.

One of Gibb's first acts following his arrival in Melbourne was to transfer his church membership from the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland to the Presbyterian Church of Victoria. In so doing he joined a tense union of differing Presbyterian traditions wherein former members of the established Church of Scotland sat uneasily at prayer with Free Church of Scotland supporters of the Disruption of 1843, and where conservative Irish Presbyterians looked suspiciously at the theological liberalism of some of their United Presbyterian brothers. These disparate Presbyterian groupings had united in 1859. However, despite twenty-three years of marriage they were still uneasy bed-fellows in 1882. The resurrection of old rivalries, theological uncertainty promoted by the impact of Darwinism, the problems raised by the new Biblical criticism and German theological revisionism were occasions for conflict between theological conservatives and theological liberals. Incompatible interpretations of the Westminster Confession of Faith - the doctrinal basis to the 1859 union which all Victorian office-bearers were bound to uphold as a pre-condition to their right to use Church land and buildings - made Victorian Presbyterianism a fractious and unhappy family.

Within the Victorian Church Gibb was under the disciplinary oversight of the Presbytery of Melbourne, a church court dominated by a party of litigious conservatives who acted as guardians of a seventeenth century

4. A useful short account of nineteenth century Presbyterian theological education in Victoria is given in D. Chambers, Theological Teaching and Thought in the Theological Hall of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria 1865-1906, Parkville, 1967.

Calvinist orthodoxy. This reactionary group was intensely sensitive to any questioning of the power and status of their Presbytery. Gibb was soon to see these 'hounds of heaven' - McEachran, Rentoul, Murdoch MacDonald and Nish⁵ - in hot pursuit of a suspected heretic. Although Gibb soon identified with this party he initially aroused their anger by an infringement of Church law occasioned by his acceptance of regular pastoral and preaching duties while still an unordained student. Gibb had been given fifty pounds by the United Presbyterian Church Foreign Mission committee to pay his fare to Victoria. For five years prior to his immigration he had been a full-time student and not surprisingly he arrived in Melbourne poor. He urgently needed money to support himself and his new bride. Parishes temporarily without permanent pastors were glad to offer him occasional preaching, a useful temporary relief but hardly sufficient to provide an adequate standard of living for the daughter of a well-to-do manufacturer.

Gibb's problem was solved when in early July he preached to the congregation of Footscray Presbyterian Church, a suburban church four miles from the centre of Melbourne. He impressed the congregation who terminated negotiations with a minister they were inviting to be their pastor and informed the Presbytery of Melbourne that they would not call a minister until Gibb was licensed and able to be ordained and inducted as their pastor. In the meantime they wished Gibb to preach each Sunday in their Church and reside in the manse. Gibb accepted the Footscray offer with alacrity and provoked the indignation of some members of Presbytery who saw his appointment to an irregular 'student missionary' office as a challenge to Presbytery's authority to regulate appointments to parishes. At a social gathering on 22 July 1882, designed to welcome Gibb and his wife to Footscray, several presbyters attacked the congregation for choosing an unordained student in preference to an ordained minister of the Church. Gibb was

5. Duncan McEachran (1828-1915) was minister to the Gaelic congregation, Carlton, Melbourne. John Laurence Rentoul (1846-1926) ministered to St. George's Church, St. Kilda, Melbourne. In 1883 he was appointed professor of exegesis and apologetics at Ormond College. Murdoch MacDonald (1832-1906) was minister of Toorak parish until his appointment to the chair of systematic theology and church history in 1883. James Nish was the clerk of the Victorian Presbyterian General Assembly and used his knowledge of Assembly procedure and Church law to the conservative cabal's advantage.

offended and at the conclusion of his morning sermon on 23 July he informed his congregation that he:

regretted that the tone of some of the rev. gentlemen who addressed the audience should have led strangers to suppose that the congregation had acted contrary to ecclesiastical law, or at variance with Presbyterian authority in selecting him, and that the press should have fallen into the error of taking the view of the remarks made.⁶

He deplored any suggestion that he was challenging church authority and denied that the Footscray congregation wished to over-ride Church law. The editor of the Independent added his support for Gibb in a footnote to his report on Gibb's morning sermon:

We are pleased to learn that the opposition...to the sensible preference of the congregation for one who is so well suited to their requirements is of no importance, as he has only to be listened to for a few minutes to know that he is the right man in the right place.⁷

Gibb's unusual situation - that of an unordained pastor - drew comment within Presbyterian circles outside Australia. An Aberdeen newspaper columnist noted:

Mr Gibb, who has been chosen by the Church members, is only recently from the mother-country, and is as yet a student of Ormond College. It appears that the choice is against all ecclesiastical law, and also the desire of the Presbytery, as Mr Gibb has not yet been ordained. That the choice will, however, prove a wise one is beyond cavil, as the gentleman appears especially adapted to the path he has chosen.... He has an impressive appearance, a good voice, ready delivery, and is succinctly logical, and above all, has energy and earnestness, that show it is not mere profession, but that his heart is in his work.⁸

As a student-pastor Gibb was personable, dynamic and able. He was also a child of that marriage of pietist Evangelicalism with the narrow scholastic mood of Calvinist confessionalism that pervaded most areas of Scottish religious life in the nineteenth century. His vigorous ethical code, with

6. Advertiser, Footscray, 29 July 1882.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Daily Free Press, 29 September 1882.

its stern denunciation of social injustice and private impropriety, soon won him acclaim from the conservative party within Presbytery, a group that appreciated hypersensitivity of conscience. Despite the parlous state of his parish's finances Gibb refused to allow raffles at his Church bazaar. The editor of the Advertiser noted this stern puritanic immovability and patronisingly applauded Gibb as 'a most excellent gentleman', but one who:

is apparently not well versed in some of the peculiarities indigenous to the colonials. He has a most decided objection to raffling at bazaars, and calls it wicked. Australian human nature, however, winks at the slight dissipation, and would sooner prefer to part with their shillings in a little excitement caused by a lucky bag than in making a straight out purchase of two or three pounds at shows of this particular kind. A longer sojourn in the colonies will probably alter the rev. gentleman's views in little amusements where the motives that prompt them are good ones.⁹

Gibb did not 'wink at the slight dissipation', and obstinately replied on 13 December that as the bazaar had raised close on £300 'it is now very evident that a bazaar may be quite successful without a single raffle'.¹⁰

Gibb found himself well suited to the ethical temper of the Victorian Presbyterian Church. He also found the theological teaching at Ormond College, a Presbyterian foundation on the grounds of the University of Melbourne, familiarly orthodox and confessionalist. Principal John Cairns had allowed no novel doctrine to intrude into the syllabus at King's College, Edinburgh, and the professors of Ormond College were fixed to a similar purpose. At Ormond College Gibb enrolled for the final year course in theology and was fed a theological diet of Scholastic Calvinism, served up in Charles Hodge of Princeton's three volume Systematic Theology.¹¹ Hodge

9. Advertiser, 25 November 1882.

10. Ibid., 13 December 1882.

11. Charles Hodge (1797-1879) was the principal architect of the confessionalist 'Princeton theology'. His three volume Systematic Theology was written between 1871-1873. Winthrop Hudson in Religion in America, New York, 1965 p.166 notes of Hodge that 'while Hodge attempted to keep Presbyterianism in a theological straitjacket, it has been justly pointed out that his learning, doctrinal rigor, respect for confessional tradition, and insistence upon intelligible discussion did much in succeeding years to prevent anti-intellectual tendencies, sentimentality and emotional partisanship from overwhelming theological concern'. See also Claude Welch, Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century, Yale, 1972, pp.201-204.

held to the plenary inspiration of the Bible, made a few token concessions to the findings of astronomers and geologists, and rejected both Darwin's hypothesis and Biblical 'higher criticism'. As Hodge proudly asserted that during his fifty years at Princeton no theological novelty had lodged in the school of theology, Gibb was in no danger of subversion to heterodoxy. At Ormond College in 1882 it seemed that Schleiermacher and the exponents of the new historico-critical theology, D.F. Strauss and F.C. Baur, had never been born. Gibb's teachers were not involved in the nineteenth century theological struggle to affirm the humanity of Jesus. The reactionary development of Hodge's 'Princeton theology' allowed conservative theologians to dismiss new challenges to their epistemology and re-state nineteenth century supernaturalism.

The teaching staff at the Theological Hall of Ormond College were part-time professors, pastors who doubled as parish ministers and teachers. The Hall was dominated by two lecturers, both arch-conservatives, heresy hunters, and leaders in the Victorian Church's conservative confessionalist party. Murdoch MacDonald and J.L. Rentoul were both elected full-time professors in 1883 and were popularly referred to as 'the fighting professors', a tribute to their persistent heresy hunting. Under their guidance Gibb was prepared for a ministry better suited to seventeenth century Massachusetts than to nineteenth century Victoria.

Gibb's application to his theological studies and to his pastoral duties pleased his tutors. His organisational aptitude revealed itself in his foundation and promotion of the Ormond College Missionary Society, an organisation he copied from a United Presbyterian model. The aims of this society were two-fold: to develop the latent speaking talents of Ormond College students and to increase the Victorian Presbyterian Church's zeal for foreign missions. The fathers of the Church nodded their approval at the foundation of a student missionary association and agreed that the founder, Gibb, was a zealous and evangelical young man. Their satisfaction with Gibb's progress was conveyed to the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland by Donald MacDonald, Foreign Missions convener for the Victorian Presbyterian Church General Assembly, in mid-1882:

Mr Gibb is proving a very good man, and he is likely to be licensed and settled in a few months.... Please send us some more like him, that is young men, licensed or

approaching license, with some experience of addressing meetings and in home mission work.¹²

As 1882 drew to a close Gibb's desire for full ministerial status became increasingly urgent. For seven months he had successfully performed several of the functions of the regular ministry and he now believed himself to be more than ready to accept the added duties and increased stipend that accompanied ordination. On 5 September 1882 the Melbourne Presbytery received a petition from 'Mr James Gibb, Student', wherein Gibb pleaded that he had:

attended a full curriculum of the University of Aberdeen, that during his arts curriculum he had attended one of the classes of the Theological Faculty...and another Theological Class outside the University, and had gained distinction in both, that he had thereafter attended one full Session in the Theological Hall, Ormond College, and praying that his course of study might be recommended to the General Assembly as sufficient to qualify for license.¹³

Gibb's prayer was answered on 5 December when the clerk of the General Assembly informed the clerk of Melbourne Presbytery that Gibb had been granted an exit certificate from the Theological Hall. (He was one of five exit students.) This did not mean that Gibb was at once free to accept a call to a vacant parish. He had first to be examined orally by the Presbytery before presbyters were satisfied that he was sound in doctrine and ready to be licensed as a probationer to the ministry. The Presbytery examined Gibb in Theology, Biblical studies and Church History and on 19 December 1882 granted him his licence.

James Gibb, licentiate of the Church and probationer to the ministry, had no sooner resumed his seat than a petition from the Footscray congregation, prepared well in advance of the occasion, was placed before the Presbytery, calling for a settlement of their vacant parish in favour of the new licentiate. However, the pedants of the Melbourne Presbytery had still not finished with Gibb. Although the Presbytery had examined him thoroughly and tested his preaching before granting him a licence the

12. Quoted in United Presbyterian Record, Edinburgh, 1 December 1882.

13. Presbytery of Melbourne Minute, F/124, 5 September 1882.

same Presbytery decided that Gibb, as a candidate for ordination, needed to be examined again. He was allowed less than one week to prepare two discourses based on texts selected by Presbytery examiners. Irritated by this uncalled for display of presbyterial authority Gibb arrived before his examiners with two sermons he had previously preached to the Footscray congregation, based on texts other than those selected by the examiners. He informed presbyters that he regarded four days notice of the subjects for his discourses as inadequate for proper preparation and, with sensible tact, added that he had been ill for three of the four days.¹⁴ His offer to submit the sermons of his own choosing was accepted by a surprised Presbytery and after due deliberation the candidate for ordination was pronounced orthodox.

On 6 February 1883 a unanimous call from the Footscray congregation in favour of James Gibb was reported to the Presbytery. Ninety-one communicant members and eighty-eight adherents had appended their signatures. On 5 March Gibb was ordained into the Presbyterian ministry and inducted into the pastoral charge of Footscray. At last he was an ordained minister and moderator of his own Kirk session. He was also the recipient of an annual stipend of £330.6s.8d. from a poor suburban parish that received from its collections and pew rents only £426.15s.6d. in the year of Gibb's ordination.¹⁵

Freed from the necessity of further formal theological study Gibb could now devote his time and effort to his new parish and to reading theology and literature of his own choice. His parish boundaries encircled a semi-industrial borough where most of the labour force was employed in the Victorian Sugar Works, the Apollo Candle Company, the Melbourne Woollen Mills and the Victorian Pyrites and Smelting Works. The Evangelical Revival had injected a concern for the moral and cultural uplifting of the working classes into Scottish church life. Gibb represented this concern in his establishment of the Footscray Presbyterian Church Mutual Improvement Association. Lectures were delivered each week by visiting ministers and educators, and the scope and style of those presented is exemplified by an

14. Presbytery of Melbourne Minutes, F/124, 5 December 1882.

15. Footscray Presbyterian Church Balance Sheet, 30 September 1883.

address on 'Hamlet', given by Gibb in late May 1883.

After surveying the recent theories on the play's dating, and after summarising the play's major incidents, Gibb then addressed himself to discussing Goethe's Wilhelm Meister - especially the assessment of Ophelia made in that work. His conclusion suggests that his touchstone for judging the value of any literary work was its usefulness to the Christian message:

and though Hamlet himself is a sceptic, even doubting sometimes the very existence of virtue - "there's nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so," - the whole tragedy is an admirable enforcement of the truth that the end of sin is death.¹⁶

Gibb delivered similar lectures - on Robert Burns and Norman MacLeod - both romantic figures, throughout Victoria, Tasmania, and, in 1884, Dunedin. In Footscray Gibb ministered to a working class community similar to the Aberdeen suburb of his childhood. His attempt to bring culture and education to his working class parishioners may have been a repayment of his debt to his working class parents and to the congregation who had largely made his university and theological education possible.

How did the Footscray community react to the new Presbyterian minister? The editor of the Independent, who did the rounds of the Footscray churches in the second half of 1883, was impressed by Gibb's person and preaching: 'All the glories of a new gown, with very wide sleeves, are well displayed, for he is a goodly man of goodly size and breadth of shoulders'.

The editor praised Gibb's diction and his 'well thought out discourse' and concluded:

I shall go there again...for I believe the preacher to be in earnest in trying to do good to the hearers, and when he forgets himself, and thinks only of them, he soars into a rugged eloquence th t rivets attention.¹⁷

16. Independent, 2 June 1883.

17. Ibid., 6 October 1883.

Although Gibb immersed himself in pastoral activity he was required to play his part in Presbytery and General Assembly affairs. His parish was no island refuge from the storms that raged within Victorian Presbyterianism. He was soon caught up in the conservative cabal's persecution and prosecution of Charles Strong,¹⁸ the able and erudite minister of Melbourne's most important Presbyterian charge - Scots Church. Strong's liberal attitude toward the uses of the Sabbath and his rejection of crude sacrificial explanations of the Atonement led to a fierce struggle between the confessionalist party and the few liberals who survived within the Presbytery of Melbourne. Strong was everything the Presbytery's conservative cabal was trained to hate. His established Church of Scotland moderatism was anathema to these colonial sons of the Disruption. His gentlemanly courtesy in debate incensed opponents who could not shout down his persistent logic. He had studied theology under John Caird who insisted that his students examine theology as philosophers rather than as dogmatists, and saw theology as an evolving and changing awareness of God's ways and not as a final set of propositions. Strong understood and quoted from Hegel, Lessing, Schleiermacher, Emerson, Strauss and Baur. The very mention of their names by Strong was sufficient evidence to some Melbourne presbyters that he supped with the devil without the benefit of a long spoon.

Strong's greatest offence, during Gibb's ministry in Victoria, was occasioned by his anti-Sabbatarian views. However, in 1880 he had given the Presbytery of Melbourne's confessionalists cause to suspect that his theology of the Atonement was less than orthodox and his enemies allowed their remembrance of this infringement of Calvinist orthodoxy to enflame their attacks against him. Strong's theories concerning the Atonement were advanced in 1880 in an article in the Victorian Review wherein he surveyed the development of the various doctrines of the Atonement and noted their reflection of the cultural situation whence they arose. He contended that figures of speech should not be mistaken for exact definition, that all explanations of the death of Christ should be interpreted with a view to the context of their place and time of origin, and that the deep need of the human soul to be one with God and God's

18. An excellent account of Strong's career is given in C.R. Badger, The Reverend Charles Strong and the Australian Church. Melbourne, 1971.

concern to make this possible, are capable of innumerable descriptions. Strong insisted:

The problem of Christian thought has been latterly how to present the Atonement as a moral and spiritual fact accomplished within humanity, not as a transaction carried on between God and the Devil or between the Father and the Son outside of man. [The problem is] how to reach the spiritual idea which is thought to underlie and constitute the very essence of the doctrine, and to show how God and man are really, and not merely legally, made one in Christ.¹⁹

Strong said nothing that a vocal and sizeable school of German and English-speaking theologians had not previously included in their lectures and publications, at least from the 1840s. He said sufficient, however, for his opponents to imagine his theological position to be an amalgam of the rationalism the Evangelicals had identified and attacked in the 1830s in Scotland, and an expression of Unitarian propositions.

In his article Strong disparaged some of confessionalist Calvinism's essential doctrine - the death of Christ as a penal substitution and the idea that God demanded legal satisfaction from man. Presbytery examined Strong's article and determined that 'the teaching of the article taken as a whole appeared to leave out the essential element of the Atonement, namely the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ'. Strong was addressed as an erring brother and urged to 'make these essential facts prominent in the future'.²⁰

After one year's interlude in Britain Strong returned in October 1882. He became almost at once involved in a controversy over the proper use of the Sabbath. In November Strong preached a sermon based on Paul's words in Romans XIV.5: 'One man esteemeth one day above another, another man esteemeth every day alike'. In the course of his sermon Strong declared that the point at issue was not whether the Sabbath was protected by one of the Ten Commandments but how it should be kept by a conscience enlightened by Christ. Directing his attention to one of Melbourne's most

19. Victorian Review, Melbourne, Vol., No. 12, 1880 p. 772. The emphases are Strong's.

20. Presbytery of Melbourne Minutes, F/124, 3 July 1882.

controversial issues - whether the public library, museum and national gallery should be opened on Sundays - Strong was provocatively forthright. He argued that 'So far from the throwing open of such a place of amusement and refreshment being a breach of Divine law, it is rather a breach of that law to keep them closed'.²¹ With his anti-Sabbatarian arguments as with his Atonement theology Strong began from Schleiermacher's Christocentric premise to demand that all Christian theology and convention be made subject to a humanized Christ. Even Strong's Christocentrism did not save him from the wrath of a Presbyterian faction that regarded the Sabbath as a pillar of social order and civilization.

Strong reinforced his stand on 3 May 1883, when in company with several leading ecclesiastics, lawyers, academics and aldermen, he addressed a gathering of three thousand citizens at the Town Hall. In seconding a motion in favour of Sunday opening of the city's cultural amenities he provocatively asserted that the gloomy and austere view of Sunday held by Sabbatarians 'emanated from the English Puritans, not from Scotland'.²²

Gibb's confessionalist mentors reacted speedily to Strong's apostasy. The next day the Moderator of the General Assembly led a deputation to the Victorian premier, James Service, a religious sceptic. The premier was bluntly reminded that the Church controlled a sizeable bloc of votes 'to whose gratitude he would entitle himself' if he intervened to close the cultural centres on Sundays.²³ Alarmed, Service at once corresponded with the trustees and advised them that the government would prefer them to keep the peace. Not all the trustees were intimidated and by a majority of one the premier's advice was declined.

The issue now took on the flavour of a cause célèbre with Gibb's tutor, Rentoul, and the arch-Sabbatarian, McEachran, leading a counter-attack by the Sunday Observance Committee at a mass meeting held on 7 May. This meeting was attended by as many enemies of their cause as friends. Rentoul

21. Argus, Melbourne, 10 February 1883.

22. Advertiser, Geelong, 4 May 1883.

23. Argus, 4 May 1883.

did the Sabbatarians little good by the arguments he presented:

The working men did not want the Library and Gallery open on Sundays (Loud cries "We do"). They would not go into the Public Library, but to the public houses, and the day would become to them a day of drudgery. (At this stage the meeting became considerably disturbed, and for some minutes the speaker was unable to proceed).²⁴

The Sabbatarians had powerful supporters. Most Melbourne editors were quick to affirm the value of the traditional Sabbath. Gibb's supporter, the editor of the Independent declared:

The toilers should be the last to give the slightest countenance to any attempt, under any guise, to tamper with or reduce the value or generality of the Sunday observance, for it is their own liberty, their rights as men that they are bartering and losing in each breach made in the universality of the rest day.²⁵

Where did Gibb stand on this issue? Not unexpectedly he is found standing cheek to jowl with his ecclesiastical mentors. On 13 May 1883 he informed his congregation that a petition against the action of the trustees of the Public Library awaited signature at the close of service. (Throughout his career Gibb mounted public petitions in favour of his crusades. This was the first of many.) He 'made a warm appeal to every one over the age of sixteen to give their voice against the desecration of the Sabbath'.²⁶ That Gibb's family and church background induced an intense veneration of the Sabbath and a typical nineteenth century Presbyterian concern for its strict observance is obvious from a letter published by his brother George on 23 August 1882:

Last Sunday forenoon while coming out of the Ferryhill Free Church [Aberdeen] I was sorry to observe two young men on bicycles peddling their way through the thick of the people issuing from that place of worship. Being a rider myself I am naturally anxious that we should maintain a good name.... There are members who abuse the Sabbath...and that alone is sufficient to bring the whole body of bicyclists into disrepute.²⁷

24. Argus, 8 May 1883.

25. Independent, 12 May 1883.

26. Ibid., 19 May 1883.

27. Daily Free Press, 23 August 1883.

Gibb stood firm as a Sabbatarian though distressed by the scandal promoted by ministers of religion engaged in public dispute. In July 1883 a public exchange of views between Gibb and the editor of the Independent showed Gibb vainly attempting to play down the Strong controversy and present an image of ministerial unity and goodwill. Gibb's attempt was instigated by McEachran's motion of censure on 3 July when it was agreed that 'the Presbytery expresses extreme regret at the conduct of the Rev. Charles Strong in relation to the Sabbath, but resolve to travel no further in the matter'.²⁸ Referring to this event the editor observed that 'the Rev. Charles Strong is again in hot water with the Presbytery' and noted that 'a very acrimonious debate is said to have taken place in presbytery over the matter'.²⁹ Gibb replied in high dudgeon, accused the editor of 'clumsy humour' and 'untruth', and then asserted 'the Presbytery considered Mr Strong's action as very unwise, and out of harmony with the principles of the church wherewith he is connected. But only expressions of regret, not of anger...were made use of'.³⁰

The consensus of Melbourne newspaper accounts of the Presbytery debate is at variance with Gibb's contention. Admittedly the press had been excluded from proceedings and all information later given to journalists would have been well flavoured by the protagonists. Even so the newspaper reports of the temper of the Presbytery's deliberations are in character with attacks made on Strong by his same opponents outside Presbytery.

The editor of the Independent now numbered Gibb amongst Strong's persecutors and on 21 July sarcastically submitted 'an amended account of events at the Melbourne Presbytery:

There was no acrimonious debate...no wrangling for precedence amongst the revd. brethren...nor was the press excluded. All the brethren congratulated Mr Strong on the position taken up by him, and not one of them raised any question of obsolete laws of the church to stifle public discussion or to keep the

28. Presbytery of Melbourne Minutes, F/124, 3 July 1883.

29. Independent, 7 July 1883.

30. Ibid., 14 July 1883.

congregations from knowing how well their ministers dwelt in unity.... (A joke lies about here, if it is not seen send a stamped envelope and explanation will follow).³¹

As the heat of battle intensified, Gibb's attendances at Presbytery became less frequent. It is difficult to give a satisfactory explanation for this turn of events. His health may have deteriorated; throughout his life he was faced with a need to occasionally lighten his load or go on holiday after a decline in health caused by asthma or diabetes. A more likely explanation is that he was deeply involved in a new parish activity, the introduction of religious instruction into three state schools within Footscray borough. In September 1883 the Victorian Minister of Public Instruction gazetted regulations that permitted the clergy to use state schools for religious instruction, outside regular school hours. The Footscray Protestant clergy secured permission from the local educational authority, the Board of Advice, and began to hold classes at the close of afternoon school. There was some public reaction to this new venture - several children were withdrawn from the state schools and enrolled in Roman Catholic schools - and Gibb and his brother ministers were involved in publicly justifying their experiment.³² However, it is possible that Gibb may have grown tired of the Victorian Church's feuds.

If Gibb deliberately busied himself in his parish with a hope that he might remain relatively uninvolved in his Presbytery's wranglings, his hope was soon shown to be ill-founded. On 1 August one of Victoria's most respected and provocative citizens, Mr Justice Higinbotham,³³ addressed the Scots Church Literary Society, with Strong in the chair. Higinbotham's subject was 'Science and Religion' and during his lecture he touched on the growing division between the clergy and educated laity in reaction to the

31. Independent, 21 July 1883.

32. Ibid., 2 February 1884; 23 February 1884.

33. Judge George Higinbotham (1826-1892) was sometime editor of the Argus, member of the Victorian Legislative Assembly, a judge of the Supreme Court from 1880 and Chief Justice from 1886. In 1886, as chairman of a Royal Commission to inquire into the common school system, he advocated that primary education be exclusively secular. See Denis Grundy, Secular, Compulsory and Free, Melbourne, 1972.

new theology and Darwinist theories on the origins of man. His tone and the direction of his lecture were not inimical to religion - only to anthropomorphism and philosophical inflexibility. He contended:

arbitrary dealing, capricious favour, vengeful punishment, sudden dispassionate change, are attributes that are wholly unthinkable in regard to the Creator (loud applause) by an educated layman in the present day.

Higinbotham attacked those 'zealots who believe that religious knowledge came to a dead stop for ever in 1643'. He concluded:

The lesson of the whole thing is...that religion, like everything else, must own the sway of the great doctrine of evolution which embraces all living things; and that the Church which brands a man as a heretic for refusing to be bound by the iron chains of ancient Puritans is no whit less in error than the church which arraigned Galileo before the torturers for declaring that the stars do not go round the earth and that the earth itself goes round the sun.³⁴

McEachran and his party were beside themselves with anger, accusing Strong of allowing his Church hall to be used as a platform for secularist propaganda and lending support to Higinbotham's views by his presence at the meeting. Strong's theology of the Atonement was again brought into question. Presbytery came close to fisticuffs, and Robert Stout who was in Melbourne to address a Freethinkers' conference, exclaimed in mock horror:

In this beautiful city of Melbourne, the Australian Paris, a presbytery has solemnly and almost unanimously condemned the clergyman and committee of a church for giving the use of the building to one of the ablest, most cultured, and most exemplary of citizens, who told us that, notwithstanding the advance of science, we could still worship God as the Father and take Christ as a living example.³⁵

The Presbytery of Melbourne determined to bring Strong to book and opened an inquisitorial enquiry into his Christological views, his anti-Sabbatarian pronouncements and his secularist tendencies. Strong was brought to trial on a charge of heresy in an emotionally supercharged

34. Argus, 2 August 1883.

35. Ibid., 13 August 1883.

atmosphere fittingly described in an Argus editorial as 'Donnybrook Fair'.³⁶ Christological controversies from the early Christian centuries reappeared, latent feuds of the Disruption sprang to life and ministerial rivalries and jealousies were given full vent. Gibb, young and inexperienced in church politics, does not appear to have considered that Strong's ability to out-preach and out-think his presbyterial colleagues might have made them only too willing to find an excuse to depose him. Accusations of ancient Arianism and modern Unitarianism were levelled at Strong by Gibb's former teachers, Rentoul and MacDonald. Gibb did not give Strong any benefit of doubt; in his private correspondence, and by his vote in Presbytery he agreed with the judgment of his conservative mentors.

On 22 September 1883 Strong delivered a lecture in Footscray, to an audience of two hundred, with the editor of the Independent presiding. Strong lectured on 'Dean Stanley' and portrayed the dean as a radical theologian 'who used his power as a critic to clear away the non-essential, and bring the moral to light.'³⁷ Gibb did not attend and his attitude to Strong's presence in Footscray may have been referred to by H.F. Scott, the Anglican vicar of Footscray,³⁸ who, when moving a vote of thanks to Strong announced:

The lecturer is perhaps the best abused and the most popular clergyman at present in Victoria.... Were I belonging to his denomination, I should not be found amongst his accusers. Last night I was told I would be considered a heretic for having Mr Strong to lecture. Well, I am willing to be charged with heresy if a heretic is one who values culture, kindness, and practical Christianity.³⁹

In November 1883, when the theological conservatives moved their attack on Strong into the arena of the Presbyterian General Assembly, Gibb

36. Argus, 22 September 1883. On this occasion the editor likened the protagonists to the 'Big-endians' and 'Little-endians' in Swift's Gulliver's Travels.

37. Independent, 22 September 1883. Dean Arthur Penrhyn Stanley (1815-1881) was a Broad Church Anglican divine who held liberal theological views. As Dean of Westminster he invited a Unitarian to ~~revive~~ ^{receive} Holy Communion.

38. Henry Forde Scott was inducted vicar of Footscray in 1876. He was also chaplain to H.M. Prison, Melbourne. See Crockford's Clerical Directory, London, 1894.

39. Independent, 22 September 1883.

moved from a passive to an active position and stood up to be counted amongst Strong's opponents. On 16 November Stewart Robinson moved, and Gibb seconded, that:

Mr Strong be invited to...disavow all complicity with the erroneous doctrines of Mr Justice Higinbotham's lecture, and so declare his faith in the true deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the propitiatory character of His death, and the real resurrection of His body from the dead.⁴⁰

Joseph Hay, a minister of liberal theology who attempted to shield Strong, and was soon to be hounded from the Church for so doing, realised that Strong could not affirm 'the propitiatory character' of Christ's death, and moved an amendment. Hay attempted to persuade the Assembly that 'it is not expedient to put such a proposal to Mr Strong'. His amendment received support from a meagre forty-two votes. Gibb and one hundred and forty-two others voted for the original motion.⁴¹ Strong resigned and left Australia, later to return to be minister to the 'Australian Church'.⁴²

Gibb had learnt the inquisitorial craft well during the Strong affair and on his return in June 1884, from one month as guest preacher at the First Church of Otago, he showed himself eager to take a lead in rooting out heresy root and branch.⁴³ At the Presbytery of Melbourne's July meeting he joined Stewart Robinson of St. Kilda (the same Robinson who less than one year before had moved against Strong) in a successful motion to remove W.G. Fraser from the interim-moderatorship of Scots Church. Fraser, who was generally sympathetic to Strong, had chaired a meeting of the Scots congregation when it was decided to ask the Victorian Legislature to pass a bill that would allow the Scots parish to withdraw, with their property

40. Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, 16 November 1883.

41. Ibid.

42. The 'Australian Church', a popular Melbourne based religious body with a latitudinarian creed, was founded by Strong in 1885. Its one congregation lingered on until 1942. See Badger, *passim*.

43. Gibb ministered to the First Church congregation during May 1884. While the First Church awaited the arrival of a new minister from Scotland ministers from Victoria were invited to preach for four Sundays each. For an account of Gibb's preaching at First Church for May 1884, see Morning Herald, 12 May 1884.

intact, from the Victorian Presbyterian Church. The editor of the Chronicle acidly commented that:

One of the Footscray parsons has been distinguishing himself during the week.... Many of the elder members of the presbytery seem to have done no more than cast their silent vote against their brother. Rev Gibb is evidently qualifying himself for one of the fighting professorships, and in the course of time may become as glorious as the great Larry Rentoul, or, McEachran. We wonder how these pugilistic churchmen "shape" at the bedside of the dying sinner.⁴⁴

McEachran was pleased with his apprentice's progress and went out of his way to provide Gibb with additional experience. The Presbytery of Melbourne had been for some months involved in a dispute with Scots Church. Some Scots Church officials had persisted in their attempts to introduce a bill into the colonial legislature that if passed would allow their congregation, with its property, to secede from the union of 1859. McEachran requested that the Presbytery permit Gibb to replace him as their Assembly spokesman in this matter.

From the close of 1884 Gibb, with McEachran's mantle about him, showed a new self-assurance in the courts of the church. That he now felt his position sufficiently strong to differ occasionally from his mentors on non-theological matters was shown at the February meeting of Presbytery in 1885. On this occasion a letter was received from A. Hardie, minister of Ballarat, who urged the Presbytery to protest against the annexation of the New Hebrides by France. Gibb, not yet the Imperialist of his later ministry, opposed the sending of any protest, and expressed his conviction:

that the Presbyterian Church of Victoria would not be seized with that mania for annexation.... There were other nations who were quite as entitled to annex territory as England.⁴⁵

Gibb's point was not accepted but his speech evidently impressed Presbytery who appointed him a member of a committee instructed to prepare and forward a protest to the Queen.

44. Chronicle, Footscray, 26 July 1884.

45. Age, Melbourne, 4 February 1885.

At Presbytery on 4 August Gibb supported W.S. Rolland's motion in favour of a course of popular lectures on revealed religion. The proposers intended these lectures 'to counteract popular scepticism'.⁴⁶ Gibb's concern was enhanced by the delivery of a series of addresses on atheism in the Hall of Science, by Joseph Symes, a vice-president of Charles Bradlaugh's National Secular Society, who arrived in Melbourne in February 1884. However, by this time the more moderate members of Presbytery were alarmed at the damage done by internecine feuding to the Church's reputation and her numerical strength. P. Murdoch persuaded the presbyters to adjourn temporarily the motion and so doing he pointedly warned that 'difficulties arose...in the way of the doctrine to be taught' at any public lectures.⁴⁷

At this same meeting support was sought for the Victorian government's new Licensing Bill, a bill designed to tighten regulations governing the Sunday sale of alcoholic beverages and allowing considerable local option in regulating the trade. Gibb was not a prohibitionist; it was not yet the age of the great prohibitionist crusade. He believed that too many homes were ruined by undisciplined drinking and he supported any effort by local bodies to moderate sales and decrease this misery. Gibb supported the new legislation but he was not convinced that the Church fully realised the seriousness of the problem. He argued that:

the Presbyterian Church might come out much more strongly as a church than they did on this drink question.... In this matter they were a long way ahead of the Old Country (Laughter). As a rule he thought they were a long way behind the Old Country.⁴⁸

Gibb's speech received a mixed reception. While Dr D. MacDonald humorously interjected 'a new chum yet!'; D. McKenzie was annoyed and attacked Gibb for 'a homily, I think, we did not deserve'.⁴⁹

46. Herald, Melbourne, 4 August 1885.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*

On 1 September 1885 Rolland and Gibb re-introduced their motion favouring a course of public lectures to rebut freethinkers, atheists and heretics. Murdoch, well aware that Presbyterian disunity would soon be revealed in any course of public lectures on theology, again attempted to delay the motion. He argued that 'only trained theological minds could grasp the issues' involved.⁵⁰ Murdoch's intense opposition to Rolland's and Gibb's plan suggest he believed that secularists would have a field day when faced by a theologically divided Church. He failed by one vote to defeat Gibb's motion and Gibb found himself elected to an arrangements committee instructed to select suitable speakers. Luckily for the Church enthusiasm for a public sortie against Melbourne's secularists soon dwindled and the Presbytery wisely devoted its time to other interests.

The more outspoken Gibb became, the more he was identified with McEachran, Rentoul and Murdoch MacDonald. His inquisitorial tactics provoked increased criticism from suburban newspapers. The editor of the Independent warned the Presbyterian clergy 'that their influence was on the wane; that their people begin to despise them'.⁵¹ Strong now held Sunday service in the Melbourne Town Hall and the editor revealed that while Strong's offering plate was heavily laden Scots Church collections were dwindling. Gibb and his Kirk session were outraged by this suggestion that a renegade minister was succeeding while orthodox Presbyterianism was failing. Attacking the editor of the Independent, W.M. Clark (who was also a member of the Legislative Assembly), Gibb warned that 'we [Presbyterians] form no inconsiderable section of the population of the borough'.⁵² The editor's anger shows in his reply:

We think that his [Gibb's] influence, so threateningly alluded to in the event of an election will not be so heavy after all, as we are not aware yet that the present member was fore-ordained to reprobation and feel inclined to wait.... We give the Presbyterians of Footscray...credit for a greater amount of common sense than to suppose that they will be led by the nose by Mr Gibb, or that their political opinions will turn on the creed of condemnation of infants long before they were born.⁵³

50. Independent, 31 October 1885.

51. Ibid.

52. Chronicle, 7 November 1885.

53. Independent, 14 November 1885.

Undaunted, Gibb continued to play his role of defender of the faith. At the 1885 General Assembly he moved the adoption of the annual report on the state of religion. He asked the Assembly to:

instruct the Committee to continue their watchful care over the claims of the Sabbath, to use their best opportunity to promote a pure morality within the bounds of the Church, to urge conferences of Presbyterians for fostering spiritual life.⁵⁴

His seconder, G. Anderson, a member of parliament, believed that freethought and immorality were synonymous. With reference to Symes' lectures he protested that the 'Sunday entertainments in the Hall of Science were a disgrace to civilization'.⁵⁵

Sometime in mid-1885 Gibb began to look about him for a larger and more challenging parish. He had done well for himself in his near three years in the colony. In November 1883 his friend John Robertson had predicted 'you will be one of the institutions of the country before long'.⁵⁶ Gibb had not become one of the institutions of Victoria, but by November 1885 he had moved to a position of some consequence within Melbourne's ecclesiastical circles. His success as a parish minister was symbolised by his persuasion of the Footscray congregation to erect a new church. On 29 August 1885 the foundation stone was laid for a £2,700 building, designed to seat five hundred in the nave and an additional three hundred in the transept.⁵⁷

Despite intensive pastoral work Gibb's congregation was still small in numbers; the borough's citizens showed the same reluctance as other uncommitted Victorians to join a Presbyterianism rent by division and public scandal. One hundred and forty-two communicant members, average Sunday attendances of one hundred and forty parishioners, a total annual income of

54. Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, 16 November 1885, p.22.

55. Ibid.

56. John D. Robertson to Gibb, 14 November 1883.

57. Footscray Parish Records, Parish Office, Melbourne.

slightly over £584, and a stipend of £350 per year,⁵⁸ hardly represented a sufficient challenge to Gibb's ability nor sufficient reward for his ambition.

In late 1885 Gibb was invited to accept a New Zealand parish. On 20 July 1885 W.H. Gualter, minister of the First Church of Otago, died suddenly after only five months in his pastorate. Gibb had visited Otago in May 1884 and had preached in First Church. - In 1885 his preaching was still fresh in the minds of several members of the First Church session. His name was submitted to the congregation and accepted with a large supporting vote. On 17 November a call from the First Church to Gibb was placed before the Melbourne Presbytery. At the December meeting Gibb accepted the call with words that drew comment from several Melbourne newspapers. The editor of the Herald praised Gibb's frankness:

The Rev. J. Gibb, of Footscray, is a minister among a thousand. His frankness is surprising, and we may add refreshing. He has received a call from the Presbyterian Church at Dunedin, and informing the Presbytery this morning that he has decided to accept it, he said that he was induced to do so on account of the stipend being larger, and the sphere more extended. Some of the members of the Presbytery, who perhaps would pause before being so frank, opened their eyes in astonishment, but Mr Gibb, who we might add is a young man, was not at all abashed.⁵⁹

The editor of the Bulletin also saluted Gibb's candour:

When a parson speechifies at a wedding breakfast we notice that it is always "respect for the family" which lures him to the board - never the champagne.... Gibb is not ashamed

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58. General Assembly, 1885. Statistics report, cii. Geoffrey Serle assesses the decline in Victorian Presbyterian church-going between 1883 and 1885 in The Rush to be Rich. A History of the Colony of Victoria, 1883-1889, Melbourne, 1971, pp.150-152. Serle suggests that 'internal strife' is the likely explanation for a decline from 1881, when 73,000 communicant members and 55,000 adherents attended the principal weekly service, to 1889, when only 70,000 communicant members and 44,000 adherents attended. The other Christian denominations represented in Victoria show a much gentler decline in membership and church attendance in this period.
59. Herald, 1 December 1885.

to admit that he keeps his eye on the main chance.
 All hail! to a man with the pluck to confess
 (How seldom his like do we find)
 That a parson, in spite of his singular dress,
 Is like all the rest of mankind.⁶⁰

At Gibb's final appearance in the Melbourne Presbytery the great conservatives, McEachran and Murdoch MacDonald, paid tribute to his qualities and talents. At Footscray the combined Presbyterian and Anglican choirs sang their farewell. On 13 January 1886 Gibb, his wife and infant, boarded the Union Steamship Company's Ringarooma, bound for Dunedin.

However, not all wept tears of sorrow at Gibb's departure. The editor of the Independent, commenting on the selection of J. McConnell as Gibb's successor, noted that the departed pastor had been 'an associate of that stern old Presbyterian pope, the Rev. McEachran'. His hope for McConnell was that he might 'prove more able, affable, and less intolerant than his youthful predecessor'.⁶¹

In January 1886 Gibb left the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, the largest and most influential of the Australasian Presbyterian churches, for the small provincial Presbyterian Church of Otago and Southland. His departure from the Victorian pastoral frontier invites an assessment of his impact on that frontier and its impact on him.

Throughout Gibb's three years in Victoria he thought and acted as an expatriate Scot. His adopted Church mirrored Scottish Presbyterian polity, prejudice and party strife, and Gibb quickly fitted into this familiar environment. He was dominated by the concerns of an ecclesiastical sub-culture and appeared to neither know nor need to know of the secular aspirations of the Victorians about him. Gibb arrived in Melbourne with a Scholastic brand of Calvinism in his cabin trunk and with Evangelical Sabbatarianism, Scottish clerical condescension and old world prejudice neatly packed in his suitcases. He left for Dunedin with the same luggage. The growing flood of secularist propaganda and propagandists entering Melbourne in the 1880s

60. Bulletin, Melbourne, 12 December 1885.

61. Independent, 24 April 1886.

stiffened his Calvinism and provoked dogmatic justification rather than an apologetic adaptation of his theological message.

Gibb later became a leader of Protestant Evangelical unity but in Victoria he had little to do with ministers of other Protestant denominations. Although there was a shortage of clerical manpower in Victoria during this period - a shortage that the Anglican bishop of Melbourne, Dr Moorhouse, faced by forming a Pastoral Aid Society to foster pan-Protestant sharing of preaching and pastoral duties - Gibb, and the majority of his Presbyterian colleagues, maintained their traditional aloofness from episcopalians. The rhetoric of traditional inter-denominational rivalries did not disappear in a new Australian setting; Methodists were still denounced as Arminians, Anglicans as latitudinarians and the Pope was still freely identified with the Antichrist. When Gibb did cooperate with the vicar of Footscray, over religious instruction in state schools and in favour of local option licensing control, they met as the ambassadors of foreign powers rather than as brother ministers in a far flung outpost of empire.

Taken all in all the evidence suggests that Gibb did not see Melbourne and Victoria as a new social order, but only as a less cultured replica of the old. Sins identical to those visited by the devil on Scotland appeared to be visited on Melbourne by the same devil. For Gibb and the theological conservatives, as for Strong, Moorhouse, Higinbotham, and the whole liberal crew, Victoria was no real frontier. Their new frontier, the frontier that threw them into confusion and strife, was ideological. Both theological poles were desperately concerned to find a basis for theological certitude and an adequate methodology as they struggled in the century-old wake of the Aufklärung's challenge to supernaturalism.

In this borderland between cosmologies and epistemologies, Strong and his companions attempted to provide a new rationale for their faith by applying the historico-critical technique (an obviously open-ended methodology) to the Biblical records and to previously unchallenged dogma. They sought a liberal accommodation with rationalism whereby a re-stated Christian message might co-exist with the new scientific knowledge and the findings of historians. Strong's position and plight had many parallels throughout the English-speaking world of the late nineteenth century: the trial of the Aberdonian Old Testament scholar, William Robertson Smith, in

1881, the proceedings attempted against Professor William Salmond at Dunedin in 1888, Gibb's own heresy trial in 1890, and the double trial of the Union Seminary Professor, Charles Augustus Briggs, in the 1890s. All these show an identical battle zone and reveal that there was little time lag in the movement of friction from the centres of Protestant thought to Protestantism's geographical frontier.

In contra-distinction to the somewhat iconoclastic liberals the confessionalist reactionaries were conservatives who often manifested a beleaguered garrison mentality. They may be fairly placed in the romantic tradition. Just as the leaders of the Oxford Movement harked back to a medieval ecclesiastical model, so Victoria's Presbyterian confessionalists sought to replicate the Westminster divines' untried plan for a United Kingdom national Presbyterian Church. They saw the Disruption Fathers as knights in shining armour defending the city of God against the satanic forces of rationalist disbelief often disguised in the speculative theology of the Moderates. Their supernaturalism was romantic and their continued reference to a seventeenth century document was antiquarian. They were as much in revolt against speculative intellectualism in the theological realm as Byron and Shelley had been in romantic revolt against literary academism.

Gibb and his brother romantics differed from their theological rivals in goal, methodology, and temperament. Hodge, Murdoch MacDonald, and Gibb began their thinking from the premise that a complete theological system already existed. Their goal was simply to re-affirm this sufficient system with minimal attention to the scientific and philosophical knowledge acquired between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. In method they were less than reactionaries, their goal allowed for some concessions to epistemological change. Thus in 1881, the year prior to Gibb's arrival in Victoria, the Presbytery of Melbourne revised its confessional standard - with the leading conservatives in the van of those demanding changes. McEachran, and his followers, wanted revision - careful, limited, and final revision - that thereafter they might halt dissent by reminding the advocates for further reform that they were challenging a contemporary re-statement, and were without excuse for their heterodoxy. If this was the method employed by the confessionalist romantics, then the Declaratory Act of 1882, the fruit of the revision debates, should not have been a liberal document. It was hardly that. It freed Presbyterian ministers and church officers from

holding to double predestination, without denying that dogma. Children who died in infancy were declared not necessarily damned. Liberty of opinion was granted in interpreting the Mosaic creation narratives, 'the Church guarding against the abuse of this liberty to the injury of its unity and peace'. In the concluding paragraph certain doctrines were established as 'vital' to 'objective, supernatural facts': the Incarnation, the perfect obedience and expiatory death of Christ, and the Resurrection and Ascension.⁶²

The tendency of the reactionary party to persecute and prosecute their opponents may in part be explained by the fact that an individual's extremism is usually multiplied in an environment of like-minded fellows. Beside this is the fact that they were attacked and rejected by a vocal and well educated section of the laity. The editor of the Argus published the entire Westminster Confession - as a three day serial - to point to its shortcomings,⁶³ and in 1883 gave a detailed report of attacks made on the Confession by leading English Presbyterian divines.⁶⁴

In temperament Gibb and his party fit the 'sect type' categorization established by the Dutch sociologist, J.A.A. van Doorn.⁶⁵ Van Doorn's 'sect type' brand as apostasy any deviation from central values and exhibit a minimal toleration of independence within their group. They over-accentuate unity, loyalty and homogeneity. The conservative cabal's persistent harassment of those members of Scots Church who supported Strong's preaching venture in the Town Hall meets van Doorn's first requirement and the Presbytery's over-accentuation of unity, loyalty and homogeneity was well illustrated by the pressure placed on two learned Scottish ministers, A. Douglas and Robert Scott - both finally fleeing from the Presbytery's jurisdiction.

62. Proceedings of the Commission of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, 1882, pp.13-14.

63. Argus, 22, 23, 24 August 1881.

64. Ibid., 13 August 1883. Dr D. Fraser's view was typical: 'A seventeenth century document drawn up with all the firmness and precision of the Puritan mind would hardly be expected to fit the church of the nineteenth century'.

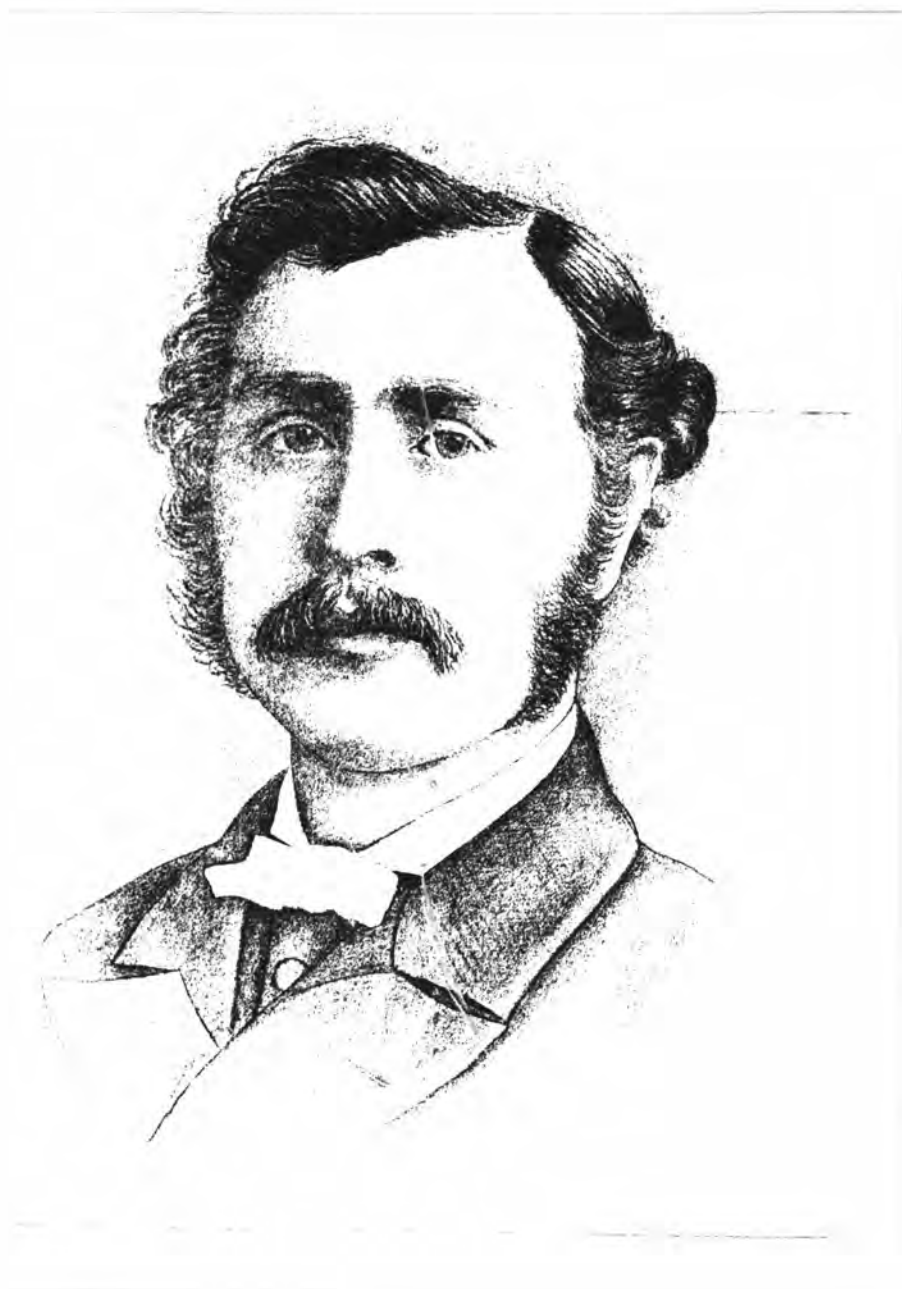
65. Jacques A.A. van Doorn, Professor of Sociology at the Netherlands School of Economics. See van Doorn's essay 'Conflict in Formal Organization' A. de Reuck and Julie Knight (eds); Conflict in Society, London, 1966, pp.111-132.

Yet another circumstance contributed to the fierceness of the conservative reaction to theological liberalism, a realisation by the conservatives that they had lost several important battles. The Sabbatarians lost an important action when on 4 December 1884 the Victorian Legislative Council affirmed the principle of suburban Sunday trains. The same week the Legislative Assembly, without a division, directed the railway commissioners to 'run Sunday trains over the national system whenever...the accommodation is required'.⁶⁶ Not only had the Presbyterian Church of Victoria failed to convince the legislature of the merit in its blue-print for a new Zion, it also failed to recruit enough colonists for heaven. The Church's membership was only keeping pace with the colony's natural population increase. In 1881 133,000, or 15 percent of the population, committed themselves as census Presbyterians. Eight years later, in 1889, still only 15 percent of the population opted for Presbyterianism - and this despite an increase of forty-eight ministers in the interim.⁶⁷

Gibb's three years at the Victorian pastoral frontier were dominated by an intra-mural concern, the Victorian Church's anguished attempt to establish an agreed basis for ideological certitude. Given the intensity of this concern (and this chapter shows an almost total preoccupation with it) Gibb can hardly be blamed for showing little awareness of Melbourne's social problems and for ignoring the plight of cheap labour brought from the Pacific Islands to Australia. He was confined within a small ecclesiastical arena. His perspective was limited by the persisting impact of his Scottish religious heritage reinforced by his conservative Victorian mentors. Amongst the warring theological factions Gibb could only hope by speedily learning the craft of the heresy hunter to advance himself in the esteem of the fathers and brethren. He would not have gained promotion so quickly to the 'office' of apprentice inquisitor had he not been an ambitious, determined, and able young man. McEachran and Murdoch MacDonald were to be proved right in their assessment of Gibb's ability. They correctly gauged that he would soon become an influential leader within the Otago Church. What they did not know, and could not envisage, was that given a different frontier situation their apprentice inquisitor would, within four years, himself be judged 'a heretic'.

66. Argus, 5 December 1884.

67. In Geoffrey Serle, The Rush to be Rich, p. 152.



The new minister of the First Church of Otago, 1886.

Chapter Two

Into the Fire, 1886-1893

When the Church Militant behaves as if it were already the Church Triumphant, it makes these appalling blunders about Joan and Bruno and Galileo and the rest which make it so difficult for a Freethinker to join it; and a Church which has no place for Freethinkers: nay, which does not inculcate freethinking...is guilty of the heresy that theology and science are two different and opposite impulses, rivals for human allegiance.

Bernard Shaw¹

On 27 January 1886, the date of his induction as minister of the First Church of Otago, Gibb did not realise that he had jumped out of a Victorian frying pan into a New Zealand fire. He had every reason to believe that when compared with the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, Otago Presbyterianism was a haven of unity and goodwill. William Salmond, the interim-moderator of the vacant First Church parish, had encouraged this belief in his letter of invitation: 'You know what sort of situation we have here and I cannot but think you will judge it every way better than that of Victoria'.² Salmond had not observed the gathering storm clouds and in 1888 he was tried for heresy himself, while two years later his protege, Gibb, was similarly tried.

Within one year of Gibb's arrival in Presbyterianism's southernmost autonomous Church, battle commenced between Calvinist traditionalists and theological revisionists. Otago's isolation was no protection against the flood of new theological ideas, scientific theories and rationalist criticisms of dogmatic supernaturalism, that had entered Australia in the early 1880s and had eroded ecclesiastical certainty throughout the western world. Twenty-nine years of age, forceful and ambitious, Gibb played an eager and provocative part in the Otago church battles. His challenge to the established leadership of the Church, his mental agility and intolerance of opposition soon incurred the jealous anger of clerics of middling ability

1. Bernard Shaw, Saint Joan, Preface.

2. Salmond to Gibb, 25 September 1885.

who in Scotland would have made little mark in church politics, but in a miniscule provincial church were of necessity given governmental tasks beyond their capacity, and the duty of settling theological issues beyond their learning and mental agility. In Victoria Strong had been martyred by men of this calibre. Gibb, despite his opposition to Strong, like Strong stood intellectually head and shoulders above most of his colonial colleagues. These colleagues, especially those of middling ability, saw Gibb as a threatening newcomer, reacted aggressively and forced Gibb into an increasingly radical position. Only Bannerman, Begg, Waddell and Will (who soon will make their entry) rivalled him in ability and drive.

At the parochial level Gibb's situation in 1886 appeared in every way superior to his former placement. He had left 142 communicant members at Footscray for 540 at First Church; his new parish gathered 1,500 under its pastoral care as opposed to his previous parish's 400 adherents, and he had increased his annual stipend from £330 to £700.³ Beside, he was now the pastor of Otago's oldest and most senior charge; of a congregation that dated its origin from 27 November 1847, the day the Philip Laing began its voyage to Otago with Free Church of Scotland pilgrims. From his substantial manse on Bell hill Gibb looked up at a new Gothic revival church with a 185 foot spire that dominated the Dunedin sky.⁴ Admittedly Gibb had left a lake for a pond. He had moved from a colonial church of thirteen presbyteries, 200 parishes and 177 ministers to a provincial church of more homogenous origins, consisting of but five presbyteries, fifty-seven parishes and fifty ministers.⁵ However, Gibb probably assumed that the pastorate of First Church would give him a place of prestige within Otago's Presbyterian clergy and this advantage seemed to compensate, by Victorian standards, for Otago's isolation and miniscule provincial town.

Gibb arrived in Dunedin ill-prepared for the troubles that were soon to meet him. Salmond had not informed him that at the congregational

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3. Annual Report, First Church of Otago, 1896; Annual Report, Footscray Parish, 1886.
 4. The First Church of Otago's present building was consecrated on 23 November 1873. A brief account of its architecture and history is given in Gordon Parry, Spire on the Hill, Dunedin, 1973.
 5. Proceedings of the Synod of Otago and Southland, 1886 (henceforth Synod). Statistical appendix to the Church Almanac of Victoria, 1886.

meeting where his call was first debated fifty-eight parishioners dissented from his election⁶ - they preferred to await the selection of an inexperienced minister from Scotland rather than risk a clerical fledgling with only four years' experience as an ordained minister. Gibb seems to have also been unaware of the dangers inherent in his translation to a provincial church that possessed no Declaratory Act to register those points where ministers, elders and deacons might differ from their Church's confessional standards. He did know that from the early 1880s revisionists had been involved in a series of attempts to gain relief from the vows demanded of Presbyterian ministers at their ordination, and at every subsequent induction; vows affirming the doctrines of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Longer and Shorter Catechisms. He was obviously unaware of the determination of the Otago old guard to prevent any change in their Church's standards.

Gibb was later to reveal, at his heresy trial, that he had come to Otago with a mistaken impression that the provincial Church allowed the same right to private opinion on minor dogma as had the Victorian Presbyterian Church. His experience in Victoria gave him a strong admiration for the Free Church of Scotland tradition - the rock from which McEachran and Murdoch MacDonald had been hewn. He had no prophetic foreknowledge that churches throughout the English-speaking world would continue to be riven by heresy trials for the remainder of the 1880s and into the 1890s. It was not until he faced the implications of the Otago situation that he realised that the right of private judgement in theological matters, and the right of scholars to pursue their studies without fear of persecution, were at stake. He had come to Victoria from the United Presbyterian Church, a denomination that had passed a Declaratory Act in 1879 to allow itself greater theological freedom. However, Gibb did not begin to value his United Presbyterian heritage until he realised that Free Church of Scotland confessionalism in Otago was antagonistic to reverent biblical criticism and to its proponents. Gibb became a dissenter because he was isolated and rejected by men of lesser ability who had neither the inclination nor the ability to try to understand his plea for limited theological revision. In January 1886 Gibb had no reason to expect that within fourteen months of his arrival in Dunedin he would challenge the theological constitution of the Otago Church, and that in 1890 the inquisitor's apprentice of 1885 would be found guilty of heresy.

6. Minutes of the First Church Kirk session, 24 September 1885.

How speedily did Gibb's reversal of role occur? His ministry was now under the immediate oversight of the Presbytery of Dunedin, a church court where the ministers were mainly liberal in their theology, but where a minority of vocal elders, when confused or under pressure from new ideas, voted heavily in support of any rhetorical defence of Free Church orthodoxy. Within the Synod, the supreme legislative and judicial court of the Church, an old guard led by William Will and William Bannerman⁷ - both pioneer Free Church settlers - and supported by an émigré emeritus professor of theology, James MacGregor, reacted speedily to all moves likely to subvert Calvinist orthodoxy.⁸

In 1886 neither the Synod nor the Presbytery was more than ruffled by the winds of controversy. Gibb immersed himself in his preaching and pastoral duties. He prepared and added forty-eight new communicant members to the First Church roll and formed a Young Men's Literary association after his Footscray model. The cobbler's son, who had received a six year tertiary education, throughout his ministry concerned himself with the education of the working class from which he originated. The literary associations fostered by Gibb, Waddell and ministers in many parts of New Zealand, were the precursors of the W.E.A. Gibb soon gained a reputation as an efficient pastor. He announced on Sunday the streets he would visit in the subsequent week. Newspaper reviews of his sermons show that he preached no novel doctrine in 1886; in the main he seems to have repeated the same pious exhortations and Christocentric themes that made up the bulk of his preaching in Footscray.

During his first year in Otago Gibb was involved in only one major extra-parochial concern. On 7 April the Presbytery of Dunedin appointed him convener of a special committee instructed to assess public opinion

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7. William Will was a Free Church of Scotland minister who arrived in Otago in 1854. He was minister of East Taieri from 1854 and moderator of Synod in 1867 and 1897. Will died in 1912. William Bannerman also arrived in Otago in 1854 and was inducted into the settlement's third charge, Tokomairiro. He resigned his charge in 1884, following a buggy accident, but continued as clerk of Synod until 1901. Bannerman was awarded a D.D. by the University of Edinburgh in 1900. He died in 1903.
8. James MacGregor was previously professor of Divinity at New College, Edinburgh. He was inducted into Columba parish, Oamaru, in 1882. MacGregor died in 1894.

regarding the threatened French annexation of the New Hebrides. Gibb's committee quickly ascertained that in Otago and Southland public opinion ran strongly against the French. Beside being influenced by a Francophobia common to nineteenth century Britons, the provinces' citizens responded well to Presbyterian inspired anti-Romanism, in this case identified with an alleged French conspiracy to expel Otago Presbyterian missionaries from the Synod's oldest mission field. British imperialist sentiment was invoked by the editors of the ecclesiastical and secular press, as was distaste for the French Projet de Loi sur les Recidivistes - a relapsed criminals bill that allowed the transport of incorrigible convicts to the Pacific and liberated them on French Pacific Islands at the end of their sentences.⁹

As convener of this committee Gibb immediately revealed his capacity for leadership and diplomatic skill. Assured of considerable public support Gibb's committee advised the Presbytery to approach the government, and on 24 April the clerk of Presbytery wrote to the premier, Robert Stout, protesting that New Zealand should not acquiesce in French intervention.¹⁰ Stout replied on 27 April and, after informing presbyters that his government was in close consultation with the British government, warned that he hardly expected Britain to go to war over the New Hebrides. The premier urged the Presbytery to strengthen his hand in his negotiations with Britain by making clear whether Presbyterian missionaries would be retained in the group following a French imposition of sovereignty.¹¹ The Presbytery replied with a resolution that drew upon the Victorian Presbyterian Church's success in its attempt to stiffen that state's opposition to a French coup. 'Cordial cooperation with the Government of Victoria' was advocated, in defence of 'the righteous claims of the Colonies and...the inhabitants of these Islands'.¹² Gibb had previously served on a Victorian Church committee instructed to frame a protest to the Queen and the Victorian legislature over

9. An act passed by the French chamber of deputies in May 1885. For a discussion of New Zealand Presbyterian interest in the New Hebridean question prior to 1890, see J.A. Salmond, 'New Zealand and the New Hebrides', in Peter Munz (ed); The Feel of Truth, Wellington, 1969, pp.113-138.

10. Presbytery of Dunedin Minutes, 24 April 1886.

11. Ibid., 20 May 1886.

12. Ibid.

the plight of British subjects and the native population in the New Hebrides. His experience was now drawn upon to advantage and the vigour with which he tackled the first task delegated to him by his new Presbytery brought him speedy recognition as a Church leader. His reward came on 7 July when he was elected the Presbytery's moderator for the following six months.

Gibb's halcyon days drew to a close in the autumn of 1887. Throughout the history of the Christian church reaction to liturgical innovation has usually indicated much deeper dissatisfaction than merely with changes in orders of service. Very often opposition to liturgical change denotes opposition to some theological innovation underlying or coincidental to the new forms of worship. From March 1887 Gibb became increasingly involved in a liturgical controversy that taken at face value could be dismissed as trivial. This clash centred around an attempt on the part of a reformist group within First Church to introduce organ accompaniment to congregational singing in the Sunday services. For A.C. Begg this proposal to defile the psalms of David by the accompaniment of a mechanical device was on a par with the wildest heresy.¹³ Begg, a doyen of Dunedin local body and ecclesiastical committees, determined to fight this innovation at Session, Presbytery and, if necessary, before the Synod itself. Begg contended that instrumental accompaniment to the service of praise, and theological revision, were birds of the same feathers. At a meeting of Session held on 7 March he advanced a counter-motion arguing that the only forms of worship allowed by the precepts of Christ and the apostles are the reading and preaching of the Word, prayer and the public (unaccompanied) singing of praise. Begg argued that during the first six centuries of the church's history instrumental music had not been used in public worship. He concluded his resolution by pronouncing:

Whereas at the reformation from Popery the Presbyterian Church was purged of this among other corruptions...this congregation ...protests against the same being introduced into the public services of the church.¹⁴

13. A.C. Begg arrived in Otago in 1859 and played a vocal role in civic and ecclesiastical affairs. He became a justice of the peace, member of the Otago harbour board, and successfully stood for parliament in 1896. He was a member of most Presbyterian synods and an occasional Presbytery elder. Begg was the leading lay opponent to theological revision in the Otago Church.

14. First Church Kirk session, 24 March 1887.

Begg secured a mere forty-nine votes in support for his protest, while 362 First Church parishioners voted to install an organ.¹⁵ The First Church deacons began to debate the merits of respective organs leaving Begg, in search of redress, to demand that Presbytery grant him leave to appeal to the Synod against this desecration of the Kirk. Gibb himself favoured the introduction of an organ but until this point had managed to remain publicly neutral. Now exasperated by Begg's intransigence he joined Keith Ramsay, a Dunedin shipping owner and the leader of the pro-organ party,¹⁶ in an attempt to persuade the Presbytery to refuse Begg his requested right to appeal. The Presbytery of Dunedin decided for Begg who now counted his pastor amongst his public foes.

Summers in Dunedin are notoriously short and the short summer of contentment that followed Gibb's arrival at First Church soon gave way to three turbulent winters. Gibb helped to provoke the storm. During the early months of 1887 Begg and his ultra-confessionalist friends were given further cause for unease by Gibb's sudden movement away from sermons of a pious and improving nature to a series of teaching sermons, apparently aimed at resolving some of the problems raised by the Tübingen School's application of the historical-critical method to Biblical studies,¹⁷ and by the challenge of theological revisionists to traditional Calvinist Confessionalism. In early March Gibb had informed his congregation that the fourth commandment was not binding on Christians in its original Old Testament sense. He submitted, as Strong had in Melbourne, that Christ had liberated Christians from legalistic sabbath observance and that the sabbath should be observed as the festival of Christ's resurrection. Gibb was certainly not advocating a continental Sunday. However, he at once drew fire from the ultra-Sabbatarian. One Robert Sinclair reminded him that in Matthew 5: 17, 18, Jesus declared 'I am not come to destroy the Law or the Prophets but to fulfil them'.

15. First Church Kirk session, 4 April 1887.

16. Keith Ramsay was a ship owner and shipping agent who arrived in Dunedin in 1862. He served on the city council from 1871-73, and was mayor in 1874-75. Ramsay was chairman of the Dunedin stock exchange for a lengthy period.

17. A school of German New Testament theologians founded by F.C. Baur. The Tübingen theologians applied Hegel's dialectic to New Testament and patristic theology.

Sinclair recited several pages of scriptural texts to rebut Gibb and then charged that Gibb had attacked the Westminster Confession in his sermon:

As to the Confession of Faith, you said it did not altogether suit the United Presbyterian Church...so they added an appendix to it, which (you said) they find very suitable. As for your Scurrilous attack on the Puritans and Covenanters, it is a gross libel, those were the men who were true witness-bearers for Christ and his Covenant, who purchased for their descendants (with their blood and lives) liberty of the Word.¹⁸

Sinclair also referred to a public address given by Gibb at a Dunedin congregational rally. This address was partially reproduced in the Evening Star and one passage in particular was sufficiently provocative for the Presbytery to demand an explanation. Gibb had informed the rally:

People seemed too much inclined to take their religion from the Old Testament. The Ten Commandments were given to a rude people in a rude age - they were not intended to serve the Church of Christ to-day. We had a law to-day higher for intensity, searching and light, and it was our bounden duty as loyal subjects...to obey the commandments of our King [Christ].¹⁹

The clerk of Presbytery, A.M. Finlayson, was most concerned with Gibb's suggestion that the Ten Commandments 'were not intended to serve the Church of Christ to-day'. Gibb at first reacted angrily to the clerk's challenge and noted there had been a delay of five or six weeks between the publishing of his remarks and the raising of the issue. Curbing his anger Gibb explained that he intended no defence of murder or adultery, he wished only to establish the superiority of the law of Christ over the Mosaic code. What he had in mind when delivering his speech was:

that men were often perfectly orthodox in relation to what he might term matters of religion, and by such matters he meant the doctrine of the Atonement and cognate matters, but when they came to examine their lives they found their morality was the bare morality of the Ten Commandments.²⁰

Gibb's new ally, Keith Ramsay, his Presbytery elder, moved that the matter be dropped. Rutherford Waddell, a theological liberal and a Christian

18. Sinclair to Gibb, 9 March 1887. The emphases are Sinclair's.

19. Evening Star, 21 April 1887.

20. ODE, 5 July 1887.

socialist, added his voice to Ramsay's motion. Presbytery agreed but some presbyters must have noted that Gibb was now consorting with radical and dangerous company.

As 1887 continued Gibb intensified his sermon attacks on rigid confessionalism. The congregation swelled under his popular preaching. However, a section of the old congregation found Gibb's new views and his support for liturgical innovation unacceptable and began to transfer their allegiance elsewhere. A.M. Burns, son of the pioneer minister of First Church, and himself a former provincial councillor and member of parliament, resigned from the congregation. Jane Cameron, a minister's widow, wrote privately to Gibb on 24 May:

I feel I ought to tell you how I have been driven from the First Church to which I had looked forward to going...with my daughter and her children - the church where my own husband had preached so often and of which her husband had been the faithful minister.... In your sermons you spoke so disparagingly of Dr Hodge - one of God's wisest and most faithful servants, and so admiringly of Canon Farrer [sic] who denies the truths of the last words the most loving lips - even the Lord's - ever spoke to the multitudes while below. Another Sabbath you denounced the proofs of the Shorter Catechism, and said they were "no proofs at all". And in the Manse you said "the love of God was not taught in the Shorter Catechism".... Then the last time I heard you preach was the worst of all.... You held up Socrates as an example...showing how although he knew not the Saviour, and consequentially never joined himself to Him, yet he had the Spirit of Christ - I could listen no longer - My Saviour's work of salvation was insulted.²¹

By the close of 1887 Gibb was faced by a tight-knit old guard remnant in First Church, who had no intention of being squeezed out by the new minister. Begg led a vocal minority in the Session while John Gillies, also an elder, conducted a personal campaign of passive resistance during Church services by remaining seated during any singing accompanied by instrumental music, all the while reading ostentatiously from his large family bible.

During 1887 Gibb's confessionalist colleagues in Presbytery and Synod merely raised questions when faced by Gibb's seeming heterodoxy. In 1888

21. Jane Cameron to Gibb, 24 May 1887. Frederic William Farrar, dean of Canterbury, was a 'Broad Church Evangelical' influenced by F.D. Maurice. In his Eternal Hope (1877) Farrar questioned the doctrine of eternal punishment. The emphases are Mrs Cameron's.

they assumed much sterner tactics and raised the first formal charges of heresy ever brought before any New Zealand ecclesiastical court. The subject of these charges was not Gibb but his former interim-moderator, William Salmond. Gibb was very much involved with these charges because in 1887 he had seen Salmond elected to the membership of the First Church session. Gibb was now Salmond's minister.

In 1888 Otago's 'Free Church party' - as Gibb's brother George described Gibb's opponents, in a letter from Victoria²² - faced a public challenge they could not ignore. William Salmond had written and published a slender pamphlet, entitled The Reign of Grace, challenging the doctrine of double predestination and maintaining that God's love might well allow an opportunity after death for men to repent, believe, and be saved.²³

On 7 May 1888 Begg initiated proceedings against Salmond at a meeting of the First Church Session. Salmond was accused of promulgating doctrine contrary to the direct teaching of Christ and inconsistent with the Church's confessional standards. Although Salmond resigned from the Session on 19 June Church law required that the charge be transmitted to the Presbytery of Dunedin for judgment. On 4 July 1888 Salmond was indicted for heresy before Presbytery.

William Will took upon himself the office of chief prosecutor at Salmond's trial. Will was later to revise his theological position but in 1888 he was a classical Calvinist and an earnest upholder of his Church's confessional standards. Will accused Salmond of Universalism, an Arminian doctrine that provided for the possible eventual salvation of all men. He began his charges by contrasting Salmond's Arminianism with the Confession's doctrine of election. He then took strong exception to Salmond's demand for a theology that 'reason embraces with enthusiasm, and the conscience of his intellect assents to with a firm amen'.²⁴ Will realised that Salmond's

22. George Gibb to Gibb, 7 December 1887.

23. 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, 1888.

24. ODT, 5 July 1888.

demand for an intellectually respectable theology - a theology that could hold its head high in the world of science and contemporary philosophy - would involve a paring from belief of supernaturalistic elements he held to be of the essence of the faith. He contended that the Bible must be accepted as the conveyer of an unassailable wisdom, as the revealed Word of God, not as one amongst many - given no more authority than the writings of Paine, Ingersoll and Bradlaugh.²⁵

At the Salmond trial, as at the Strong trial, two incompatible epistemologies were in conflict. Will upheld a supernaturalism based on the witness of a verbally inspired and textually inerrant Bible. For Will, man's rational faculty was useful only to provide supports for truths already revealed. On the other hand, Salmond argued that man's knowledge of God was dependent on his ability to probe with his mind into the depths and intricacies of God's ways. Salmond held that every generation must, in the light of advances in human knowledge, and aware of the shortcomings of previous understanding of God's mystery, re-state the implications of the biblical record of God's dealings with men.

What part did Gibb play in Salmond's Presbytery trial? He was a careful defender of the accused. As a member of Presbytery Gibb was cast in a judicial role, a role he was able to use to Salmond's advantage by time and again recalling the court to the precise words used by the accused, and by insisting that the least damaging interpretation possible be placed on these words. Gibb protested that Salmond had not explicitly taught Universalism, he had merely raised a theological possibility. He realised that Salmond would be found guilty, and unsuccessfully attempted to persuade Presbytery to issue a mild censure that would have minimised the chances of a continuing debate. Gibb attempted to move Presbytery from a discussion of Salmond's theology to an assessment of Salmond's wisdom in publishing his views. Gibb asked Presbytery to agree to a rebuke that simply announced 'That there is danger lest the author's reasoning may be construed to mean that he believes in an absolute final salvation for all men'.²⁶ Will would have none of this and insisted that Salmond's treatise be debated clause by clause - and condemned clause by clause. This course was followed and

25. ODT, 5 July 1888.

26. Ibid.

finally The Reign of Grace was judged heretical, capable of unsettling the minds of the faithful, encouraging to rationalists, Unitarians and sceptics - and calculated to bring controversy and schism to the Church.

Having found Salmond guilty the Presbytery was faced with the difficult problem of deciding what to do with a minister who was not a pastor and, as a university professor, was not dependent for his livelihood on church offerings. Will somewhat lamely suggested that Salmond should be asked to suppress his pamphlet. Gibb used the Presbytery's quandry as an opportunity to channel debate away from the heretic to a discussion of the nature of heresy. He asserted three arguments in support of a mild censure. First of all he reminded presbyters that Salmond's criticisms of the confessional standards were in no way unique, and argued that as there was widespread demand for modification of these standards that Salmond's pamphlet should be regarded as no more than a legitimate contribution to a theological debate. Gibb suggested that the Church of Otago and Southland should formulate a Declaratory Act similar to acts adopted by the Victorian and English Presbyterian Churches and by the United Presbyterian Church of Scotland. He argued that it would be unwise to discipline a minister for expressing theological opinions that might soon become permitted deviations from the Church's standards. Gibb concluded by warning presbyters against imposing any penalty on one who was not a parish minister. Salmond was in no position to corrupt the minds of the faithful and any such imposition would attach undue importance to the dogma challenged, a dogma Gibb displaced to the periphery of belief.

In his address Gibb daringly challenged the doctrines attacked by Salmond and even more bravely questioned the authority of the Westminster Confession. The challenge was carefully phrased:

He had frequently attempted to reconcile for himself the apparently contradictory teachings of the Bible on the question of the future condition of man, but had never succeeded in doing so in any way satisfactory to himself.... He was firmly persuaded that the doctrine of the oternity of future punishment did not belong to the substance of the faith, and while he did not think the church should grant her ministers permission to teach the wider hope, he believed the time would come when it would not be regarded as indispensable to entrance to the ministry that a man should accept the doctrine of future retribution in the sense...set forth in the Confession of Faith.²⁷

27. ODT, 5 July 1888.

Gibb had appealed from a written confessional constitution to an 'unwritten creed'. He argued, in support of his appeal:

In every living church there was always such an unwritten creed, for the statement of its truth which sufficed for one age could not satisfy subsequent ages...as...men were being led into fuller apprehension of the meaning of the Scriptures.²⁸

Gibb's cautious support for the heretic, and frank countenancing of the cause of confessional revision, resulted in his vilification by several of the more incautious members of the confessionalist party. John Ryley, minister of Port Chalmers, accused Gibb of ridiculing the Confession, a charge Gibb fervently denied. Despite Gibb's plain speaking no presbyter attempted to arraign him alongside his former Session member. Instead, Presbytery, by sixteen votes to eight, supported Will's futile demand for suppression of Salmond's pamphlet.²⁹

Gibb's argument that the Westminster standards were sub judice, and that no charges against office-bearers should be entertained until the Church had debated proposed doctrinal revisions, was partially upheld at the October meeting of the Synod. The Synod refused the demand made by hard-core confessionalists that Salmond be unfrocked, on the ground that the doctrinal issues involved were under review - Gibb's point.³⁰ Strangely, no one advanced the argument that the superior court's decision meant that the Presbytery of Dunedin's judgment was invalid and the findings against Salmond must therefore be quashed. There is another and more pertinent reason for the Synod's reluctance. Had the Synod prosecuted Salmond it would have been the laughing stock of Otago. The chair of Mental and Moral Science at Otago University, Salmond's chair, was a professorship endowed by the Synod. In 1886 Duncan MacGregor resigned to become Inspector of Asylums. The Synod had been alarmed at MacGregor's apparent scepticism and agnosticism and was determined to see a man of sound theological views appointed to the chair. Without prior consultation with the University the Synod appointed Salmond, then professor of theology, to the vacant chair. The University was

28. ODI, 5 July 1888.

29. Presbytery of Dunedin, 4 July 1888. Also The N.Z. Presbyterian, 1 August 1888.

30. Synod, 1888 p.22.

outraged by the Synod's lack of consideration for its rights to appoint staff and a heated exchange followed. Having appointed Salmond as its man of safe theology the Synod had no desire to find their appointee guilty of heresy.

How did Otago's citizens react to the Salmond trial? The acting editor of the New Zealand Presbyterian had supported Salmond at Presbytery and had given him cautious support in his periodical. He gently rebuked Salmond for 'putting a pillow under the head of the careless' and then praised The Reign of Grace as an honest attempt to relieve the church of doctrine repellent to many intelligent minds.³¹ Correspondents in the Otago Daily Times ranged in opinion from those who declared Salmond to be in breach of his ordination contract to uphold the Church's doctrinal standards, to those who likened his prosecutors to huntsmen with their hounds.³² The columnist 'Civis' contrasted James MacGregor's rejoinder to Salmond, a tract entitled The Day of Salvation, with The Reign of Grace, and rhymed his rejoinder to MacGregor's bitter denunciation of his theological foe:

Salmond affirms, in MacGregor's despite,
That there's hope after death for the sinner - poor beggar.
If Salmond's not wrong, then MacGregor's all right.
But if Salmond's not right, t'will go hard with MacGregor.³³

The consensus of opinion expressed by newspaper columnists praised the heretic for his courage and rationality and denigrated his persecutors as bigots and Rip Van Winkles. The power of the pen was proving mightier than the power of anathemas, and the pen was wielded by educated Dunedin laymen who had read Darwin, knew about Wellhausen's theory on the composite authorship of the pentateuch,³⁴ and accepted reason and evidence as their means of reaching truth. From the Salmond trial onwards Otago's confessionalists received a bad press.

31. The N.Z. Presbyterian, 1 June 1888.

32. ODT, 9 June 1888.

33. *Ibid.*, 26 May 1888.

34. Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) was a leader of the school of Biblical higher criticism concerned with analysing the several layers of traditions incorporated in the pentateuch. His findings left no room for any serious possibility of Mosaic authorship. The editor of the Otago Daily Times discussed the erosion of Protestant theology with reference to views presented by Salmond, on 6 May 1889.

Gibb may well have assumed that the Synod's refusal to review the Salmond verdict, on the argument that the confessional standards were sub judice, allowed Presbyterian ministers immunity from prosecution on doctrinal issues, and latitude to attack publicly whatever doctrines in the Confession displeased them. He should have been warned by the Synod's failure to intervene on Salmond's behalf, and he should have taken note of the increasingly vitriolic attacks made against him in the courts of the Church and in the secular newspapers as he, Gibb, increased his criticism of Scholastic Calvinism.

In June 1890 the conservatives arrived at their moment of reckoning with Gibb; the Minister of First Church was charged with heresy. On 4 June Begg complained to Presbytery that in a sermon preached on 25 May Gibb had attacked the doctrine of election. Begg, who seems to have taken pencil and paper to church, submitted:

The Reverend James Gibb...made use of language to the following effect - "My very soul revolts against the sentiment of the doctrine of election as set forth in the standards of the Church, the Confession of Faith and the Shorter Catechism. viz:- 'God having out of his mere good pleasure from all eternity elected some to everlasting life, did enter into a covenant of grace etc;'"³⁵

In preferring his charges on 18 June Begg admitted that Gibb's comment was an interjection rather than a major point. However, Begg argued that Gibb's offence was made more heinous by the fact that the confessional doctrine attacked was the doctrine set for catechetical instruction in the Sabbath school that very Sunday.

In defence Gibb read his sermon to his judges, submitted that it was his duty to involve his congregation in the Church's task of theological revision, and expressed regret for not explaining his objection at greater length and with more clarity. Had he spent more time on this small section within his sermon his congregation would have found that it was the arbitrariness of the words 'mere good pleasure' that he found offensive. Gibb would have no truck with any theology that advanced a God who damned or saved according to his whim. On this point he mounted a romantic

35. Presbytery of Dunedin, 4 June 1890.

defiance modelled on Luther's plea before the imperial diet, or Knox before Mary, Queen of Scots:

He held the Confessional statement as to preterition, as to the damnation of all the heathen, and of all save elect infants, was a caricature of God's truth...and fully sensible of the gravity of his words he affirmed...he would sooner go forth from the church and earn his living how he might than teach his people what he held to be a lie.³⁶

Gibb informed presbyters that he had recently come to question and then rejected these doctrines that had been instilled in him in his boyhood in Scotland, and at theological college. After specifically attacking A.A. Hodge's Exposition of the Confession he argued that he had entered the Presbyterian Church of Otago and Southland assuming that he would be granted the same degree of theological latitude he had known in Victoria - a somewhat surprising piece of special pleading considering the state of the Presbyterian Church in that colony. He would never have come to Dunedin had he thought he was expected to accept the Confession in its entirety.

Five hours of debate followed with Finlayson, Ryley and Stuart³⁷ upholding the Confession and demanding that Gibb be found guilty in that he had publicly denied one of the legal documents of the Church. Rutherford Waddell piquantly suggested that Gibb's only crime was to have made public views discreetly held in private by other presbyters. Gibb gained a convert during his trial, for Will, who previously had played a major part in Salmond's prosecution, changed sides to contend that the Westminster Confession was never intended to be a test of orthodoxy; that the Westminster divines specifically invited their readers to test the veracity of the Confession's statements against scripture. Will insisted that Presbyterians were at liberty to assail the Confession wherever it contradicted scripture and that anyone who attempted to use the Confession as a final test of orthodoxy was in fact contradicting the Confession. Will so upset the Presbytery that the moderator eventually ordered him to resume his seat.

36. ODT, 19 June 1890.

37. D.M. Stuart (a D.D. from the University of St. Andrews) was minister of Knox parish, Dunedin - the parish adjoining First Church. He was a conservative in theology who arrived in Otago in 1860 and died in 1894.

Will's conversion to the revisionist camp probably prompted some of the uncommitted presbyters to throw in their lot with Gibb. The Church's two leading theologians, John Dunlop, professor of theology, and Michael Watt, acting-professor of biblical studies, proposed that the Presbytery 'dismiss the case with an expression of regret that Mr Gibb should have allowed himself inadvertently to have put construction on the language of the Shorter Catechism that it does not warrant'.³⁸

Gibb was acquitted by seventeen votes to six. Dunedin's Presbytery elders could not bring themselves to find the minister of First Church guilty and Gibb's brother ministers were mainly convinced that the time had come to re-define the Confession's authority and certain of its doctrines. However, Finlayson, Ryley and Sutherland were appalled that a minister had denounced a confessional doctrine, had reaffirmed his heresy before the Presbytery and escaped scot-free. They appealed to Synod.

The Synod of Otago and Southland had refused to review the Dunedin Presbytery's findings in the Salmond case but it showed no reluctance in bringing Gibb to the bar. On 31 October 1890 it not only re-tried Gibb but reversed the Presbytery's judgment.³⁹ Gibb's fate was clear even before the votes were counted. Immediately before his trial the Synod debated an overture from the Southland Presbytery calling for an urgent decision as to the scriptural warranty of the doctrines of the Westminster Confession. Synod was forced to make a decision. A.H. Stobo, an arch-conservative, appealed to Synod members not to meddle with a Confession that had been British Presbyterianism's flag for 200 years. He moved that 'the Synod ...resolve and declare that...the Confessional Calvinism of the doctrinal system ought to be maintained unimpaired in its integrity in the constitution of this church'.⁴⁰ Stobo's emotional appeal only just saved the day for the defenders of the final authority of the Westminster standards. Stobo carried his motion by only fifty-five votes to forty-nine, with only twenty-four ministers supporting his motion while thirty-four opposed it. Thirty elders rallied to the Confession while only fifteen

38. Presbytery of Dunedin, 18 June 1890.

39. Synod, 1890, p.21.

40. Ibid., p.15.

dissented. The Synod's laity had rallied against a seeming threat to the integrity of their provincial Church. Dunedin's Synod elders contradicted Dunedin's Presbytery elders.⁴¹

Gibb's situation on 31 October was made even more precarious by the precise nature of his case - an appeal against a Presbytery decision. As the Presbytery of Dunedin was also before the bar of the Synod, defending its judgment, its members were allowed to speak but were not permitted to vote. Gibb was thus deprived of the votes of the most liberal of the Otago Church's Presbyteries. Finlayson led the appellants and insisted that the Church's constitution was at stake. Watt opposed Finlayson, appealed for a judgment of charity, and pleaded:

The Church...ought not to be a Court of Inquisition to sit upon every divergence from strict orthodoxy, and to bind the one charged with heterodoxy down to its defence, and so stereotype the error in his mind.⁴²

Watt's plea carried weight and the Synod refused to agree to a demand that Gibb be brought before an inquisitorial committee where his errors could be identified at leisure. Instead, by forty-three votes to nineteen, it sustained the appeal, reversed the decision of the Presbytery of Dunedin, regretted that Gibb had used language inconsistent with his oath of induction, and let the matter end.⁴³ Gibb had been found guilty of heresy - but the embarrassed Synod had let the impenitent heretic continue on his way. Given this strange verdict it is hardly surprising that 'Juryman' wrote to the Otago Daily Times complaining that the Church's supreme court did not seem to understand that when a judge reviews a magistrate's decision and finds against a malefactor he does not then let him go free and unpunished.⁴⁴ Watt's plea, Gibb's popularity and position as minister of the province's First Church, fear of an outcry within the Church, the growing uncertainty of all but the staunchest of Confessionalists as to the infallibility of the Confession and the Synod's unwillingness to risk Gibb imitating Strong by beginning his own

41. ODT, 31 October 1890.

42. Ibid., 1 November 1890.

43. Synod, 1890 p.21. The N.Z. Presbyterian, 1 January 1891.

44. ODT, 4 November 1890.

denomination, together persuaded the Synod that the matter was best forgotten quickly! Although Gibb had threatened to resign from the Presbyterian ministry he at no time suggested that he would begin a rival church.

Gibb's outspokenness was quickly forgotten but the Church could not escape so easily from the dead hand of the Westminster standards. Colonial Otago Presbyterians looked toward Britain for guidance and a solution to their problem. This was hardly surprising and agrees with Walter Houghton's contention that the average Victorian Briton was 'more likely to defer to the opinions of his elders and betters than think out the problem on his own'.⁴⁵ This recoil to traditional authority in part explains the Synod's refusal to submit a Declaratory Act to the subordinate courts of the Church prior to 1893. The Otago ecclesiastical infant was waiting for guidance from its Free Church of Scotland mother. Beside, some Confessionalists believed that if the revisionists were delayed often enough and long enough they might go away.

In 1893 the Free Church of Scotland General Assembly at last passed a Declaratory Act and unleashed a demand for revision that could no longer be resisted. Synod passed down the Free Church of Scotland act to presbyteries and sessions for comment and approval. On 3 November 1893 the Synod, by a majority of ninety votes to fifteen, adopted this Declaratory Act on behalf of the Otago and Southland Presbyterian Church.⁴⁶

The provincial Church's confessionalists were far from satisfied with the new definition of orthodoxy given by their mother church. They found, to their dismay, that the Declaratory Act allowed as many escapes from Calvinist confessionalism as did the United Presbyterian Declaratory Act they found unacceptable. The Free Church act began with an affirmation of God's love, then denied that the Confession taught the fore-ordination of men to eternal death, disavowed the view that those who died in infancy were damned, allowed that God's saving love might extend beyond his covenant

45. W.E. Houghton, The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-70, Yale, 1957, p. 103.

46. Synod, 1893, p. 23.

people and established that the courts of the church should determine all moot theological points.⁴⁷ Suddenly the heresies of 1888 and 1890 had become permitted opinion in an antipodean colonial church.

The confessionalist minority now found themselves deserted by their mother church. Believing themselves betrayed they appealed from the Free Church of Scotland of 1893 to the Church of Scotland of 1643. They protested at the introduction of Arminian interpretations of the atonement and sanctification into a purportedly Calvinist church. They protested even more loudly against a change in the Church's constitution that allowed a bare majority in a church court the right to decide truth and error, without reference to written subordinate standards. Only seven Synod members submitted written protests alleging the departure of the Otago Church from her foundation constitution, but these seven were spokesmen for a vital minority who insisted that property donated in trust to a church with a particular theological constitution belonged only to those church members who remained true to the foundation constitution.

Within fourteen months of his arrival in Dunedin Gibb made a gradual volte face and rejected the rigid confessionalism he had espoused in Victoria. Only seven years after Gibb's induction as minister of First Church the provincial Church formalised an equally radical change in theological position by promulgating a Declaratory Act that allowed Arminian and revisionist doctrine a place in its theology. What forces were at work on the Otago pastoral frontier to make for such sudden changes? Why did these forces coalesce and erupt at this particular time?

In the Presbyterian Church of Otago and Southland Gibb's impatient ambition to lead was thwarted by ministers and elders unwilling to relinquish their control of synod or presbytery to a newcomer. The freezing effect of Otago ecclesiastical life certainly precipitated Gibb's movement into a liberal and revisionist theological camp. Gibb was too clever and too young for the men of middling ability who clung to the reins of ecclesiastical power in Otago. The structure of Presbyterianism, with its parity of ministerial and lay voting power, allowed mediocre clergy, who felt themselves threatened by the able newcomer, to make plain that they would

47. Synod, 1892, p.53 (Report on the confession of faith).

not permit their establishment to be upset by an upstart from Victoria. Gibb was only twenty-nine when he became pastor of First Church, following the sudden death of a minister who had been only nine months in office. He was not only resented because of his youth but also because his selection had broken the pattern First Church had hitherto followed, of selecting an experienced minister from Scotland. Gibb's youth, brilliance and ability were resented. He was too inexperienced to win the confidence of the mediocre and under pressure from their resentment against his logic and leadership he moved into the company of Otago's theological 'radicals'.

Gibb's comparative ecclesiastical inexperience and desire for intellectual stimulation were raw material capable of subtle moulding by a new group of associates who maturely took for granted theological revision that in Victoria he had branded heresy. Who were these new and radical associates? Rutherford Waddell, minister of the adjoining parish of St Andrews was a writer, orator, advocate of social reform and a Christian socialist, who read extracts from the latest theological journals from his pulpit. A Master of Arts from Queen's University (Belfast), Waddell brilliantly presented his radicalism disguised in lectures on Shakespearean characters and the English poets, suggesting all the while that his views were venerable and authoritative. Waddell and Gibb soon began to share the latest books to arrive from Britain and Waddell became Gibb's closest and most long-standing friend.

William Salmond was the second of the radical group to impress Gibb. Salmond was professor of moral philosophy at the University of Otago and acted as Gibb's adviser until his chastisement by the Church courts in 1888 resulted in his withdrawal from ecclesiastical politics. Salmond had held office as professor of theology in the Otago Church between 1876 and 1886. Whilst professor of theology, he had kept the ecclesiastical peace by silence. Gibb's arrival coincided with Salmond's new found freedom of expression as an academic in a secular university. It is unlikely that Salmond suddenly came to the views he propounded in The Reign of Grace, and he most certainly acquainted Gibb with these views soon after Gibb's arrival at First Church. Gibb expressed his appreciation of Salmond's support and acumen by taking the unusual step of securing the election of this minister turned academic to the First Kirk session in 1887.

There were other associates. John Dunlop and Michael Watt, both later professors at the theological hall, were liberal, though not radical, in their theology. The Dunedin situation was the obverse of the Melbourne. In Melbourne the theological professors and the leading Presbyterian ministers, with the exception of Strong, were rigid confessionalists. In Dunedin they were mainly liberal and revisionist - and one, Waddell, was a self-declared radical. Dunedin was a university city and the training centre for New Zealand's Presbyterian ministry. The minister of First Church, as pastor to members of university staff and to the staff and students of the theological hall, was immediately drawn into an intellectual circle where the latest theological and philosophical writings were discussed. As in most frontier towns an anxious demand for the latest overseas periodicals and books existed. Gibb now had sufficient financial means to purchase every book he desired - his stipend was almost double that of most of his senior colleagues - and he began to build a private library that was in time to become one of New Zealand's largest.

Through his reading and discussions Gibb soon discovered that the world of nineteenth century theology had much broader horizons than his Scottish and Victorian theological mentors had allowed. While cataloguing the challenges made to Presbyterian confessionalists by the leading revisionist theologians he discovered that Victoria's orthodoxy was Otago's heterodoxy. His speeches at his heresy trial reflect his surprise on learning that orthodoxy was a matter of degree. He did not set out to become a corrector of confessional theology, he wished to remain a consistent United Presbyterian, permitted to ignore the harsher aspects of the Calvinist doctrine of election. In defending the theological liberties allowed by his previous Churches he soon went beyond the plight of uncovenanted infants and heathen. His reading made him aware of the historic context from whence the Westminster standards arose. He began to perceive the mistaken emphases of the Westminster divines, their over-reaction to political and ecclesiastical foes, and their arrogant attempt to systematise all the secrets of the Almighty. Gibb determined that the Church's subordinate standards must either be radically revised or demoted in status. Earnestness, dogmatism and a refusal to allow any consequential matters to simmer unresolved, were marks of his generation.

As to the timing of Gibb's volte face - the conjunction of three factors in early 1887 provides a sufficient explanation.

George Shriver notes the explosion of a flurry of heresy hunting on the American Protestant scene between 1880 and 1906.⁴⁸ Shriver could have extended his observation to include all the English-speaking world and Germany. This chain reaction was ignited by the deposition of a Free Church of Scotland professor of biblical studies, William Robertson Smith, in 1881. In 1875 Smith contributed an article to the Encyclopaedia Britannica, expounding and giving measured support to Wellhausen's hypothesis on the composite nature of the pentateuch. Smith's deposition from the ministry was received by Presbyterian Confessionalists everywhere as a signal to begin sifting the chaff from the wheat. In New York Charles Augustus Briggs, professor of biblical theology at Union seminary, published an appreciation of Smith's views in the Presbyterian Record and received an identical sentence - removal from his chair and deposition from the ministry. The ideological battle-zone took little note of geographical isolation, and views expressed by protagonists in the old world were speedily repeated (at times even anticipated) by colleagues at the frontier of Presbyterian expansion. Theological journals, denominational periodicals, vivid newspaper accounts of heresy trials, interchange of ministers and close correspondence between leaders of theological parties, created a world-wide frontier where eruptions at one location quickly spread along the line. Smith's deposition, Strong's defection, Salmond's admonition and Brigg's unfrocking, were vivid public symbols of an epistemological turmoil that throughout the 1880s and 1890s rocked Presbyterianism.

In Otago and Southland the orthodox remained passive until Gibb, inspired by Salmond and his pamphleteering, threatened to dislocate their complete and self-supporting scheme of salvation. The confessionalist party reacted by branding the challengers as part of a grand conspiracy bent on the subversion of Calvinism. Salmond's acceptance of a secular chair was the match that lit the Otago fuse. Gibb quickly found himself amongst the revisionists - torch in hand.

A further circumstance that prompted Gibb's change of direction was his conviction that the First Church pulpit should exercise a teaching ministry. Students formed a large section of his congregation and Gibb

48. G.H. Shriver (ed); American Religious Heretics: Formal and Informal Trials in American Protestantism, New York, 1966, p.7.

was aware of his opportunity for training the church leaders of the future. Once committed to a teaching ministry he was forced to tackle intellectual problems facing believers and potential believers. This concern brought Gibb to study and re-assess the teaching of the Westminster standards. Some of his friends warned him to keep silent about his growing dissatisfaction with the Confession. In June 1890 Gibb's former classmate, J.C. Coutie, wrote from his Victorian parish:

Look here Boss, isn't it easy enough to ignore some of its [the Confession's] terrible doctrines in your preaching without denouncing them in a sledge-hammer way. I flatter myself that if anybody tries to spike me it'll have to be for what I don't say not for what I do say.⁴⁹

It was relatively easy for Coutie to remain silent; he had no students in his congregation.

A third and tragically personal set of occurrences precipitated Gibb's movement to theological revisionism. Gibb and his wife had three of their children die in infancy; in quick succession. Marion Annie Gibb died on 4 April 1884, James Gordon Gibb died in his fifth month on 1 December 1885 and Norman Gibb died in March 1889. James and Jeanie Gibb were devastated by the loss of their children. They were far from consoled by the Westminster Confession's declaration that 'Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how he pleaseth'.⁵⁰ The Confession provided no assurance that the Calvinist God cared equally for all children. To the contrary, salvation depended upon the mysterious election of the Almighty, and as children who died in infancy had no chance of understanding God's call and accepting their salvation, they were eternally lost. Significantly, a major part of Gibb's criticism of the Westminster standards had to do with their harsh treatment of infants and pagans.

Between 1886 and 1893 a large number of Otago and Southland Presbyterian ministers underwent a conversion from confessionalism to revisionism. Their movement was accelerated by their awareness that their

49. Coutie to Gibb, 25 June 1890. The emphasis is Coutie's.

50. The Westminster Confession of Faith; X.III.

Church was involved in a world-wide search for religious certitude, and by their familiarity with arguments presented by overseas protagonists. Theological division within the Otago Church attracted considerable attention in America and Scotland where partisans were eager to point morals from antipodean heresy. Salmond's case attracted the attention of Benjamin Warburton, a Princeton professor, who analysed and rejected Salmond's arguments in an article published in the New York Independent. Warburton cited the Otago heresy as a warning to those New England Presbyterians who were tempted to follow Union seminary revisionists against the Princeton school:

The New Theology of to-day is simply the new theology of the past, brought to its legitimate conclusion by the unfeeling logic of history. As such it is God's scourge to drive us back to the old theology of His Word, which has been somewhat facetiously called "seventeenth century Calvinism", but between which and a naturalistic universalism there is no safe or stable standing place.⁵¹

In debates within both Synod and Presbytery opinions from leading overseas authorities were quoted with bland assumptions that arguments should be decided by the status of the authorities quoted, rather than on the logic of the arguments set forth. At his own trial Gibb referred to theological movements in Scotland, quoted precedents from the Strong case and recited opinions given by two prominent English theologians. In opposition the confessionalists called Hodge and the Princeton school to their defence and until 1893 successfully countered revisionist moves by reminding their Church that it should be guided by the wisdom of the Free Church of Scotland and the Presbyterian Church of the United States - both conservative dominated churches.

Between 1886 and 1893 the confessionalist party contracted in numbers and weakened in influence. Part of the explanation for this weakened position has to do with the temper of nineteenth century intellectual life. The subversiveness of Benthamite questioning, demanding a 'why' of every ancient formula, was injurious to a party that based its authority on a set of seventeenth century documents that when closely examined seemed to be more an expression of Puritan polemic than a timeless doctrinal system.

51. Reprinted in the ODT, 15 October 1888.

The critical spirit deepened its hold as the century drew to a close. Gibb and the more erudite of the ministers and laymen within the Otago Church recoiled against dogmatism and argued that with many theological issues there was room for conflicting views. However, the anxiety of multiplied doubt and shaken belief prompted the Otago ecclesiastical adolescent to await an authoritative decision from its mother Church. The confessionalist minority received an agonizing shock when their mother Church's General Assembly dismissed charges of rationalism and mutilation of the scriptures brought against professors Marcus Dods and A.B. Bruce. The Free Church of Scotland had already lost one of her ablest sons to a Cambridge University chair of Arabic, with the dismissal of Smith, and did not wish to lose Dods and Bruce as well. Otago's mother Church had begun to understand that to punish the heretic in no way destroyed the heresy. The Otago confessionalists were horrified at their mother's apostasy. They had lost their two most telling arguments - continuity of Free Church of Scotland tradition and an unexpurgated Confession.

Lack of evangelistic success increased the introspection of the provincial Church's leaders. Between 1881 and 1885 the Church had increased its membership by 3,726 members, but between 1885 and 1893 membership grew by only 1,000. Indeed, in 1890 there was a meagre gain of only fifty new communicant members in advance of the previous year's total.⁵² Radical elders, of the Keith Ramsay type, blamed the hold of rigid confessionalist Calvinism for this lack of progress in soul winning. The same charge was advanced by well-read elders in Melbourne during the Strong controversy. The fairest assessment is probably that many settlers in Otago and Southland used the Church and its ministry occasionally, and feuding within the Church reduced their occasional use still further. The tide of rationalism and scepticism set free at the Enlightenment was still advancing and the clerical Canutes could not turn it back.

Had the Otago confessionalists bent even a little during the 1880s they might have fared better. By world conservative standards they were obscurantists, for Salmond and Gibb were not revolutionaries. Philip Schaff, a nineteenth century German American theologian, referring to Brigg's placement in the theological spectrum, passed a comment that could be

52. Synod, 1881-1893. Statistical reports.

applied with equal fairness to the New Zealand heretics.

- In Germany Dr Briggs would be classed with the conservatives and orthodox rather than with the radicals and rationalists. He is in fact, a Calvinist in everything except the question of higher criticism where he adopts the opinions of... Wellhausen, though not without some modifications, and with a distinct disavowal of rationalism.⁵³

At the true radical end of the spectrum stood D.F. Strauss with his Leben Jesu, a work that argued that the gospel record of the ministry of Christ was mainly an artefact of ingenious mythologizing.⁵⁴ Gibb and Salmond were miles from this position. Neither was spectacular in his application of the historico-critical method to the biblical texts. They were certainly not involved in any denial of the deity of Christ - Strong's most damaging error. They wished only to prune a few twigs from the confessional tree. Only under pressure did they appeal from a written Confession to an unwritten creed.

The Otago confessionalists were defeated by their inflexibility. Despite disappointing statistical returns they still quixotically dreamt that in time they would be able to establish in Otago the church the Westminster divines had failed to bring to Britain. The Westminster standards were their title deeds to this frontier Zion. They believed that if they permitted even the smallest amendment to these deeds they would betray their mission.

During his first seven years in Otago Gibb was in a similar position to that of a prisoner confined in a darkened room with lunatics who would only discuss one subject. A columnist in the Otago Daily Times noted this pathological obsession with the question of religious certitude and likened a day with the Presbytery of Dunedin with a day at Seacliff asylum.⁵⁵ However, unlike the man in the story, Gibb occasionally left the darkened room for short periods, and when he did made sorties into fields he later

53. Shriver, p.107.

54. Leben Jesu was published between 1835-36 and led to the dismissal of Strauss from his lectureship at Tubingen.

55. ODT, 26 September 1890. This article is headed 'Imbecile Presbyterians'.

developed once the issue of theological liberty was settled.

Some of Gibb's extra-theological activities were prescribed for him by Presbytery and Synod, who kept the Church's machinery moving despite their preoccupation with intra-mural feuding. Despite his suspect theology Gibb was appointed to a number of committees. His classical training was recognised by his appointment to examine the Church's ordinands in Greek and Hebrew - which he did by setting texts from the Epistle to the Galatians and Cicero's de Senectate. He arranged services for workers on the Otago Central railway project, led a deputation to the Dunedin city council to protest at the holding of prize fights in Dunedin, and advised on the merits of the London School Board's syllabus for religious instruction.

These were intra-mural concerns. Had Gibb no prophetic message to give to a colony at the beginning of its Liberal era in political and administrative reform; a colony experiencing its first major clash between capital and labour?

In the 1880s a nation-wide economic depression, occasioned by a fall in export prices, brought unemployment and financial hardship to a large sector of the colony's labour force at a time coincidental with labour's first realisation of the power of trade unionism and the ballot box. The depression reached Dunedin in 1879 and was met by government curtailment of public works expenditure, even while the last boats of assisted immigrants were still arriving. Artisans, together with skilled and semi-skilled tradesmen from the smaller towns, as well as gold diggers who could no longer keep themselves fed, invaded Dunedin in search of work. Employed workers were determined to maintain their current rates of pay in the face of possible reductions by employers well aware of the surplus of labour supply over demand. The new unions loudly supported job protection and demanded better working conditions. Their leaders were inspired by class slogans imported from Britain and Australia. The New Zealand workers like the colony's churches copied old world movements and repeated old world rhetoric.

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century Dunedin was New Zealand's largest industrial city and from Dunedin the colony's leading

trade unionist, J.A. Millar, led the Maritime Council - a coalition of seamen, wharf labourers and coal miners. In 1888 Millar, George Fenwick, (the editor of the Otago Daily Times), and Rutherford Waddell, joined in an exposé of sweating in the city. Waddell informed his startled congregation that Dunedin seamstresses were sewing mole-skin trousers for a meagre return of 2½d per pair, and that by working from 8.30 a.m. until 11 p.m. most of these piece-workers could hope to earn no more than two shillings each day. Public meetings of protest, press denunciations and the formation of a Royal Commission followed. Labour was beginning to wage war against capitalist exploiters - real and mythical - and a few radical churchmen, and the agnostic Robert Stout, joined the protest.⁵⁶

In 1890 industrial unrest in the colony reached a crescendo when militant unionists joined their Australian counterparts in a maritime strike that paralysed New Zealand's economy. The workers revolted against an economy based on unregulated laissez-faire. They were determined to take a larger bite of the depression's bread crust. Stout demanded that the colony decide whether: 'the individual struggle for existence [would] culminate in social war'.⁵⁷

Gibb was too much blinded by life in his darkened room, and now despite his working class origins, too much of a middle-class Scot, to have appreciated the opportunity for a church-labour alliance provided by the sweating allegations. His Kirk Session was made up entirely of professional and commercial men and Gibb shared their fear of anarchists and socialists. He sat silently behind Waddell at civic protest meetings and he preferred to offer the workers a Calvinist heaven rather than less hell on earth. Waddell, however, was prepared to take the side of the workers, and declared himself a Christian socialist who held that 'Christian socialism... recognised that material possessions alone did not buy happiness, but at

56. See L.H. Barber, 'Rutherford Waddell: A Preaching Politician and a Political Parson'. Forum, XXIII, May 1970 pp.12-15.

57. ODT, 25 July 1890. Also quoted by D.A. Hamer, 'Sir Robert Stout and the Labour Question, 1870-1893'. R. Chapman and K. Sinclair (eds.); Studies of a Small Democracy, Auckland, 1963, p.94.

the same time, insisted on the stewardship of wealth'.⁵⁸

Gibb's only recorded public assessment of the 1890 Maritime strike was made in a sermon preached on 14 September. He expressed a fear of revolution, typical of the middle-class of the Victorian age, warned employers not to retaliate against the workers by police action and piously asked the strikers 'What good will it do the poor man to obtain bigger wages and shorter hours of labour if in fighting for those things he becomes of the earth earthy, and seeks his position in this life alone'.⁵⁹

In the 1920s Gibb joined the Labour party; in the 1890s he offered the workers mainly heavenly rewards - and warnings about the dangers inherent in striking:

It seems as if the workmen, now that they have realised their strength, were bent on repaying with interest the injustice under which they undoubtedly groaned in the days that are swiftly becoming the olden time.... Wrong breeds wrong, I say, but wrong never cures wrong; and the working men should lay this to heart and refuse in putting their case and promoting their own ends to trample rough shod over the rights and liberties of those outside their ranks.⁶⁰

Gibb's political liberalism, like his theological liberalism, was of a mild and cautious character. He was no revolutionary!

The close of 1893 marked the end of one act in Gibb's career. The passing of the Declaratory Act that year won the battle for theological toleration in the Presbyterian Church of Otago and Southland. Gibb could now free himself from the narrowest of all his intra-mural concerns and embark on a series of political protests aimed at making the moral rules of Calvinism the nation's laws.

58. ODT, 31 August 1888.

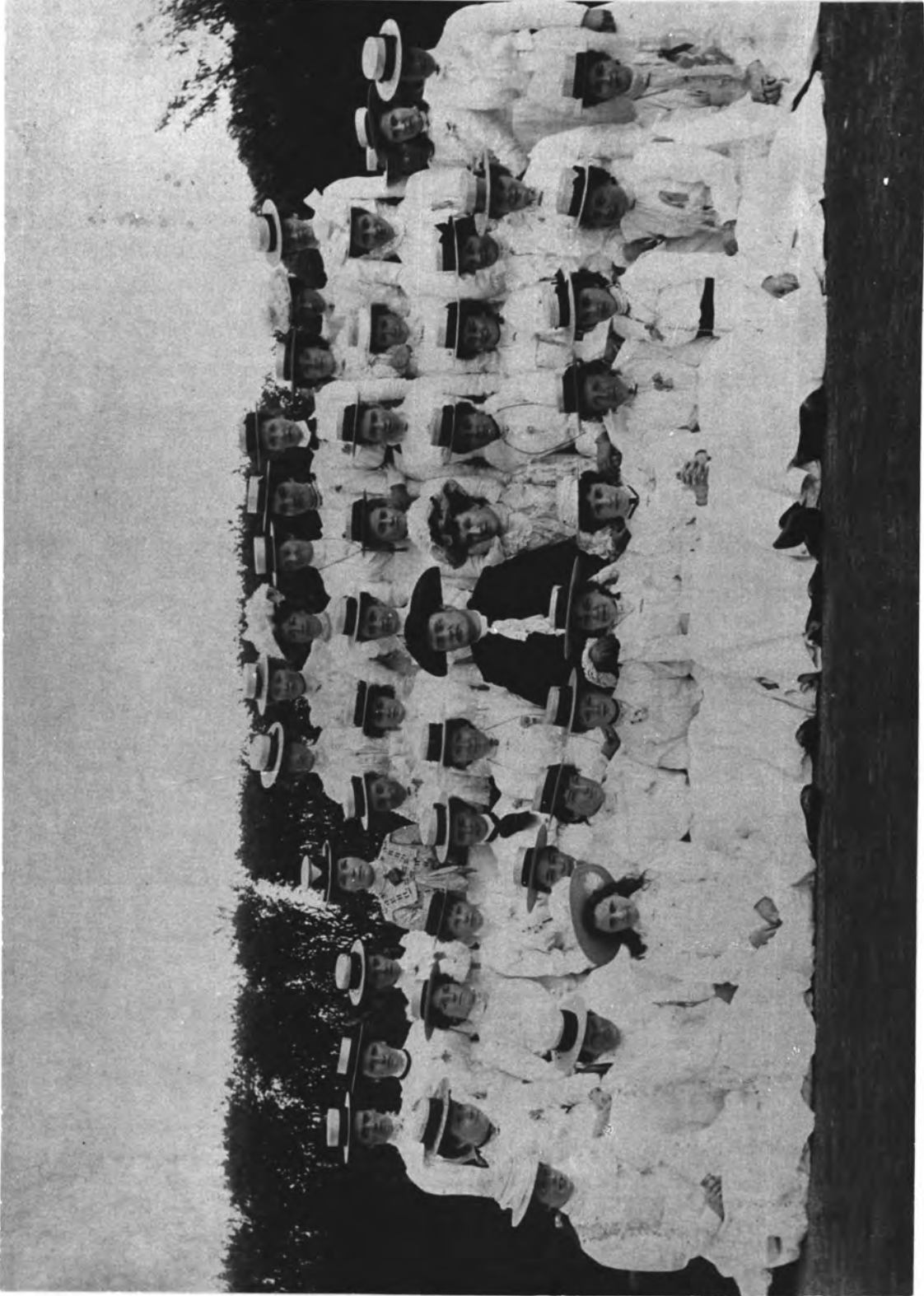
59. Evening Star, 20 September 1890.

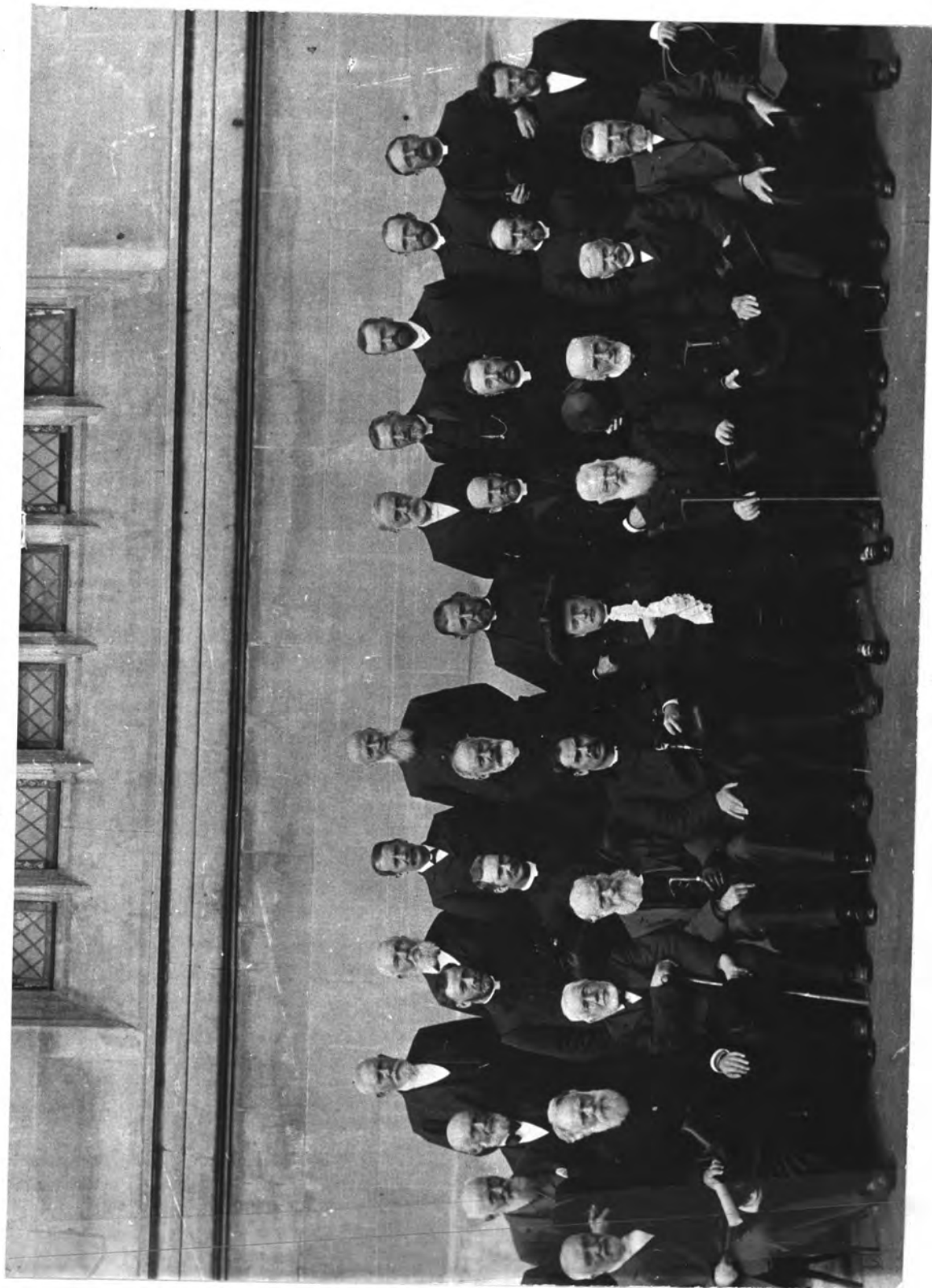
60. Ibid.



Gibb in Moderator's robes, 1901.

Gibb and the First Church Young Ladies' Bible Class, 1901.





James Gibb and the Synod of Otago and Southland, 1901.

Chapter Three

Steering the Ark, 1894-1902

Once [all is] well within the Church; her members united together by union with their living Lord; pleasant social intercourse among themselves; cheerfully bearing one another's burdens, and thus fulfilling the law of Christ; - once well thus within the Church, there could then be an aggressive Christianity which assuredly would tell upon the masses outside.

Rutherford Waddell, 1899¹

With the passing of the Declaratory Act in 1893 Gibb no longer feared being thrown from the southern Presbyterian ark by its Free Church of Scotland designers and builders. He was now free to set his talents to a variety of interests that had received scant attention during the theological troubles of the preceding seven years. The eight years following 1894 saw Gibb rise to acknowledged leadership within the Presbyterian Church of Otago and Southland. During this period he was, at one time or another, a member of every consequential presbyterial and synodal committee. He was a leading voice on public questions and Bible in Schools, a member of the board of examiners for theological students, and a member of the theological college committee. While convener of the General Assembly publications committee he encouraged and aided Rutherford Waddell, the new editor of the Outlook,² and as convener of the Church Union committee he led his Church through the difficult final stages of negotiation with the Northern Presbyterian Church to establish a national Presbyterian Church in October 1901. From 1896 he strenuously supported a consolidation and expansion of the Synod's home mission activities in rural Otago.

1. Outlook, 27 May 1899.

2. See Synod, 1893 p.75. In 1893 the Synod Publication committee, by a majority of one, recommended the introduction of a weekly church journal, with Waddell as editor. Gibb moved the successful motion and supported Waddell throughout his editorial career. Following Waddell's death in 1932 Gibb wrote an appreciation as a foreword to J. Collie, Rutherford Waddell: Memoir and Addresses, Dunedin, 1932.

By the close of 1901 Gibb had recovered from the heresy trial of 1890 and had moved from a central position in the provincial ecclesiastical arena to the captaincy of the colony's Presbyterians. He was the first moderator of the united Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. His new status and his autocratic manner were acknowledged, half seriously and half jokingly, by his friend T.F. Robertson, an Auckland minister, who in his letters began to address Gibb as 'Dear Archbishop'.³

Between 1894 and 1902 New Zealand was increasingly unified by additional railways, telephone, closer settlement and the steady invasion of citizens' lives by government departments entrusted with enforcing the policies and programmes of a Liberal administration. Government inspectors stalked through farm gates, bent on eradicating noxious weeds; through factory doors to check that adequate lighting had been provided for employees, and into homes that hid truants from state schools. New Zealand was becoming a social and political unity, a nation rather than a collection of settlements grouped in notional provinces. To some extent Gibb and his Church charted their course with reference to these new tides of nationalism. However, in this period the Presbyterian Church of Otago and Southland was in the grip of old world currents. In this final seven years of the southern Church's life Gibb steered the Church on a course that was ruffled by four overseas movements: the impact of the new Social Gospel, anti-Catholicism, the 'New Imperialism' and a world Presbyterian concern for denominational consolidation and union.

During this period Gibb's attention was captured by a new overseas theological emphasis - the Social Gospel. Throughout the 1890s a renewed social consciousness pervaded world Christianity. Within Roman Catholicism Leo XIII's encyclical Rerum Novarum announced his Church's concern for justice in the relationship of employer and employee. Anglo-Catholics were similarly involved in promoting plans for the fashioning of industrial society to Christian principles while Methodism and the Salvation Army

3. T.F. Robertson to Gibb, 18 May 1899.

furthered this new social emphasis.⁴ As far as Protestantism was concerned Evangelicals for most of the nineteenth century, had counted on saving the world by saving sinners one by one. Washington Gladden, Joseph Cook, Josiah Strong, George Gates and George Herron - the fathers of the American Social Gospel movements⁵ - displaced this individualistic orientation with a belief that the individual's reformation and salvation were bound up with his social predicament. The slogan 'save this man now' was displaced by 'save this society now'. Sin was identified as a social disease spread by poverty, untreated physical illness, lack of educational opportunity and the poison of social vice. The disciples of the Social Gospel believed that by destroying the seat of evil and renewing man's environment they could manufacture a corporate salvation. They planned to build a terrestrial kingdom of God.

This new social doctrine developed from the positivist and organic sociological insights of Comte, Darwin and Marx, and from a 'this-worldly' Millennialism. Walter Rauschenbusch, whose works Gibb later studied,

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4. Rerum Novarum was issued on 15 May 1891. This encyclical upheld traditional Roman Catholic teaching on the virtue of work, the justice of profit by investors and the proper regard for each other's welfare that should be held by masters and servants. It condemned socialism but revealed the Church's growing concern for social justice. For a brief introduction to the development of Anglo-Catholic social concern see B.M.G. Reardon, From Coleridge to Gore, London, 1971, pp. 211-212.
 5. Of this group Washington Gladden and Josiah Strong, both Congregationalists, made the greatest impact. Gladden published The Church and the Kingdom in 1856. Strong published his Social Progress, in several parts, between 1904 and 1907. Claude Welch, in a historiographical note in the preface of Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century, insists that the Social Gospel was both an American and European phenomena. Following Welch this thesis holds that the term 'Social Gospel' usefully designates a late nineteenth century and early twentieth century theological temper - a social ethic and call for social redemption. See Welch, Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century, I. p.7, and his warning on the danger of categorizing theological movements into exclusive schools, pp.18-21.

became the Social Gospel's clearest and most popular propagandist.⁶ However, it was not from the United States that the movement initially spread to Otago. German Ritschian theology contributed much to the origins of the Social Gospel and with a close interchange of Scottish and German theological ideas it is hardly surprising that Ritschl's theology generated a Social Gospel interest in New Zealand.⁷ Ritschl insisted that the Christian message was offered to a community, the Church, rather than to individuals. He repudiated supernaturalist metaphysics and opposed Schleiermacher's emphasis on religious experience. Instead he stressed the ethical and social implications of Christ's teachings and the possibility of an earthly realisation of the Kingdom of God through social reformation. R.J. Campbell, a British theologian, and Salem Bland, a Canadian, also contributed to the form and drive of this theology but their impact on New Zealand churchmen was later.⁸

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6. Gibb referred to Rauschenbusch in article four of his series 'A Minister's Books', see Outlook, 2 March 1931: 'Books like Martensen and Newman Smyth are, I suppose, behind the times. Peabody, whom you probably all know, is better. And better still are books like those of H.F. Hodgkins, The Christ Revolution, and Personality and Progress. Rauschenbusch's Theology for the Social Gospel, Fosdick's Christianity and Progress; and...Bishop Gore's magnificent indictment of the existing civilization, entitled Christ and Society'.
7. Albrecht Ritschl (1822-1899). A useful account of Ritschl's theology is given in B.M.G. Reardon, Religious Thought in the Nineteenth Century, Cambridge, 1966 pp.138-148. Ritschl appears amongst the theologians to be studied by theological students of the New Zealand Presbyterian Churches in the 1890s and Gibb and Dickie often discussed Ritschlian theology in their correspondence. See especially Dickie to Gibb, 27 April 1911. In 1915 P.B. Fraser accused Dickie of heresy, at the General Assembly, and in an article entitled 'Ritschlian Theology at Knox College', Biblical Recorder, April 1915, pp.30-32. Dickie had translated into English the work of a conservative Ritschlian, Theodor Haering's Dogmatic Theology. Fraser regarded Gibb as a supporter of Dickie and his Ritschlian heresy and denounced him in his article. In 1931 Gibb reviewed Dickie's The Organism of Christian Truth, London, 1930, and noted the contribution of Ritschl to Dickie's thought. See Outlook, 3 August 1931.
8. R.J. Campbell, an English Congregationalist. Author of The Restored Innocence, London 1893; The Making of an Apostle, 1898; and A Faith for Today, 1900.

In the 1890s the 'Kingdom Movement', led by Gates and Herron, was at its peak in Iowa.⁹ Gibb's social concern began its real development in this same period, yet with little direct reflection of the propaganda used by Gates and Herron. They began with a critique of impersonal and irresponsible industrialism. Gibb began by advocating the teaching of the Bible in the state schools. He planned to rectify the morals of the nation by training the young in Christian doctrine and ethics. His support for reform of the laws governing the liquor trade aimed at a reduction of poverty, a lessening in the number of cases of brutality by drunken husbands and a decrease in arrests for drunkenness. He opposed gambling because he believed that it contradicted the idea that wealth was held in trust for the public good, and because he believed that light-hearted wagering detracted from a serious attitude toward human need. He demanded the repeal of legislation he considered to be morally unsound; the Contagious Diseases Act of 1869 was particularly offensive to him. He opposed the introduction of legislation and regulations that he believed would damage the moral fabric of society or were at variance with his Calvinist social ethic. Extension of hours of trade for licensed premises and MacGregor's liberal divorce bill both incurred his displeasure.¹⁰ Gibb was a Calvinist Evangelical who later defined his doctrine of Church-State relations as 'co-ordinate jurisdiction'. He held that the State must be granted jurisdiction over its own province of affairs while the Church should be allowed supremacy in those matters that belong to its domain. However, from the 1890s Gibb became increasingly convinced that the Church should involve itself in moulding the life of the nation. In part, his Social Gospel philosophy was a re-discovery of the traditional Calvinist theology of the Church as the guardian and guide of national morality. He made this clear in 1917, when his Social Gospel philosophy had matured. Looking back, Gibb deplored the past reduction of the Church's role to one of protest and resistance to state interference in the purely

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9. For a description of this movement see C.H. Hopkins, The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865-1915, Yale, 1947, p.194.
10. J. MacGregor introduced a 'Divorce and Matrimonial Causes' bill into the Legislative Council in early 1894. This bill provided for divorce in cases of desertion, brutality and neglect. It was opposed and caricatured by most councillors and was lost at the close of the session. See J. MacGregor, Marriage and Divorce: The Ecclesiastical and Rational Conceptions of Marriage Contrasted. This pamphlet is reprinted from the ODT, 7 October 1897.

ecclesiastical domain. He noted:

It is only of late that we have been discovering that many questions previously thought to belong exclusively to the sphere of the State, belong as much or more to the sphere of the Church - questions affecting the welfare of the people.¹¹

Gibb discovered this new theology of social concern in the 1890s and it developed throughout his career. There was nothing novel, or even peculiarly antipodean, in Gibb's new social awareness. His shift in social attitude and doctrinal interpretation was part and parcel of a movement that from the 1880s captured the imagination of many British churchmen. Peter d'A. Jones, in an analysis of this late nineteenth century partial abandonment of theological individualism and social complacency, suggests that a variety of pressures on the Churches were responsible for this new mood. Jones argues that the Churches were, in their battle for survival, forced to come to terms with the emergence and existence of the welfare state, the labour movement, socialism, and changing social and economic conditions. However, it was not only external pressure on the Churches that Jones holds responsible for the advent of the Social Gospel. Looking at changes within the Churches he contends that:

It is also true that a major internal pressure, pushing acceptance of the Social Gospel, was the dissatisfaction felt within the denominations and expressed by courageous and dissident souls like the Christian socialists. Their own religious faith very often was deeply shaken by the discoveries of science, Biblical criticism, and comparative religion, and by key reinterpretable books such as Lux Mundi (1889) and The New Theology (1907). Their social consciences were aroused by experiences in settlement houses and missions, and by countless government reports and frank "Blue Books", private investigations, such as those of Charles Booth, into the conditions of poverty, and the short but highly effective Congregationalist pamphlet, The Bitter Cry of Outcast London (1883).¹²

In the 1890s Gibb took his social morality as well as his theology from the Old World. New Zealand was seen as a mere extension of British society, faced by similar evils and to be cured by British solution.

11. Outlook, 27 November 1917.

12. P. d'A. Jones, The Christian Socialist Revival, 1877-1914, Princeton, 1968, pp.7-8. The emphases are Jones'.

In the late 1890s Gibb's Social Gospel policy was still limited, and cautious, and tended to be more concerned with the welfare of individuals than with society and social groups. He was by no means a fully-fledged devotee of the Social Gospel. Devotees believed that sin was so pervasive and endemic that there could be no personal salvation without social salvation, and often came close to identifying God's immanence in social reform with progressive Social Darwinism. Gibb was adopting a new pastoral emphasis that would adjust his Calvinist and Evangelical passion for the salvation of individuals to a more socially oriented concern.

Between 1894 and 1902 Gibb showed a tendency to strike out passionately at evils, followed by an anti-climax of pious cliché calling for individual reformation as the panacea for social illness. The limited emphasis of his Social Gospel is revealed in his address to the inaugural meeting of the Dunedin Council of Evangelical Churches in 1899. Gibb's proposed solution, in contrast to his vivid Dickensian denunciation of social evils, was weak:

It [the Council] proposes a united crusade against the positive unbelief and abounding iniquity lying all around us. What do we find? Personal wreck and misery - intemperance and impurity - disease and degradation - helpless patience and stolid apathy - careless parents and neglected children, a perpetuation of the relentless curse, like the hissing lava of human doom.¹³

And the solution prescribed? Only if the Council showed 'absolute non-conformity to the world' could it hope to succeed in its reformative ventures. Personal self-denial and self-sacrifice were demanded with Gibb declaring that:

The precepts of the Sermon on the Mount cannot be practised under the present social conditions.... The trade spirit has infected the Church, and her office-bearers and members have taken kindly to wealth and money-making...forgetting that men cannot serve God and Mammon.¹⁴

In their appeal for a return to the asceticism of primitive Christianity Gibb and Waddell followed Tolstoy, whose works they admired, into a romantic disregard for the realities of nineteenth century business life.

13. Outlook, 27 May 1899.

14. Ibid.

Gibb's social emphasis, at this time, expressed in his address to the Evangelical Council, neatly fits Richard Allen's description of the 'conservative' Social Gospel position. Allen holds that between 1890 and 1914 three emphases began to crystallise within the Social Gospel movement. These he designates 'conservative', 'progressive' and 'radical'. Allen argues that the 'conservatives' were closest to traditional Evangelicalism, emphasising personal-ethical issues, often identifying sin with individual acts, and taking as their social strategy legislative reform of the environment.¹⁵

Gibb's treatment of the feminist cause in Otago is an example of his tendency to reduce social issues to personal-ethical terms. One of his reasons for seeking the removal of the Contagious Diseases Act from the statute books was his abhorrence of prostitution. Another was his concern to gain the approval of Otago's women, who, enfranchised since 1893, were a political power able to give considerable support to Gibb's campaign for Bible teaching in the state schools. The Victorian Women's Christian Temperance Union, with the encouragement of Dunedin women temperance supporters, had written to the Australasian Medical Conference, meeting in Dunedin, requesting support for their attempt to have the Contagious Diseases Act repealed.¹⁶ Gibb supported the arguments presented by the feminist leaders; that it was unjust to legislate for compulsory medical examination of female prostitutes while leaving their male sexual partners free to spread venereal disease. He threw in his weight behind a movement to rectify a corporate wrong. However, he did not maintain his recognition of women as a social group with group loyalties, aspirations and a new found dignity. He kept reverting to personal-ethical considerations. In a series of sermons preached in April 1897 he asserted that no woman had reached her God-given pinnacle of womanhood unless she had accepted St. Paul's model of the perfect wife - a model that to feminists read strangely like the description of a domestic servant.¹⁷ Not surprisingly

15. R. Allen, The Social Passion. Religion and Social Reform in Canada, 1914-1928, Toronto, 1971, p.17.

16. Prebytery of Dunedin, 4 February 1896.

17. ODT, 3 April 1897.

a few of those Dunedin feminists who had previously applauded Gibb's support for temperance, and his repeal of offensive vice laws, then turned on him, regarding him as a nineteenth century precursor of their twentieth century successors' 'male chauvinist pig'. Mrs P.E. Smith, who in a letter of protest to Gibb disclaimed being 'a New Woman', exploded: 'If I had heard such a sermon as yours of last night before my marriage I quite think I would have decided to remain single lest my husband should prove to be a second St. Paul'.¹⁸

Throughout this period Gibb veered between personal-ethical concerns and a rude environmentalism that assumed that the individual could be changed by attending to his environment. In 1893 a gymnasium was set up in the Russell Street Hall, a First Church preaching and Sunday School outpost. It had ceased to operate by the close of 1894, with Gibb commenting on its failure: 'Physically a gymnasium is no doubt a very excellent thing; morally it is at least harmless; inspiring, in a mental or spiritual sense, of course it is not'.¹⁹ At this stage of his ministry Gibb had little enthusiasm for the development of any parish youth groups other than those with a Bible study or literary bent. He saw the development of Dunedin's suburbs as a threat to the standing of his parish amongst Dunedin's Presbyterian Churches. He seems to have given little thought to the social needs of the new suburb-dwellers nor to any assistance that First Church might have given to the suburban ministers. His zeal for Church extension was confined to rural areas. In 1899 he complained to his congregational annual meeting:

The set of the tide is steadily suburbwards, and our neighbourhood is now almost entirely occupied by shops, factories and warehouses. Practically we have no parish. For some years past the success of the Church has, in ever increasing measures, depended on the Sunday services, and it is evident that in the near future, this will be our sole means of prosperity.²⁰

First Church depended upon the charisma of its minister to draw a congregation from the whole city area. As Gibb's extra-parochial duties

18. Mrs P.E. Smith to Gibb, 12 April 1897.

19. First Church Annual Report, 1894.

20. Ibid., 1899.

increased his relationship with most of his congregation was limited to a sight of their faces from his pulpit, a hand-shake at the door and a visit to them at times of grief or trouble. Whilst he was engaged in a ministry that glorified the pulpit and minimised pastoral links with any secular community it is hardly surprising that Gibb remained a 'conservative' Social Gospeller, concentrating on personal-ethical issues.

Gibb also meets Allen's second characteristic of Social Gospel 'conservatism'; he almost exclusively identified sin with individual acts. When Dr Mason, the colony's chief health officer, undertook an urgent inspection of a Dunedin house infected by a shift in night-soil deposits, and did so on a Sunday, Gibb together with the entire Presbytery of Dunedin protested to the premier. Gibb and his colleagues debated the issue at two meetings of Presbytery but showed little concern that an outbreak of community illness might easily result from the council's dumping of offensive matter close to private dwellings.²¹ The Presbytery was concerned only with a breach of the Sabbath by a senior civil servant. Seddon's reply on 21 May 1901 conveyed his hope that the Presbytery, on mature reflection, might withdraw their motion of criticism.²² They did not. An individual's alleged sinfulness in breaking the Sabbath took precedence over a threat of pestilence to the community.

Legislative reform of the environment, another mark of Allen's 'conservative' Social Gospel advocate, was at this time and hereafter a strong feature of Gibb's social concern. His brief and unsuccessful campaign to remove the Contagious Diseases Act from the statute book, already mentioned in reference to his inability to appreciate the corporate aspirations of the feminists, is an excellent case in point. Beside arguing that the act was unjust in its exclusion of men from medical examination Gibb also argued that by protecting society from the wages of sin the State seemed to be condoning sin. This does not indicate that Gibb supported a laissez-faire attitude to morality. To the contrary he demanded the act's repeal because it attempted to regulate society's sin rather than provide a legislative barrier against sin.

21. Presbytery, 7 May 1901; 11 June 1901.

22. Seddon to Presbytery of Dunedin, 21 May 1901; Presbytery of Dunedin, 11 June 1901.

There is, however, something very odd about the timing of Gibb's campaign to repeal the Contagious Diseases Act. The act had been on the statute books since 1869 when it was introduced to limit the spread of venereal disease amongst the Imperial forces stationed in the colony, by enforcing medical examination of other ranks' camp followers. The act allowed for periodic compulsory medical examination of declared prostitutes, confinement for treatment and penalties against those who refused medical examination. Immediately after enactment, it was occasionally administered in Auckland and Christchurch, but there is no evidence to suggest that it was enforced at all in the 1890s. There was no local issue that provoked opposition to the act.²³

Within New Zealand opposition to the Contagious Diseases Act was created in the 1890s by a British organisation determined to repeal all such acts throughout the Empire. In late 1895 Gibb received a circular letter from the Scottish Free Church committee on State Regulation of Vice. John Dymock, the committee's convener, informed Gibb that he and his colleagues had been instrumental in securing the repeal of the British Contagious Diseases Act in 1886, and had also forced the repeal of similar regulations in force in India and the crown colonies. Dymock then came to the point:

It is a grief to us that, in some of the Self-governing Colonies, the System is still maintained. We long to see every trace of it effaced from the Statute-books of every Dependency of Great Britain, and we now address you in the hope of...encouraging...you...to make such efforts.²⁴

Dymock even outlined the tactics he believed Gibb and his colleagues might most profitably follow. He suggested that public meetings be held, that resolutions be forwarded to the government, and that petitions be sent to the legislature from the courts and congregations of the Church:

If the minds of the people are informed, their conscience will respond, and the utterance of their voice will not be without effect on the Legislature and the Administration. We need not speak of the importance of prayer.²⁵

23. I am indebted to Professor W.H. Oliver for this information about the administration of the act.

24. J. Dymock to the Colonial Churches, 28 October 1895.

25. Ibid.

Gibb referred his Scottish correspondence to the Presbytery of Dunedin on 4 February 1896 and gained unanimous support for a motion calling for the removal of 'these obnoxious laws from the statute-book'.²⁶ On 7 April Gibb presented Presbytery with a sample petition form for distribution to sessions and to congregations.²⁷ His campaign died through lack of public interest. The Synod did not even include the issue on its agenda for its 1896 meeting.

Temperance, by legislation and regulation, was another of Gibb's Social Gospel convictions. Although not himself a total abstainer²⁸ Gibb increasingly identified with the prohibitionist cause and in 1899 addressed prohibitionist rallies in Dunedin.²⁹ At the turn of the century he was determined that the Church should regulate the drinking habits of its members as a prerequisite to regulating the drinking habits of the nation. On 2 April 1900 two communicant members of First Church were suspended for drunkenness, the first time in the Kirk session minutes of that Church that any members had been disciplined for that offence. In 1896 the prohibitionists had doubled the vote they polled at the 1894 local option referendum. Bands of Hope, Good Templar Lodges, Blue Ribbon unions and Prohibition Leagues spawned within the parishes of the Presbyterian Church of Otago. A new attitude toward alcoholic liquor now arose within the Church with a corresponding demand that alcoholic communion wine should be replaced by grape juice.³⁰ Older ministers ceased replenishing their stocks of whisky. By 1900 to be a Presbyterian minister was usually to be a prohibitionist.

Within Presbytery and Synod Gibb did not go out of his way to support the prohibitionist cause; he merely added his vote to the overwhelming ecclesiastical support the new movement had gained. He voted with the

26. Presbytery of Dunedin, 4 February 1896.

27. Ibid., 7 April 1896.

28. I am indebted to the late Malcolm Wilson for this information.

29. Curzon-Siggers to Gibb, 16 May 1899.

30. The suggestion that unfermented wine be used at Communion was first made to the First Church Session in March 1903. See First Church Session 2 March 1903.

Synod in support of the temperance committee's demand in 1898 that 'inebriates' asylums should be organised by the State...[and] that magistrates should have power to commit habitual drunkards to such asylums'.³¹ At the parish and local level he seems to have been far more active. This is made clear in a letter from W.A. Curzon-Siggers, vicar of St. Matthew's Church, congratulating Gibb on his temperance addresses in Dunedin, and by a motion passed in 1900 by the First Church session urging the government to continue its prohibition of the sale of alcoholic beverages to the Maori people of the King Country.³²

Between 1894 and the close of 1902 Gibb's new interests in Social Gospel concerns slowly expanded. Despite his tendency to revert to personal-ethical issues his belief that Evangelical behavioural patterns could be imposed on the colony by government legislation forced him more and more to consider the social and national implications of vice and virtue. By 1902 he was certainly a 'conservative' Social Gospeller, but he was moving toward a more progressive position. By 1902 Gibb was in agreement with John Bright's assertion 'that agitation was but marshalling the nation's conscience to right the nation's laws'.³³

The rise of the Social Gospel movement registered the impact of a new overseas ideological force on the New Zealand ecclesiastical domain. During this same period an ancient old-world force revived its polemical activities in the colony - anti-Catholicism. Biblical higher criticism, theological revisionism, Darwinism, socialism and romanticism had cut a horizontal line through the old vertical denominational divisions. High Church Anglicans, nourished on Tractarian literature and liturgy, felt more at home amongst Roman Catholics than they did amongst their Low Church brethren. New Zealand's few Lutherans were less unhappy in the company of confessionalist Calvinists than they were amongst theological liberals. Change had blurred the relevance and clarity of many denominational divisions. Fearful of the variety of theological perspective and

31. Synod, 1898, p.68.

32. First Church Session, 26 August 1900. One of the few issues involving the Maori race that interested Gibb.

33. Quoted by Waddell in Outlook, 20 October 1894.

liturgical practice that now sheltered under Protestantism's umbrellas many church leaders neurotically attributed the disruption of their previous denominational solidarity to the work of Roman Catholic infiltrators. Protestants who were innovators were very often branded by their opponents as crypto-Papists. Rouse and Neill confirm that there was an intense suspicion by nineteenth century Evangelicals of Anglo-Catholicism: 'They tended to condemn Anglo-Catholic moves in any direction as "Romanizing"'.³⁴

In the mid-1890s Gibb decided that Protestantism throughout the world, and even in Otago and Southland, was in danger from a 'sacerdotalist threat', with Anglo-Catholics and the supporters of liturgical reform within Scottish Presbyterianism as the subtle spearhead of the Romanist invasion. The editor of the Outlook noted, in September 1896, that:

Since Mr. Gibb returned from his travels [a holiday in Scotland and Palestine], some of his friends say he has been afflicted with sacerdotalism of the brain. In season and out of season, he has been moved to lift up his testimony against it. But perhaps it is Mr. Gibb's friends who would be better for having their brain operated upon. At any rate, he, Mr. Gibb, is only voicing the opinion of the best informed leaders of the Church at Home. Even in Presbyterian Scotland so broad-minded a thinker as Prof. Bruce has just been warning his country men that this is the most subtle enemy that threatens them at this moment.³⁵

In this lengthy editorial Waddell expanded on Gibb's expose of the menace of Romanism. He suggested that Roman Catholicism was disguised within the Oxford Movement and that sacerdotalist ministers were secret Romanists. Gibb's attacks on Roman Catholic militancy continued throughout this period, and beyond it.

Before the 1880s anti-Catholicism had been played in a minor key by the colony's Protestant leaders. Ministers occasionally denounced the 'beast of the Apocalypse' when hard pressed to find a Sunday sermon subject,³⁶

34. Ruth Rouse and S.C. Neill (eds); A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948, London, 1967, p.326.

35. Outlook, 12 September 1896.

36. The 'beast of the apocalypse', from the Biblical Book of Revelation 13, was a popular anti-Catholic theme that allowed preachers full opportunity for Millenarian and sectarian sentiment.

or when the local Loyal Orange Lodge marched in for its annual church parade. With their British contemporaries New Zealand colonists studied Foxe's Book of Martyrs, re-published in 1875; revelled in Maria Monk's Awful Disclosures, with their imputation of frightful goings-on in the Hotel Dieu convent in Montreal, and believed some of the 'revelations' of Papist tyranny and clerical immorality detailed in many evangelical tracts of the time.³⁷ Before the 1880s New Zealand's Protestant clergy mainly confined themselves to conventional anti-Papist gestures. It was not until the early 1880s that both Roman Catholics and Protestants realised how unsatisfactory the Education Act of 1877 was to their pastoral claims and proselytising aims. In their bids to have the act revised they came into serious conflict. The occasion for this confrontation coincided with a spate of British anti-Catholic sentiment connected with an attempted rapprochement with Rome by some Anglican leaders, and also with the explosion of the Irish question.

In retrospect it is easy to see how the 1877 Education Act set the colony's Roman Catholic and Protestant leaders at each other's throats. The act introduced state controlled, free, secular and compulsory elementary education. State control of the education of young Catholics was as unacceptable to the hierarchy as was a secular system. The Roman Catholic bishops required that the children under their care be educated in Church schools by Church teachers, usually members of religious orders, who would present them with a Catholic view of life. Protestant ministers were equally disenchanted with the Godless schools and wished to introduce Bible reading, or Bible teaching, either by visiting clergy or by state school teachers. Both groups wanted an end to secular primary education but in choosing different and conflicting paths away from secular education they crossed each other's paths as enemies. The Roman Catholics maintained and advanced the cause of Church schools while the Protestants wished to invade the state schools.³⁸

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37. See E.R. Norman, Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England, London, 1968, pp.13-22. A useful example of New Zealand Presbyterian anti-Catholicism in this period is found in James Chisholm, Fifty Years Syne. A Jubilee Memorial of the Presbyterian Church of Otago, Dunedin, 1898, p.231. Chisholm, having persistently pointed throughout his book to the superiority of Calvinism, here refers to 'men of the Calvinistic type' without whose efforts 'Roman Absolutism might still have been sitting like a hideous nightmare astride all human energy, and choking the breath from every human institution'.
38. For a discussion of the conflict that followed the passing of the 1877 Education Act see Richard Bates, 'The Politics of Compromise and the Education Act of 1877'. Delta, 4 May 1969, pp.27-35. Also L.H. Barber, 'The Defence of Secular Education in New Zealand, 1877-1937'. *Idem*, pp.36-48.

Between 1890 and 1900 the number of Roman Catholic Church schools within the colony increased from ninety-five to 132³⁹ and the Church urgently sought relief for its parishioners who were taxed by the clergy to pay for the building and maintenance of Church schools, and by the government to pay for a State school system they did not use. State aid for Church schools was advanced as a practical expedient by which the State could redress the declared injustice suffered by a substantial number of citizens. Protestant Evangelicals and secularists opposed this demand arguing that if any citizen did not wish to use a facility provided by the State they were free to create and pay for any alternative they preferred, but this choice in no way freed them from their obligations as subjects to pay taxes to support the state schools. The bishops gave tit for tat and opposed the granting of any right of entry to Protestant ministers into State schools on the argument that there were Roman Catholic children still attending these schools for whom as yet no places could be found in Church schools. Neither Protestant ministers nor a Protestant Bible was to be permitted entry into their presence. Neither party would allow the other an advantage and an effective checkmate was quickly reached.

Gibb began his attempt to provide an acceptable syllabus for Bible reading or Bible teaching in the State schools in the early 1890s. In 1893 and 1894 he supported endeavours to obtain parliamentary sanction for the introduction of the Irish School Board's Scripture Lesson Book.⁴⁰ In 1896 he assisted in the direction of written questions to election candidates, who were asked to affirm their support for Bible in Schools legislation.⁴¹ The Council of Evangelical Churches, founded and spurred on by Gibb, from 1899 took up the campaign and gave it a wider basis of support. In promoting this cause and rebutting Roman Catholic arguments for Church schools Gibb soon clashed with the Roman Catholic Bishop of Dunedin, Patrick Moran, who had twice sought election from a Dunedin parliamentary constituency on a state-aid ticket. He also began his long and stimulating confrontation with Henry Cleary, the editor of the Tablet, who P.S. O'Connor claims (referring to later battles, for Knox College was not founded until 1909) to

39. N.Z. Year Book, 1902, p.254.

40. Outlook, 9 June 1894.

41. ODT, 10 June 1902.

be 'a match for the whole of Knox College', but who was, nevertheless, sometimes beaten by Gibb.⁴² However, these clashes, recorded in Church 'periodicals, the daily newspapers and occasional tracts, seem to have been regarded as fairly light diversion by the Otago public. Interest and concern were aroused but there was neither violence nor threat of violence. New Zealand's era of sectarian conflict lay well in the future. The Churches, at the close of the nineteenth century, were still optimistic as to their individual prospects on the New Zealand pastoral frontier. Only when despondency and despair became the prevailing moods, when the Ne Temere decree challenged the regularity of marriages not celebrated by Roman Catholic priests, and when Irish nationalism and the Protestant Political Association entered the lists, was public hysteria aroused to the point where individual acts of violence erupted. Even so, at the close of the century Protestant fire-brands knew that a large residue of anti-Catholic sentiment lay awaiting the torch.

In 1901 an issue arose that focussed existing popular anti-Catholic sentiment, foreshadowing the sectarian conflict of the second decade of the twentieth century. The contentious issue was a proposed change in the coronation oath.

The agitation of 1901 arose from an attempt made by Edward VII to have Parliament delete certain words from the coronation oath. Following the Bill of Rights of 1689 the monarch was obliged to repudiate the doctrine of transubstantiation and assert that 'the invocation or adoration of the Virgin Mary or any other saint and the sacrifice of the Mass as they are now used in the Church of Rome are superstitious and idolatrous'.⁴³ On 14 February 1901 the King, after fulfilling his obligation in a low voice, wrote to his prime minister, the Marquis of Salisbury, and suggested 'It will, I hope, be the last time that I, or any of my successors, may have to make such a Declaration in such crude language'.⁴⁴

42. P.S. O'Connor, 'Sectarian Conflict in New Zealand, 1911-1920', Political Science, 19, July 1967, p.3. Curzon-Siggers believed that Gibb had trounced Cleary in July 1901 and informed Gibb so: 'I see you had a good innings and smashed that philosophical absurdity "transubstantiation"'. See Curzon-Siggers to Gibb, 11 July 1901.

43. Sir S. Lee, King Edward VII. A Biography, Vol.II, London, 1927, p.22.

44. *Ibid.*, p.23

This attempt by Edward VII to remove an offense to his Roman Catholic subjects, only recently freed from the final vestiges of political and 'educational disability, was greeted by Protestant extremists with cries of 'No Popery!'. In late 1901 Gibb, joined by leaders of Dunedin's major Protestant denominations, led a public rally called to protest at the changes mooted. The Loyal Orange Lodge applauded his efforts and the secretary of the Dunedin 'No Surrender' branch wrote Gibb a congratulatory note, warning:

If we are not careful we will have to go through what our forefathers did for the privileges we are now enjoying and to keep our Blessed Bible and the Protestant Faith from being held in subjection by the Pope and trampled in the mire.⁴⁵

The editor of the Evening Star, blessed with the un-Protestant name 'Cohen', wrote to Gibb applauding his efforts and linking the proposed changes to the constitutional oath to alleged favouritism of Roman Catholic applicants for civil service vacancies in New Zealand:

It is high time that the Protestant conscience was awakened as to the part the Roman Catholic Church is taking in the public affairs of this Colony. I doubt very much whether the public have the faintest idea of the numbers and the members of that church who during the last six or seven years have been "provided for" in the Civil Service of this Colony, and I further doubt very much whether any member of Parliament has the courage to demand the production of a return which would give that information plainly that he who runs may read.⁴⁶

Cohen's charges were never substantiated by hard facts. Richard Seddon's political career was studded by grants of favour to his supporters. R.M. Burdon records several incidents where Seddon intervened in the regular course of appointments to secure jobs for his own nominees.⁴⁷ Even so, Seddon was an astute politician who knew the dangers of relying upon any sectarian group, and by so doing alienating that group's rivals. His political tactics allowed lobbyists to destroy each other, talk themselves out and find their bills jettisoned at the close of the parliamentary

45. Thomas Brown to Gibb, 22 November 1901.

46. M. Cohen to Gibb, November 1901.

47. R.M. Burdon, King Dick. A Biography of Richard John Seddon, Wellington, 1955, pp. 60 et seq.

session. Seddon was too astute to favour any one religious group and Roman Catholic bishops who received no support for their demands for state aid for Catholic schools hardly saw Seddon as a crypto-Romanist. Seddon's two Roman Catholic senior cabinet ministers, Sir Joseph Ward and Sir Patrick Alphonsus Buckley, were often accused of dispensing political patronage in favour of their co-religionists but no substantial proof was ever offered.⁴⁸

For all its fancy Cohen's outburst is significant. Seddon had cleverly ensured that none of the Bible in Schools bills brought before the legislature had prospered, furthermore he was no friend to the prohibitionist cause. In 1897 he had sought and had been granted an audience with the Pope. Given the Victorian Protestants' fear that Jesuits lurked behind every tree Cohen's emotive outburst is plainly part of the general Protestant hypersensitivity of the nineteenth century. Cohen assumed that a premier who prevented the passing of legislation favouring the Protestant cause was at least a secret friend of Rome. A connection between Seddon's known dispensation of patronage and his suspected Roman Catholic sympathies was inferred and with similar illogicality a link was woven with the coronation oath affair. Such was the stuff anti-Catholicism was made of at the turn of the century.

Gibb was far more concerned with the Protestant traitors than he was with direct Roman Catholic gains. Anglo-Catholicism and the new Scottish Presbyterian interest in tradition and liturgy, Scoto-Catholicism, were denounced as agents provocateurs. After his return from a ten months Cook's tour of Europe and the Holy Land in 1895 Gibb began to identify several sacerdotalist influences he saw at work within Protestantism. He seems to have made his first face to face encounter with hard-line Anglo-Catholic clergy on his outward voyage. In response to an invitation from the ship's master Gibb conducted divine service only to have two Anglican clerics rise and ostentatiously leave the room as soon as he

48. H.S. Moores has weighed the evidence on the charge that Ward favoured Roman Catholic applicants for civil service appointments. He judiciously comments: 'It seems impossible to establish conclusively the truth or otherwise of the numerous allegations against Ward.... What people believed is as important to the historian as what actually was'. See H.S. Moores, 'The Rise of the Protestant Political Association'. Unpublished M.A. thesis, Auckland, 1966.

began.⁴⁹ Gibb always responded fiercely to personal affront and from this moment he began to question any movement within Protestantism that appeared akin to an Anglicanism that declared his orders invalid. Reviewing his visit to Scotland in 1895 Gibb saw sinister sacerdotalist forces at work:

In Scotland there is a Society called the Church Society which ostensibly aims at...improvements of the service and the bringing of the present doctrines of the Presbyterian Church into line with the Westminster creed. So far so good, but it has become quite evident that the promoters have other and much more far-reaching purposes in view.⁵⁰

The Scottish Church Society was founded in 1892 by John MacLeod of Govan. Its membership was mainly drawn from the established Church of Scotland and its aim was the promotion of Scoto-Catholic liturgical revision. The society persuaded the 1896 Church of Scotland General Assembly to withdraw from cooperation with the other Scottish Presbyterian Churches in producing a common hymn book. The leaders of the Church Society were critical of ecclesiastical dissent and were eager to reclaim the whole history of Christianity in Scotland as their heritage. This 'high church' society was soon denounced by the essentially Free Church of Scotland Scottish Reformation Society. Puseyism made any interest in liturgical embellishment suspect and Gibb's identification of a Rome-bound conspiracy was a typical expression of Victorian Protestantism's fear of resurgent Catholicism.⁵¹

Gibb believed that Romanist agents had wiled their way into the Protestant camp. During 1850 Lord John Russell had identified Tractarians and Roman Catholics as birds of a feather;⁵² in 1896, and again in 1899, Gibb identified High Churchmen and liturgists as crypto-Romanists. In May 1899 he went further and his identification of Anglicanism with crypto-Romanism drew a prompt response from Curzon-Siggers, an Anglican

49. Outlook, 2 November 1895.

50. Ibid., 12 October 1895.

51. For an account of the ideals and impact of the Scottish Church Society see Burleigh, A Church History of Scotland, p.399.

52. E.R. Norman, Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England, p.55.

Evangelical who resented Gibb's charge. Curzon-Siggers left Gibb in no doubt as to the definiteness of his anti-Catholic sentiment:

I hate Rome as I hate the devil and deny the Anglican Church sympathises with Romanism: only a small and moneyed section does. They will be snuffed out. You think I hold the "high" Anglican view which would deny that God and the Holy Ghost blesses your ministry and works through you. That I do not hold. It seems to me blasphemous to deny what is patent, that God works by non-episcopal ministries.⁵³

The vicar of St. Matthew's soon became an associate of Gibb and then a lasting friend. He periodically reminded Gibb of the existence in Otago of another brand of Anglicanism, Low Church Evangelicalism, as suspicious of Bishop Nevill, the Anglo-Catholic bishop of Dunedin, as was Gibb. Low Church Anglicans were allowed to join the Dunedin Council of Evangelical Churches and were incorporated into the Protestant anti-Catholic alliance.⁵⁴ In late nineteenth century New Zealand anti-Catholicism provided a useful meeting point for Protestant denominational leaders who found that having cooperated against Rome they could cooperate on other issues. The development of Evangelical Church Councils throughout the colony during this period marked the beginning of an informal Protestant alliance that reached its maturity in the social crusades of 1902-1922.

The third global force that drew a response from Gibb between 1894 and 1901 was the 'New Imperialism'. While in the mid-nineteenth century a general sentiment against any extensive increase in colonial commitment permeated European foreign offices, from 1870 to 1890 the major European powers dramatically embarked on a new policy of colonial expansion. In thirty years nearly 150 million people and over ten million square miles were added to Europe's empires. This 'New Imperialism' was an extension

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53. Curzon-Siggers to Gibb, 16 May 1899. In April 1898 Curzon-Siggers publicly attacked the doctrine of Apostolic Succession. His rejection of a viewpoint held by Bishop Nevill, his bishop, is reproduced in the Outlook, 23 April 1898.
54. Presbytery of Dunedin, 18 April 1899. On Gibb's motion a United Council of Evangelical Churches was founded in Dunedin. Anglican clergy were allowed entry after a debate, and then only by a majority of eight to five in a presbytery division.

of continental and oceanic naval rivalries to a larger stage. For the humanitarians it was a proper assumption by European civilization of 'the white man's burden', a burden that conveniently found distant occupations for younger sons. Enlarged commercial opportunity, the chance to offer salvation to savages in danger of losing their immortal souls, and quickened promotion opportunities in expanded armies and navies, were advantages that induced powerful interest-groups to support this new drive for colonies.

Gibb met the 'New Imperialism' at two points where it intruded into New Zealand political interests: accelerated French political and commercial activity in the Pacific, especially in the New Hebrides; and British military action against the Boer. During the 1880s Otago's Presbyterians had several times protested to the colony's government about French commercial and naval interference with missionary stations and missionary natives in the New Hebrides. In the 1890s these protests became louder and more frequent, a point generally missed through J.A. Salmond's concentration on the previous decade.⁵⁵ Gibb's reaction to increased French intervention in the Pacific was clear and simple. As a presbyter and synodman he contended that the New Hebrides constituted a Presbyterian missionary zone and that the Presbyterians of New Zealand had every right to expect Protestant Britain to protect Protestant missionaries and their wards from Catholic France. Arguing in favour of Britain seizing the islands some Church leaders contended that this course was required to guarantee the security of Britain's Pacific empire, easily threatened by the existence of foreign naval stations in the South Seas.⁵⁶

Between 1884 and 1901 the Presbytery of Dunedin and the Synod of Otago and Southland frequently attacked French expansion in the Pacific, and Britain's reluctance to assume responsibility for the protection of her subjects' persons and property. Gibb supported these criticisms in both Church courts and in petitions sent by the provincial Church to the premier. The arguments presented to Seddon by Gibb and his colleagues

55. J.A. Salmond, 'New Zealand in the New Hebrides'. P. Munz (ed); The Feel of Truth, Wellington, 1969, pp.113-135.

56. For examples of Otago Presbyterian denunciation of French activity in the Pacific see Synod, 1900, pp.17-18 and 69; Outlook, 23 March 1901; 6 April 1901 and 25 May 1901.

are summarised in the Outlook of 25 May 1902. After warning that escaped French convicts from the penal colonies the French were believed to intend to plant in the island belt would make for British Australasia, attention was given to the danger posed by a French naval presence:

A first-class harbour would be provided for the French, of great value as a naval coaling station, within two day's steam of Fiji on the one side and a little more from Brisbane on the other. This is Port Sandwich on Malekula.⁵⁷

Of all the arguments presented by Gibb and his fellow Presbyterians it was not so much the persecution of Protestant missionaries, the oppression of a native population, or the loss of copra and fruit to Imperial markets, as a Francophobic fear of French naval power in the South Pacific that awakened public support, at a time when foreign warships were frequently sighted by fanciful coast watchers.

The second element in the 'New Imperialism' that evoked reaction from Gibb was the British Empire's war with the South African Boer. On this issue he was far more cautious in his appraisal of Imperialist motives than he had been over French imperialist expansion. In a colonial ethos where 'the empire right or wrong' was a patriotic sentiment declared by most politicians Gibb wisely avoided a charge of unpatriotic sentiment by measuring his criticism with care. Large crowds applauded the 6,500 volunteers who sailed away to do battle with the Empire's enemies. In late 1899 Gibb read a prepared statement to his congregation, cautiously suggesting that the South African war did not seem to be a 'just war'. He asked whether it was 'the dogged obstinacy of the Boer, or British lust for gold?... I do not know, and my very uncertainty has restrained my sympathy with the war fever now sweeping over the Empire.'⁵⁸ Gibb contended that two international events had taken place during the last few years that justified armed intervention by Britain. He cited the French threat to British imperial interests in the Sudan, and the Sultan of Turkey's persecution of Armenian Christians, as incidents that could have demanded British involvement in a 'just war'. His claim that

57. Outlook, 25 May 1901.

58. *Ibid.*, 4 November 1899.

Britain had failed to do her duty in these situations is only half true, for Britain had acted vigorously in the Sudan with the French unconditionally evacuating Fashoda in November 1896. As far as South Africa was concerned Gibb questioned the justice of the British cause:

But does either of these just incentives to war - our national rights or the sufferings of others - exist in this case? I gravely doubt it. The one and only consideration which appeals to my mind is the alleged fact that British paramountcy in South Africa is endangered by the attitude and actions of the Boers and their sympathisers in Cape Colony and Natal. That it is for the good of South Africa that Britain should be the supreme power in that region, is a proposition which, to my thinking, admits no denial.⁵⁹

For Gibb, as for J. Hutcheson, T.E. Taylor and the few other parliamentarians who opposed the sending of New Zealand troops to South Africa, the Boer war was not a 'just war' in the traditional Christian sense.⁶⁰ A 'just war' was defined by Thomas Aquinas as a war undertaken on the authority of constituted and lawful sovereign power, just in cause and intended to advance the cause of good and defeat evil.⁶¹ Calvinist theology had from its conception accepted this Thomist basis and Gibb framed his criticism from the application of this test. Under the examination of the Thomist test British intervention in the Transvaal was at least morally dubious. There was no doubt as to the sovereign authority of Queen Victoria over British subjects within her realms, but what of her authority over expatriate Britons who chose to live in Boer republics? The justness of Britain's cause was for Gibb an uncertain factor. He suspected that commercial avarice was probably a primary motivating force amongst those who had demanded military intervention. Gibb found only one mitigating argument and he played it for all he was worth. He argued that a British victory would be for the good of 'Outlanders', natives, and Boers alike; a British victory would save them from the corrupting influence of other European powers and would assure

59. Outlook, 4 November 1899.

60. For an account of New Zealand reaction to the Boer War see S. Johnson, 'Sons of the Empire: A study of New Zealand's Ideas and Public Opinion during the Boer War', unpublished B.A. (Hons) exercise, Massey University, 1974.

61. Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica, II, ii, 9, 40. Also Confession of Faith, XXIII, 2, 'Of the Civil Magistrate'.

them the advantages of Anglo-Saxon civilization. Gibb argued:

The one and only consideration which appeals to my mind is the alleged fact that British paramountcy in South Africa is endangered by the attitude and actions of the Boers and their sympathisers in Cape Colony and Natal. That it is for the good of South Africa that Britain should be the supreme power in that region is a proposition which, to my thinking, admits to no denial.⁶²

Having rationalised that South Africans must be provided with the advantages of British rule and culture, whether they wanted it or not, Gibb joined the Otago clergy who offered to bless the departing Otago contingent, and was affronted when the Minister of Defence allowed the troopers to attend a race meeting at the time arranged for a civic farewell service.

Gibb questioned Britain's war aims, but he did not forthrightly condemn. He at least went further than most of the colony's leading clerics. In Wellington, T.H. Sprott, then an Anglican vicar but later to become bishop of that diocese, rejoiced 'that New Zealand should have more unreservedly than ever before expressed her feeling of oneness with the Mother Country'.⁶³ W.J. Williams, a Wesleyan leader, declared that New Zealand's interests in the war were 'personal', 'colonial', 'national' and 'Christien'.⁶⁴ A few clerics, Father George MacMurray and the Anglican bishop of Wellington, Frederick Wallis, were hesitant in pronouncing judgment, while others found the war an occasion for fiery jingoistic sermons.⁶⁵ Of Otago's Presbyterian ministers Rutherford Waddell, alone, came out with a clear and forthright condemnation. He found it insufferable that New Zealand Presbyterians and Protestants should go to war against Protestants of the Dutch Reformed Church, against Presbyterians. Waddell complained:

62. Outlook, 4 November 1899.

63. Quoted in G.C. Dunstall, 'Public Attitudes and Responses in New Zealand to the Beginning of the Boer War, 1899', Auckland University Historical Society Annual, 1967, p.18.

64. N.Z. Herald, 9 October 1901.

65. Dunstall, 'Public Attitudes and Responses to New Zealand to the Beginning of the Boer War, 1899', p.18.

The Puritan blood is none too plentiful among the people of the world that we can afford to wastefully spill it in the Transvaal.... Surely the colonies now, or at any time, have a right to consider the morality of a war before they are asked to join it.... Are we to deem it true patriotism to sink our opinions and stand by whether she [Britain] is right or wrong? That is not patriotism. It is political fatuity.... We are not "Little Englanders".⁶⁶

On 21 October Waddell was even more precise in his allocation of blame. 'We have not hesitated all along to aver our disbelief in Mr. Chamberlain, and we are more than ever concerned that he has jockeyed the nation into an unnecessary war'.⁶⁷

Waddell's denunciation of British imperial aggression, and even Gibb's cautious questioning of Britain's motives, were not popular public stands in New Zealand between 1899 and 1901. Public opinion was behind the war and the press denounced the Boer leaders as 'traitors to the Empire'. Those who volunteered as mounted troops were enthusiastic enough to meet the army's demand that every trooper provide his own mount. Cenotaphs stand in nearly every New Zealand village as perpetual reminders of the solitary volunteer, or the two or three, who fell in defence of Imperial unity; they are granite monuments to the colony's popular support for the war. New Zealanders behaved ipsis Anglicis Angliciores.

In Britain public opinion was much more divided with Lloyd George, Labouchere and Sir Edward Clarke challenging Chamberlain's motives, policy and integrity. The anti-war party denounced the cost of a campaign that took 400,000 troops and £250 million to subdue a population smaller than that of Brighton. Few New Zealanders seemed to know or care about J.A. Hobson's assertions in the Manchester Guardian and the Spectator that capitalism and imperialism were inextricably combined and in combination were driving the nation to economic and moral ruin.⁶⁸ In Britain a vocal

66. Outlook, 7 October 1899.

67. Ibid., 21 October 1899.

68. See A.P. Thornton, The Imperial Idea and its Enemies, London, 1963. J.A. Hobson (1859-1940), author of Psychology of Jingoism, 1901, and Imperialism, 1902, argued that the rash of colonialist ventures in this period was, as far as Britain was concerned, mainly a search for overseas investment of private capital that could find little profitable investment in Britain.

minority kept up an increasing attack on the morality of Britain's war aims and Britain's conduct of the war. Three anti-war spokesmen, Hirst, Murray and Hammond, in a booklet published in 1900, crystallised the fears of many humanitarians and some British Church leaders. They complained: 'In civilizing the world we are in danger of relapsing into barbarism... we are purchasing the morality of Africa at the price of our own'.⁶⁹ In Australia there was far more opposition to the war than in New Zealand with a young W.M. Hughes (later to become Commonwealth Prime Minister) condemning it as "ill-advised, ill-judged and immoral".⁷⁰

Gibb's misgivings about the justness of Britain's military intervention in South Africa disappeared soon after the fighting began. The same movement of opinion occurred amongst many other leading New Zealand clerics. Gibb at once concerned himself with arranging Presbyterian pastoral care for the troops at the front and successfully negotiated with the government for the appointment of a Presbyterian minister, D. Dutton, as chaplain to the Ninth Contingent.⁷¹ He accepted office as convener of the Dunedin Presbytery's Chaplaincy committee and declared his support for the Empire in an address delivered on 'Contingent Day', the day the Otago contingent sailed for the front:

The Empire for which these men of ours are going to fight is on the whole an empire to which a Christian man may gladly give his best - give even his life, if he can serve it better by dying than living.... And it is because Britain has borne the sceptre so well, because on the whole she has been faithful to her God-given trust, that we Christian men can give, and do give, her our undivided and enthusiastic loyalty.⁷²

When a Boer force of several companies attacked eighty of the Seventh Contingent at Bothensburg and inflicted sixty-five casualties, Gibb moved that the Presbytery records its 'deep sympathy with the relations of the

69. F.W. Hirst, G. Murray and J.L. Hammond, Liberalism and the Empire, London, 1900, p. 185.

70. Quoted in Barbara Peany, 'The Australian Debate on the Boer War', Historical Studies, 14. April 1971, p. 529.

71. Presbytery of Dunedin, 1 May 1900, 25 February 1902. Outlook, 15 March 1902.

72. Outlook, 7 April 1900.

gallant lads who fell fighting for flag and country'.⁷³

Gibb's imperialist fervour increased with the duration of the war. In June 1902, following the close of hostilities, he delivered his final verdict:

Let it be freely granted that the war now ended was on our part a just and inevitable war. Had we declared the conflict or, having entered it, had we been defeated or sheathed the sword before the victory was, in the sight of the whole world, manifestly ours, the very existence of the Empire would have been imperilled. And apart from our patriotism, we as Christian men shudder to imagine the disaster which...the overthrow of Britain would have meant for the Kingdom of God.⁷⁴

Waddell, a Christian Socialist disenchanted with imperialism and capitalism, certainly did not share Gibb's appreciation of the British Empire as the valiant defender of the Protestant cause. Gibb, however, feared that one chink in the armour of the pax Britannica, even a small dent inflicted by Boer farmers, would bring disaster. He believed that alien powers were awaiting opportunities to lay siege to the outer perimeter of Empire and that Roman Catholic agents were intensifying their campaign of undermining the Protestant citadel from within. His fervent Imperialist rationalisation of Britain's war policy was not echoed by the majority of members of the Synod of Otago and Southland, who maintained a temperate public position on the issue. At the close of the Boer War the Synod did not break into a Presbyterian version of the Te Deum; instead a sombre motion was passed reminding the Empire's leaders of the solemn responsibilities of power, and praying 'that the statesmen of Great Britain may be wisely guided in securing an equitable and permanent settlement of the difficulties still remaining'. Waddell was far more outspoken and persisted to the end in his condemnation, judging the conflict a 'weary, wasteful war'.⁷⁵

By allying himself with the British expression of the 'New Imperialism' Gibb had gained recognition in New Zealand as a good patriot.

73. Presbytery of Dunedin, 25 February 1902, 4 March 1902.

74. Outlook, 14 June 1902.

75. Synod, 1902, p.17; Outlook, 11 January 1902.

Seddon agreed to do his utmost to persuade the British government to annex the New Hebrides, not out of any large concern for Presbyterian missionaries, but because this demand agreed with his vision of a greater Pacific empire incorporating Hawaii and the New Hebrides. The Boer War established Gibb as a strong imperialist who brooked no diminution of the imperial hegemony. He seemed now to recognise the British Empire as the Social Gospel's greatest ally. Under the Empire's protection humane social reform might best be accomplished and Protestantism, guarded by the Revolution of 1689, could well regulate the lives of the Queen's subjects according to Protestant ethical principles reinforced by Parliamentary legislation.

Between 1894 and 1902 Gibb became a minor national figure. However it was not his intervention as a sectarian polemicist and a patriot that raised him to his rank. His name was known throughout the colony because of his efforts in the cause of Presbyterian church union. In this period Gibb's greatest concern was with the consolidation of Presbyterianism in the colony and to implement his aim he devoted most of his time to negotiating the union of New Zealand's two Presbyterian Churches. In making Presbyterian consolidation and union his primary pursuit Gibb aligned his interests with those of many Protestant leaders across the globe similarly engaged in rehabilitating their Churches following a decade of theological in-fighting. By the mid-1890s most Protestant Churches had effected a modus vivendi with the aggressive ideological forces that had challenged their doctrine and disturbed their unity. Having accommodated the new learning they settled down to repair the ecclesiastical fabric that had been damaged or neglected during the battle for religious certitude. In the decade of the 1890s home mission consolidation and denominational union were debated in Presbyteries, Synods and General Assemblies throughout the English-speaking world. In Scotland union discussions between the Free Church of Scotland and the United Presbyterian Church were revived in 1894 when a series of informal conferences were held.⁷⁶ In 1897 the two Churches, since the passing of the Free Church's Declaratory Act separated by few doctrinal issues, began formal negotiations aimed at organic union - a union completed on

76. For an account of these discussions see J.H.S. Burleigh, A Church History of Scotland, Oxford, 1960, pp.398-400.

31 October 1900.⁷⁷

Australian Presbyterians had begun union discussions in 1879, before the Strong dispute divided Victorian Presbyterians. In July 1886 an advisory Federal General Assembly for the Presbyterian Churches of Australia and Tasmania was inaugurated, and in 1901 the first federal General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia was constituted. The new federal General Assembly exercised jurisdiction over doctrinal matters, worship, discipline, missions, theological education, admission to the ministry and youth work. The constitution of each of the federated Churches was left intact.⁷⁸

Canadian Presbyterian Church union had ante-dated the theological troubles of the 1880s but the success of the Presbyterian Church of Canada in absorbing most of the English, Irish, Scottish and European Reformed traditions within its framework, and the vitality of Canadian Presbyterianism caught the imagination of New Zealand pro-unionists.⁷⁹ Increased evangelistic mission work in old-world cities and towns, revived interest in Sunday Schools and Bible Classes, and the involvement of large numbers of young Presbyterian intellectuals in the newly formed Student Christian Movement, with its motto 'the world for Christ in our generation', were marks of a new denominational sense of unity and purpose. J.R. Mott, General Secretary of the World Student Christian Federation, visited the University of Otago in May 1896 and after his New Zealand visit strong Student Christian groups, many under Presbyterian leadership, were set up.⁸⁰

In 1896 Gibb focussed his attention on the eroded state of home mission work within the Otago Church. The more he interested himself in

77. See Burleigh, A Church History of Scotland, pp.367-369.

78. Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, 1900 and 1901. The slow movement of the Australian Presbyterian churches toward a federal union may be traced in the Church Union reports of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, 1879-1901. Gibb kept in touch with Australian developments through his correspondence with his brother George, and his former colleague, P. Murdoch. See Murdoch to Gibb, 12 February 1901.

79. Gibb alluded to the Canadian situation frequently. See Outlook, 18 June 1904.

80. Gibb sent his apologies to Mott's main Dunedin meeting. See Outlook, 9 May 1896.

home mission work within Otago and Southland the more he realised the pastoral opportunity New Zealand offered to the colony's Presbyterians. Gibb began to dream of a powerful Presbyterian national Church, with a parish in every town and village. He did what he could to expand the Southern Church's pastoral role all the while aware that the Presbyterian cause was challenged by the new rural settlements in the North Island. To meet this challenge Gibb advocated Presbyterian union. However, while working toward a united Presbyterian Church he also attempted to wake the Southern Church from its contented sleep. In his annual report as convener of the Synod Church Extension committee he warned:

The work of Church extension within the bounds of the Synod is almost at a stand still.... There are districts where Presbyterians have settled, but Presbyterian services are either non-existent, or are few and far between; there are mission stations that ought to be Church extension charges; there are parishes that ought to be divided into two, or at the very least ought to have a missionary to help the minister in overtaking work he cannot possibly do without such assistance.⁸¹

Gibb pointed out that during 1895 the Church's total collections for home missions amounted to £384.2s.9d, and the three largest congregations had contributed only 6½d, 8d and 2½d per member, respectively. He reported that the Home Missionary at Ratanui, an extension charge, who had served a community that had provided him with only £18.4s.2d for the year, had been 'starved out'. Gibb noted:

The district is large, the settlers widely scattered and very poor.... They cannot pay for the Gospel, and it is the clear duty of the Church to give them the Gospel.... And the Church has done so - by starving the missionary. The total income of the charge for the year has been £18/4/2d, and to this your Committee added the magnificent sum of £1 per week, up to the end of June, when the missionary intimated that he must either receive a larger emolument or resign, starved out.... He has since resigned this mission....⁸²

In 1896 Gibb extended his attack on the Synod's lassitude over home mission work to the pages of the Outlook. On 9 May he pleaded for subscriptions to provide a horse for one of the Church's agents working

81. Synod, 1896, p.41.

82. Ibid., p.42.

amongst railway workers in Central Otago. The sum of £2.8s.6d had hitherto been donated and Gibb sarcastically noted that 'horse flesh is not a very costly commodity in Otago; but the sum in hand will not buy a steed of any description. Even Don Quixote's famous lean horse Rozinante could not be had for the money'.⁸³ On 14 November Waddell came to Gibb's assistance and commented that he could well understand why Gibb had delivered such a 'low key' extension report. He congratulated the Church on its annual foreign mission collection of £1,500, a sum equal to that obtained by the Presbyterian Church of Victoria, and warned 'We must take care that in our effort to reach the heathen we do not let go of the Anglo-Saxon'.⁸⁴ Gibb's extension policy was clear and simple; he aimed at the provision of an adequately paid minister, or lay agent, for every Otago and Southland community, and he advocated that the Synod should concentrate its efforts on raising its extension charges and home mission stations to the status of self-sufficient parishes. In an effort to induce young and active Scots licentiates to emigrate to Otago and tackle these tough rural parishes Gibb persuaded the Synod to waive the usual probationary year before ordination for any immigrant licentiates recommended by the Free Church of Scotland's Colonial committee. Gibb wanted a settled ministry and the best educated ministry that the supply of manpower would allow. He wanted no more visits from Biblical literalist evangelists of the calibre of Victoria's John McNeill, who in 1894 preached his way through Otago ranting about ministers who thought church organs, sermons about Henry Drummond's Ascent of Man, and analysis of social

83. Outlook, 9 May 1896.

84. Ibid., 14 November 1896.

problems, were substitutes for 'the real Gospel'.⁸⁵ Gibb was not the only New Zealand Presbyterian leader who warned that the Church was not keeping pace with population expansion. Most critics agreed with Gibb and Waddell that the rural areas needed most attention. However, a few, like Charles Murray, pointed to the unchurched state of many of the new suburbs.⁸⁶

Between 1894 and the close of the twentieth century Gibb had no control over the planning of the Northern Church's extension work. His writ ran only in the Southern Church and although he identified a colonial rather than a provincial need he confined his immediate attention to his own Church. How successful was the advice he gave? At the union of the two Presbyterian Churches on 31 October 1901 the Southern Church consisted of eighty-eight parishes, whilst in 1894 only seventy-three had been in existence. Synod statistical and home mission reports for the 1890s are marred by a confusion of nomenclature. No clear distinction was made

85. Outlook, 1 December 1894. McNeill's address on 'The Story of the Man Sick of Palsy' is reproduced in full. The evangelist pleaded for a return to the simple gospel of Christ and commented: 'If any brother minister wants a recipe for filling an empty Church...I can give you an open secret for doing it. Now, its not "Get an organ - (laughter) - and play them in". Well, you may play them in for a little, but by-and-by you will play them out. - (laughter). And it is not: "We must get conferences and be up-to-date, and have two or three sermons on Drummonds 'Ascent of Man', - (laughter) - and on social politics, and so forth". No, these things are played out almost before they are played in. People won't have them. You know after all, people know corn from chaff as well as the crows or the miller. - (laughter) - They know that is not the ministers business.'

Gibb had little time for professional evangelists. J.L. Pattulo, minister of Waihi, refers to Gibb's opinions in the Outlook, 16 June 1905: 'I am thoroughly in accord with Dr Gibb's estimate of the travelling evangelist, who, with very few notable exceptions, travel round from place to place, and repeat, parrot-like, half a dozen worked-up addresses calculated rather to excite the emotions than to convince the understandings of his audience'.

86. Charles Murray, at this time minister of Feilding parish, was concerned with the Northern Church's failure to keep pace with Wellington suburban development. On 8 April 1899, and 17 June 1899, Murray informed readers of the Outlook that while Auckland's 5,250 Presbyterians were ministered to by six, the capital, with 6,157 census Presbyterians, had but four pastors. Murray protested at the 'estrangement of the masses' and pleaded for adequate pastoral care for 2,592 Wellingtonians, whom he claimed were without pastors.

between home mission stations employing full-time agents and those ministered to by theological students during summer vacations. For some years it is impossible to accurately distinguish between extension charges, receiving aid from Synod funds, and self sustaining parishes. This confusion prevents any accurate tabulation of the home mission stations that became aided charges, and the aided charges that became parishes, during Gibb's time as Southern Church home mission convener. However, home mission reports and Synod statistical reports show clearly that from 1897 until the Presbyterian union of 1901 the Southern Church expanded its pastoral coverage in Otago and Southland.⁸⁷ By the turn of the century the provincial Church had recovered its pastoral drive. Gibb had succeeded in attracting some able ministers and home missionaries and had raised their stipends to a point where committed agents could remain at their posts.

By the mid-1890s Gibb was convinced that the two Presbyterian Churches of New Zealand could only effectively perform their pastoral task by uniting. In 1894 he was elected convener of the Synod's Church union committee and held this office until the two Churches were united seven years later.⁸⁸ Gibb succeeded A.H. Stobo who had been appointed convener in 1891 when the Synod heeded a motion from the Presbytery of Clutha to establish a committee to 'positively consider the matter of union'.⁸⁹ During the 1870s and 1880s the mood of informal cooperation that existed between the two Churches was broken only by occasional jibes at each other's theology. Both Churches were divided over theological revision and partisans from both camps saw union as an advantage for their theological enemies. Stobo had quickly responded to the Synod's *détente* with the Northern Church and submitted a plan that gained immediate general support and was opposed by only a small party of confessionalist recalcitrants. When Stobo resigned from the committee in 1894, because of ill health, Gibb inherited a plan that provided for the retention of the Synod as a provincial ecclesiastical court, protection of the Synod's right to administer the endowments of the Otago settlement, and an alternation between Dunedin and Wellington as the sites for the annual General Assembly. Stobo had even persuaded the

87. Synod, 1893-1901. Statistical Reports.

88. Synod, 1894. Committee appointments.

89. Ibid., 1891, p.16.

Presbyterian Church of New Zealand to adopt a Declaratory Act to define the limits allowed in interpreting the Westminster standards. In return he promised to do his best to persuade the Synod to allow liberty of opinion on the issue of whether the Church could solemnise marriage between a man and his deceased wife's sister. Stobo's arrangement with the Northern Church leaders and his appeasement of those reluctant to see the death of the Otago Church had prepared the ground well for Gibb.⁹⁰ When Gibb assumed office there was a considerable measure of goodwill within the Southern Church toward the principle of union. However, he soon found that those opposed to the union were almost exactly the same ministers and elders who had spoken against him at his heresy trial in 1890. This group used the union issue as a drum to rally the sons of Otago to defend their heritage from northern barbarians bent upon looting the Otago Church of her funds and endowments. Throughout seven years of debate and negotiation Gibb persevered in his attempt to prevent the New Zealand Presbyterian union from occasioning a minor schism. On the eve of union he consulted privately with Southern Church anti-union leaders and persuaded them to enter the united Church, pledging that their theological scruples would be respected.⁹¹

The need for Presbyterian solidarity was the main argument presented by Gibb in his advocacy of the union cause. His clearest and most detailed case was presented in a letter to the Otago Daily Times on 28 April 1897. After alluding to Church union as an expression of the will of Christ he argued that it was also in accord with the genius of Presbyterianism:

Even those who are opposing the present scheme admit this. In the immense territory of Canada the various Presbyterian denominations once existing there...now form one large, vigorous organisation. The five Presbyterian churches of Australia and Tasmania are now in process of cementing union. The Free Church of Scotland and the United Presbyterian Church are at this moment negotiating for union. The difficulties surmounted in Canada were very much greater than any we have to encounter in New Zealand. Yet they have overcome.

90. For a fuller account of the Presbyterian union see J.S. Murray, 'The Union of the Northern and Southern Churches of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand', unpublished M.A. thesis, Otago, 1927.

91. Outlook, 2 March 1901.

The obstacles in the path of Australian and Scottish Church union are much more formidable than ours. Yet they will doubtless be successfully surmounted. And if we face our task in a spirit of earnestness and enthusiasm Presbyterian union in this colony will be an accomplished fact in a year or two at the utmost.⁹²

There could hardly be a clearer appeal to the example set by Presbyterians in other parts of the Empire and to the need of the Otago Church to identify with a movement sweeping across the denominational world. Even when Gibb made a case for union on the ground that it would aid the Northern Church in its difficult pastoral task he was not so much concerned with the possibility of more effective pastoral mission as with the creation of a national Church of sufficient membership to make it second in size only to the Church of England:

In the rural districts of Otago and Southland we have the field practically to ourselves; the Northern Church is seriously handicapped by the presence of other denominations. Think of the assistance we shall be able to render them in upholding the interests of Presbyterianism in the large territory they are endeavouring to occupy.⁹³

When Gibb did refer to the probable impact of the proposed Church on the nation his interest extended beyond denominational growth: 'The voice of a united Presbyterian Church will make itself heard with salutary effect on political questions with a social and religious bearing'.⁹⁴

Gibb easily carried the majority of his Church with him in his negotiations for Union. However, he was determined to bring the vocal confessionalist minority with him and delayed the consummation of the merger until this group, led by Bannerman, Begg and Sutherland, had been given every chance to state their case and realise that their theological integrity would be no more impaired in the united Church than it was by

92. ODT, 28 April 1897. Later reprinted as a pamphlet. Gibb seems to have ignored the small schism occasioned by the Canadian Presbyterian union. See J. Webster Grant, The Canadian Experience of Church Union, London, 1967, p. 18.

93. ODT, 28 April 1897.

94. Ibid.

their remaining in the Otago Church after the passing of the Declaratory Act. At a referendum of the Presbyteries and Kirk sessions in 1897 only one Presbytery, Dunstan, with a communicant membership less than that of Knox Church, Dunedin, voted against the basis of union. Fifty-seven of the Otago Church's sixty-five Kirk sessions declared themselves in favour of the union plan and none of the larger parishes were represented amongst the objectors. Even so, Gibb still delayed enacting a merger with the eager Northern Church. In 1898 he informed the Synod that it 'had carried a very important measure - the marriage of a deceased wife's sister - on a majority of three. They certainly could have carried Union on a majority of twenty-five. It would not have been wise'.⁹⁵

Gibb was wise in delaying his final push toward national Presbyterian Church union. His opponents formed a powerful minority. In 1897 the Southern Church opponents of Church union formed a 'Church Defence Society of Otago and Southland' and appealed to two Dunedin solicitors, F.R. Chapman and W.C. MacGregor, for a legal opinion on the lawfulness of the proposed merger. They were advised that doctrinal revision and Church union were breaches of faith with the original constitution of the Church as drawn up by the donors of the Otago Church endowments.⁹⁶ Gibb countered this move by cleverly obtaining a contrary opinion from Sir Robert Stout who declared:

That if it [the Church] is governed by the Free Church doctrines, polity and discipline, there can be no appeal against the decisions of its highest courts in such matters to the law courts and if any of its members should so appeal they could be deposed.⁹⁷

Gibb had his eyes on overseas developments in persevering with his Church's minority. In 1893 a small group of Free Church of Scotland Presbyterians dissatisfied with the seeming permissiveness of a new Declaratory Act seceded. He was aware that tempers ran high in the negotiations for the

95. Synod, 1898, p.77. Outlook, 12 November 1898.

96. See L.H. Barber, 'The Church Defence Society of Otago and Southland, 1897', unpublished M.A. thesis, Massey University, 1970. W.C. MacGregor was a somewhat biased counsel. His father was a leading anti-Union minister.

97. Stout issued his opinion on 21 August 1897. It was published in the ODT, 4 October 1897.

merger of the Free Church of Scotland and the United Presbyterian Church, a union enacted in October 1900 at the cost of the separation of twenty-five ministers and sixty-three congregations, mostly in the Highlands, from the united Church.⁹⁸ Legal entitlement to property as well as the unsavoury polemics that accompanied schism were matters of concern to Gibb. He assured the national Church of legal entitlement to the property of both Churches by parliamentary legislation and brought the dissenting party into the united Church.

Gibb's success in uniting the Colony's Presbyterians without schism prevented the application of the House of Lord's decision of 1903 to Otago lands and endowments. Acting in its senior judicial capacity the House of Lords gave over the total churches, manses, glebe, endowments and other property of the former Free Church of Scotland to a minority that retained the Free Church of Scotland name and continuity. Had Bannerman, Begg and company, not been persuaded to enter the united Church a period of fierce litigation could have marred the beginnings of the united Church and, at least for a time, the miniscule remnant might have inherited all the property of the Otago Church.

Gibb's attentiveness to the danger of schism inherent in denominational union, as much as his devotion to a world Presbyterian mood, were recognised by his election as the first moderator of the united Presbyterian Church of New Zealand on 31 October 1901. He was also rewarded by a grant of leave that allowed him a vacation abroad. Gibb well deserved the brief vacation he allowed himself in Canada and United States in 1902. A formal Presbyterian union had been completed without any last minute withdrawal by recalcitrants. The mood of Church union was in the air and correspondents in the Outlook, and Gibb himself, advocated a broader union, incorporating at least the colony's Congregationalists. In 1901 the Congregational Churches paper, the Advocate has amalgamated with the Outlook and the Congregationalists seemed willing to unite. World Presbyterian leaders were delighted at Gibb's success and Andrew Cameron's letter to Aberdeen University suggesting that Gibb be rewarded by the conferring of a Doctorate of Divinity had been posted, and

98. Ruth Rouse and S.C. McNeill, A History of the Ecumenical Movement, pp.303-304.

Cameron had informed Gibb of his prospective distinction.⁹⁹

Gibb's Social Gospel aspirations were now backed by a national Presbyterian denomination. They were also supported by a formidable, though informal, Evangelical alliance. The Wesleyan Conference had agreed to renounce support for Bible reading in state schools and accepted Gibb's new platform, a demand for a national referendum on the question of Bible instruction by state school teachers.¹⁰⁰ By 1902 the Anglicans of the North Island had agreed to this new strategy and the Warden of Selwyn College had hinted at support from the next Dunedin Diocesan Synod.¹⁰¹ Although the coronation oath affair had died down in early 1902 Gibb had gained from his stand on this issue and by 1903 had gathered under his anti-Catholic and Protestant-Evangelical umbrella not only the main Protestant Churches but also elements from the more extremist Protestant wing. At the turn of the century Gibb took his place in the centre of all photographs of Protestant dignitaries, and no one seems to have suggested that this was not his rightful position.

99. Cameron to Gibb, 4 March 1901.

100. OVI, 3 April 1902.

101. Ibid., 10 June 1902.

Chapter Four

Social Crusader 1903-1913

The older ethics were individual, introspective, self-examining, and its stream grew narrow and un-inviting and dry; but into its bed there has broken this new flood of social interests, like a spring freshet filling the channel to its banks; and now a score of outlets can hardly contain the stream of philanthropic service which sweeps on to the refreshing of the world.

F.G. Peabody¹

From 1903 until the outbreak of the Great War Gibb was, even for an extraordinarily active man, extremely wide-ranging in his activities and interests. This was the most influential period of his career. The evidence for this period is also rich and it seems best to discuss Gibb's impact in two chapters. In this chapter attention will be given to Gibb's involvement in New Zealand's social crusades, while in Chapter Five an assessment will be made of the failure of Gibb's grand design - a National Evangelical Church - and his subsequent efforts to extend the influence of the Presbyterian Church throughout New Zealand.

Gibb was inducted into his third and final parish on 12 August 1903. He immediately informed the St. John's Presbyterian congregation that they need not expect the same frequency of pastoral visitation from him that they had received from James Paterson, his predecessor.² Gibb had moved to the colony's capital to better marshal and persuade the nation's Social Gospellers to support his social reforms, and to more easily lobby

1. F.G. Peabody, Jesus Christ and the Social Question, New York, 1900, p.12.

2. On 22 August 1903 the Free Lance commented adversely on Gibb's indication that he would not be visiting his parishioners as often as they had been visited in the past: 'Dr Gibb, the new pastor of St John's, had a busy time last week when he entered into his new possession. The burly Doctor from Dunedin told the people of his new pastorate that he would not visit them so frequently as they had been accustomed to be visited.... Under the old regime of pastors, the minister used to go in and out among his people. Now-a-days folks have to go to church or great public gatherings if they want to meet their pastor. Dr Gibb has avowedly come to Wellington because of the larger scope offered him of taking part in the ventilation of questions of the day.'

legislators to regulate the nation's morals according to Calvinist-Evangelical blue-prints. He soon began a decade of leadership in the Evangelical Protestant crusades: Bible in Schools, prohibition, and those crusades levelled against the opium trade, gambling, permissiveness on the stage and Sabbath recreation.

Between 1903 and 1913 Gibb embarked on a campaign of persuasion and political coercion aimed at regulating the nation's morals by law. His crusades failed to take Jerusalem and establish a new crusaders' state. Legislators were not prepared to risk arousing sectarian conflict by testing the public mind by a plebiscite on the Bible in Schools issue. Referendum successes allowed prohibitionists to believe that the people of New Zealand would in the near future follow the crusaders, dry-shod, to the promised land, but the First World War was to ruin their chances. Gibb's crusade against the opium trade was part of an international campaign leading to the first Opium Convention at the Hague in 1912 and the signing of an international treaty. Here his concern was with a rival consolation that rendered the task of missionaries in China more difficult. His crusade against permissiveness on the stage gained him ridicule and little success, as might be expected from a protest against a play he never took the trouble to read or see. Gambling and Sabbath-breaking were traditional sins and Gibb's campaigns against them reiterated ancient arguments. However, these earlier crusades are significant because the debates over bills presented to the legislature in attempts by the crusaders to curb these 'evils' provide an excellent barometer of the sensitivity of Parliament to the strength and weaknesses in the Protestant-Evangelical bloc's political tactics. The era of crusades ended in defeat, and that defeat was realised and publicly admitted by Gibb even before the outbreak of the First World War turned the public's gaze away from the spectacle of the Dominion's Social Gospel crusaders limping back to their Churches with broken swords and dented armour.

The Bible in Schools crusade was the linchpin to all Gibb's Social Gospel legislative design. He believed that the introduction of Biblical teaching into the state controlled national education system would provide the nation's youth with the moral training needed to make them willing upholders of the Evangelical-Calvinist social order he planned to impose. His belief in the transforming effect of Biblical teaching was naive, but

it was a belief common to most protestant clergy of the period. He had no quarrel with the State over its assumption of the control and direction of the national educational system providing it made provision for the imparting of all the elements needed for a full education. Gibb held that the 1877 Education Act, with its secular provision, neglected the elements of cultural and moral training. He argued that without the inclusion of these areas of training universal education would produce only an educated monster:

Morals were concerned with conduct, and conduct, as Matthew Arnold used to say, covered four-fifths of human life. If the future citizens were not taught the fundamental verities of morals, and their true basis in the character and will of God, mere cleverness would avail them nothing.... Those who had read Goethe's Faust would remember that Mephistopheles was there presented as a very highly polished and well-bred gentleman of the highest intellectual power and acquirements. But at the very heart of him he was as much the devil as in the days when he appeared with hoofs and horns. In the long run the intellect, when divorced from the control of the conscience and moral nature, spelt out ruin for the individual and the community.³

For Gibb morality was a necessary part of a full education; morality could not be taught apart from religious sanctions and the Bible was the text book of Christendom's religious sanctions.

Gibb wanted the secular clause expunged from the New Zealand Education Act and to further his aim he invited representatives from all the major Protestant Churches to a conference held in Wellington between 28 April and 30 April 1903. This inter-Church conference agreed to seek a national referendum to test the electorate's assumed support for Bible in Schools, despite the Legislative Council's rejection of Bible in Schools legislation in 1901 and 1902.⁴ It sought a daily thirty minute period of Bible study, the participation of State teachers to provide explanation and context for the lessons, and a 'conscience clause' to

3. Outlook, 30 August 1902.

4. A full account of the Wellington Conference on Bible in Schools is given in the Outlook, 9 May 1903. At the conclusion of the Conference Gibb led a deputation to Seddon and made much of the success of the Bible in Schools vote in voluntary plebiscites held throughout the colony.

allow teachers with scruples and parents who did not wish their children to be taught the Bible to withdraw from classes. Local plebiscites in Otago, Auckland and Palmerston North provided Gibb with a show of public support⁵ for his crusade and they were augmented by a barrage of letters to the press from supporters. However, he needed more than a measure of goodwill; he needed either legislation to nullify the secular provision of the 1877 act or a public plebiscite. In search of a legislative solution Gibb, unanimously elected chairman of the inter-Church conference, led a deputation of twenty-five notable ecclesiastical leaders to the premier. Richard Seddon reacted cautiously, adamant that there would be no return to the pre-1877 situation when education was the play-thing of denominational rivalries, but able at the same time to suggest that he was impressed by a growing public interest in Bible in Schools. He cleverly protected himself from any unequivocal statement by informing the deputation that he had not had a chance to discuss the issue with his ministerial colleagues and that he noted the referendum questions set by the Churches in their local questionnaires asked only for agreement in principle; no particular basis for teaching was set before the voters. (Seddon expected denominational strife to erupt as soon as the Churches began to discuss what was to be taught.)⁶ The premier sent the deputation away with the conviction that he had discovered a new demand from the electorate and was concerned to meet it.⁷ Pleased with their reception the

5. General Assembly, 1902. Bible in Schools Report. On 9 May 1903 the Outlook listed results from a series of unofficial plebiscites. Three results indicate the trend in voting:

| District | 'Yes' | 'No' | 'Refuse to Answer' |
|------------------|-------|-------|--------------------|
| Dunedin | 8,547 | 1,291 | 565 |
| Mataura | 2,395 | 325 | 120 |
| Palmerston North | 2,003 | 226 | 125 |

Most ballot paper asked simply whether the voter was, or was not, in favour of Bible lessons in state schools.

6. Outlook, 9 May 1903. In reply to Gibb the premier commented that: 'The opening remarks of Dr Gibb gave him quite a shock, because Dr Gibb had said what was desired was the reintroduction of scripture teaching into State schools. In its wider sense, if he was to take that to mean denominationalism, he was entirely opposed to it.'
7. Ibid. Seddon informed Gibb's deputation that: 'He was only a servant of the people. He had no right whatever to keep back anything for their good or to prevent them expressing their opinion on any matter affecting their well being.'

deputies failed to note Seddon's reminders that the legislature would have to be convinced that funds should be allotted for Bible in Schools teaching and that a Referendum bill would need to pass both Houses of Parliament.⁸

Seddon was less ambiguous in November 1903 and seemed to support the advocates of Bible in Schools during the committee stages of a Referendum bill; a bill designed to refer to a direct vote of the electors issues twice passed by the lower chamber and rejected in the upper house. In supporting the Government's bill he conceded that he had given the Bible in Schools leaders:

a promise...that there would be a measure brought forward in which provision would be made for the Bible-reading in schools and other large social and political questions to be submitted to the people.⁹

The premier showed himself sensitive to charges that he had introduced a bill that he really did not wish to see passed. He expressed resentment of a comment made by the member for Wairarapa to Gibb: 'You don't know Seddon and his ways yet'.¹⁰ The bill failed to pass the Legislative Council.

By November 1904 Gibb did know Seddon and his ways and he was not enamoured with his new found knowledge. On 14 November he denounced Seddon from the floor of the Presbyterian General Assembly, accusing him of manipulating the procedures of the legislature to prevent the passing of a bill designed to allow a national plebiscite on the Bible in Schools question:

What was wanted was a direct referendum to the people on the Bible question.... He had a very shrewd suspicion that Mr Seddon had been fooling them all along the line.... On the last day of the previous session to the last, when the new Government railway offices were opened, he had some conversation with the Premier in the hearing of a prominent

8. Outlook, 9 May 1903.

9. NZPD, 127, 4 November 1903, p.371.

10. Ibid.

Three cartoons caricaturing Gibb's contest with Seddon.

Top left: 'Who Told That Taradiddle?' appeared in the Free Lance, 3 December 1904.

Right: 'Little Children, Love Ye One Another' was published in Free Lance, 19 November 1904.

Beneath: 'Let's bury the hatchet dear Dick and mingle our tears' was placed in the Christmas Supplement in the Free Lance, 10 December 1904.



WHO TOLD THAT TARADIDDLE!

St. John: Oh, you naughty, naughty man! You've been telling taradiddles. How-jisth we are utter strangers.
 King Dick: How dare you, sir, accuse me of such a shocking crime! Never told a taradiddle in my life. But what about you? People are saying—
 "Minister's Association! Peace, peace, beloved brethren!"



"LITTLE CHILDREN, LOVE YE ONE ANOTHER,"

Presbyterian General Assembly: Where's that referendum on the Bible-in-Schools? What have you done with it? Who runs this country? We'll teach you not to fool us! We are the people and don't you forget it!



St. John: "Let's bury the hatchet and our hands mingle as one!"

Seddon upsetting Gibb's Bible in Schools' barrow,
1904. The occasion for this cartoon was Seddon's
announcement, on 30 November 1904, that he was
'prepared to speak from end to end of the colony in
opposition...[to the return of] denominational
education'.



Dr. Reddin, November 20. Mr. Reddin announced that if ever the Bible in schools question became a law matter he was prepared to vote from end to end of the colony in opposition as he was determined to prevent a return to denominational education.

THE BIBLE-IN-SCHOOLS.

The Rev. Doctor: You bad man, you meant to expose me! I know you did. You've been leading me all along. It's all over between us now!
Richard John: And this is all the thanks I get for trying to give you a lift, eh? Right you are! You can get somebody else to lift you up!

citizen of Wellington, and the Premier had then stated that it was all right.... The Premier had told him: "Put your trust in me, and I'll give you a bill next year which will have the effect of giving the Bible to the children of the colony".... He found it extremely hard to believe that a statesman, a Minister of the Crown, could tell a "tarradiddle".¹¹

Gibb was probably right in his supposition that Seddon had never really intended to allow the crusaders more than a chance to enter their bill on the parliamentary order paper. Skilful parliamentary management allowed embarrassing bills to lapse at the close of each parliamentary session, a tactic described by Waddell as 'the slaughter of the innocents'.¹² The premier's real intention may well have been to allow the Legislative Council to add to its crimes by allowing that House the privilege of destroying Gibb's bill. Seddon was concerned with the Council's power to delay Government legislation and may have decided that the Bible in Schools issue would be a useful pawn to play in his contest with the Council. Seddon vacillated in his attitude to the Council. At times he called for its abolition, on occasion he sought its reform, and in 1904, faced with a private measure bent on abolishing the second chamber, he voted for its retention. It was a thorn in his flesh and 'See how the Council is thwarting the will of the electorate', was easily shouted when a private member's bill was sure not to pass.¹³

Gibb believed he had been duped by Seddon and determined that the colony should know the facts of the case. However, the Bible in Schools crusaders, despite strong public support, were regarded by most newspaper editors as misguided fanatics and Gibb received scant sympathy from the press. These editors were rival guardians of society's values and made their value judgments from a broader perspective than Gibb's Calvinist-Evangelical blue-print. The N.Z. Free Lance responded with ~~the~~ two leading articles, and three cartoons that face this page. On 19 November

11. Outlook, 26 November 1904.

12. Ibid., 11 November 1904.

13. See W.K. Jackson, The New Zealand Legislative Council. A Study of the Establishment, Failure and Abolition of the Upper House, Dunedin, 1972, pp. 162-164.

1904, under the leader 'Dr Gibb goes for King Dick', the editor observed:

- That substantial cleric, the Rev. Dr Gibb...is in a high state of wrath. Richard John the Premier, is the cause of it all, and had better keep out of the way if he doesn't want a wiggling. It has been shrewdly suspected ever since the Upper House... booted the Referendum Bill for the third successive year out of its venerable precincts, by the convincing vote of twenty-two to seven that the Rev. Dr Gibb was at the bursting point.¹⁴

The Free Lance was not sympathetic. A fall in the number of entries for the Presbyterian Sunday School examinations was noted and the suggestion was made that 'It would be well for Dr Gibb and his clerical brethren to leave the State schools alone for a season and galvanise interest in their own Sabbath schools'.¹⁵

Seddon did not take Gibb's attack lying down. He protested to the Presbyterian General Assembly and distributed copies of his letter to the colony's newspapers. The Free Lance noted that 'all diplomatic relations are apparently suspended between the Doctor of Laws and the Doctor of Divinity' and suggested that Seddon:

strongly objects to the eminent divine's suggestion conveyed in the frisky language of the comic opera that he has been "telling tarradiddles".... The Premier will place himself in a false position if he mistakes this ecclesiastical clamour for the voice of the people.¹⁶

The premier was not done with his revenge. In an address to the ladies of Chatto Creek, in Central Otago, he denounced Gibb as 'a political partisan, more of a politician than a clergyman', and charged Gibb with misquoting him by omitting the three words 'and other questions' from his account of Seddon's promise.¹⁷ Seddon now argued that his intention toward the Bible in Schools plebiscite was conveyed exactly in the pledge that he had made to Gibb at the opening of the Railway offices. However, as the 'other questions' were of more consequence to the nation than Bible

14. Free Lance, 19 November 1904.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid., 3 December 1904.

17. Outlook, 10 December 1904.

in Schools they had been given preference while Gibb's measure lapsed with the close of session. This rather weak defence was followed by a stern denunciation of Gibb's crusade. The good ladies of Chatto Creek, who had kindly provided the premier with tea, were promised: 'If ever it became a vital question whether or not the Bible should be introduced into the State schools, he would be prepared to take the platform, and would speak from end to end of the colony in opposition to the movement'.¹⁸ That Seddon selected a small audience in a diminutive Central Otago settlement to receive his tirade against Gibb reveals both that Gibb had become a national figure and that Seddon was concerned at the success of his crusading. Unless Seddon had undergone an instantaneous conversion to secularism it may be assumed that Gibb's conclusion that the premier had throughout been playing with him was a fair conclusion.

The year 1905 added failure to failure. T.K. Sidey introduced the Bible Lessons in Public Schools Plebiscite bill into the House, saw it succeed in its second reading by a majority of seventeen votes and then lapse, carefully squeezed from the order paper by a political manager determined that it would not pass.¹⁹

During the second reading debate A.E. Remington, member for Rangitikei, represented the misgivings of those opposed to the bill. He objected to a referendum being used to assert 'the right of even a majority to force religious teaching on the minority as has latterly been so strenuously urged by the Rev. Dr Gibb'.²⁰ Vexed by Seddon's Fabian tactics Gibb complained:

A deputation was appointed to wait on Mr Seddon to ask him to provide another day for the discussion in committee of the Plebiscite Bill. This request was addressed to him on the 26 August. Not till the 24 October - a few days before the end of the session - did he consent to receive the deputation.²¹

18. Outlook, 28 June 1905.

19. NZPD, 132 (19 July 1905), p.727.

20. Ibid.

21. General Assembly, 1905, p.137.

Despair began to pervade the crusaders' camp. W.E. Gillam, vicar of St. Matthew's parish, Auckland, commiserated with Gibb:

I am very thankful that you have not resigned your position as Chairman of the Executive. It must be dreadfully disheartening for a Skipper to look upon a water-logged ship. But still we honour the Captain who sticks to his post to the last.²²

During 1905 the Bible in Schools crusaders raised a whirlwind of activity. The newly named Bible in Schools Referendum League distributed 5,000 sample lessons to members of Parliament, headmasters, and ministers of religion.²³ R.A. Wright of Wellington, later a Reform Party member of Parliament, was appointed full-time organiser, at a salary of £300 per annum, and forty-one new branches were opened.²⁴ A barrage of pamphlets from the Wellington State schools' defence league was answered by a counter-bombardment of pamphlets.²⁵ Despite this flurry of activity the crusade was lost. Without parliamentary legislation Gibb and his followers could only tilt at windmills.

Frustrated by Seddon's persistent stone-walling of his bills Gibb reacted with personal abuse and threats. A.W. Rutherford, member for Hurunui, renounced his pledge to support the Bible in Schools plebiscite bill. Ignoring the matter of parliamentary privilege (the bill was still technically before the House) Gibb threatened Rutherford with defeat at the next election. The Free Lance accused Gibb of breach of privilege in bringing pressure to bear on a parliamentarian over an issue before the

22. Gillam to Gibb, 27 December 1905.

23. General Assembly, 1905, p.136.

24. Free Lance, 18 February 1905. R.A. Wright was a journalist and publisher with a distinguished record in public life. He was a member of the Wellington Licensing Committee from 1899-1905, and served on the Education Board, Harbour Board and the City Council. He was an M.P. from 1908-1911 and, again, from 1914-1938. Wright was Minister of Education from 1926-1928 and mayor of Wellington from 1921-1925. He was popularly known as 'Monkey' Wright because he usually managed to climb to the top of the electoral poll.

25. See especially the pamphlet The Bible in Schools: a criticism of the proposed text book, Wellington, 1905.

legislature. The editor was impressed neither with Gibb's tactics nor with the doom Rutherford might be expected to endure:

The pathetic picture of this poor parliamentarian driven forth from the haven of rest, and £300 a year, to a bare private existence on a few hundred thousand acres and a bagatelle of a few thousands a year, is enough to make the angels weep.... Dr Gibb is a man who must "make dust".... He can no more help being heard than Mr Seddon can help being Premier.²⁶

Toward the close of 1906 Gibb began to analyse the failure of his crusade. He discovered a weakness in the Presbyterian Church's ecclesiastical machinery that was to vex him until his death. General Assembly and Presbyteries exercised little executive authority and seemed unwilling to channel the enthusiasm they expressed in unanimous support for motions into continued political action once their meetings ended. Gibb's grand delusion was that he could finally transform the Church's courts. He vainly believed he could make these 'talk shops' into efficient administrative bodies able to implement and enforce their own decisions. On 1 December 1906 he expressed his exasperation in an answer to 'Back-Block Brother's' allegation that he had grown weary. He declared an emphatic:

No, but I have grown weary of the make-believe of the General Assembly's annual resolutions protesting the vast importance of the movement...only to be followed by the utmost supineness and indifference when the testing moment comes.²⁷

The Bible in Schools Referendum League was dying. In the Dominion 'Socrates' wrote a slightly premature epitaph: 'It grows on poor soil and bears annually a solitary flower, to wit, a deputation'.²⁸ From 1908 the executive seems to have ceased meeting. In 1911 it amalgamated with the newly formed Bible in Schools League.²⁹

26. Free Lance, 9 September 1905.

27. Outlook, 1 December 1906.

28. Dominion, 6 November 1907.

29. See I. Breward, Godless Schools? Christchurch, 1967, pp.47-54.

The Bible in Schools League, the second wave of the crusade, was bent on introducing the New South Wales religious instruction system into the New Zealand state schools. Under the Public Instruction Act of New South Wales religious teaching was placed on the same footing as the teaching of grammar and geography, with examination and inspection of teaching. In the primers and junior standards Biblical stories were re-told with little comment by the state school teachers. In senior primary school classes the Irish National board's syllabus was used and additional lessons were given in morals and civics.³⁰ P. Board, an under-secretary of the New South Wales Education department commented in October 1906 that 'all teachers, irrespective of creed, are required to teach these Scripture lessons, and in no case has any refusal to do so taken place'.³¹ Section eighteen of the act allowed parents to withdraw their children from all religious instruction merely by writing to the teacher. Considerable attention was paid to the success of the Australian systems operating not only in New South Wales but also in Tasmania, West Australia and Queensland. The appointment of an Anglican Queenslander, Canon David Garland, as Dominion organiser for the League in June 1912, reinforced this use of Australian precedents.³² Garland saw the New Zealand crusade as part of a greater Australasian crusade and remarked 'If we fail we jeopardise the situation for the whole of Australasia'.³³

30. The New South Wales system was advocated because of its success in Australia. Accepted in New South Wales in 1866 this system was adopted by Tasmania in 1868, Western Australia in 1893 and Queensland in 1909. A typical example of the pamphlets produced by Bible in Schools crusaders in favour of this system is W.N. de L. Willis (Archdeacon of Waikato), Bible Teaching in State Schools, Auckland, 1911. At the turn of the nineteenth century the Victorian scheme had been favoured by Gibb who discarded it in favour of the New South Wales system. See also Gibb Notebook 1; Garland to Wellington House-Holders, 1 September 1910.

31. Board's comments were reproduced in Victorian Bible in Schools Pamphlet, 2, Melbourne, 1908.

32. David Garland came to New Zealand in 1911 after a successful career as Archdeacon of North Queensland. He was largely responsible for the success of the Queensland Bible in Schools crusade and he was a warm advocate of the New South Wales Bible in Schools system. Garland received high praise for his Australian Bible in Schools work in the Australian Christian World, 1 April 1910.

33. Outlook, 27 August 1912.

Gibb remained the key figure on the national executive, moving from the presidency to the vice-presidency as a tactful acknowledgement of the presence of Anglican bishops on the executive demanded. A parliamentary referendum was still the last ditch that needed crossing but under Garland's leadership the League built a massive organisation, and enlisted public support, in an attempt to prevent legislators from disregarding the crusaders' demands. Garland was soon in trouble. He refused to enter non-Anglican pulpits during canonical hours and necessitated Gibb's rallying to his defence with unconvincing, and unconvincing, explanations about Garland's difficult position with the New Zealand bishops.³⁴ Garland and the New South Wales system soon came under attack from a group of Presbyterian rebels who preferred the Nelson system of ministerial entry out of official school hours. The Nelson Presbytery, led by the clerk of General Assembly, J.H. MacKenzie, passed a motion at variance with General Assembly's support for the League's platform.³⁵ Gibb answered MacKenzie's challenge by writing to Presbytery clerks advising them to encourage their Presbyteries to censure MacKenzie, who, Gibb argued, had no right as clerk of General Assembly to oppose the Assembly's stated policy. Again Gibb was faced by a Presbyterianism that refused to be drilled, disciplined and ordered. He wrote to William McAra: 'I am really profoundly distressed with the disintegration, the lack of co-ordinate life, which is being manifested at the present time by the attitude of some of the leading Presbyterians'.³⁶

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34. Gibb to Roseveare, 27 March 1913. Marked 'Private and Confidential'. Gibb pleaded that Roseveare understand Garland's difficult position: 'He has had to fight high dignitaries of his own church...in vindicating his right to take part even in such services as he holds in our churches'.
35. A flurry of correspondence between Gibb and leading Church leaders and Bible in Schools supporters followed MacKenzie's rebellion. In his letter to McAra (Gibb to McAra, 16 August 1913 marked 'Private and Confidential') Gibb identified the rebels with 'organised Congregationalism' within the Presbyterian Church. See also, as examples of Gibb's reaction to MacKenzie's challenge: Gibb to Jolly, 18 June 1913; Gibb to Ryburn, 18 June 1913 and Gibb to Davies, 7 October 1913. Garland warned Gibb that an attack on MacKenzie could react against the League by provoking 'a demonstration of sympathy' in favour of the Assembly clerk. See Garland to Gibb, 5 November 1913 marked 'Strictly Confidential'.
36. Gibb to McAra, 16 August 1913.

The ruin that threatened the second Bible in Schools crusade was caused by Anglican-Presbyterian suspicion, division in the Presbyterian camp and apathy. M.B. Harris, Presbyterian minister at Pahiatua, was reported to Gibb, by Garland, as one who was not furthering the League's cause, and duly received a stern letter from Gibb.³⁷ Gibb could only plead with parish ministers; as convener of the Home Mission Committee he was far more intimidating to home missionaries. On 13 August 1913 Gibb wrote to J. MacDonald, a home mission agent, bluntly warning: 'You are not taking a wise course in doing what you are said to be doing at present'. MacDonald responded at once with an affirmation of loyalty and a plea that he had been misrepresented.³⁸

Ian Breward in Godless Schools? points out that 'Free Church fears of Anglican-Presbyterian advantage' led to several influential Baptist and Congregationalist ministers joining the League's enemies, the New Zealand National Schools Defence League - with Howard Elliot, later of Protestant Political Association fame, as an Auckland branch secretary.³⁹ Gibb's Evangelical alliance was breaking up. To accommodate the Anglicans he had roused the suspicion of non-conformist theological conservatives, and through his attempt to impose disciplined adherence to the League's platform he had frightened some Congregationalists who feared absorption by the increasingly powerful Presbyterian Church. Bishop Cleary's running attack on the League gave Gibb an opportunity to raise an anti-Catholic

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37. Garland to Gibb, 16 July 1913; Gibb to Harris, 30 July 1913; Harris to Gibb, 3 August 1913.
38. A similar sequence follows. Garland to Gibb, 12 August 1913: 'I think it would be well if you would draw his attention to the position of the [Presbyterian] Assembly.' Gibb to McDonald, 13 August 1913: 'It is bad enough for ministers of the Church to set themselves in definite opposition to the will of the Supreme Court [of the Church]. It will be regarded as something worse for a Home Mission agent contemplating study for the ministry taking up such a line'.
39. See also McDonald to Gibb, 15 August 1913.

banner, but with limited effect.⁴⁰ John Caughley, a Presbyterian elder who was secretary of the New Zealand Educational Institute, and the editors of many of the Dominion's newspapers, stressed the satisfactory results of the 1877 Act and made much of Protestant disunity.⁴¹ Caughley questioned the accuracy of several of Harland's statements about the success of Australian Bible in Schools legislation and pointedly indicated divisions within the Presbyterian Church of Queensland over the issue. Gibb's blustering retort that if Caughley believed the Presbyterian Church was trafficking in falsehood in its support for the Bible in Schools movement he should have 'shaken the dust of such a church off his feet' was an argumentum ad hominem that did nothing to assist, and much to injure, his case.⁴²

The proverb 'nothing succeeds like success' was true for the 1877 Education Act. Most of New Zealand's parents showed by their failure to agitate for a Bible in Schools plebiscite that they did not wish to allow the parsons a new chance to bother them. Those who did sign a card calling for a referendum in the main did nothing more in support. The crusaders mistook well-signed petitions for enthusiasm. At the 1913 Presbyterian General Assembly Gibb announced that 'it is now or never'.⁴³ By 132 votes to thirteen the Assembly representatives supported the League's

40. Henry Cleary's attacks were conducted in the New Zealand Tablet, in the secular newspapers and in a profusion of pamphlets. His major pamphlets were:

H.W. Cleary, The Bible-in-schools movement in its relation to taxpayers, teachers and pupils, Wellington, 1912.
Bible -in-schools League, Auckland, 1913.
The Great Failure, Auckland, 1913.
The New State Religion, Auckland, 1913.
A Summary, Auckland, 1913.

41. John Caughley was a secondary school teacher who became assistant Director of Education in 1916 and Director of Education from 1921-1927. He was a prominent leader of the N.Z.E.I. - the 'Teachers' Union'.

42. Gibb to the Lyttleton Times, 23 August 1913 (autograph copy).

43. Outlook, 27 January 1914.

platform.⁴⁴ However, despite his comment to Dickson on 3 September 1913, that 'the...Movement has now got a mighty swing on and I think the Referendum will be granted next session of Parliament',⁴⁵ Gibb had little cause for optimism. Garland's efficiency had brought an accompanying unpopularity and only eighty-six of the 1,400 Protestant Ministers on the Marriage Register had supported his petition with their signatures.⁴⁶ The defenders of secular education were now organised, able and determined; the Roman Catholic hierarchy were opposed to any seeming proselytising advantage being given the Protestants and Gibb's battles with Cleary had introduced a sectarian conflict into the debate that reinforced legislators in their conviction that the Churches must not be allowed to resurrect the pre-1877 era when education was a sectarian football. Gibb still gathered crowds of several thousand as he barn-stormed in Wanganui and the Taranaki,⁴⁷ but although the crowd applauded his oratory and returned home to gain new disciples and write to their members of Parliament the Government was reluctant to change the educational status quo.

In June 1914 a Bible in Schools Referendum bill was promised in the Governor's speech. The promised bill was not introduced.⁴⁸ The First World War cannot be blamed for the destruction of the League's chances of securing the legislation it sought. Despite changes in political leadership premiers consistently upheld the secular basis of the nation's educational system. New Zealand's politicians were not duped by Gibb's claim that his crusaders spoke for a Protestant nation; they realised that many New Zealanders wore their religion as they wore their hats, infrequently. They also realised that those who did adhere to the League's

44. General Assembly, 1913, p.24.

45. Gibb to Dickson, 3 September 1913.

46. N.Z. Methodist Times, 31 October 1914.

47. On 31 July 1913 the Wanganui Opera House was packed and a large number stood in the aisles to hear an address by Gibb on Bible in Schools. An account of this gathering and a reproduction of the address was given in an 11 pp. pamphlet, Bible in State Schools League: address... at Wanganui, Wellington, 1913.

48. NZPD, 168 (25 June 1914), p.5.

demand were unlikely to coalesce to punish parliamentarians who voted against their wishes; the crusaders were too small and scattered a minority. In any case, most damage to the Bible in Schools cause was done by Legislative councillors who were not directly answerable to the electorate. On 22 October 1915 Gibb informed Gray Dixon: 'I quite agree with the statement that the Bible in Schools League is practically dead'. It had lived only five years, a miserable invalid child who did little except make a loud noise.⁴⁹

Between 1903 and 1913 most Presbyterians regarded the liquor trade as the foremost evil in 'the trinity of evils' polluting the nation - drink, gambling and vice.⁵⁰ Gibb agreed with this diagnosis but he was not a front-line leader in the crusade for national prohibition. He played a secondary role in the Presbyterian Church's prohibition crusade not because he believed the cause was irresistible and did not need his efforts but because of misgivings at the extremist solution proposed by the prohibitionists.

By 1907 the Presbyterian General Assembly, with Gibb's vote, had committed itself to the proposition that 'the only cure for the liquor traffic is no liquor traffic'.⁵¹ The New Zealand Alliance's propaganda machine was working well. Band of Hope texts were displayed on numerous household walls, Sir Robert Stout's continued advocacy of the cause was well known,⁵² and the Outlook cited in support of the crusade the success of prohibition in Kansas and the speeches of William Jennings Bryan.⁵³ William

49. Gibb to Gray Dixon, 22 October 1915.

50. This expression seems to be first used in General Assembly, 1903, p.69.

51. General Assembly, 1907, p.34.

52. Stout's support for the prohibition cause did not lessen with his years. On 15 July 1929 he wrote to Gibb suggesting a league to discourage social waste. He noted: 'We are spending nearly £9,000,000 a year on alcohol'. Stout was as firm in his support for prohibition in the 1920s as he had been in the 1890s.

53. Outlook, 19 March 1910.

Ferguson Massey, a Presbyterian, deplored the abuse of alcohol,⁵⁴ and George Fowlds applauded the 'blue ribbon cause' in numerous public speeches.⁵⁵ Labour leaders combined denunciation of the liquor trade with anti-capitalist propaganda. E.J. Carey of the Cooks' and Waiters' union protested that 'the traffic was the cruelest, ugliest and biggest monopoly existing in the Dominion'.⁵⁶ W. Lightfoot informed the Labour Council's Conference in July 1908 that 'the traffic was a curse...sapping the life-blood of the workers'.⁵⁷

Although the New Zealand Alliance sought a straight-out electoral confrontation between prohibition and continuance, Gibb and a group of Presbyterian leaders opposed attempts to remove local option reduction from the choices placed before the electors. Gibb believed that 'reduction' allowed moderate drinkers an opportunity to support the temperance cause whereas a straight-out prohibition versus continuance contest might well place them in the continuance camp.⁵⁸ Since 1893 electors had been given an opportunity to vote on three questions:-

- Is the existing number of public houses in the district to be maintained?
- Ought this number be reduced?
- Ought all public houses in the district be suppressed?

54. Massey was against any increase in licensing hours, and in favour of a via media between the extremist parties. See NZPD, 168, (21 July 1914) p.827.

55. George Fowlds appears in the 'Who's Who' of prohibition in J. Cocker and J.M. Murray, Temperance and Prohibition in New Zealand, Wellington, 1930, pp.222-223.

56. Dominion, 22 July 1908.

57. Ibid.

58. Under the 1893 Alcoholic Liquors Sale Control Act it was possible for electors in a licensing district to vote that no licence be issued to any hotel in that district. This vote needed to be carried by a three-fifths majority. From 1905 to 1910 there was a demand, by both prohibitionists and the liquor trade, for a straight-out confrontation between 'prohibition' and 'continuance'. Gibb and a few Presbyterian leaders believed 'reduction' was as much as the Churches could hope for and sought to prevent the removal of the local option. Gibb was satisfied that New Zealand's drinking habits were superior to those he had observed in Scotland in 1907. See Dominion, 13 February 1908. Gibb was advocating local option as late as 1929. See Outlook, 17 June 1929.

From 1911 the second question was removed from the ballot paper and the prohibition cause suffered accordingly. In 1911 55.83 per cent of the voters were in favour of national prohibition. In the local option poll, where the issue was whether the existing number of public houses should be maintained or suppressed, the continuance vote exceeded the 'no license' vote by 2,369 votes.⁵⁹ George Fowlds found the number of questions asked him about temperance at the 1911 election had increased from 14 per cent asked in 1908 to 25 per cent.⁶⁰ Yet Fowlds failed to take account of the fact that the increase mainly took the form of facetious questions. The prohibitionist crusaders needed a sixty per cent national vote to impose national prohibition but this vote was denied them - only just denied them - because of their increasing fanaticism. In 1913 the prohibitionists gained support, from almost every member of the Presbyterian General Assembly, for a petition to Parliament requesting a reduction in the necessary majority to carry national prohibition from 60 per cent to 55 per cent.⁶¹

James Milne, and his two unknown supporters, who sought for several years to interest the Presbyterian Church in a state control option found their motions rejected with opprobrium, the whole Assembly bearing down to vote against them.⁶² Gibb seems to have given up his occasional glass of whisky under the duress of the prohibitionists.⁶³ His public utterances make clear that he regarded intemperate consumption of liquor and the liquor trade's right to increase its sales with little regard for public welfare as great social evils. He appears also to have regarded prohibition as a solution that was unlikely to succeed in its aim and a solution that Calvin and Knox would not have sought for Geneva and Edinburgh. Gibb believed in temperance rather than in national prohibition, although he was

59. General Assembly, 1912, p.9a.

60. Attention is drawn to Fowlds' campaign experience in G.S. Robinson, 'Some Aspects of the Attitudes of the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches to Social Questions in New Zealand, 1853-1938', unpublished M.A. thesis, Auckland, 1950, p.10.

61. General Assembly, 1913, p.14.

62. Ibid., 1911. They were a minority of three in the 1911 Assembly division

63. The late Malcolm Wilson affirmed that Gibb very occasionally accepted a glass of whisky.

frequently branded a prohibitionist. In March 1904 'R.J.G.' complained to Gibb that it grieved him 'that anyone who occupies the position of a minister of the Gospel should identify himself with that class of people who called our saviour a wine-bibber'.⁶⁴ Gibb's position was clear. In December 1904 he informed the Wellington Evangelical ministers that it was the Church's duty to demand a reduction in the consumption of alcohol in New Zealand. He pleaded: 'In vain do we strive to reform the drunkard, while we suffer the existence of almost irresistible allurements to his depraved appetite'.⁶⁵

There was moderation in Gibb's service to the prohibition cause. He realised that national prohibition was unlikely to come and his reservation was expressed when he informed Wellington's ministers: 'It is our bounden duty to lessen and, as far as may be, to abolish the temptations to vice and sin which abound on every hand'.⁶⁶ To what extent was Gibb a prohibitionist? As a Christian minister he was committed to reclaim the drunkard and reduce the temptations offered to him. However, Gibb accepted this crusade as part of a greater crusade to realise the Kingdom of God. His temperate support for prohibition is an expected conformity to Calvinist-Evangelical social evangelism. It also provided him with associations and alliances useful in crusades closer to his heart. The moderation of Gibb's prohibitionist zeal was shown at its clearest later, in June 1917, when he lobbied for 6.00 p.m. closing during the course of the war, as a war economy measure. In June 1917 he was not demanding national prohibition, but reduced hours of sale by local option.⁶⁷

It was against the second of 'the trinity of evil', gambling, that Gibb and the Social Gospellers appeared to have their greatest success. Early in the twentieth century Supreme Court judges, magistrates, bishops, school masters, and Richard Seddon, agreed that gambling was a canker that appeared to be infecting the youth of the nation and increasing the

64. 'R.J.G.' to Gibb, 19 March 1904.

65. Gibb papers, Autograph copy of Gibb's address to inaugural meeting of the Wellington Council of Evangelical Churches, 7 December 1904.

66. Ibid. The emphasis is mine.

67. Evening Standard, 11 June 1917. St. John's Session, 5 June 1917.

colony's crime rate. Politicians agreed that something must be done to eliminate the street betting, tote shops, and telephone bookies that everywhere abounded. However, they were in the main reluctant to advocate the abolition of totalisators at race meetings, allowed under the Gaming and Lotteries Act of 1881. Piece-meal restrictions were imposed, carefully formulated to restrict gambling to the race courses and regulate the number of opportunities allowed each community to fulfil its gambling urge. In 1894 the number of totalisators was restricted to two-thirds of those in existence in the previous year but still the crusaders were far from satisfied. In May 1905 the New Zealand Times denounced gambling as 'a social vice that is more insidious...and destructive of character than ...drunkenness'.⁶⁸ The Outlook, in August 1906, reported the death of a bookmaker at Flemington race course, kicked to death by angry punters. It demanded that 'the Anti-gambling crusade...be prosecuted with renewed vigour'.⁶⁹ The premier paid lip service to the crusade at the opening of the new Hastings Presbyterian Church in early 1906. Seddon warned his audience that:

The great danger to the rising generation and the adult population of the colony was the gambling spirit.... The criminal statistics furnished a long line of embezzlements, the primary cause of which was gambling.⁷⁰

When one of those present interjected 'What about the totalizator?' Seddon blustered that if the totalisator was abolished it would only be replaced by something worse.

However, mounting public concern forced Seddon's successor, Sir Joseph Ward, to take action. In the Justice and Prisons department report of 1906, F.E. Severne, a gaoler and probation officer, complained of the increase in gambling within the colony and suggested it was a factor in moulding youths into criminals:

The great increase in the amount of crime as shown by the return attached, is a circumstance which cannot be lightly

68. New Zealand Times, 5 May 1905.

69. Outlook, 4 August 1906.

70. Ibid., 3 March 1906.

ignored. The causes of this deplorable state of things are many, but the chief of them are very clear, so plain, indeed, that "he who runs may read". A few years since the undoubted cause of most crime was drink, but now I am inclined to attribute at least an equal percentage to gambling, more equally as it affects the youth of New Zealand There are too many young men in the towns a great number of whom dislike steady work; they have too much time on their hands; they want to dress above their means; and if they cannot get money honestly they steal it and gamble with the proceeds of their thefts.... My duty is done when I point out the great cause of crime, leaving it to others to derive a remedy.⁷¹

A parliamentary select committee found that totalisator betting had reached the annual sum of £1,800,000.⁷² Ward introduced a Gaming and Lotteries Act amendment bill into the House aimed at the prohibition of the publication of dividends and work-place betting. As a sop to racing interests the bill proposed to allow licensed bookmakers to conduct their activities on the course.⁷³

The crusaders were adamant that the bill did not go far enough. J.J. North, a Baptist observer at the Presbyterian General Assembly, referred to the bill as 'a very lame and inefficient measure and hoped that the [Presbyterian] Assembly would say what it thought'.⁷⁴ Gibb supported the bill in principle but demanded the elimination of the clause proposing to licence bookmakers and sought for a total abolition of the totalisator. The crusaders believed that gambling could be driven from the land by legislation, apparently ignoring the problem that would have arisen with an attempt to police unpopular legislation. The government appeared to be willing to regulate gambling opportunities to a degree at which gambling would play a smaller part in the national life. The crusaders were not satisfied with the compromise proposed by the government and looked about for the identity of those who appeared to be thwarting their Social Gospel

71. AJHR, 1906, H-20. Department of Justice report.

72. Outlook, 9 June 1924. A useful summary of the history of gambling legislation to that date.

73. NZPD, 141 (15 October 1907), p.1189.

74. Dominion, 7 November 1907.

design. The Wellington Council of Evangelical Churches, now reduced to thirteen members at its annual meeting, determined that the totalisator must go. Gibb seconded an annual report that threatened those members of the House of Representatives who stood in the way of the crusade:

It is desirable to discover who are those Members of Parliament who render it impossible to remove this stain upon our legislation, to mark them down as enemies of the common weal, and to strain every nerve at the next election to prevent their continuing to misrepresent their country.⁷⁵

A Wellington Citizens' Anti-Gambling League was formed, rallies were held and leaflets distributed after the model of the prohibition crusade. The anti-gambling crusaders did well. In 1910 bookmaking was totally prohibited and the number of days allowed for the use of totalisators substantially reduced. The government had taken note of a behavioural pattern that seemed to be getting out of hand and had reduced gambling opportunities as far as they sensibly might without incurring serious public displeasure and without promoting difficulties for the police by encouraging public tasting of a forbidden fruit. The crusaders were men of principle unsatisfied with the concessions to their demands made by Parliament. They sought total suppression of gambling and their refusal to accept any less was their undoing. C.E. Major, member for Hawera, saw the crusaders as fanatics rather than moderate men of principle and informed the House that:

There are a number of people who are advocating this measure, and who think it is not drastic enough.... On questions of... religion they probably have ideas, but as far as gambling is concerned they have no knowledge whatever.... When men are sufficiently strong in mind to indulge in any games of chance without indulging to excess, why should they be prohibited from so doing?⁷⁶

Three circumstances contributed to the success of the anti-gambling crusade between 1903 and 1913 - a change in premier in 1905, a general belief that the youth of the nation were being corrupted by gambling fever, and the

75. Dominion, 1 October 1907.

76. NZPD, 142 (21 November 1907), p.1174.

Justice department statistics referred to by Seddon. Sir Joseph Ward was more amenable to Gibb's promptings than the aggressive Seddon. Ward and Gibb exchanged polite notes about family affairs and the premier received Gibb's depositions without the long delay between application and reception that Seddon found so useful.⁷⁷ Ward's speech in introducing the 1907 amendment bill shows that the new premier's sympathies lay with those who required heavy curtailment of gambling.⁷⁸ He appeared to sympathise with the crusaders. The second circumstance encouraging anti-gambling legislation was the increase in race meetings and the participation of the youth of the nation in betting. Archdeacon H.W. Harper observed of the period that 'gambling is a considerable evil; there's too much racing - a race-meeting somewhere nearly every day of the year'.⁷⁹ Judge Cooper in reviewing the cases of several youthful offenders pointed to an outbreak of gambling amongst the young,⁸⁰ and Sir Robert Stout, the chief justice, reinforced this conclusion.⁸¹ An increase in fraud and embezzlement was the third occasion for government concern, a matter referred to by Seddon in his address at the opening of the Hastings Church when he admitted that the criminal statistics furnished a long list of embezzlements, the primary cause of which was gambling.

Bible in Schools, prohibition and anti-gambling are crusades Gibb might have been expected to join. His fervent advocacy for a movement aimed at suppressing the import of opium into China is less predictable.

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77. See Ward to Gibb, 8 February 1909, and 31 March 1910. At the opening of the Wellington Boys' Institute (one of Gibb's foundations) Ward and Gibb humourously scolded each other. The occasion closed with Ward calling for 'three cheers for Dr and Mrs Gibb'. See Dominion, 4 October 1906.
78. NZPD, 142 (13 November 1907), p.939. Ward made his position clear 'But what he did care about - and what most people cared about - was the putting an end to this system which was producing injury and detriment and the ruin of thousands of young men and women in the Dominion'.
79. H.W. Harper, Letters from New Zealand, 1857-1911, London, 1914, p.330.
80. Outlook, 3 March 1906.
81. Stout supported J.J. North's Citizens' Anti-Gambling League. His dislike of gambling was as consistent as his dislike of alcohol.

Given his Imperialist sentiment and his Evangelical passion to reform social evils wherever they besmirched the British name his support is understandable. Add to this his developing Social Gospel conviction that the world's economic and political affairs were leading toward a disaster that could be prevented only by the international acceptance of the principles of the Christian ideal of the Kingdom of God, Gibb's participation in this, the fourth of his crusades, is in no way exceptional. From 1906 Gibb played a leading part in the affairs of the New Zealand Association for the Severance of the Connection of the British Empire with the Opium Traffic.⁸² His interest in this movement arose in part from his awareness of the plight of those Chinese gold miners in Otago who were deposited like flotsam in the province as the wave of gold rushes receded. Gibb's colleague, Alexander Don, was missionary to these misfits from 1886 and Gibb realised the hardships and persecution that had led these oriental expatriates to an other than Christian solace.⁸³ Gibb was influenced far more in his determination to fight against the opium trade by reports from New Zealand missionaries on the debilitating effect of this drug in their Church's second mission field - China.

The New Zealand situation during this period was well controlled by inspectors able to enter the homes of Chinese suspects under the 1901 Opium Prohibition Act and the Opium Act, 1903. The first of these acts was introduced by Seddon who was alarmed by tales of wild-eyed Chinamen, reported by colonists who saw everything foreign as a threat to their security. Despite a reduction of public revenue of between £8,000 and £9,000 per annum the act was maintained by a legislature concerned 'to prevent the smoking of opium by Chinese, and its spread to others,

82. Gibb preserved several typewritten reports of the annual meetings of this society.

83. Alexander Don (1857-1934) was the Presbyterian Church of Otago pioneer missionary to the Chinese who had come in the gold rush. Between 1886 and 1889 he visited Chinese settlements throughout the province on foot. After 1886 he centred his work in Dunedin. His eighteen tours are well recorded in the Outlook and he awaits a biographer.

especially persons of the opposite sex'.⁸⁴ Gibb was at one with this fear that the opium pipe was a lure employed by wily orientals to shaanghai British womanhood. In 1905 the Wellington Council of Churches proposed that the government should introduce 4,000 Chinese females into the colony as mates for the predominantly male Chinese population. Supporting this motion Gibb argued, with little respect for Chinese marriage custom: 'It was better to increase the number of full-blood illegitimate Chinese children in New Zealand than to increase the number of half-caste illegitimates'. Gibb received a stern rebuke from the editor of the Free Lance who replied: 'You are not going to cure the immorality of Chinamen by throwing open our ports for the free entrance of Chinese women, and if the Council of Churches is well-advised it will never raise the subject again'.⁸⁵

With the passing of the Opium Act of 1908 Gibb and the association were able to accuse Britain of lagging behind her colonies in her legislation against the traffic and in enforcement. Under the New Zealand act a separate customs permit was required for each import and all quantities bought and sold were recorded in a ledger open for inspection. Opium suitable for smoking was prohibited entry to the Dominion and the smoking of opium was prohibited. The police were authorised to enter the home of any Chinese, without warrant, if they had any reasonable cause to suspect that opium smoking was taking place.

The style of Gibb's anti-opium crusade follows an already established pattern. Private representations to politicians were followed by political pressure. Branches were set up throughout the country to enlist public support and persuade politicians that a vocal and vigorous minority required action. By 1908 the New Zealand Anti-Opium Association numbered 170 members with branches in Auckland, Christchurch, Dunedin, Napier, Nelson, Gisborne and Wanganui.⁸⁶ At the annual meeting, on

84. See Drug Dependency and Drug Abuse in New Zealand (First Report), Wellington, 1970, p. 15.

85. Free Lance, 4 March 1905.

86. Third annual report of the N.Z. Anti-Opium Association, 1903. A typewritten copy of this report is lodged with the Gibb papers.

18 December, Gibb proposed a condemnatory motion that reveals how far he had moved since his rationalisation of Imperialist behaviour during the Boer War:

This meeting deploras the sin and crime of which the British nation is guilty in forcing vast quantities of opium grown and manufactured in India upon the people of China. Great Britain is usually supposed to stand for righteousness; the opium export is vile immorality. Great Britain is equally supposed to stand for freedom and the rights of weaker peoples. The opium export is a brutal infraction of the liberties of the Chinese and of their right to self-government. This meeting therefore calls upon the British Government to put a swift end to this unspeakable disgrace and to cleanse the nation from the black stains which now defile its escutcheon.⁸⁷

How well substantiated were Gibb's charges? In 1906 the Wellington branch had heard an address from a Captain Blackbourne, recently retired from the China sea trade. Blackbourne revealed that he 'had just made two trips to China in command of...mail steamers, and on each voyage had carried over 1,000 chests of opium from Bombay to China'.⁸⁸ Blackbourne's evidence is validated by numerous missionary accounts and by the opposition of the Imperial Chinese government to a trade imposed upon them by European powers. Britain had been involved in the export of opium from India to China since the East India Company began the trade in 1773. By 1880 over 5,000 chests of the drug were annually unloaded at Chinese ports. Imperial edicts, vice-regal seizures of pipes and supplies, and military action, far from stemming the tide increased the determination of the traders to brook no interference. The First Opium War resulted in China losing Hong Kong, in five ports being given over to free trade and in the payment of an indemnity of nearly twenty million dollars. The treaty of Tientsin, following the Second Opium War, forced China to pay the cost of the expedition that destroyed the Summer Palace, opened more ports to the 'foreign devils' and made opium a legal import. The Boxer Uprising in 1905 was an upsurge against a European presence that had debased an ancient civilization.

87. Third annual report of the N.Z. Anti-Opium Association, 1903.

88. First annual report of the N.Z. Anti-Opium Association, 1906.

Britain's guilt in the despoliation of China arose from her failure to stop the trade in opium from India, a trade that allowed the government of India to keep taxes relatively low. The British Royal Commission that sat in India in 1893 and 1894 had largely white-washed the trade with few witnesses appearing to give evidence on its destructive effect. In May 1906 the House of Commons unanimously passed a motion decrying the opium trade to China as morally indefensible. The India Office disregarded this condemnation and on 4 March 1911 the Earl of Crewe, Secretary of State for India, reported an increased demand at the Calcutta sales had resulted in a £2,960,000 increase in opium revenue over that received in the preceding year.⁸⁹

The New Zealand anti-opium crusade, in which George Fowlds and Judge Cooper joined with Gibb, was part of an Empire-wide movement. New Zealanders, and especially Social Gospellers, were beginning to see social problems in a world setting. The Protestant alliance united on this issue and the Edinburgh World Missionary Conference of 1910 appealed to all member Churches to bring pressure to bear for a change in British practice.⁹⁰ This campaign was not so much anti-imperial as an attempt to recall the British imperial power to its humanitarian duty. These efforts combined to bring about the first Opium Convention at the Hague in 1912. Gibb had played a small but successful part in the overseas Empire's appeal to the British government.

In July 1910 Gibb began a fifth crusade, against permissiveness on the New Zealand stage, unfortunately choosing as his target a play he had not seen, a light-hearted farce entitled 'The Girl from Rectors'.⁹¹ In

89. Britain's involvement in this scandal was reported at length in the Outlook, 21 March 1911.

90. Ibid. Very little is made by historians of the ecumenical movement of the part played by the colonial Churches in this crusade. Hans-Reudi Weber, Asia and the Ecumenical Movement, 1895-1961, London, 1966, does not even mention the opium trade.

91. A non-partisan review of Paul Potters' 'The Girl from Rectors' is found in the Domicon, 2 August 1910. For a further account of the clash between stage and pulpit occasioned by this play see L.H. Barber, 'How Wellington Hospital Gained Four Wards from a Battle between Stage and Pulpit', N.Z. Medical Journal, 80, 24 July 1974, pp.63-65.

a burning condemnation from St. John's pulpit Gibb denounced the play as "Satanic...bestial. It is a pornography rendered tenfold more deadly by the fascination of wit and beauty and dress with which the play is said to be invested".⁹² The Attorney-General had already been approached by Gibb and asked to ban the play. J.G. Findlay replied sympathetically but intimated that he was not able to take any action other than laid down by the Police Offences Act of 1884 and the Criminal Code Act of 1893. Gibb was dissatisfied and demanded government action:

Power should be obtained, and that without delay. The police will hale before the magistrate a woman for solicitation in the streets, but here is a play which would do as much harm to the morals of a large section of the community as a regiment of courtesans.... I hope that an agitation will arise that will before the long [sic] free the stage of this city from the pollution of the frank riskiness and piquant agreeableness of French lubricity.⁹³

An angry series of exchanges followed in the capital's newspapers. The Opera House was booked out in advance of all performances and Hugh Ward, the play's producer, challenged Gibb's high flying moralism by offering to provide a matinee performance in aid of a Childrens' Hospital for Wellington. The public rallied to Ward, Gibb was deserted by most of his friends, and £7,314.2s.4d. was raised by public subscription to allow, with a government subsidy added, four childrens' wards to be erected and to form the King Edward VII Memorial Hospital for Children.⁹⁴

Paul M. Potter's play was a ridiculous comedy of manners wherein several flirtatious characters finally and unexpectedly end up in bed with their own spouses, without any adulterous adventures on the way. The last scene sees three strained marriages mended and is even slightly moralistic. Why did Gibb make such a fuss and risk ridicule by denouncing a farce he had not even seen? Gibb was fiercely puritanic in his upholding of the sanctity and indissolubility of marriage. He opposed every suggestion of easier divorce, arguing that marriage was a

92. Dominion, 1 August 1910.

93. Ibid.

94. Secretary, Wellington Hospital Historical Records Committee to Barber, 12 November 1973.

lottery and that once begun there was no withdrawing from the game. His basic objection to 'The Girl from Rectors' was its light-hearted attitude towards marriage and its frank acknowledgement that extra-marital flirtations, and more, went on. Gibb was not blind to the facts of life. However, he believed that marriage was too sacred and man's sexuality too easily aroused for the stage to be permitted to satirize married life. His second objection was based on a mistaken assumption that the play performed in New Zealand by Hugh Ward and his company was the same play described to Gibb by a visitor to the United States. The play had been revised; dialogue and action likely to upset New Zealand's 'Mother Grundy' had been removed. Gibb's third objection appears to have been his general Puritan dislike of the theatre. Hugh Ward recognised this at once and protested:

If the reverend gentlemen Gibb and J.J. North think that members of an honoured profession may be treated as rogues and vagabonds as they were 200 years ago he is very much mistaken. Nowadays the people on the stage are just as God-fearing as those off it - perhaps a little more so.⁹⁵

Gibb saw the Edwardian theatre as a rival to the pulpit - a propagator of false values. The Dominion had only a few months previous to Gibb's sermon denounced dramatic productions likely to corrupt and loosen moral values.⁹⁶ That bawdy plays existed there is no doubt, but J.C. Williamson and the Ward players did not bring them to New Zealand. Gibb had chosen for his crusade the wrong play, the wrong country, and, with a legal remedy on hand had he wished to use it, the wrong method. He deserved the 'black hand' that was anonymously posted to him on 15 August 1910.⁹⁷

Gibb's fifth crusade, a campaign to enforce a Presbyterian sabbath on the community, met with limited success. His demands were doctrinaire and inflexible and in making them he took little account of the social consequences their granting would bring. In the main, city councils ignored his demands for the abolition of Sunday concerts and Sunday golf

95. Dominion, 3 August 1910.

96. Ibid.

97. It has not been possible to discover how seriously Gibb took this seeming threat.

and the government gave way only when it was to the advantage of the exchequer to do so. Sunday trains services were increased but shooting practice for the Volunteers was gladly cancelled.

In 1903 Seddon attempted to suspend standing orders to allow the House of Representatives to complete its session by sitting an extra few hours on Sunday morning. Had he succeeded he would have saved members from the inconvenience of remaining in the capital until Monday afternoon to complete minor legislation. The Speaker ruled the premier's motion out of order, to the jubilation of the Sabbatarians who followed with an attack on Seddon's Sabbath-breaking activities:

The frequency with which Cabinet meetings are held on Sundays is common talk in Wellington, whilst the ministry are by no means guiltless in the matter of Sunday travelling, frequently involving the running of special Sunday trains. It is therefore not to be wondered that the Railway Department encourages Sunday labour, that the Defence Department are prone to winking at Sunday volunteer practice, and that in the City of Dunedin men have been employed on Sunday in laying the track of the electric trams.⁹⁸

Gladstone and William Jennings Bryan were held up as examples Seddon and his cabinet would have done well to imitate.

Not only the cabinet but also the growing number of the colony's dairy farmers gained the opprobrium of the Presbyterian Church - for taking their milk to creameries on Sundays. What were the 'cow cockies' to do? 'An Old Supplier' advised them to 'put aside the Sunday's milk to make butter.... This might be a little sacrifice...but it might pay in the end...knowing that we must all be judged according to our works'.⁹⁹ In the same edition of the Outlook 'S[unday] S[chool] Teacher' referred to Sunday milk delivery as a sin 'on a par with Prostitution and the opium trade'.¹⁰⁰

98. Outlook, 28 November 1903.

99. *Ibid.*, 21 November 1903.

100. *Ibid.*

Amongst the correspondents 'Fair Play' alone showed any sense of perspective, suggesting that people who snuggled in their beds until 10.00 a.m. on Sunday mornings should attend to their own sloth rather than lay charges of sinfulness against dairy workers who before that time had done three or four hours' work.¹⁰¹ Presbyterian Sabbatarians were ardent supporters of Alfa-Laval's new home separators, not out of any concern for better farm economy but because home separation prevented farmers from breaking the Sabbath by their long milk haul along farm track and the public roads to the creameries. While the advent of home separation was greeted with gasps of joy by dairy farmers they did not all use the time saved by this new invention to attend Sunday morning services.

Sunday concerts incensed Gibb and his Sabbatarian friends, and their opponents delighted in suggesting that the offence was heightened by concerts usually being timed as an alternative entertainment to the long Presbyterian sermon. On 26 December 1903 Gibb led a deputation of 100 from the Council of Evangelical Churches to the Wellington city council to complain about an imminent Sunday night concert. The deputation was received with courtesy but failed to convince the Mayor and councillors. Public opinion was against the crusaders. The editor of the Dominion indicated his respect for the deputation's motives but insisted that 'The spiritual life of the community cannot be injured by the noble use of a beautiful art'.¹⁰² The Free Lance was less kind: 'If...their only object is to close the Town Hall and shut the Orchestra on Sunday nights because it is a rival show and threepenny bits are getting scantier in the church plate, they haven't much chance of succeeding'.¹⁰³

The Sabbatarian crusaders were permitted one success; to the chagrin of the army they persuaded the government to curtail Sunday shooting and exercises by the part-time Volunteer forces. Gibb had previously received no support from Seddon in protests made about territorial troop activities

101. Outlook, 21 November 1903.

102. Dominion, 14 December 1903.

103. Free Lance, 26 December 1903.

on the Sabbath. Sir Joseph Ward was more susceptible to Social Gospel protest and in 1910 issued instructions forbidding shooting practice on Sundays. Gibb and Ward exchanged a polite correspondence congratulating each other on the outcome of the issue.¹⁰⁴ Gibb had found an area of complaint where the government seemed prepared to make concessions and, without questioning why the government gave in so quickly on this issue, he determined to exploit it. On 4 December 1912 Gibb's Kirk session addressed a complaint to the minister of Defence expressing dismay that the 5th Regiment had been permitted to parade publicly on Sunday.¹⁰⁵ On 19 January 1913 a reply was received from R.H. Heaton Rhodes, acting-Minister of Defence, stating his regret and promising the issue of instructions that would be 'entirely satisfactory to you'.¹⁰⁶

During the 1903-1913 period the Volunteer forces left much to be desired in efficiency and economy. The government had no objection to following any lead that would reduce expenditure on Volunteer companies where training activities were often more in keeping with those of sporting clubs than of military units. To gain acclaim as a protector of the Christian Sabbath while saving public funds was a political advantage worth having. Although Gibb gained only minor successes in his Sabbatarian crusading he succeeded in frightening the sports associations of the Dominion. In mid-1911 representatives of the trotting, rugby football, hunting, athletics, billiards, life saving and yachting clubs, together with several leading actors met in Wellington to form the New Zealand Sports Protection League. R.A. Armstrong, representative of the Auckland Mutual Sports Protection Association, made clear at the beginning of the conference that the Wellington Presbytery's campaign against Sunday sport 'visiting friends and digging in the garden' had necessitated their banding together.¹⁰⁷ Gibb's rhetoric may not have been politically effective but it did frighten his opponents into believing it might be.

104. Sir J. Ward to Gibb, 31 March 1910.

105. St. John's Session, 4 December 1912.

106. Heaton Rhodes to Gibb, 19 January 1912.

107. Dominion, 19 July 1911.

Gibb entered the 1903-1913 period with a conservative Social Gospel's desire to mitigate the evils of the existing social and economic order. He left the period with an integrated social philosophy directed toward the social reconstruction of New Zealand. Works of Christian philanthropy were regarded as first-aid solutions that must give way to major legislative surgery. His demand for a regeneration and transformation of the New Zealand social and economic order into a political version of the Kingdom of God was strengthened by his reading of F.G. Peabody's Jesus Christ and the Social Question and by the impact of the 'Jesus of History' New Testament theologians - Herrmann, Haering and Harnack. This new school focussed attention on a humanized Jesus and humanized the Biblical symbol 'the Kingdom of God' into a religious version of evolutionary theory. For them the Kingdom of God equalled the developing moral consciousness and moral activity of man:

Freed of its traditional catastrophic setting and background of demonism, and coupled to the dogma of progress, the kingdom was now at home in the naturalistic atmosphere of the modern world.¹⁰⁸

Gibb and his Social Gospel crusaders sought to establish an environment where sin would be choked out of existence by sturdier plants. Bible in Schools was meant to sow the seed of the new order in the fertile minds of the nation's young. To allow the new order every chance to germinate and grow the State was called upon to eradicate infestations present in the environment and likely to injure the young social organism. As Calvin used the magistracy in Geneva and the New England Puritans moulded the law to their understanding of God's will so Gibb demanded that the government of New Zealand, a Protestant Christian state, heed the Church's guidance on matters of morality. The Confession of Faith's 'godly magistrate',¹⁰⁹ in this case the corporate personality of Parliament, was called upon to guard the Sabbath and legislate against drunkenness, gambling, and permissiveness on the stage. Findlay, the Attorney-General, called Gibb and his colleagues 'the chief moralizing Agents',¹¹⁰ but found

108. C.H. Hopkins, The Rise of the Social Gospel in American Protestantism, 1865-1915, Yale, 1940, p.127. The late Ormond Burton noted Gibb's familiarity with Peabody's works.

109. Confession of Faith, XXIII.

110. Findlay to Gibb, 30 September 1910.

that these agents were quite prepared to have the government radically invade the area of private judgment by associating reforms that would entail inspectorial and police powers unacceptable in a British democracy.

The legislators took careful account of the crusaders' opinions, counted the likely number of votes they could really muster, and gave little. Gibb's 'Kingdom of God' was far too austere and too much a replica of a Calvinist-Evangelical prayer-meeting to gain much support from legislators who preferred to leave room in the ark for the occasional race horse. The crusaders allowed no room for debate about the specifications of their new society. Gibb's social ideals were items of dogma, as much received absolute truth as was Marxist economic doctrine. His assumption that an individualistic Calvinist-Evangelical ethic could be expanded and promoted into a basic formula for the creation of the Kingdom of God in New Zealand was his downfall. The philosophical basis was too small and his programme too narrow. Mark Hanna's estimate of William Jennings Bryan can, with a changing of only one word, be usefully applied to Gibb: 'He's talking silver all the time and that's where we've got him'.¹¹¹ In Gibb's case it was 'morality all the time'.

Findlay, the Attorney-General, seems to have recognised the short-coming in Gibb's social philosophy. The Attorney-General agreed with Peabody's dictum '"social progress can only be secured by moralizing our Economic problems"...I have become more and more convinced that true progress lies in making the spiritual and the moral aims of Social life much more important than mere economic ends'.¹¹² However, Findlay laboured over the formulas he constructed to better regulate the social life of the nation. His legislation was hewn from hard negotiations with interested parties who often represented conflicting opinions that had co-existed uneasily for centuries, as had the gambling and anti-gambling arguments. He had also to consider the larger issues of the rights of the individual and decide at what point the state could intervene only at the risk of being justly accused of police state intervention. Findlay was

111. Quoted in H.U. Faulkner, Politics, Reform and Expansion, London, 1959, p.206.

112. Findlay to Gibb, 30 September 1910.

aware that programmes for social betterment required much more thought than Gibb and his crusaders had given to their plan. In a letter of 30 September 1910 he drew Gibb's attention to Peabody's work as the best statement he had found of his own viewpoint. If Peabody was an accurate reflection of the Attorney-General's views then Gibb stands accused with the gallant but narrow crusaders for prohibition, single tax and old age pensions, condemned by Peabody for the negativism of their stand:

A charity administrator accomplishes his round of inquiry and relief, an organiser of working men gathers the whole membership of a trade into his union, a temperance reformer procures the legislation which his cause seems to require, yet, when the text...arrives, how disheartening its results often seem to be! ...Temperance reform is but a labour of Sisyphus, and the burden it desires to remove rolls back on the community again, unless the agitation is consistently directed, not so much to the hampering of a trade, as to the disciplining of a passion.¹¹³

Gibb's prohibitive crusades, his attempts to initially regulate moral behaviour by act of Parliament, could only have resulted, had they succeeded, in defeat for the goal he aimed for, responsible adherence to the principles of the Kingdom of God by the nation's citizens. Police imposition of moral judgment in areas where previously a measure of liberty of action has been permitted has almost invariably resulted in clandestine breaking of the law and conflict between the police and those who refuse to accept an imposition they regard as unjust. The prohibition era in the United States, resistance to early closing of hotels in New Zealand (especially on the West Coast), and the continuation of bookmakers after 1910 are cases in point.

If Gibb's social philosophy was insufficient as a realistic basis for national social reformation so also his tactics were unequal to his aim. During this period he remained the prophetic minister, a twentieth century Amos who denounced injustice and demanded the abolition of community evils but who knew little about the way to win politicians and influence premiers. His favourite tactic was a headlong charge from his ecclesiastical stockade into the newspapers, immediately irritating the legislators who realised that they stood to lose as many votes as they would gain by acceding to

113. Peabody, Jesus Christ and the Social Question, pp.348-349.

Gibb's demands.

Gibb developed the tactic of direct confrontation during his Bible in Schools campaigning and clung to this primitive political method throughout his ministry. As a result deputation followed deputation into fruitless interviews with ministers who watched their words for fear of later denunciation in the press. Private member's bill followed private member's bill into the end of session void, dropped there by governments who knew how to deal with noisy minority lobbyists. Gibb refused to accept the political necessity of taking a little gratefully in order to gain more the next time. Whenever his total demands were rejected he villified the rejectors, at times worsening his case by suggesting conspiracy. Seddon, Ward, and later Massey, were in turn greeted as potential saviours and finally rejected with abuse as betrayers of a holy cause.

Between 1903 and 1913 Gibb's crusades suffered not only from his restricted social philosophy and his crude political tactics but also because he failed to enlist the cooperation of New Zealand's increasingly vocal and aspiring labour movement. Gibb was aware that labour leaders and the Social Gospellers had formed mutually advantageous alliances in other lands. R. Inglis, in a moderatorial address to the Presbytery of Wellington, in September 1910, reminded presbyters of the strength of these alliances and suggested the usefulness of a pact with the Trades and Labour Council in the Dominion:

All over the world the forces of Christianity and labour were coming into line.... In Canada a great Sabbath Law had been placed on the Statute Book.... as a result of co-operation between the Labour party and the Church.... Then in regard to Temperance Legislation - No license and the bare majority - the Labour representatives were prepared to throw in all the influence they possessed to second the influence of the Church in obtaining better licensing legislation. The same had been said in regard to anti-gambling: The Trades Council was against all forms of gambling and any crusade against the totalizator or the bookmakers would have their hearty support.¹¹⁴

114. Outlook, 20 September 1910.

Although Gibb was aware of these overseas trends, especially evident in the support from United States' unionists for Bryan in his presidential campaigning, he did not progress until 1913 beyond the paternalistic position of an Asquith liberal. His attitude to the working-class was condescending. He was sensitive to working-class aspiration but he constantly reminded labourers, by his formal clerical dress and his haughty demeanour, of his professional and clerical status. In May 1909 he blotted his copybook with the labour movement by over-reacting to an address delivered by Arthur Fisher, Labour premier of the Commonwealth of Australia, to the General Assembly of the Australian Presbyterian Church. Fisher accused the Churches of lagging behind in their promotion of social reform and of showing little interest in the working conditions and housing of labourers. Gibb responded with an explosive 'Canting Bosh!' and rejected the premier's claims entirely:

It is time and more than time that ministers of religion spoke out plainly when called on to vindicate the church against the aspersions of critics of the Socialist type, whether high-placed men like Mr. Fisher or hoodlums like those who have turned at least two recent meetings in this city into veritable bedlam.... If the Church takes up the political role to which Mr. Fisher calls it, and begins to preach Socialism...then her end will be at hand. There will in this case be few to mourn her disappearance as there would be to mourn the disappearance of some Labour agitators and the Socialistic crank if they were to vanish from the sum total of created things.¹¹⁵

The Dominion, a conservative newspaper, praised Gibb's keen political perspicacity but many labour men joined with Morgan Williams, later a Labour parliamentarian, in his charge that Gibb was a capitalist lackey.¹¹⁶

In late June 1909 Gibb again attacked labour interests when he complained from the pulpit that he would have more sympathy with the unemployed if they went out into the country in search of work.¹¹⁷ His observation was ill-founded and 'W.H.B.' hastened to inform him that there

115. Dominion, 15 May 1909.

116. Ibid., 19 May 1909.

117. Ibid., 3 July 1909.

there was little work to be found in rural areas.¹¹⁸ At Presbytery on 13 July Gibb again offended the working-class, this time by wording a motion on unemployment with scant regard for labour's sensitivity. He backed labour leaders in their demands for a just wage while 'disclaiming all sympathy with the spirit displayed by a certain section of the unemployed and deploring the folly of the claims made by some of their leaders'.¹¹⁹ When Gibb attempted to address a public meeting called by the mayor of Wellington to raise funds for the unemployed he was treated to sustained neckling.¹²⁰

Gibb seems, between 1910 and 1912, to have taken the advice of 'Wake Up' who advised the clergy to read Henry George's Progress and Poverty, and his more informed and measured opinions on labour matters suggest that he had not only read by studied the issues discussed in George's work.¹²¹ At the St. James' Presbyterian Church jubilee, in Auckland, Gibb informed his audience that he stood for cooperation and profit-sharing and announced his sympathy for British carters who were striking for a reduction in their hours of work to twelve a day, and were demanding thirty shillings a week wages.¹²² By late 1912 Gibb had moved further toward labour's cause and was in regular communication with I. Griffiths, a socialist. Griffiths arranged for Gibb to meet socialist leaders privately and encouraged him to attend meetings of the 'Progressive Society'.¹²³

Gibb's moment of testing came with the 1913 Wellington Waterside strike, an industrial action involving thirty-seven unions and over 13,700 workers. He led the Wellington Council of Churches in an appeal for further conferences between the strikers and the employers and in

118. Dominion, 3 July 1909.

119. Ibid., 14 July 1909.

120. Free Lance, 7 July 1909.

121. Dominion, 9 March 1912. Henry George (1839-1897), the author of Our Land and Land Policy and Progress and Poverty, profoundly influenced the pioneers of the Social Gospel movement - Rauschenbusch, Bliss and Herron. Gibb's address at the St. James Church jubilee suggest that he too was influenced by George.

122. Dominion, 19 March 1912.

123. Griffiths to Gibb, 4 November 1913.

harsh criticism of the government's 'preparations for an armed conflict'.¹²⁴ The Dominion, strongly behind Massey's strong-armed tactics with the strikers, unfortunately singled out Gibb for praise, endorsing his conclusion that 'Whatever view the vast majority of the City had in regard to the present trouble they must all be of one mind that the City must not be given over to mob rule'.¹²⁵ Gibb made a responsible decision to advocate a *via media* at a time when the citizenry were polarizing into two camps. As usually happens on such occasions he was regarded as a traitor by both parties. His earlier manifestations of anti-Socialism and his apparent siding with the forces of law and order - 'Massey's cossacks' - decided most labour leaders that he was no friend. His mediatorial statement was given an unfortunate slant in the well-circulated Dominion. Gibb was not given a chance to persuade the capital's labour leaders that he was an ally. His solution received publicity only in the Outlook, a church periodical with limited circulation.

The solution offered by Gibb, as convener of the special committee, reveals a new concern for practical administrative and economic solutions to social problems. He urged the General Assembly to 'record its profound sympathy with the just claims of Labour' and advanced two propositions for national, employer and labour leaders to consider:

- (1) That private ownership of the great public utilities leads to a monopoly inimical to the welfare of the community and that these, therefore, should be nationalised and put under the control of the State.
- (2) That some form of voluntary co-operation and profit sharing between employers and employed is desirable, and probably the next step in the evolution of the social organism.¹²⁶

Gibb's attempted détente with labour and his proposed solution to the problem of waterside unrest came too late to win him any useful support for his crusades. His movements were in 1913 either dead or dying and organised labour had for too long opposed his greatest crusade,

124. Dominion, 4 November 1911.

125. *Ibid.*

126. Outlook, 23 December 1913.

Bible in Schools, to reverse position. In any case, an alliance between the Social Gospelers and organised labour could only have been short-lived for the two movements headed toward vastly differing goals. In 1913 the labour leaders were dismissed by most Church leaders as trouble-makers and anarchists. Despite this rejection Gibb and his Social Gospel allies made a close contact with labour leaders in this period. Between 1901 and 1913 the labour leaders believed that the Churches might have some solutions to offer to a nation searching for a way to deal with its social ills. After the First World War these leaders moved more and more to secular solutions. The concluding paragraph of Gibb's proposal to prevent further industrial unrest in the Dominion stresses his Christianizing aim: 'Without a concomitant moralization of men's hearts and lives any movement along merely economic lines will not result in better social order'.¹²⁷

For Gibb environmental reforms were means to an end, the clearing from the landscape of hindrances to the growth of the Kingdom of God within the nation. Organised labour regarded environmental reforms as ends in themselves. The proletarian heaven included a debt-free home, wages sufficient to support a family and allow one evening a week in the 'pub', and the peace an old age pension would ensure at the end.

Labour's lack of vital commitment to Gibb's ultimate goal was seconded by most of the other sections of the New Zealand population in this period. Land settlement brought into being a race of self-sufficient farmers who tended to build stop banks rather than pray that there would be no floods. Industrial growth lured labour leaders from Australia to the Dominion, men who preferred to organise a political party with a secular platform rather than await the coming of the Kingdom of God. As the nation's society became more affluent and self-confident it grew less concerned with evicting the demons of drink, gambling and sabbath-breaking. Indeed, as many former crusaders grew in prosperity they discovered that poverty and disease were not the automatic punishment that followed a glass of beer, a consultation with Hobart, and a Sunday trip to the beach. The demons were demythologised and the clerical crusaders were treated with the tolerant politeness reserved for nice but eccentric fanatics.

127. Outlook, 23 December 1913.

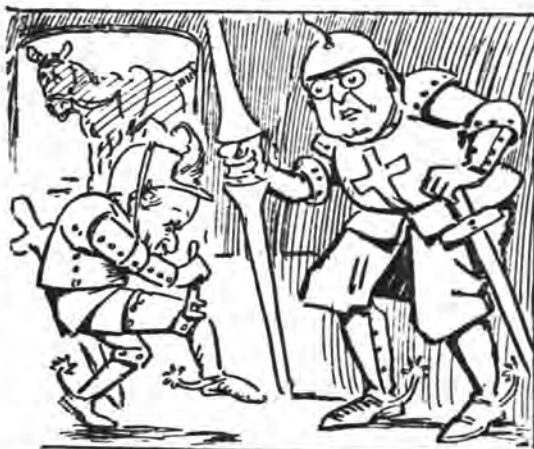
Gibb and North attacked the play 'The Girl from Rectors' in 1910. This cartoon appeared in the Free Lance, 13 August 1910.



The Secret Deputation: Now, Doctor, for goodness sake don't let those dreadful, flippant papers get hold of our protest against "The Girl from Hector's."



The Deputation on its way home is horrified to find that the flippant papers have already got wind of its mission.



"The painful warriors favoured for fight."



They go for that Satanic Girl with fire and fury.



But, alas, they are up against a brass wall. And the Girl makes merry.



And the honours of war are with the Girl and Hugh Wain.

THE MOVING ADVENTURES OF TWO KNIGHTS OF THE PULPIT.

In 1903 Gibb was awarded a D.D. by the University of
Aberdeen. This cartoon appeared in the Free Lance,
17 December 1904.



THE PRESBYTERIAN DOCTOR.

Chapter Five

The Grand Design, 1903-1913

My brief experience of the convenership of the Home Mission Committee has deepened in my heart the sense of the folly of our denominational separations and rivalries. If there were but one evangelical church in the land how easy, comparatively, would be the task of church extension! May the union of the churches come soon!

James Gibb, 1909¹

The year 1903 marked two important events in Gibb's life, the award to him of a Doctorate of Divinity by his alma mater, the University of Aberdeen, and his translation from the First Church of Otago to St. John's Church, Wellington. By his induction as minister of St. John's Church on 12 August Gibb gained neither a larger congregation nor an increased stipend. At the time of his departure the First Church recorded a membership of 760 communicants, while at the 1903 St. John's Church annual congregational meeting a membership of 720 communicant members was reported. From 1903 until his retirement in 1926 Gibb's stipend remained £600 per annum, £100 less than his Dunedin salary. The St. John's Board of Management was unable to pay him more. On the retirement of his predecessor, James Paterson, it had promised to pay £300 a year for life and Paterson enjoyed this gratuity from 1903 until 1926.² He survived until the year of Gibb's retirement from the parish ministry.

Gibb was not drawn to Wellington, as he had been to Dunedin, by the lure of a larger parish and an increased stipend. Wellington was the colony's political and administrative capital, a strategic centre from whence Gibb could implement his grand design. From Wellington, in late 1903 and throughout 1904, Gibb launched a concentrated attempt to unite the Congregationalists, Methodists and Presbyterians of New Zealand into a

1. Outlook, 20 March 1909.

2. Annual Report of the First Church of Otago, 1903; Annual Report of St. John's Church, Wellington, 1903; Minutes of St. John's Church Management Committee, 6 May 1903.

National Evangelical Church, a coalition he believed powerful enough to Christianize the nation. When this attempt failed Gibb revised the aim, of his grand design, the establishment of an Evangelical Church strong enough to mould and regulate the nation's conscience, and then attempted to build his own denomination into a national Church strong enough to Christianize the nation. During his attempt to extend the influence of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand into every back-block area Gibb launched an attack on the one rival Church he believed to be contending for ecclesiastical pre-eminence in New Zealand, the Roman Catholic Church. His deliberate attempt to create an issue out of the promulgation of the Ne Temere³ decree in the Dominion, although no New Zealand instance of broken marriage or serious slander was substantiated, should be explained in the light of his belief that this one serious rival must be discredited and reduced to impotence. In 1903 the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand held a tremendous advantage over both the Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches in the colony. It was a national Church controlled, however imperfectly, by a national General Assembly. The Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches were both diocesan in structure and their bishops, with exceptions, were regional rather than national spokesmen.

Although Wellington's presbyters greeted Gibb's transfer to the capital with public expressions of pleasure, several ministers held private reservations about the planting of a 'Presbyterian pope'⁴ amongst them. J. Kennedy Elliott, the usually discreet and unruffled minister of Kent Terrace Church was irritated by the repeated suggestion made at Gibb's civic farewell in Dunedin that Wellington badly needed Gibb's pastoral leadership. Elliott protested: 'The impression was conveyed that Wellington was in a state of terrible and utter spiritual destitution'.⁵ Gibb soon found that the presbyters of Wellington were not prepared to

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3. Ne Temere, a decree of the Sacred Congregation of the Council to assure that Catholics are married in ceremonies solemnised by their parish priest or his deputy. Pius X ordered that the decree take effect from Easter 1908.
 4. Outlook, 1 August 1903. Kennedy Elliott, W. Shiren, and R. Wood (Masterton) had hitherto guided the Wellington Presbytery through its deliberations and had no wish to relinquish their leadership.
 5. *Ibid.* James Kennedy Elliott (1845-1929) was a Belfast minister who emigrated to New Zealand in 1884. He was in turn minister of St. James (Newtown) and Kent Terrace (Wellington).

follow him blindly. However, instead of a careful attempt to win their confidence, Gibb embarked upon one of his most adventurous plans, assuming and demanding support that he did not receive. Throughout his career Gibb injured his causes by his brash assumption that he was predestined to lead while others were born to follow. He assumed that he, the first moderator of the united Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, held a special right to direct the Church's future. This arrogant disregard for the sensitivities of others was a major factor in the failure of Gibb's plan for the union of the New Zealand Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches.

A sensitive and politically astute Church leader would have spent time winning the loyalty of a newly united national Church and gaining the goodwill of the presbyters in his new location, before demanding their support for a novel and adventurous plan. Gibb was neither sensitive to the niceties of presbyterial seniority nor aware that his leadership within the Presbyterian Church was not conferred for life but needed to be continuously sought and won. He disregarded Presbyterianism's traditional abhorrence of bishops - de jure and de facto - and provoked a powerful coalition of leading Presbyterians to oppose his union scheme when its only hope of success was speedy enactment before the newly united Presbyterian Church could consolidate its organisations and its sense of national mission.

Gibb began his advocacy of a united Protestant Evangelical Church at the ceremonies marking the union of his own denomination on 31 October 1901.⁶ He persuaded the 1902 General Assembly to initiate negotiations with the Congregationalist and Methodist Churches and had himself appointed convener of a committee of twenty-four entrusted with negotiations with the two sister Churches. In February 1903 Gibb led a large Presbyterian deputation to the annual meeting of the council of the Congregational union. The Congregationalists responded favourably to Gibb's contention that no real theological barrier any longer stood between the two Churches. His argument that the waste of manpower and material caused by denominational overlapping was a betrayal of Christian stewardship gained enthusiastic acceptance. Gibb concluded his appeal to the Congregationalists with a

6. Autograph copy of Gibb's speech at the inauguration of the United Presbyterian Church. (Jeanie Gibb Papers).

plea based on a Darwinian premise: a plea that revealed his pragmatic approach to Church union:

The struggle for existence was to be found in the churches and elsewhere, and the solution of the problem was simply the abandonment of the separate camps and the uniting of their forces in one great organisation.⁷

On 4 March 1903 Gibb led another deputation favouring Evangelical union, this time to the annual Wesleyan Conference. Gibb developed his utilitarian argument for Church union further on this occasion. In contending that denominationalism incurred a waste of men and means he suggested that it was a notorious fact that in many districts of the colony there were two or three congregations where there was room only for one. Again Gibb was received enthusiastically, and he responded to this enthusiasm by advocating the passing of a 'Mutual Eligibility Act' by the three Churches, to allow a minister in any one denomination to accept a parish appointment in either of the other two.⁸ This plan, never enacted, was based on a Scottish ecclesiastical agreement allowing ministers from the Free Church of Scotland and the United Presbyterian Church to interchange pastorates.

In promoting the cause of a National Evangelical Church Gibb's first concern was to convince the leadership of the three Churches that the proposed merger was based on sound theology and was necessitated by the urgency and magnitude of the task of Christianizing the nation. His plan was to have the Churches affirm the principle of union, accept a provisional theological statement of the key Evangelical beliefs, and then unite. He argued that theologians could then take as long as they liked to prepare a

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7. Outlook, 21 February 1903. A.C. Begg accompanied the Presbyterian Ministers and pleaded for an Evangelical union to 'Present a united front to the aggressive sacerdotalism' he maintains had been alluded to by Gibb. Gibb himself suggested that the proposed merger should be known as the National Evangelical Church.
 8. *Ibid.*, 14 March 1903. New Zealand's Methodists were not united until 1913. Gibb's proposals presented the colony's Methodist leaders with two problems. In 1903 their movement consisted of independent Wesleyan, Primitive Methodist, Free Methodist and Bible Christian Churches. Gibb negotiated with the Wesleyans and assumed that if the largest Methodist group entered the National Evangelical Church the rest would follow. The second problem that confronted the Methodist leaders was their incorporation within the Methodist Church of Australasia. They did not succeed in freeing themselves from Australian tutelage until 1913.

careful theological agreement while the Church went about her business of saving souls. There was good sense in this procedure. A common theology was much in evidence on the newly settled fringe of the pastoral frontier. Methodist and Presbyterian preachers faced with large and difficult districts often preached to united congregations, alternating their individual Sunday visits in preference to duplicating their efforts. These preachers, by unwritten agreement and in response to the urgency of their task, kept to key Evangelical and Biblical themes, avoiding any contentious denominational emphases as much as possible. The Congregationalists were confined to the cities and larger towns, and they too showed little inclination to raise the banners of outdated controversies. However, when Gibb formed his grand design, he failed to take into account that there existed within his own denomination ministers and elders who possessed finely balanced theological sensitivities. Deprived, since the union debate of 1897, of any real opportunity for prolonged theological debate, these scholastic Calvinists found the appearance of Gibb's provisional creed a timely opportunity to make a stand against theological intervention.

Gibb's provisional creed made one notable departure from Calvinist normality. In deference to the new theological interest in the life of Christ, and at the request of the Congregationalists, it omitted the Westminster Confession's declaration that man's justification is achieved by the death of Christ alone. Within the Presbyterian Church this minor theological amendment was greeted with a mixture of horror, alarm, and delight. Philadelphius B. Fraser, a schoolmaster turned parson, denounced Gibb in the Outlook, contending that Gibb was attempting to rush dangerous theological revision through a rump committee, and that Presbyterian orthodoxy was in jeopardy. Fraser enjoyed theatrical exposé of any conspiracy, real or imagined, and in a flood of metaphor declaimed:

Before the Church at large runs the risk, by giving a mandate to Dr Gibb or any clerical coterie, of flinging the most vital articles of her faith into the crucible of a visionary clerical debating society, she will ask

more about this new creed, that, full grown, has suddenly emerged, like a chimera, from her bosom.⁹

Fraser's attack acted as a signal for the unleashing of a volley of abuse and charges against Gibb's union plan. Gibb found this vital foundation to his grand design threatened by some who had been his most loyal supporters in the cause of Presbyterian denominational union. D. Borrie, J.K. Elliott, Isaac Jolly and R.M. Ryburn were men to be reckoned with. Of his new opponents, Jolly, minister of St. Andrew's Church (Palmerston North) brought the most dangerous objection to his union proposal, arguing that the nation's Presbyterians had not yet completed their own union and that this task should take precedence:

We have at present different Books of Order and Church Practice for North and South, and we have a committee busy at work trying to produce a Book of Order which the whole Church will accept. We have also different Aged and Infirm Ministers' Funds for North and South, and it will take years to secure their unification. And we have different methods of ministerial support for North and South, and we have a committee of Assembly trying to evolve a scheme to present to Assembly for their unification; and I believe it will take years to arrange this. Many of our congregations will need to alter their methods of finance before it is completed. Time, patience, and forbearance will all be needed before our own union is thoroughly completed, and I submit that it is utterly preposterous to expect that our Church is to go on and complete delicate arrangements of that kind and at the same time prosecute an agitation for union with other churches. We need peace and quietness to complete our own union, and must terminate this extremely ill-judged agitation as soon as possible.¹⁰

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9. Outlook, 6 February 1904. Philadelphius B. Fraser is one of the most fascinating of the New Zealand Presbyterian controversialists yet awaiting a biographer. Before entering the ministry in 1897 Fraser, an MA (Aberdeen), was a school teacher, Education Board member and chairman, and contested the 1893 General election, polling 1200 votes against T.Y. Duncan at Oamaru. From 1897-1911 Fraser was minister of Lovell's Flat. He was appointed Home Mission Superintendent and held this office until 1926. He was throughout a theological conservative, a fierce anti-evolutionist and an enemy of Church Union.
10. Ibid., 19 March 1904. Isaac Jolly was a Scot trained at the Theological Hall, Dunedin. He was minister in turn to Myross Bush (1887); Lawrence (1888-1893); South Dunedin (1894-1900); Palmerston North (1901-1909) and Ponsonby (1910-1921). He was Moderator of the General Assembly in 1909. R.M. Ryburn, Minister of St. Paul's (Wanganui) from 1891-1909, later became the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand's First Youth Director.

Jolly and his friends presented a strong anti-union case. They were spokesmen for a new spirit of Presbyterian denominationalism and very much aware that their Church was the second largest in the land. They believed the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand was well able to unilaterally conduct a mission to the nation. The anti-unionists asked for an end to controversy and demanded that the Presbyterian Church concentrate its efforts on its real work, the conversion and moral regulation of New Zealand. Jolly and Ryburn pleaded at the Presbytery of Wanganui that the large number of expatriates holding office within the three negotiating Churches would doom the National Evangelical Church to a life of theological schism by unleashing their inherited Old World prejudices on the new denomination. Jolly firmly rejected Gibb's re-statement of the Westminster Confession's doctrine of the Atonement, with its omission of the Calvinist tenet that salvation is attained 'solely on the grounds of Christ's perfect obedience and atoning sacrifice'.¹¹ He was determined that should the National Evangelical Church come into existence he would refuse to abandon the Presbyterian name and would lead a continuing Presbyterian Church.

Gibb miscalculated the support for Evangelical union amongst his own denomination. He assumed the existence of an enthusiastic and committed movement, anxious to formalise the Evangelical alliance into a corporate union. This desire was present but it was in no way the unanimous wish of his Church. The Presbyterian Church was divided on the issue, and Gibb was warned by P.J. Murdoch, the Victorian Presbyterian minister who had attempted to quieten the Strong controversy in 1895, that he should realise that an Evangelical union could mean the severance of New Zealand's Presbyterians from 'the comity of Presbyterianism'. Gibb was asked whether he would be able to live with that eventuality.¹² Gibb disregarded Murdoch's warning and throughout 1903 and 1904 intensified his propaganda

11. Outlook, 19 March 1904. Jolly was a New Zealand trained minister, and Ryburn had finished his theological training in Dunedin. Their reference to inherited old world prejudices was part of an impatience felt by many of the colonial trained ministers toward expatriate influence in the Church. In June and July 1911 the Outlook published a series of letters by indignant colonial clergy under the caption 'No New Zealander Need Apply': see Outlook 13 July 1911; 20 July 1911.

12. Murdoch to Gibb, 18 March 1903.

campaign. In September 1903 he informed the editor of The Young Man's Magazine that a National Evangelical Church would bring:

Economy and efficiency in administration, the enthusiasm of numbers, the strength of a united front, the disappearance of sectarian rivalry and bitterness, a new sense of brotherhood, [and] a great step towards the realization of the Lord's ideal of the oneness of His Church.¹³

Gibb announced to the Methodists that the Presbyterians needed a more itinerant ministry. He argued that his Church needed a greater flow of ministers from parish to parish just as much as the Methodists needed a more settled pastoral tie between ministers and people. Methodist suspicion of Presbyterian theological rigorism was disarmed by Gibb's assurance that Calvinist and Arminian theology were complementary rather than conflicting: 'You cannot pray without being Calvinists; we cannot preach without being Arminians'.¹⁴ The Romanist menace was introduced as an argument for a speedy merger of Protestant Evangelicals, and he appealed to incipient nationalism arguing that New Zealand should lead the world in Church union as she had led the world in social legislation.¹⁵

Overseas union negotiations were cited as evidence of a world wide movement of the Evangelical Church toward unification. Gibb made occasional reference to the 1903 Australian Presbyterian General Assembly's approval, by a majority of four to one, of the principle of union with the Commonwealth's Congregationalists and Methodists. The Australian pro-unionists had declared that 'denominational claims have no justification in public utility', a sentiment Gibb applauded.¹⁶ In Canada a committee of the Presbyterian Church had been involved in union discussions with other Evangelical Churches since 1899, and Gibb believed that the Canadian negotiations were on the verge of a break-through into final agreement.

Gibb's arguments convinced the Congregationalist and Methodist leaders, but he had travelled too fast, and trampled over too many, for his own Church

13. The Young Man's Magazine (Wellington), September 1903.

14. Outlook, 14 March 1903.

15. Ibid., 21 February 1903.

16. Ibid., 24 October 1903.

to share his enthusiasm. His provisional creed was prepared by a sub-committee comprising Gibb and two professors from Knox College. This sub-committee studied a new, and hitherto unknown, theological statement prepared by a committee of the Presbyterian Church of England. Gibb and his colleagues worked through their revision of this statement at high speed and with little interest in discovering the views of the committee. Here was yet another occasion when Gibb's impatience, and his failure to appreciate the need to win allies for his cause, resulted in a resistance to his plan. By March 1904 an intense reaction to Gibb's assumption of an 'episcopal' role was evident in Presbytery debates and in the correspondence columns of the Outlook.¹⁷ On 26 March Fraser complained to the Presbytery of Clutha that 'negotiations were conducted at incredible speed, almost entirely by one man'.¹⁸ By mid-1904 Presbytery returns from a referendum on the principle of union were collated. The Presbyterian Church of New Zealand now showed itself as a house almost evenly divided against itself. Eight of the Church's fifteen Presbyteries had voted against any continuation of union negotiations. While some Presbyteries, like Southland, unanimously demanded a continuation of discussions, others affirmed the Timaru Presbytery's motion 'that while cherishing friendly feelings towards all other evangelical Churches [it] does not consider opportune or desirable that the Assembly enter into negotiations...with a view to union'.¹⁹

In 1901 Gibb had united New Zealand's Presbyterians without schism, but by mid-1904 it was apparent that an Evangelical merger would be a more costly venture. Presbyterian schism was prevented by an event that took place in London in June 1904, an event that sent all but the most fanatical pro-unionists scuttling from Gibb's sinking union scheme. The House of Lords, acting as a judicial court of review, delivered the entire property of the newly united Free Church of Scotland into the hands of twenty-four ministers and congregations, who had refused to enter the merger, and retained the Free Church name and polity. Over 1,100 Churches, mansees and

17. The union debate in the Wellington Presbytery meeting of 31 March 1904 is recorded in the Outlook, 11 June 1904. Gibb, Fraser and Jolly appear in the correspondence columns throughout January, February and March.

18. Outlook, 26 March 1904.

19. Ibid., 13 June 1904.

glebe, in all property worth over £10,000,000, were sequestered.²⁰ Presbyterians throughout the British Empire were horrified and alarmed by this judgment. Church unions that involved even the slightest departure from the foundation constitution of the uniting Churches could now take place only at risk of a total loss of Church property. The Outlook sounded the alarm, and when the General Assembly debated Gibb's motion of sympathy with the United Free Church of Scotland the meeting was divided over the text. Gibb asked members to protest against the principle basic to the House of Lords' decision:

That a Christian Church has no right of modify its doctrine in harmony with fuller knowledge of the Holy Scripture and the leading of the Spirit of God, without risk of losing its material possessions.²¹

Elliott and his anti-Union friends protested vigorously. They demanded that the General Assembly forward its message of sympathy without any condemnation of the judicial findings. They had no intention of allowing the Assembly to record its abhorrence of a ruling they might well be able to use to strangle the National Evangelical Church at birth. The moderator appealed to Gibb not to divide the House on a motion of sympathy, and Gibb, realising that he had been out-manoeuvred, withdrew the offending words and registered a futile protest against the moderator's intervention. It was now obvious to Gibb that the cause of Evangelical union was doomed. The colony's Presbyterians would not risk losing their Churches, property and endowments by deserting the Presbyterian name and polity for a united Church, title and creed. Gibb bowed to the inevitable and moved:

In view of the manifest existence of great differences of opinion in the Church on the question of framing a basis of union in doctrine and polity, the Assembly resolves that it is inexpedient at this juncture to proceed further with this matter.²²

As a sop the General Assembly permitted Gibb to retain his committee but limited its terms of reference to a study of overseas union

20. Outlook, 20 August 1904. See J.H.S. Burleigh, A Church History of Scotland, London, 1930, p. 365.

21. General Assembly, 1904, pp. 22-23.

22. Ibid., pp. 18-19.

negotiations and the prevention of denominational overlapping in country districts. In 1905 Gibb reported progress in several overseas intra-Presbyterian union negotiations but admitted that Presbyterian Churches now showed little enthusiasm for ventures that involved any revision of their Westminster standards and thereby risked their property. The Australian discussions had entered a 'mark-time stage' and the Canadian discussions were proceeding in a desultory fashion.²³ At the 1906 General Assembly Gibb's committee on Evangelical Union and Co-operation was dissolved, and the major Presbyteries were instructed to form regional committees to discuss with Evangelical Churches in their districts practical ways of reducing denominational overlapping.²⁴ Jolly threw the last turf on the National Evangelical Church's coffin when, as the convener of a special committee, he reported to the 1906 General Assembly that he had consulted several legal advisers and these were of the opinion 'that our Church is not at liberty to depart from the doctrine of the Westminster Standards without endangering its possession of the greater part of its property'.²⁵

Gibb's attempt to implement his grand design by the creation of a National Evangelical Church had failed. Although an act of the British Parliament, passed in 1905, appointed a commission to redistribute the property sequestered by the House of Lords, the cause of Evangelical Church union never recovered its momentum in New Zealand during Gibb's lifetime. Gibb occasionally attempted to re-ignite Presbyterian interest, but without success. An upsurge of denominational pride and a sense of mission as a national Church displaced any serious desire for Evangelical union. Complaints registered by tired back-block preachers, frustrated by the duplication of effort imposed upon them, were largely disregarded. The minister of Bulls, E.G. Evans, spoke for many, and his example could easily have been Methodist or Baptist instead of Anglican, when he announced:

I have travelled after a morning service eight miles over shockingly bad roads in winter, conducted church at 2.30 p.m. to a handful of people, made my way homeward discouraged and

23. General Assembly, 1905. Appendix XXII, p. 105.

24. Ibid., 1906, p. 44.

25. Ibid., Appendix XIV, p. 149.

wet, through mud and slush, another seven miles, and have met at my journey's end the Anglican man with leggings and oil-coat, ready to start over the same road, through the same mud, to preach at the same place, in the same church... and partly to the same people.... The pressing need of the hour in both churches is a mutual readjustment of men and means, under an incorporate union, and the home mission problem is practically solved.²⁶

From the close of 1904 pioneer ministers and home mission agents found that the Evangelical Churches preferred to feather their own nests rather than propound cooperative solutions to the problems raised by a ministry to the back-blocks.

The 1906 national census returns were carefully analysed by the Dominion's Presbyterian leadership. They found that while only 49,945 Anglicans attended Church each week 52,103 Presbyterians met for worship in their Kirks. Presbyterian ministers solemnised more marriages than did Anglican parsons and 22.96 per cent of the national population, some 203,597 souls, admitted to an allegiance to the Presbyterian Church.²⁷ However, whilst the Church's leaders were pleased at the progress and vitality of their Church, they noted with concern that the South Island Presbyterian population numbered 182,137, or 45 per cent, and yet the North Island Presbyterian population was only 121,460, or 17 per cent.²⁸ From 1907 onwards the Presbyterian Church leadership began to concern itself with the need for northward expansion, especially the need to plant Presbyterian ministers or agents in new farm settlements that followed the Main Trunk line and spread up the river valleys of the Tararangi.

At the 1908 General Assembly Gibb was appointed convener of the committee responsible for the northern section of the Church's Home Mission work. (It was not until 1912, at Gibb's instigation, that the Home Mission committees of the former 'Northern' and 'Southern' Churches at last united.) As convener of this committee, and from 1912 until 1924 as

26. Outlook, 21 September 1907.

27. Ibid., 7 December 1907; 19 September 1908.

28. Statistics compiled by P.B. Fraser from the New Zealand Official Year Book and Church returns; Outlook, 7 December 1907.

convener of the united Presbyterian Home Mission committee, Gibb was involved in a task of Church extension that was to tax his health and frustrate him. His grand design, that New Zealand should be Christianized by the Church extension work of a National Evangelical Church had failed. He now accepted the more difficult task of deploying and extending toward the same goal the ministry of the nation's largest Evangelical Church.

The newly appointed convener of the northern section of the Presbyterian Church Home Mission committee inherited an empty treasury and a lifeless cause. At the close of 1908 the Home Mission fund showed a credit balance of £40, a somewhat slender fund with which to attend to the exigencies of some forty home missionaries.²⁹ This sum fairly accurately measured the enthusiasm of the Dominion's Presbyterians for Home Missions during the first decade of the twentieth century. The Outlook had stressed the urgency of the need for a large scale investment of men and money into the newly developed North Island settlements. In October 1906 'Bush Boy' had drawn the Church's attention to the immense region under development in the centre of the North Island:

We have two missionaries in the heart of the country, one at Taupo and the other at Taumarunui. We have a scanty fringe of members at Te Awamutu, Rotorua, Gisborne, Wairoa, Napier and a half dozen along the Taranaki seaboard. The minister of Stratford has to travel eastward and northward four long days before he joins hands with a fellow Presbyterian minister on the other side of this enormous country.... What a problem for our Church to solve! And how can she do it unless her people north and south supply with vastly increased liberality the sinews of labour.³⁰

Even on the fringes of North Island urban settlements the Presbyterian Church had by 1908 done little to extend her pastoral oversight over her adherents. J. Patterson, minister of Waikukurau, complained that no Presbyterian service had ever been held in Akitio county, Wellington province, where 345 census Presbyterians resided. He also lamented that Eketahuna

29. Outlook, 20 February 1909. Resignations and the use of students as Home Mission agents during the long vacation make it difficult to decide the exact number of home missionaries Gibb was under his charge.

30. Ibid., 13 October 1906. At a Home Mission Festival in 1911 P.B. Fraser noted that in 1902 there had been only twenty-three Northern stations and in 1905 thirty-four. See Outlook, 21 November 1911.

county was graced by neither a Presbyterian Church nor manse, despite its 3,000 inhabitants.³¹ Ministers in charge of Home Mission stations, contributors to the Outlook, the former Home Mission convener (Barrie), and Gibb himself, had vainly attempted to inject a note of urgency into the Church's response to the challenge of the North Island back-blocks. Well established Otago and Southland parishes, where buildings were built and repaired with the aid of financial grants from the endowments of the Synod of Otago and Southland, had little grasp of the struggles entailed in planting and maintaining Home Mission stations in the North Island's bush and mud. Canterbury congregations and the urban congregations of Auckland and Wellington were more interested in the romantic claims of the New Hebridean and Chinese mission fields than with the plight of unchurched New Zealanders. The Dominion's Presbyterians showed little sense of shame when the Outlook confronted them with the knowledge that the Presbyterian Church of Ireland, despite economic hardship at home, still contributed £100 per annum to New Zealand Home Mission outreach. They were no more moved to generosity when informed that the Dominion's Methodists, comprising only 10.06 per cent of the population, had in 1908 invested £2,654 in its Home Mission enterprises, while the Presbyterian Church had collected only £1,384 that same year.³²

Gibb began his convenership determined to obtain the services of the best agents available. He planned to retain their services by increasing their stipends and bettering their conditions of service. The personal plight of many of the agents was grim. In the year before he was appointed convener the Church (northern section and southern) was served by sixty-one home missionaries. Only seven of these agents received a salary of £150 per annum, equal to ten shillings a day for 300 days of the year. Fifty-four agents were paid £117 per annum, or 7s. 10d. per day for 300 days. In late 1907 Fraser had unfavourably compared the stipend paid by the Church to its home missionaries to the average annual wage of casual labourers; 'Why, a casual labourer gets at the rate of £130 per annum, or 8s per day'. The New Zealand Official Year Book for 1906 shows Fraser's estimate to be correct. Fraser's additional note, that the Church's foreign missionaries received

31. Outlook, 20 July 1907.

32. Ibid., 20 March 1909.

a stipend of £200 a year, was reinforced by his question: 'Are our own people not equally worthy of missionaries paid on some more reasonable scale than at present.'³³

In 1910 Gibb complained that many of his best agents were finding their financial positions untenable. He cited the case of a 'good agent':

He has wife and four little children, with the immediate prospect of a fifth child. There is no manse, and the missionary pays eight shillings a week for house rent. He has a horse and buggy to keep up, and his salary amounts to £125 per annum.³⁴

The plight of Gibb's unnamed agent was not singular. George Crockett, at Rewa, travelled 100 miles each week, and thirty miles on Sundays, for a weekly stipend of two pounds.³⁵ A.H. Lennox, home missionary to the railway workers on the Main Trunk line, lived with his wife in a tent throughout an Ohakune winter.³⁶ In 1911 the secular press revealed that G.C.J. Parfitt, recently resigned as agent to West Oxford, was now employed breaking stones on the county roads at a better wage than he had received as a Home Mission agent. The Dominion reported that Parfitt, his wife and five children, had attempted to live on a stipend of £100 per annum, paid in quarterly instalments.³⁷ Gibb admitted that Parfitt was forced to supplement his income by splitting wood while employed by the Church.³⁸

At the 1909 General Assembly Gibb classified his Home Mission stations into three groups. The first class was made up of those stations providing an emolument in excess of £130 per annum and a manse: his second class provided a stipend of between £100 and £130, with either a manse or an

33. Outlook, 7 December 1907. These figures were cited by P.B. Fraser who noted that only sixteen out of the forty-seven home missionaries in the Northern section had manses provided. See Year Book, 1906, pp.413-417.

34. Ibid., 26 February 1910.

35. Ibid., 5 November 1905.

36. Ibid., 27 July 1907.

37. Dominion, 23 May 1911.

38. Outlook, 13 June 1911.

additional payment in lieu of a manse; his third division was made up of all stations providing salaries of less than £120 per annum, without the provision of a manse.³⁹ Gibb's plan was to move agents from the second and third class to the first, as soon as possible. He hoped to be able within a few years, to reach the stage when he could abolish all but the first class. In an effort to provide funds to increase his agents' stipends he visited wealthy Presbyterians, soliciting ever larger donations by stating his reluctance to admit the small size of their proposed donations to his friends. Gibb kept up a steady stream of appeals in the Outlook for funds and embarked on field inspections to keep himself aware of the problems faced by individual Home Missioners. By 1912 Gibb's efforts began to produce results, and in an appeal for twenty-five new agents he was able to promise:

the stipends that will be paid in future will show a marked advance on those of the past.... Even now we shall guarantee every fit man who applies a minimum to start with of £130. We are aiming at £150.... If only we had a sufficient supply of effective agents we should sweep the North Islands into our nets.⁴⁰

In 1913 Gibb reported to the General Assembly that twenty-five new agents had been hired that year, ten of them New Zealanders, nine Scots, five Australians and one Englishman. He advocated the immediate enlistment of thirty-nine additional home missionaries, contending 'We have ceased to pay starvation wages' and arguing that dedicated single men would accept employment at £120 per annum and married men at £150.⁴¹

Between 1909 and 1913 Gibb not only raised the stipend of the Presbyterian Home Mission agents, he also obtained for them a heightened status in the Church and made possible the promotion of better agents into the regular ministry. In 1909 the General Assembly committee on the training of home missionaries advocated a three year course of field training, with guided reading in basic theology, Biblical exegesis and Church history, and with elementary lessons in English language and literature. Agents

39. General Assembly, 1909 Appendix IV, p.73.

40. Outlook, 19 March 1912.

41. General Assembly, 1913 Appendix III, p.65

were to be ordained as elders and allowed to sit on Kirk sessions, if their charge possessed enough elders to allow the formation of a Kirk session. To prevent charges suffering for too long under the preaching of any semi-trained agent (some of these agents held rather odd Millenarian views and some were fervent British Israelites), home missionaries were not permitted to remain for more than three years at any station.⁴² Gibb soon realised that a few of his agents were as good as any ordained minister, and that some in this group would have entered the ministry but for the financial circumstances of their families in their land of origin. He persuaded the General Assembly to allow selected home missionaries to apply for entry to the Theological Hall, and eventually present themselves as candidates for license and ordination.

Gibb noted, during his inspection of Home Mission districts, that, as far as the back-block settlers were concerned, his agents were 'ministers'. However, because the Presbyterian Churches traditionally reserved for ordained ministers the right to administer the sacraments and celebrate marriage, Gibb's agents were unable to provide settlers with many of the Church ordinances they demanded. Theoretically each agent was superintended by a moderator, the ordained minister of an adjoining parish, but in fact this minister was often too far distant, and too busy, to afford much assistance. Gibb began to search for a solution that would allow a regular administration of the sacraments to the back-blocks charges and at the same time maintain traditional Presbyterian polity. In studying the Home Mission regulations of the Presbyterian Church of Canada he found a solution.⁴³ The Canadian Presbyterian Church, faced with the mammoth task of providing pastoral and sacramental coverage over the western prairie lands, had inaugurated a new order within its ministry, ordained home missionaries. These pastors were permitted to celebrate the sacraments and solemnise marriages within the bounds of their parishes. The 1912 General Assembly agreed to Gibb's proposal that a similar expedient should be adopted by the New Zealand Presbyterian Church and, following a three years

42. General Assembly, 1909, Appendix XV, p. 68 et seq.

43. Ibid., p. 74.

probationary period, agents were ordained as home missionaries.⁴⁴ A second order had been created within the Presbyterian ministry. Home Missionaries were granted the honorary title 'reverend' and were distinguished from regular ministers of the word and sacrament only by an inferior status in the Church courts. If a home missionary entered the regular ministry he was not re-ordained. However, as long as he remained a home missionary he was not entitled to vote at Presbytery, nor could he attend the General Assembly as a ministerial member.

While attending to the problem of inadequate Home Mission stipends and to the need to provide home missionaries with increased authority, Gibb also attended to the problem of providing adequate supervision for his growing home missionary force. Many of Gibb's new recruits were not Presbyterians. Although he preferred Presbyterian applicants, the urgent need for additional agents and the higher stipend paid by the Presbyterian Church brought Congregationalists, Methodists, and even a few former Salvation Army officers into the new order. These new recruits needed watching and guiding, and Presbyteries had not shown themselves willing and able to efficiently provide this oversight. Gibb's home missionaries also needed help in meeting the educational requirements imposed on them by General Assembly and required regular visiting to help them with parochial and personal problems. To meet this supervisory requirement Gibb again turned to a Canadian innovation. The Presbyterian Church of Canada, faced with an even greater problem in supervising its scattered agents, had revived John Knox's office of 'Superintendent'. The Home Missions Superintendent was delegated executive and pastoral powers by the General Assembly. As the executive officer of the Home Mission committee he directed the training and duties of these fledgling ministers and acted as their pastor.⁴⁵ At the 1910 General Assembly Gibb

44. General Assembly, 1912. Home Mission Report.

45. Outlook, 6 December 1910. The editor of the Outlook discussed the qualities needed in a superintendent: 'We have in these days learned something from Canada. The Church of the West was confronted with the problem of supplying ordinances to the townships springing up along the Pacific Railway. The line was advancing across the prairie at the rate even of three hundred miles a year. The Church revived John Knox's office of superintendent and sent one Dr. Robertson.... In twenty-one years this one Western Presbytery of four congregations became eighteen Presbyteries with 1,30 preaching stations.... Dr Gibb has studied Robertson. He sees similar possibilities for our own Church if the right man can be got'.

surprisingly nominated his theological arch-enemy, Philadelphius B. Fraser, as Superintendent.⁴⁶ The Assembly accepted the nomination with applause, and Fraser speedily commenced an 'episcopal progress' through the country.

Fraser was able and confident. In 1913, following a three months visit to the 'roadless north', he announced that 'were things to go forward as they ought, in three years 50 out of 100 home mission stations would become sanctioned charges'.⁴⁷ The fathers of the Church hoped, and probably prayed, that these two powerful personalities, Gibb and Fraser, would work in harmony. Some hoped that Gibb would rule the Assembly while Fraser ruled the country. However, while Gibb and Fraser worked harmoniously enough between 1910 and the close of 1913, they clashed thereafter. Gibb was not content to administer his home missionaries from his study and invaded the countryside, toured Home Mission stations and by so doing invaded Fraser's domain. Fraser made matters worse by disregarding instructions from Gibb's committee and assuming an episcopal authority over his home missionaries.

By early 1913 Gibb had found a place for his home missionaries within his Social Gospel philosophy. His aim was the establishment of an environment that would allow for the growth of a Christianized community. Rural barbarism was to be replaced by Evangelical piety and Calvinist moral rigorism. Early in the twentieth century Gibb had thrown off his United Presbyterian belief in a voluntary Church and embraced the Church of Scotland and Free Church of Scotland assumption of a close link between Church and State. Gibb's conviction that the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand should become a national Church is hardly surprising. The Scottish United Presbyterians had for some time been moving away from the concept of a gathered Church. In the mid-1890s a series of unofficial discussions between United Presbyterian and Free Church of Scotland leaders had resulted in agreement that the state should 'recognise the Church of Christ as a Divine institution and the chief means for the promotion of righteousness and godliness'.⁴⁸ The union of the two Scottish churches

46. General Assembly, 1910, p.72.

47. Outlook, 24 June 1913.

48. J.H.S. Barleigh, A Church History of Scotland, p.398.

Scottish churches in 1900 was contracted on the basis of this ideal of Church-State relations.

Gibb's creation of a network of Presbyterian stations and parishes was an attempt to create a national Church able to promote the 'righteousness and godliness' needed by the nation. Gibb believed that the planting of a congregation, be it small and struggling, and the provision of a minister, even a semi-trained Home Mission agent, would provide each back-block community with a moral and cultural focal point. He hoped that genteel manners and social service would become more and more evident in the rural districts as school teachers, constables, bank managers, shop keepers and parsons, cooperated in their civilizing task:

The state is doing what it can for the settler. Roads are being made, schools and post offices erected. The storekeeper is in evidence, the banker offers the facilities of his calling. Shall we not give the people the Gospel and the healing ordinances of the Christian Church.⁴⁹

Churchmen newly arrived in the back-blocks were horrified at the 'pagan behaviour' evident. Sunday was a time for washing clothes and for cricket. Workmen deserted their tents and corrugated huts for nearby towns with public houses, seizing the opportunity for a short bucolic escape from mud and monotony. In a letter to Gibb, published in the Dominion in May 1910, 'One of a Flock without a Shepherd' complained:

I read of missions to heathens, and of eloquent sermons preached on behalf of our brethren abroad, but the poor benighted back-blocker "at home" is not considered worthy of consideration.... Last Good Friday was devoted to shearing, grass-seeding, and dipping, and...last Sunday was spent horse-breaking, packing in wire etc; while one young man was busy at the wash-tub.... Are we to wait for some foreign Power to send missionaries into the New Zealand back blocks to convert our heathen?⁵⁰

Gibb's answer was 'No', and by the close of 1913 the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand had settled home missionaries in almost every settlement where a sizeable Presbyterian community existed, and in some areas where

49. Outlook, 18 March 1913.

50. Dominion, 10 May 1910.

there were few Presbyterians. In their 1913 Home Mission report Gibb and Fraser informed the General Assembly that their committee controlled 120 Home Mission stations and employed 111 home missionaries. Gibb assured the Church that the quality of agents had greatly improved over the preceding few years, and that while:

here and there an agent may have had to live on a pittance barely sufficient to keep body and soul together...as a rule the single men have received a salary of £120 per annum, and the married men a minimum of £150.⁵¹

Twenty-five new agents were hired during 1913 and Gibb was able to report that every Home Mission station was now manned. He informed the General Assembly that he had selected agents in advance for new stations that would be opened during 1914.

Gibb had every reason to be pleased with his accomplishment as convener of the Presbyterian Church's Home Mission Committee. At a time in New Zealand's development when new settlements and farms were springing like mushrooms from the burned bush and drained swamps of the North Island, he had provided the Church with manpower sufficient to capture these settlements for Presbyterianism. However, Gibb's sense of achievement was nullified by the parlous financial state that his committee found itself in at the close of 1913 and also by the failure of the Church to recruit ordained ministers. The Committee's financial situation was bluntly placed before the General Assembly: 'The case stands thus: Income from regular congregational contributions and interest...£2,853; expenditure, £5,341; deficit, £2,488'.⁵² Disaster had been averted only by Fraser and Gibb embarking on a fund raising campaign and by the transfer of funds from a bequest.

Gibb confronted the General Assembly with the alternatives its failure left open:

We may close down 20 or 30 of our Home Mission stations; we may cut down the grants until we once more starve our agents and drive all self-respecting men out of our service; or we

51. General Assembly, 1913, Appendix III, p.69.

52. Ibid., p.67.

may rise to meet the new need of the new day. But it will not suffice merely to pass resolutions; this is now a matter of life and death.... The Church, to be entirely candid, has never taken the work of Home Missions seriously. The committee has put forth unceasing efforts to spread abroad a knowledge of the facts, but it has spoken to deaf ears and written to blind eyes; and the result before long will be shipwreck.⁵³

A shortage of ordained ministers was another occasion for complaint by Gibb. He noted that there were twenty-seven parishes without ministers at a time when he was attempting to raise Home Mission stations to parish status. If the Church needed twenty-seven ordained ministers in 1913, how could it expect to provide ordained ministers for the twelve Home Mission stations that in 1914 would become fully sanctioned parishes?⁵⁴ The situation was made worse by the dearth in final year students from Knox College - only seven. Again Gibb despaired at the Church's failure to anticipate its future needs and demanded that an urgent appeal be made to the British Presbyterian Churches to provide probationers to meet the emergency.

At the close of 1913, despite the Church's failure to capture Gibb's vision of a pre-eminent national Presbyterian Church, his revised grand design was still a feasible plan. Given a belated financial response, and a generous influx of Scottish ministers similar to the useful gift of Scottish clergy received by the Presbyterian Church of Canada for its Home Mission work, ecclesiastical pre-eminence might still have been won. In 1913 the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand possessed 322 ministers and home missionaries, while the Roman Catholic Church was served by only 221 parish priests.⁵⁵ Gibb's grand design was threatened by Church apathy, but it was not yet defeated. It was also endangered by a reluctance by New Zealand Presbyterianism to accept its supreme court as a regulative rather than a consultative body. Gibb was never able to transform the General Assembly into a political machine capable of enforcing its own policies. His attempts were opposed by a Free Church of Scotland voluntarism that placed more emphasis on congregational life than on participation in the work of a national Church. In his grand design Gibb was intent upon providing a

53. General Assembly, 1913, Appendix III, p.67

54. Ibid., p.69.

55. N.Z. Year Book, 1913, p.159.

spiritual home for native born *pakeha* New Zealanders, newly arrived settlers, and Europeans from the Reformed tradition. His design ignored the Maori race. Gibb's speeches, reports and correspondence show little sign of any social or evangelistic concern for the welfare of the indigenous people. This is hardly surprising for Gibb would have seen few Maoris during his time in Dunedin and even during his Wellington ministry. In this period a sentence of extinction had been pronounced on the declining numbers of the native race. Apparently Gibb accepted this verdict and ignoring their plight sank his efforts into making pastoral provisions for those of European stock.

Throughout the 1903-1913 period Gibb watched carefully the one Church he believed bent upon removing, if it could, the prize of his grand design from his grasp. By 1913 the Roman Catholic Church had increased its number of Church schools from 139 in 1903, to 156, providing education for 14,476 young Catholics.⁵⁶ New contingents of nuns and teaching brothers had arrived in the Dominion, and the Roman Catholic Church seemed to Gibb to be on the march. New Zealanders as a whole seemed little concerned about the sinister fate Gibb believed Rome held in store for them. He badly needed a drum to beat that would awaken them to their danger and drive them into the arms of that great bulwark against the works of Romanism, the Presbyterian Church. The promulgation of the decree Ne Temere by Pope Pius X, on 2 August 1907, and the Pope's command that this decree come into effect on 19 April 1908, provided Gibb with an opportunity to work his sensitive anti-Catholicism to the pitch of monomania.

The Ne Temere decree was designed to remedy the confusions of the Tridentine Tametsi decree of 1513, a decree designed to suppress clandestine marriages involving Roman Catholics. Tametsi was not published in Protestant nations, and the Sacred Congregation, concerned at the lack of uniformity in canon law regulations of marriage, determined to enact a new decree that would regulate carefully the obligations of Roman Catholics in marrying outside their faith. The decree's implications for New Zealand

56. N.Z. Year Book, 1904, p.139; 1913, p.214.
For a discussion of the growth of Roman Catholicism and anti-Catholicism in New Zealand see R.P. Davis, 'The Irish Catholic Question and New Zealand Society, 1858-1922', unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Otago University, 1968.

Roman Catholics were outlined by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Christchurch, J.J. Grimes, in his 1908 Lenten Pastoral:

Hitherto when a Catholic in this Dominion, as in the whole of Australia, was wicked enough to contract marriage with another Catholic, or even with a non-Catholic, before the civil registrar or an heretical minister, the marriage was valid though sinful, and entailing ecclesiastical censures. But from next Easter any such marriage contracted by a Catholic, either in a registry office or before a non-Catholic clergyman, will be null and void; in other words, the parties will in the sight of God and His Church, still remain unmarried.⁵⁷

Ne Temere was intended as a disciplinary regulation for Roman Catholics. It was simply meant to prevent Roman Catholics from solemnising their marriages without the benefit of a sacrament that could only be provided by their own clergy. The Church was asserting its authority over its own. Gibb and his anti-Papalist allies were slow in realising the implications of the decree for marriages between Protestants and Roman Catholics and were incited by overseas rather than New Zealand situations. He did not cite any instance of interference with religious liberty in New Zealand when, in August 1911, he asked Wellington Presbytery to support an overture to the General Assembly protesting at:

this intolerable invasion of the civil and religious rights of the people...[and calling the Assembly to] expose the machinations of the papacy and put the people on their guard against the subtle encroachment of the Roman Catholic Church on the liberties of the nation.⁵⁸

Gibb objected to the Ne Temere decree on six counts. He objected to the decree's suggestion that only marriages solemnised by Roman Catholic priests were ecclesiastically valid. Objection was raised to the promotion of variable and changeable ecclesiastical law as the arbiter of the validity or invalidity of marriage. Without providing any instance, Gibb contended that the decree interfered with the liberty of the subject. He protested that couples legally married according to New Zealand's law were now open to slanderous accusations of immorality and concubinage. He also

57. Lenten Pastoral of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Christchurch, 1908. In Outlook, 15 August 1911.

58. Wellington Presbytery, 8 August 1911.

charged that the decree might be used by irresponsible husbands who could claim that their marriages were non-canonical and repudiate their marriage vows.

When, in late 1911, Gibb's overture reached the General Assembly, he made his sixth objection when he emphasised the insult offered to British racial pride by the introduction of the Ne Temere decree into New Zealand:

It makes the blood of the British boil to think that Germany should be free of this yoke that they [the Papal curia] dare to impose upon freeborn Englishmen.... I believe that one of her [the Roman Catholic Church] ideals is the recapture of England to the Papacy.⁵⁹

Gibb was aware that in 1906 Pope Pius X, by his decree Provida Sapienciaque, had suspended the application of Tametsi in Germany. He wrongly assumed that Ne Temere would continue this exemption.

Throughout 1912 Gibb, a handful of anti-Romanist Presbyterians, and the Loyal Orange Lodge, attempted to rouse the public against the new Papal decree. Early in 1912 John Dickson, minister of Picton, published a book of 246 pages attacking the decree. In Shall Ritualism and Romanism Capture New Zealand? Dickson decried the failure of New Zealanders to perceive the Romanist threat to their land and liberties:

We treat the question as if it did not vitally concern us. Australia has been loudly giving expression to its indignation through all kinds of meetings, resolutions, and newspaper comments. Canada is alarmed. For months the Old Country has been in a state of ferment.... The question of questions was debated on the floor of the House of Commons, and even Mr Birrell, the Home Secretary of a supine Government, was stirred up to make an effort to find and bring to justice the man McCann, who, at the bidding of the Roman Church, had deserted his wife and left her childless, homeless, penniless, and, as far as he could do it, ruined in character.⁶⁰

Dickson, Gibb, and their anti-Catholic crew waxed eloquent over the McCann case in Britain and over Canadian examples of family disruption allegedly

59. Outlook, 26 December 1911.

60. John Dickson, Shall Ritualism and Romanism Capture New Zealand? Dunedin, 1912, pp. 179-180.

caused by the new decree, but they were hard placed to find a New Zealand instance. The best Dickson could do was to cite a case where a country girl, from a Loyal Orange family, had run away from home to marry her Roman Catholic sweetheart in a nearby town.⁶¹ This was hardly the case to inflame New Zealanders who were more likely to congratulate the runaway lovers on their defiance of bigotry.

At the 1912 General Assembly a committee on Romanism and ritualism, formed in the previous year, cited correspondence from leading Canadian Protestant leaders who were convinced of the existence of a Roman Catholic plot in Canada to make canon law binding on the State. However, Robert Wood, the committee's convener, and Gibb, who rallied to Wood's aid, had little occasion for sounding the tocsin in New Zealand. The 1908 Marriage Act allowed for a second certificate to be issued to parties who desired to hold a second marriage ceremony. This provision allowed couples who had been married by a civil registrar, or by Protestant clergy, to regularise their union in the eyes of the Roman Catholic Church by the simple solution of a quiet visit to the parish priest. Roman Catholic priests did not, apparently, place pressure on invalidly married members of their flock to hustle their mates to the altar. The Presbyterian committee's argument that priests would blackmail the Roman Catholic party into forcing the Protestant party to agree to re-marriage, on the ground that their children were illegitimate, seems to have been ill founded. The Presbyteries of Christchurch, Taranaki and Timaru petitioned Parliament to enact legislation to protect from slander the Protestant parties in mixed marriages. These petitions lay on the table of the House of Representatives and do not appear to have been taken seriously.⁶² The Roman Catholic hierarchy seems to have handled the imposition of the new regulation gently. There is no evidence that its promulgation led to any case of criminal slander, and the Protestant objections to the decree seem to have been dismissed by most New Zealanders as proceeding from motives other than altruistic.

Gibb's correspondence with Wood, and his speeches, show him to have been a leader of this outburst of anti-Catholicism. How justified was

61. Ibid., p. 182.

62. N.Z. Journals of the House of Representatives, Session 1-11, 1912, p. 164

his fear that the Roman Catholic Church was the great menace to his revised grand design? A comparison of the census returns for 1906 and 1911 suggest that Gibb's fear was ill-founded.⁶³ Between these two census years the Roman Catholic portion of the total population declined from 14.32 per cent to 13.97 per cent. In this same period the Presbyterian Church increased its number of adherents from 22.96 per cent of the total population to 23.32 per cent. The Anglican Church showed a slight decline in its number of adherents in this period, falling from 41.51 per cent to 41.14 per cent. Gibb did not regard the Anglicans as serious rivals, essentially because he believed that Anglo-Catholicism had deadened that Church's missionary drive and turned its interests inward and back to the Middle Ages. He believed that the Evangelical party within the New Zealand Anglican Church was small and impotent. The Baptists were still among the 'other denominations', a grouping that comprised 6.53 per cent of the total. However, the Baptists had shown an increase of 12.44 per cent on their 1906 result. Gibb had little fear of an upsurge of interest in the Baptist Church. He believed that the Baptist ideal of a gathered Church and their refusal to baptise infants would hardly endear them to rural New Zealanders. Many of these saw the Church as one public service among others and wished their children to have the spiritual insurance of baptism.

Although the census returns for 1906 and 1911 revealed that the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand had grown faster than the Roman Catholic Church Gibb was not altogether a victim to anti-Romanist hysteria in his assessment that the Roman Catholic Church was consolidating and advancing. Archbishop Francis Redwood, the Metropolitan, and Henry Cleary, bishop of Auckland, were able controversialists, who gave convincing answers to Protestant attacks. With the three other bishops in the New Zealand hierarchy they had organised a well deployed force of parish priests and teaching orders. Since the days of Calvin and Knox the Presbyterian Churches had confronted the Church of Rome in fierce competition for national hegemony. The two Churches recognised each other's strength. Each possessed a well educated clergy, an anti-Erastian conviction that the State must be guided by the Church, and an efficient ecclesiastical organisation. In the New Zealand setting the Outlook and the New Zealand Tablet attempted to check-mate

63. N.Z. Year Book, 1912, p. 151.

propaganda disseminated by each other. In Parliament devotees countered, or side tracked, bills likely to aid the mission of the rival Church. At the parish level Gibb's home missionaries responded to the charge that they were not true ministers, a charge that touched a sensitive area in view of their novel order, by identifying the parish priest with the devil's brood. Within this context the promulgation of the Ne Temere decree provided Gibb, and his Church, with a magnificent opportunity to cry 'wolf'. Gibb assumed that he could persuade New Zealanders that the Pope and his minions were involved in a plot to undermine the most sacred of the Dominion's institutions, marriage. Pragmatic New Zealanders noted that no married women were complaining, assumed that the Protestant campaign was but a new variation in a traditional clerical warfare, and carried on with the development of the country.

Gibb's anti-Catholicism did little to help his advancement of the Presbyterian cause. Unfortunately for New Zealand his chickens were to come home to roost in the years immediately following 1917. The incorporation of anti-Roman Catholic teaching in Presbyterian Sunday School and Bible Class curricula, the encouragement given by Gibb and his colleagues to ministers and home missionaries to attack the Papacy and the Church of Rome in their sermons, distribution of anti-Catholic literature by Presbyterian colporteurs and encouragement for the Loyal Orange Lodges, prepared the soil for a harvest of sectarian strife.⁶⁴ General Assembly minutes and Gibb's private correspondence, especially with Wood (the convener of the Assembly anti-Romanist committee)⁶⁵ reveal Gibb's continuous involvement in anti-Catholic campaigns. At the close of the First World War, casualty returns, Irish nationalism, war fever, the question of conscription and the clergy, and anti-Catholicism, combined to ignite a bitter sectarian conflict. Gibb and his allies may be fairly charged with creating a spirit of Protestant militancy that set off the malicious tirades of the Protestant Political Association. In his attempt to further his design by defaming a rival Church Gibb invoked patriotism to his aid. His prayers were not answered. Between 1914 and 1920 Gibb accepted the role

64. See reports of the General Assembly Committee on Ritualism and Romanism for 1911 and 1912, and of the Committee on Protestant Principles, 1913. These reports are incorporated in the Proceedings of General Assembly.

65. Wood to Gibb, 15 March 1911.

of a clerical recruiting sergeant, a patriot par excellence. He also chaired meetings of the Protestant Political Association. In this next period Gibb slowly learned that patriotism and sectarianism form an explosive mixture, a mixture far too volatile to be used in the manufacture of any grand design.

In retrospect Gibb's revised grand design, for a powerful national Presbyterian Church, and his social gospel philosophy are seen to be closely related. New Zealand had to a large extent grown up under the tutelage of its Churches. The pulpit, the school and the newspapers were the leading forces in moulding the character of New Zealanders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Churches, despite their sectarian rivalries, had accepted a responsibility for the development of national life. Before the 1890s the Churches had laid the moral and spiritual foundations of New Zealand in a somewhat unconscious manner - by preaching, answering the pastoral needs of settlers, founding schools and colleges, and by social comment. From the 1890s onward a much more self-conscious programme of nation-building was offered. Ministers and priests were more outspoken as the conscience of the colony, and then the Dominion. The nation was offered Christian refinement as a corrective to the grossness that accompanied harsh pioneering efforts. A Protestant union was the obvious answer to the problem of the provision of a refining agency for every community. Obviously, Gibb's 'National Evangelical Church' would have tackled the task of missionary expansion with larger resources of money and manpower than any single communion could have provided. Once persuaded that a speedy union of the Protestant Churches was impossible Gibb proceeded to extend and expand the pastoral influence of the newly united Presbyterian Church, to ensure that the Christian faith met the challenge of New Zealand's growth. His home missionaries and additional ministers were the founders and also the critics of society. Between 1903 and 1913 Gibb was involved in a more self-conscious programme of nation-building than hitherto. His implanting of Home Mission stations and new parishes across the land was undertaken with a clear goal in sight; the erection in New Zealand of the microcosm of a Christian society.

Unfortunately for Gibb and his Church, the war that accentuated sectarian rivalries also devoured home mission agents; ministers and zealous laymen in its battles, with a consequential contraction of the Presbyterian Church's pastoral coverage of the nation.

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The Wellington Clergy, 1909.

Gibb is captioned 'Bishop of St. John's' and appears standing at the bow of the craft.

Chapter Six

The Christian Patriot's Dilemma, 1914-1922

When the war pain! was on the city knew it. I left his vicinity just before the outbreak of the Great War. But I met him during its course and had authentic reports of St. John's ringing with his "Hang the Kaiser" sermons.... From a perforce nationalistic he passed by a sort of Pauline conversion to pacifism in which his Church does not yet agree.

J.J. North: A tribute to Gibb¹

On 28 June 1914 Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Habsburg monarchy, was murdered by Serb terrorists. The assassination at Sarajevo brought European international politics, long simmering, to the boil. On 4 August Britain declared that her empire was at war and New Zealand's 311 regular army staff began to mobilise a voluntary territorial army. The First World War drew 91,941 New Zealand volunteers, and later 32,270 conscripts, over 14,000 miles of ocean to fight in a European war. This ill-equipped expeditionary force, armed with obsolete Canadian rifles and without adequate supporting artillery and machine guns, left 16,554 New Zealanders dead in foreign fields.

For Gibb the outbreak of the 1914-18 war acted as a catalyst to a new series of crusades. From 1914 until the beginning of 1917 he crusaded to persuade New Zealand's manhood to enlist in a holy war against German imperialism. Gibb believed that the British Empire was a uniquely Christian institution, raised up by God to bring the benefits of Anglo-Saxon Protestantism to the world and he fiercely opposed Germany's challenge to Britain's control of the seas.

German imperialism was not, however, the only alien force resisted by Gibb between 1914 and 1922. In this period he became even more strongly convinced that the Protestant cause in New Zealand was under threat from Roman Catholicism. The glowing coals of his long-held anti-Catholicism had been fanned by the promulgations of Ne Temere. During

1. Outlook. 11 November 1935.

the war this sectarian bias was fueled by the seeming reluctance of the Dominion's Catholic clergy to accept conscription and by the Irish rebellion. Continued Roman Catholic opposition to Bible in Schools and attempts by the hierarchy to gain state aid for Church schools reinforced his anti-Papist fervour. While Gibb marched on those two crusades he publicly supported Massey and the Reform party. He believed that Massey, a Presbyterian and an Orangeman, would ensure that the Roman Catholic cause gained no advantages during his tenure of office. Gibb also believed that Massey was a strong leader well able to enlist the maximum of New Zealand recruits against the new Anti-Christ, the Kaiser.

The war acted as a watershed in Gibb's life. By 1922 he was not the same man that he was in 1914. During its course, and immediate aftermath, he moved from ultra-patriotism to pacifism, from collaboration with the Protestant Political Association in its anti-Roman Catholic witch hunting to cooperation with Archbishop O'Shea in the League of Nations Union. He also moved from support for Massey and the Reform party into the Labour Party camp. This chapter traces and analyses the Christian patriot's dilemma that resulted in Gibb's change of secondary loyalties during this period. His primary loyalty to God in the Christian cause, remained intact and was responsible for his dilemma.

In New Zealand as in Europe the war began with wild outbursts of patriotic fervour. With few exceptions the clergy ranged themselves alongside Massey and his cabinet in denouncing Germany and summoning the Dominion's manhood to enlist in a just war. This enthusiasm did not sour until the casualty returns from Gallipoli were posted and the cost of the 1916 offensives was counted. Clerical misgiving increased with the replacement of voluntary recruitment by compulsory service under the Military Service Act of August 1916. During 1917 the Irish rebellion, persecution of pacifists, censorship and suspicion that peace would leave in power the same incompetent political crew who had allowed the advent of Armageddon, brought uncertainty and division to New Zealand. Industrial unrest, sectarian conflict and political polarisation disturbed the surface calm of national life. The war led some New Zealanders to question British imperial leadership, the divine right of private enterprise and the use of war as a political argument. The clergy, conscious of their role as guardians of the nation's morals, were at the forefront of those who

during the final two years of the war questioned Britain's war policies and likely post-war aims. The years 1917 and 1918 were seasons of discontent wherein New Zealanders battled to clarify their nation's social goal, the degree of loyalty that should be shown to British imperial leadership and their tolerance of pacifists and Irish nationalists who were also fellow citizens.

At the outbreak of the First World War Gibb was more a jingoist than most of the New Zealand clergy and at the close of hostilities he embraced the cause of the League of Nations with almost fanatical fervour. Once convinced of the merit of any cause Gibb always gave himself absolutely in its support. His initial patriotic fervour, final disillusionment and pacifism are vividly etched because of this personal intensity. However, while Gibb was undoubtedly at the forefront of the clergy as they reacted to the changing fortunes and increasingly complex moral problems raised by the war he is also a typical clerical figure, expressing the judgments, prophecies and clarion calls that issued from thousands of pulpits.

In 1913 Gibb was by no means an unreserved imperialist and unthinking patriot. He had been lukewarm to British war aims during the Boer War and he met the subsequent tension between the central European powers and Britain by advocating close cooperation with the German Churches in an attempt to persuade the two great Protestant empires that they should share world leadership. In September 1913 Gibb accepted an invitation to become a vice-president of an association commonly called the Associate Councils of Churches in the British and German Empires,² a society aimed at reconciling the two powers. Until war was declared Gibb prayed for peace and spoke in advocacy of peace and reconciliation.

After Sarajevo Gibb imitated the action of the tiger. He did not exaggerate when in the 1930s he lamented: 'I was as good as a recruiting

2. J. Allen Baker, M.P. to Gibb, 12 September 1913. This body, properly named 'the Associated Council of Churches in the British and German Nations for Fostering Friendly Relations between the Two peoples', was founded in 1913. Its guiding spirit was J. Allen Baker, an English Quaker M.P. It was founded in response to a visit by a party of 130 German Churchmen to Britain in 1908.

agent during the War',³ his recorded utterances bear out his contention. At the 1914 General Assembly, in moving the traditional motion of loyalty to the throne, Gibb denounced the German army's 'excesses of lust and cruelty'.⁴ He demanded that New Zealanders rally to defend the integrity of the Empire, and he justified the war as a necessary defence of national honour required by fidelity to treaty obligations. In April 1915 Gibb's patriotic fervour led him to use the occasion of an invitation to preach in Christchurch to deliver an attack on the smallness of New Zealand's war contribution. Gibb quickly tipped his hat in farewell to his sermon's text, a passage from St. John's Gospel that argued 'if ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins'. Within a few minutes the guest preacher attacked Germany, prophesying:

the great malignant nation with which we are now warring
had thrown down the challenge to Christ, and it was inexorably
doomed.

Gibb then satirically paraphrased the war creed of the German leaders:

Blessed are the valiant; blessed are the great in soul
and strength for they shall enter into Valhalla; blessed
are the war-makers for they shall be called the children
of God, or Odin, who is greater than God.

In no doubt that those fighting on the side of the allies were fighting on the side of God and Christianity, Gibb then disadvantageously compared New Zealand's enlistment figures with those of Australia and Great Britain and concluded:

It is the urgent duty of all men of age and physical fitness
to offer themselves at once to their country, and it is the
duty of all women to surrender their men, nay, to bring
pressure to bear on them to do their duty to the flag.⁵

At this stage of the war the New Zealand government was still committed to the principle of voluntary enlistment and Gibb's recruiting sermon was applauded in official circles. Sir James Allen, the minister of Defence,

3. Personal interview with Emeritus Professor the Very Rev. J.A. Allan, Hutt, 29 June 1973.

4. General Assembly, 1914, p.37.

5. Press, 26 April 1915.

was grateful and the editor of the Christchurch Press eulogised Gibb's address in an editorial that demanded 'at least 6,000 men...within the next six weeks':

The stirring sermon preached by the Rev Dr Gibb...last evening should have an inspiring effect, and we should like to see similar efforts from a score of other pulpits in this province.⁶

By July 1915 Gibb had worked himself into a fever of patriotic zeal and in his crusade in support of the allied cause had sacrificed theological orthodoxy to his enthusiasm. On 20 July Gibb consoled J.C. Paterson, minister of Albury, on the death of his son, in action. Gibb's words, although he paraphrased Colossians 1.24, conveyed a sincere respect for a dead hero but played havoc with the orthodox Calvinist emphasis in the total sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross: 'For a lad like yours to do what he did is certainly a filling up of what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ'.⁷ In August 1915 Gibb was at the height of his patriotic hysteria and informed a packed congregation at a State and civic Memorial Service in the Wellington Town Hall that:

Every unmarried man should volunteer. Even it is coming to this, that every married man who is physically fit should report himself to the authorities and say, "When in your judgment the time is come, here am I, send me".⁸

Here again Gibb used the language and sentiment of orthodox Christianity without concern for their original context. Gibb had cleverly suggested that Kitchener's call was God's call, a suggestion made by quoting Isaiah's response to God and indicating that this was every man's proper response to the recruiting officer.⁹ As Gibb warmed to his task Christian charity was forgotten:

6. Press, 26 April 1915.

7. Gibb to J.C. Paterson, 20 July 1915. This Calvinist emphasis is stated in J. Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, II, XVI, and in the Westminster Confession, VIII. Colossians 1.24 reads in the King James' translation: 'Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh, for His body's sake, which is the Church'.

8. Dominion, 9 August 1915.

9. Isaiah, 6.9.

We are pledged to this conflict, to see that the insensate pride, the strong ambition, the merciless cruelty, in one word the militarism of Germany, shall be brought reeling and crashing to the dust.¹⁰

Galipolli brought home to Gibb the seariness and horror of war. In the course of the war 218 men enlisted from St. John's congregation, seven were severely wounded and thirty eight died. Fifteen members fell during the attempt to force the Dardanelles. The Wellington battalion of the New Zealand Infantry Brigade was decimated and the Otago battalion left with only one living officer. Gibb reacted with an even more fervent call for volunteers to fill the gaps. At an Anzac Memorial Service in the Wellington Town Hall in 1916 Gibb issued 'a clarion call to the slackers and shirkers to come in and do their duty'.¹¹

Gibb's jingoism was applauded by many New Zealanders at a time when few in the land embraced pacifist doctrine. His patriotic sentiment differed little from that expressed by other leading clerics who also preferred to lambast the enemy rather than use the pulpit as a vehicle for Christian charity. Gibb's opportunity to sway public opinion was greater than that allowed to most parsons and he used this opportunity to address patriotic rallies, church courts and congregations on the need for more and more recruits for the armed forces. George, Gibb's elder son, was a minister, exempted by his office from conscription and more concerned with the battle against the devil in his new parish than with the battle against the Hun. Malcolm, Gibb's younger son, was too young to enlist. However, Gibb did not allow his family's failure to contribute soldiers to inhibit his demand that younger brothers should follow older brothers to the Front. Those who could volunteer and would not be treated with contempt. Occasionally, and not surprisingly anonymously, a few of New Zealand's more pacific citizens replied, provoked by the charge of cowardise and upset by Gibb's marriage of war and religion. Following a particularly

10. Dominion, 9 August 1915.

11. Free Lance, 28 April 1916. The two Memorial plaques in St. John's Church - one to those who enlisted and another to those who died - were installed at Gibb's suggestion. After Galipolli he began to list names for inclusion and informed soldiers at the Front that this was being done.

fierce jingoistic sermon in early September 1916 Gibb received this retort from Dunedin:

We've a man down here, doctor, that can beat you hollow at war sermons, simply beat you hollow. I've heard him. You know the style:- Righteousness, Liberty, Freedom etc. These catchwords are diplomatically sandwiched while he rubs on the war paint. It's all so delightful, so uplifting, so unprejudiced, so cosmopolitan, so likely to enhance the Kingdom of God on earth.¹²

A devotee no longer totally sure of his creed tends to shout in order to hide his uncertainty from the world. After Galipolli's appalling losses, following the battle of the Somme where within two to three hours New Zealand suffered twice as many casualties as those of the whole Boer War, with 7,000 ~~officers alone~~ wounded or killed, and faced with daily visits to the parents and wives of parishioners killed at the Front, Gibb began to voice reservations about British war policy. As early as 4 June 1916 Gibb was arguing that a place must be found for Germany in Europe's post-war commerce. He applauded the ideal of post-war disarmament and deplored any suggestion that the British empire could only maintain its existence if 'hedged round with steel'.¹³

Gibb was less sure of himself now and Charles Murray, a brother Presbyterian minister, soon gave him the push needed to place him outside the militarist camp. Murray, an erudite Christchurch minister, had on the eve of the War held office as convener of the General Assembly's committee on International Peace and as such as in communication with the Presbyterian Churches of the Empire, the Reformed Churches of France and the German Lutheran Church. As part of his personal attempt to present a united Church condemnation of militarism Murray was in communication with Dr Drylander, court chaplain to the Kaiser, and with Dr Voights, president of the Evangelical Supreme Church Council in Berlin.¹⁴ Discreetly and consistently Murray retained his anti-militarist and pacifist position

12. Anon to Gibb, 10 September 1916.

13. Outlook, 11 July 1916.

14. General Assembly, 1914. Appendix XXI, pp. 154-157. Drylander and Voights were foundation members of the Associated Councils of Churches of the British and German Empires.

throughout the early years of the war despite accusations by parishioners that he was pro-German in sympathy.

In August 1916 Murray, incensed by Gibb's increased sabre rattling warned him that he need not expect any revival in the nation's spiritual life as a consequence of war commitment and appealed to Gibb to look carefully at the final intentions of his political allies:

Our Premier expresses his inclination to carry out to its uttermost letter the law of Moses, viz "an eye for an eye" etc; as if Christ had never lived. Then I see the Premier of an adjacent Commonwealth expressing the determination to organise ...armies and navies when the present struggle is over. I see in these quarters no sign of improvement in our national life.¹⁵

Gibb was not quite ready to abandon his cause and, disregarding Murray's warning, at the 1917 General Assembly moved a strongly pro-war motion that demanded that the Church be:

aware that this war must be waged with inflexible determination, and that meantime there can be no real or stable peace unless the military power of the Central Empires is shattered, or the Germanic peoples themselves realise that their aggressions have brought them nothing but disaster and the moral condemnation of the whole intelligent world.¹⁶

This was too much for Murray who denounced Gibb as a 'strenuous militarist'.¹⁷ This epithet upset Gibb considerably and at the close of General Assembly he forwarded a letter of explanation to Murray wherein he claimed that Murray's assessment of his position as 'the greatest mistake you ever made in your life'.¹⁸ Gibb contended that while he moved his motion as the convener of an Assembly committee he was opposed in committee to the motion presented to the Assembly. This argument gained an acid retort from Murray:

Neither our local Christchurch newspapers nor the Outlook gave the least hint that the resolution did not convey your

15. Murray to Gibb, 14 August 1916.

16. General Assembly, 1917, p.3.

17. Murray to Gibb, n.d.

18. Gibb to Murray, 18 December 1917.

views.... All the Outlook says was: "Dr Gibb moved the adoption of the resolution which was seconded by Professor Dickie and carried unanimously without discussion, the House rising and singing two verses of the National Anthem...." There was a way, as you well know, by which you could enter your dissent, even tho' convener, but there is no record, or evidence of your dissent. We therefore naturally concluded you supported it and therefore stand as a "strenuous militarist" as aforesaid.¹⁹

Murray had chosen the right moment to take a firm line with Gibb. Already shaken by the death of Max Gray, the son of one of his best friends, killed in France 'in front of his men and facing east',²⁰ and shocked by the mounting casualty list within his own congregation, Gibb's advocacy of war policies was made with increasing mental reservation as 1917 proceeded. In July he had written to Captain W. Howard Johnson, in France:

it would not surprise me very much if this horrible war should in the end yield no overwhelmingly decisive victory for either side...although it will put an end to the ambitions of Wilhelm of Potsdam; but it will do so probably as part of a greater whole, namely, the ending or at least the great diminution of militarism in all the civilised world.²¹

Gibb's uncertainty was augmented by his memory of an unexpected meeting in July 1916 with several of Wellington's pacifists. While leading a deputation to the Wellington City Council in opposition to Sunday golf Gibb was faced by a deputation waiting on the Council with a request for permission to hold an anti-conscription rally. Gibb's case was based upon the example set by golf players to the children of the Berhampore orphanage, a case dismissed by the editor of the Free Lance as 'cant in excelsis'.²² After the predictable refusal of the pacifist request a member of their deputation wrote to Gibb:

Now, which, as a Christian minister, do you honestly believe would be likely to do these children the most harm morally, to see a quiet game of golf played on the Sabbath, or to see the troops going away at intervals with the purpose of killing their fellow men?²³

19. Murray to Gibb, 25 December 1917. The emphasis is Murray's.

20. W.M. Gray to Gibb, 4 November 1916.

21. Gibb to Howard Johnson, 4 July 1917.

22. Free Lance, 22 June 1916.

23. Mrs R.S. Ilott to Gibb, 29 July 1916.

Murray was astute enough to realise that Gibb's certainty had given way to a dilemma and in late December 1917 was even less gentle in his treatment. This time the bone of contention was a sermon delivered by Gibb on the teachings of Christ on the Mount. Gibb attempted in this address to cloak his uncertainty with ambiguities but Murray had none of this:

I have given much time, study and reading to this subject and have come to the deliberate conclusion that war is not the way Christians, and therefore Christian nations, should settle their disputes. If you condemn war on such grounds as I have indicated, I shake hands with you and long to see the day when the Church of Christ will take that stand.... I have made up my mind about it, taught it, and have suffered accordingly.... I must confess it beats me to know where you actually stand on this subject.²⁴

Between the close of 1916 and early 1918 Gibb's public utterances about the war were cautious, ambiguous and less frequent. For Gibb this was a period of intense soul searching over the rightness of Christian support for any war, and in his search for an answer to his dilemma he read deeply not only into theological and ethical works but also critiques of the claim that Germany was solely responsible for the war. Benjamin Kidd's The Science of Power and Philip Gibb's The Soul of the War received special attention.²⁵

Gibb was not alone in his uncertainty. Throughout New Zealand the clergy were beginning to doubt whether even a just war vindicated the blood bath on Europe's battlefield. Thomas Henry Sprott, Bishop of Wellington, wrote privately to Gibb denouncing the war of 'imperialistic darkness'.²⁶ The Roman Catholic Church was incensed by the government's failure to ensure the exemption of seminarians from conscription and by the insulting posting of 'call-up' notices to the Bishop of Christchurch and his clergy. Archbishop Redwood, the Roman Catholic metropolitan, decried the possible conscription of his clergy and pictured a Catholic community 'left to live and die without the Sacraments and to be buried like cattle'.²⁷ At the 1917

24. Murray to Gibb, 25 December 1917.

25. Gibb quotes from both works in his letter to the Dominion of 9 August 1915.

26. Sprott to Gibb, 29 July 1917.

27. New Zealand Times, 19 February 1917. Quoted by P.S. O'Connor, 'Storm over the Clergy - New Zealand 1917', Journal of Religious History, December 1966, p.132.

General Assembly Gibb loyally moved that 'military exemption shall be sought for no minister called to service whose place can in any way be filled',²⁸ and then was left to lament the increasing numbers of parishes and stations left without ministers.

The war had put an end to the steady expansion of Home Mission stations throughout the Dominion. By November 1917 there were seventeen Home Mission stations without agents, despite Gibb's policy of allowing extensions of service to older men.²⁹ The Presbyterian General Assembly grew alarmed at the exodus of clergy from new charges and established committees in each of the four main cities to appeal against the conscription of agents who could not be replaced.³⁰ Congregational giving fell in stations where inferior agents replaced good and where Presbyterian heads of family were away at the Front. Gibb became more detailed in his instructions to weak and inexperienced agents and incurred the wrath of the Home Mission superintendent, P.B. Fraser, who dubbed Gibb 'the autocrat in Wellington'.³¹ As Gibb began to plan for the post-war period and persuaded his Home Mission committee that urgent recruitment of agents from Britain must follow the end of hostilities, he grew even more impatient and distressed at the seemingly endless slaughter.

In the summer and autumn of 1916-1917 Gibb faced a moral dilemma that became increasingly urgent. H.S. Moores has described this period as 'one of the most explosive moments in New Zealand's history during the twentieth century'.³² Industrial strife, sectarian conflict, the implementation of the Military Service Act and reaction to the Dominion's war losses brought a few of those concerned with the moral leadership of the nation to question and then attack the government's policies and actions. Gibb spent this period wrestling with his conscience over the vexing problem of whether the end of a just peace justified the means of violence. After the arrest of

28. General Assembly, 1917, p.48.

29. Ibid., Appendix III, p.59 f.

30. Ibid., Gibb was convener of the Wellington committee.

31. Fraser to Trotter, 31 March 1915. Trotter forwarded a copy of this letter to Gibb.

32. H.S. Moores 'The Rise of the Protestant Political Association', M.A. thesis, University of Auckland, 1966, p.55.

Armstrong, Brindle, Cooke, Fraser and Semple, following an anti-conscription conference in December 1916, he questioned the Massey government's claim that New Zealand was fighting for liberty. The vicious persecution of conscientious objectors by local appeal Boards, and the transportation of unwilling conscripted objectors to the battlefields, especially the cases of Archibald Baxter, G.C. Ballantyne and Mark Briggs, raised acutely the question of liberty of Christian conscience.³³

Calvinism and Thomism agreed that a war may justly be embarked upon by Christian men only when three conditions are met: the call to arms must come from constituted authority, the cause must be just and the belligerents must have rightful intentions. It was the last factor that troubled Gibb. The threats and promises of the allied leaders seemed to suggest that vengeance and national aggrandisement were their aims and Gibb saw the pursual of these aims as a sure road to disaster.

Gibb's inner turmoil was heightened by his fear that Presbyterianism's ancient enemy, Roman Catholicism, was attempting to increase its strength by seeking exemption from military service for its clergy and seminarians at a time when Protestant clergy and theological students were patriotically enlisting. Roman Catholic priests were under their Church's discipline of celibacy and as single men were liable for early conscription. Sir James Allen, the Minister of Defence, had promised the Roman Catholic hierarchy that clerics would be protected from conscription but local appeal boards felt no obligation to enforce the Minister's undertaking. A battle over the conscription of Roman Catholic clergy was one of the major issues that escalated the development of sectarian conflict in New Zealand in the latter stages of the war.

Gibb quickly involved himself in the Protestant extremist anti-Romanist witch hunt of late 1916 and 1917. The Catholic Federation's attempt, towards the close of 1916, to gain state aid for Church schools was a red rag to a Protestant bull. Gibb was convinced that the Roman Catholic hierarchy had connived with politicians to assure the defeat of a Bible in Schools bill in 1914 and he was anxious to pay off an old score. Sinn

33. For an account of the treatment of New Zealand conscientious objectors see A. Baxter, We Will Not Cease, London, 1939.

Feinism, promoted by the monthly periodical Green Ray, and after February 1917 by James Kelly the new editor of the New Zealand Tablet, was an offense to Gibb's patriotism and religion. Roman Catholic demands for clear government assurances that their clergy and seminarians would not be conscripted allowed bigoted Protestant spokesmen, and Gibb was such, to publicly question the loyalty of the Dominion's Roman Catholic community. Sectarian controversy erupted in an unparalleled explosion, fanned by the Loyal Orange Lodge and the Protestant Political Association.

In 1914 Gibb had supported the Presbyterian General Assembly in its attempt to form a national Protestant defence society. He had denounced the Ne Temere decree and was convinced that the Vatican had even worse threats to offer. Throughout 1915 Gibb was in close contact with A.J. Bishop, the secretary of Loyal Orange Lodge No.1, Wellington,³⁴ and he chaired early meetings of the Protestant Political Association, following its formation in July 1917.

Howard Elliott, the first secretary of the Committee of Vigilance of the Protestant Political Association, is a figure from the murky underworld of Protestant sectarianism. His scurrilous anti-Catholic propaganda, and his libellous accusations against the integrity of a deceased nun made him one of the most dangerous partisans ever to trouble New Zealand. Gibb initially lent his presence to several of Elliott's campaign meetings, as chairman. However, Gibb was, from the outset, cautious about Elliott. In mid-September 1917 Gibb chaired a Wellington meeting addressed by Elliott, who on this occasion defended his use of Post Office Box 912 (this box had been used for disseminating scurrilous anti-Catholic propaganda and mail directed to and from it had come under the scrutiny of the government censor). At the conclusion of Elliott's address Gibb moved a very cautious motion of thanks:

That this meeting...waiving the question of the wisdom of Mr Elliott's procedure, is satisfied of his bona fides, and that he is convinced that there are facts accordant with the statements contained in the letters.³⁵

34. Bishop to Gibb, 1 July 1915.

35. Evening Standard, 26 September 1917.

on 5 July 1918 R. Evan Davies, minister of Knox Church, Dunedin, queried
of Gibb:

What is your attitude to the P.P.A.? We are holding aloof
here chiefly on account of Elliott. He is very unsafe as a
leader and is likely to bring further discredit to the
movement.³⁶

Unfortunately no reply from Gibb to Davies is extant. However, from early
1918 Gibb ceased to adorn P.P.A. meetings and it may be assumed that like
Davies he found Elliott far too dangerous a colleague. By the mid-1920s
Elliott was rejected as a leader by most Protestants. P.S. O'Connor argues
that Elliott's influence exhausted itself in the mid-1920s because of a
Reform Party - P.P.A. marriage.³⁷

Gibb reacted to the Massey administration's leadership during the war
years by a steady movement of support away from Reform. At the close of
1914 Gibb informed Alex Waters 'I suppose my sympathies on the whole are

36. Davies to Gibb, 5 July 1918, pp.3-14.

37. See P.S. O'Connor, in 'Sectarian Conflict in New Zealand, 1911-1920',
Political Science, July 1967, pp.3-16. In this article O'Connor
assumes that the P.P.A. was the major Protestant pressure group
lobbying Massey. O'Connor's assumption deserves to be challenged.
Well before the formation of the P.P.A. Gibb and his Evangelical
Protestant alliance approached Massey over Bible in Schools, Sabbath
breaking and gambling. On 7 April 1914 the Outlook saluted 'our
Presbyterian Prime Minister'. In June 1914 Gibb believed Massey had
promised support for a Bible in Schools referendum. On 4 July 1914
the Free Lance attacked Massey's apparent appeasement of Protestant
Evangelical interest, in an article entitled 'Mr Massey's Worst
Blunder': 'In committing himself to the introduction of the proposal
to submit the Bible in School's question to a referendum, Mr Massey
has made his worst tactical blunder so far. Questions that affect the
religious conscience of the people should not be subject to the coercion
of the majorities'.
The outbreak of war prevented Massey being put to the test on this
issue and his integrity as a good Protestant was maintained. W.J.
Gardner in his article 'W.F. Massey in Power, 1912-1925', Political
Science, September 1961, pp.3-28, also makes much of Massey's association
with the P.P.A. and says nothing of his involvement with the more
respectable spokesmen of the Protestant Evangelical alliance. There
should be no assumption that the P.P.A. enlisted much support from
the Presbyterian Church leaders. John Collie, professor of New
Testament at Knox College, attacked the P.P.A.'s 'negative attitude
towards the truths of Protestantism' in the Outlook, 15 August 1921.

with the Reform Party rather than their opponents'.³⁸ He had publicly supported Massey's firmness in the face of industrial strife in 1913 and in return had received a private letter expressing the Prime Minister's thanks:

I much appreciate your complimentary references to the attitude of Government in connection with the present industrial difficulty, and would like to take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to you for the outspoken manner in which you have dealt with the subject.³⁹

Throughout the period 1914-1916 Gibb and Massey were in close accord, with Massey anxious to meet Presbyterian suggestions on matters as disparate as the control of contagious disease in the Cook Islands⁴⁰ and a reduction in the trading hours at public houses.⁴¹ Gibb's disenchantment with the Reform Party appears to coincide with his discovery that Massey and Reform were no more likely to erect the Kingdom of God in New Zealand, to Gibb's blueprint, than were the Prime Ministers and governments who preceded them. This finding was made by Gibb as he studied the government's war policy, realised that the government's labour policy intended few benefits for the urban workers and noted the conservative nature of Reform legislation. On 1 September 1917 Gibb wrote to G.H. Robertson, a medical officer in Flanders, confiding that he was giving close attention to 'After the War Problems', especially the questions of wealth distribution and return for labour. Gibb

38. Gibb to Waters, 22 December 1914.

39. Massey to Gibb, 25 February 1913. Gibb's letter to Massey is not extant but its contents may be inferred from his remarks in correspondence with Jolly. Gibb to Jolly, 27 November 1913: 'My own feeling is that the Government merits a special vote of thanks for protecting the lives and property of the citizens. But for the firm stand they have taken anarchy and red-handed murders would have taken place at all events in Wellington, whatever may be the case in Auckland.'

40. Massey to Gibb, 9 November 1915. The best example of Massey's appreciation of Gibb's support is from earlier correspondence - in Massey to Gibb, 25 November 1913. In this letter Massey informed Gibb: 'I much appreciate your complimentary references to the attitude of Government in connection with the present industrial difficulty, and would like to take this opportunity of expressing my gratitude to you for the outspoken manner in which you have dealt with this unfortunate trouble.'

41. Presbytery of Wellington, 10 April 1917.

remarked:

As far as St. John's is concerned I sometimes wonder that we find any rich man continuing to attend the services, for the preacher himself is practically a socialist and does not hesitate to expound the social applications of the Gospel from that point of view.⁴²

By September 1917 Gibb had withdrawn support from the Reform party and was propounding Christian Socialist solutions to the nation's economic problems. In September 1918 he was advocating the establishment of cooperatives and profit-sharing systems. On 18 December 1918 he made an even more dramatic change of position by publicly condemning the proposed Imperial demands to be made upon the defeated powers at the Peace Conference. In a letter to the editor of the Dominion Gibb criticised the editor's advocacy of a tough line at the conference table, an advocacy summarised by Gibb: 'that defeated Germany shall be dealt with practically on the principle one had thought long ago discredited - of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"'.⁴³ Then followed a stern criticism of the increased and increasing harshness of the demands proposed by Lloyd George and the War cabinet, that closed with a declaration that the Empire's leaders had now reached a position in direct conflict with the golden rule. Their position was 'as the Germans, if victorious, would have done unto us, so let us do unto them'.⁴⁴ Gibb noted that the crushing of German militarism had not put an end to the power of militarism throughout the world and warned:

Unless I greatly err, if we abandon ourselves to the mood which now apparently holds the minds of many of our leaders...we shall find that Armageddon has not yet been fought, that another and even more dreadful war lies before us in the not far distant future.⁴⁵

How could a stop be brought to this headlong race to disaster? Gibb informed readers that leaders of the British Free Churches, previously solidly against Germany, were now strenuously opposing the coalition government and its peace settlement policies. While Gibb was certain that

42. Gibb to Robertson, 1 September 1917.

43. Dominion, 18 December 1918.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

the churches would state their opposition through accepted and peaceful democratic machinery he was not convinced that the forces of labour would accept this betrayal of their sacrifices. Gibb stated his fear that the Labour party would respond to the betrayal of its ideal of 'no more war' by being driven into the arms of Bolshevism, or at least into revolt against constitutional authority. As far as New Zealand was concerned Gibb's solution was clear:

A concordat must be established between the churches and the Labourists [sic] and Socialists, and whoever else in the community is determined that war is an abomination that must be banished from God's world.... If Church and Labour unite there will be an end to militarism in this country and in Great Britain.⁴⁶

Gibb's letter provoked four replies. J.D. Sievright rather insensitively suggested that Gibb could not have suffered as other fathers had suffered and closed his rejoinder with a few lines that might have turned the Scottish poet William McGonagall green with envy:

But never can me and you
 Forgive those sons of Cain
 Till the dead have had their due
 And the seas are clear again.⁴⁷

'Justice: Neither more nor less' was more temperate in tone, despite his insistence that the Kaiser and his subordinates must be punished.⁴⁸

'Loyalty' was affronted by Gibb's charges against Lloyd George and accused Gibb of 'a gross libel on our statesmen' and demanded an unequivocal apology.⁴⁹ A correspondent who called himself 'Mac' attempted a weak

defence of Gibb, accused Sievright of violent language, but even this defender closed with a demand for indemnities for wives and children.⁵⁰

The editor of the Dominion did not change his mind on the matter of war reparations and twelve days following the publication of Gibb's letter

46. Dominion, 18 December 1918.

47. Ibid., 21 December 1918.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid., 23 December 1918.

50. Dominion, 24 December 1918.

announced that the sweeping victory of the British coalition parties at the polls, with 484 seats to the opposition's 222, was a mandate from the electors for a policy of no half-measures at the Peace Conference.⁵¹

Gibb was bravely swimming against the stream and few took the risk of jumping in with him. C. Reginald Ford, a Wanganui architect and League of Nations Union leader, penned his support in a private letter:

I endorse every word that you said in the same. I have long been waiting to see some lead given by your Church in the matter I do not believe that the New Zealand people as a whole want to see the Peace Conference develop into a game of the old sort, of the diplomatists sitting around a table bargaining for spoils. Judging, however, from the latest utterances of Messrs Massey and Ward this is what they intend and expect.⁵²

Massey and Ward were insistent that New Zealand should have its own representative at the bargaining table and were determined that Western Samoa, New Zealand's spoil of war, should not be returned to Germany.

In 1919 Gibb was out of tune with the militarist sentiment of New Zealand, a nation that could well be dubbed the Prussia of the south Pacific. On 17 March Gibb addressed a meeting in St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Palmerston North, on the subject of 'Church Union'. He quickly moved away from his subject to the problem of the peace settlement. Gibb warned:

Unless Christ got into industry, labour and capital, there would be hell on earth.... [After referring to the Peace Conference Gibb continued] The greatest of these problems was not how the Germans should be punished for crimes against humanity, nor how the claims of the nations should be adjusted, nor whether New Zealand should get Samoa. The problem that transcended all was that of securing for all time a warless world, and in the solution of that great international problem the Christian Church was...simply indispensable.⁵³

Massey and his government liked the idea of a warless world but they believed that a strong territorial army and the support of the Royal Navy

51. Dominion, 30 December 1918.

52. Ford to Gibb, 21 December 1918.

53. Manawatu Daily Times, 18 March 1919.

were far more likely to preserve peace than any covenant of the League of Nations. They planned accordingly. The Armistice brought no end to the military obligations of a large section of New Zealand's population. Under the Defence Act of 1909, and its 1910, amendment youths from the age of eighteen years to the age of twenty-one were liable for service in the Territorials, and boys of fourteen to eighteen years were obliged to join the cadets. The militarists boasted that in New Zealand every male was a soldier.

Despite the fact that during the war, apart from those men enlisted for the Expeditionary Force, approximately 58 percent of the male population between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five passed through the Territorial Force, and 90 percent of those between fourteen and eighteen served in the Cadets, leading military advisers, the National Defence League and advocates of a strong Empire, were dissatisfied with the extent of the Dominion's defence arrangements.⁵⁴

Sir James Allen, the Minister of Defence, assured the House of Representatives that the Committee on Imperial Defence was giving attention to plans for the protection of British possessions in the Pacific.⁵⁵ Although no Territorial camps were held in the immediate post-war years young men were still liable for service, medically examined and selected for units. In 1919 a new syllabus for cadet training was issued by Defence Headquarters, reducing the amount of military instruction but adding other subjects; according to the General Officer Commanding, Major-General E.W.C. Chaytor, advantageously 'making for the mental, moral and physical improvement of those undergoing instruction'.⁵⁶

Gibb viewed with alarm the continuation of the Territorial system, the extension of Cadet training into the realm of character formation, together with the government's support for Imperial rearmament. On 12 August 1919 he stated his objections to the Presbytery of Wellington

54. AJHR, 1921 H-19: Report of the Officer Commanding.

55. NZPD, 1918, 163, 25c.

56. AJHR, 1920, H-19: Report of the Officer Commanding.

with such vigour and clarity that he received considerable support:

- * The war was fought if possible to end war. Definite promises were given here and throughout the Empire, when the militarism of Germany was broken, militarism would be restricted. An extension of the territorial scheme such as proposed would not repress but intensify the militaristic spirit in this country. It is the duty of every nation committed to the League of Nations to do its utmost to give effect to the conventions.⁵⁷

Gibb's rejection of the expanded Cadet training curriculum and of Sir James Allen's proposal to reactivate Territorial training brought acclaim from overseas. In the October issue of The Christian World an article 'Militarism in New Zealand' attacked the government's policy,⁵⁸ and Gibb received unexpected support from Sidney Keith, church secretary to the Purley Congregational Church in Surrey, who had previously met Gibb in New Zealand:

I am glad to note that you are taking a leading part in opposing the monstrous proposals of Sir James Allen, and from this far-distant Homeland I beg the liberty of sending to you my devout congratulations. Surely the Churches in New Zealand are strong enough and wise enough to unite and squash such an idea straight away.⁵⁹

Gibb's anti-militarism was reinforced by a visit to Britain. The 1919 Presbyterian General Assembly commissioned him to recruit twenty additional ministers and the same number of home missionaries to fill the gaps in the parish ministry left by the war. Gibb left New Zealand in December 1919 not to return until October in the following year. By the date of Gibb's departure for the United Kingdom his anti-militarist opinions, advocacy of disarmament and support for the League of Nations, were common knowledge. Ormond Burton's assessment that Gibb 'left New Zealand orthodox and returned something of a revolutionary'⁶⁰ Gibb was an anti-militarist and Labour sympathiser before he set off on his clerical recruiting campaign. His European visit reinforced and strengthened his new convictions. A letter from a brother minister to Gibb, dated

57. Presbytery of Wellington, 12 August 1919.

58. Christian World, London, October 1919.

59. Keith to Gibb, 2 November 1919.

60. Personal interview with the Rev. O.E. Burton, Otaki, 25 July 1973.

20 August 1919, discussed Gibb's application of the term 'pacifist' to himself.⁶¹

The Gibb papers provide few indications of Gibb's movement during his time in the United Kingdom. They do tell that the secretary of the Church of Scotland Colonial committee invited him to attend the preliminary meeting of the inter-church conference on Faith and Order, held in Geneva between 12 August and 20 August 1920. World Council of Churches minutes do not record Gibb having attended.⁶² Most of his time was spent interviewing potential recruits for the New Zealand ministry. Gibb surprised prospective candidates who were unused to the sight of a D.D. in shirt and braces shrouded by a cloud of tobacco smoke. Gibb was more interested in the applicants robustness of health than with their theological orthodoxy and after accepting any candidate made sure that he was booked on the next ship bound for New Zealand. He gained twelve ministers and twenty home missionaries and his selection was justified by the contribution made by them to the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand.⁶³

Gibb's pacifist and anti-militarist convictions were reinforced during his time in Britain. He arrived while British leaders and the British newspapers were fiercely debating the terms of the Versailles Treaty and the Covenant of the League, both to become operative on 10 January 1920. He must have noted the charges of calculated vengeance, cynical triumph, economic unrealism, pharasaic judgment and unchristian behaviour, levelled

61. Kidston to Gibb, 20 August 1919.

62. J.A. M'Clymont to Gibb, 26 June 1920; World Council of Churches Secretariat to Barber, 21 August 1973.

63. Gibb listed the recruits gained from his visit to Britain in his report to the 1920 Presbyterian General Assembly. See General Assembly, 1920, p.92. His list follows:

Ministers secured: Jas. Baird, B.A.; D. McCosh, M.A.; H.C. Stuart; J. McIlroy, B.A.; A. Watson; W. Hutchinson, B.A.; W.J. Gregg, B.A.; C. Walker, M.A.; J.H. McKenzie; J. McNeill; Thos. Harrison, M.A.; A. Baird, B.D. (on a temporary basis).

Home Missionaries secured: J.S. MacGregor; Wm. Brown; James Irons; J. Coburn; Jas. Adamson; D.P. Campbell; A.W. Armstrong; H. White; Robt. Boyd; J.H. Wilson; S. Waddell; G.W. Brookes; A.F. Stewart; Wm. Dodds; Jos. Dixon; Wm. MacArthur; Jas. Gemmill; E.P.H. Penn; G.B. Jardine and Alfred Morrison.

at the allied political leaders by such eminent ecclesiastics as Cosmo Lang (Archbishop of York), Canon William Temple, H.R.L. Sheppard (vicar of St Martin's-in-the-Fields), C.E. Raven and others. It is almost certain that Gibb held conversations with leading British theologians, especially with those who held positions similar to his own on war and disarmament. He later encouraged New Zealand post-graduate divinity students to study at Westminster College, Cambridge, and this suggests that John Oman and Carnegie Simpson, temperate critics of war aims during the hostilities and outspoken advocates of a just peace, made their mark on him.⁶⁴

On his return to Wellington Gibb at once attempted to construct the anti-militarist alliance of Church and Labour suggested in his letter to the Dominion of 18 December 1918. He persuaded the Presbytery of Wellington to approach selected Labour leaders with an invitation to informal discussion. By mid-1921 encouraging replies were received from the New Zealand Waterside Workers' Federation,⁶⁵ the National Executive of the Labour party,⁶⁶ and the Okato (Taranaki) branch of the Labour party.⁶⁷ During 1922 Gibb secured support from representative Protestant clergy and from the Roman Catholic hierarchy - a dramatic breakthrough in inter-church relations. In February 1922 Archbishop O'Shea wrote to Gibb:

You may rest assured that the object for which it [a League of Nations Union meeting] is being convened will have the wholehearted support of Catholics. The coming together of Christians for such a purpose cannot fail.⁶⁸

In early 1921 Gibb initiated moves to form a Dominion branch of the British League of Nations Union. At the 1921 General Assembly a League of Nations committee was set up with this aim in view but before the committee

64. Personal interview with Burton, op. cit. Burton indicated that immediately following the Armistice he visited Cambridge University for an OCTU and found both theologians critical of the British government's reparations policy.

65. J.A. Roberts to Clerk of Wellington Presbytery, 20 May 1921.

66. P. Fraser to Clerk, 28 May 1921.

67. S.A. Thomas (Secretary, Okato Branch of the Labour party) to Gibb, 6 June 1921.

68. O'Shea to Gibb, 25 February 1922.

could take action a civic branch was inaugurated in Dunedin, centred around staff at the University of Otago. The Assembly committee resolved to support the citizens' branch in Dunedin and encouraged a Wellington branch initiated by Gibb.⁶⁹ Gibb was elected the inaugural chairman of the Wellington branch and successfully secured the appointment of official representatives on his committee from the Anglican, Baptist, Congregational, Methodist, Roman Catholic and Presbyterian Churches, and from the Salvation Army.

The Wellington branch immediately began a campaign aimed at promoting a public:

sentiment of hatred against war; to demand an immediate curtailment of armaments with a view to their ultimate abolition; to insist that our rulers shall refrain from making secret treaties or alliances with other nations...and to labour for the coming era of universal peace.⁷⁰

Throughout 1922 the New Zealand section of the British League of Nations flourished. A second branch was mooted for Wellington, the Dunedin branch began a series of lectures and made propaganda literature available to new branches, and the Labour party and trade union movement continued to show interest.⁷¹ A notable barrister, P.J. O'Regan, a defender of conscientious objectors during the war, offered his support and a cheque⁷² - and branches were formed in many country towns, with a particularly vigorous branch in Gisborne.

How did Gibb go about his task of spreading the League's gospel of peace on earth throughout the Dominion? At the 1922 General Assembly he nominated a League of Nations committee of seventy-two members, easily the largest of the Assembly committees, with corresponding members in every Presbytery. Gibb's plan was simple, to use his control of General Assembly

69. General Assembly, 1922. Appendix XIX, p.185. The New Zealand League of Nations Union still awaits historical analysis.

70. Henderson Pringle to Gibb, 9 January 1922.

71. J. Pickup (Secretary, Thorndon Branch, Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants) to Gibb, 20 March 1922.

72. P.J. O'Regan to Gibb, 15 April 1922.

and to use the machinery of Presbyterian Church government to establish vital cells of League propagandists throughout New Zealand.

Gibb had manufactured machinery he believed would enable the anti-militarists to win public support to their cause. He then began his search for a patron for his movement, a notable New Zealander whose eminence would attract the uncommitted. Sir John Salmond, the Chief Justice, was approached and declined;⁷³ hardly a surprising decision from one who as New Zealand's representative at the Washington Conference on the limitations of armaments rejected the argument that the Dominions were now independent nations able to form their own separate foreign policies.

In considering alternatives Henderson Pringle, the Otago chairman, was insistent that 'Massey would never do',⁷⁴ a decision that the Prime Minister firm in his support for a Singapore naval base, a New Zealand division of the Royal Navy and a strong Empire, had he known of it, would have confirmed. In the end Sir Francis Bell, Massey's chief lieutenant, surprisingly accepted the office of president and did the League little harm by it.

Gibb now considered himself to be in a strong position with a section of the clergy enlisted as propagandists for the League and with a nominal alliance between the Churches and Labour working in the interests of disarmament. His aim was clear enough, a unilateral renunciation of war by New Zealand followed by complete national disarmament. Gibb sought a New Zealand foreign policy divorced from Massey's reliance on the Royal Navy or a citizen army. To effect this aim Gibb needed to persuade the government, or a potential government, to accept a dramatic and revolutionary change, and this he could not do. In 1922 the Reform party was in the hands of one of the most competent party managers ever to become a New Zealand premier. Massey was well aware that a Protestant lobby was a dangerous irritant and he had already signified his recognition of Protestant interests by his deference to anti-Catholic feeling in public service promotions.⁷⁵

73. Salmond to Pringle, 12 June 1922.

74. Pringle to Gibb, 15 June 1922.

75. See P.S. O'Connor, 'Mr Massey and the P.P.A. - A Suspicion Confirmed', New Zealand Journal of Public Administration, March 1966, pp.69-74.

However, Massey had no intention of allowing party members a right to make up their minds on a matter as vital as defence. The Liberal party similarly embraced the notion of Imperial defence leaving only a handful of Labour members as spokesmen for disarmament.

Lack of supporting voices in Parliament did not worry Gibb. In 1922 he believed the Labour party was the political force of the future and would soon be returned to office as New Zealand's government. Gibb's attempt to ally the party and the Church brought occasional outbursts from clerics of more conservative political persuasion. The August meeting of the Presbytery of Wellington was the occasion for the fiercest of these attacks when B. Hutson gave notice of motion:

Whereas a meeting was held in a theatre of this city last Lord's Day evening under the auspices of the Labour Representation Committee in the interests of the "no more war movement" and was addressed by the leader of the Extreme Labour party and by two ministerial members of this Presbytery, who are spoken of as representing the Church, the Presbytery, while recognising the right of every member to hold and express for himself an opinion consistent with good citizenship and while earnestly desiring and strenuously seeking the reign of universal peace hereby disassociates itself from the views set forth at the said gathering wherein the Statesmen of the Empire and the Dominion were attacked as if they did not desire a worldwide peace and were not prepared to reduce all armaments to the narrowest margin of safety.⁷⁶

Advantageously for Gibb his opponent wrote a letter to the press about the incident while it was sub judice thus incensing the Presbytery who rallied to Gibb. Hutson then declined to proceed with his motion allowing Gibb to consolidate his victory by pushing through Presbytery one of his strongest pro-League motions.⁷⁷ Gibb was still powerful enough to make Presbytery dance to his tune, despite a fall in popularity following his conversion to pacifism. It was a pointless victory, for Gibb failed to note that Presbytery motions carried little weight in an increasingly secularist community.

In 1922 Gibb had no reason to suspect that the liaison of the Churches and the Labour movement was not a union contracted by the Almighty but a

76. Presbytery of Wellington, 8 August 1922.

77. Ibid.

marriage of convenience. He assumed that for Labour pacifism and disarmament were fixed principles. History seemed to verify his judgment for it was four Labour members, the entire New Zealand Parliamentary Labour bench at the time, who had fought the 1911 Military Service bill at all its stages, and it was the Labour leadership who had been gaoled for their part in the 1916 anti-conscription rallies. Gibb rejoiced in the decision of the fourth annual Labour Party conference in 1920 that 'the time had arrived in the movement when everything in connection with militarism should be taken out of their platform',⁷⁸ and in their vote to disband the Territorial force. Gibb had no reason to expect that the Labour party would waver on its disarmament promise at the 1924 party conference when the majority agreed that on becoming the government the party would 'be guided by the circumstances prevailing at the time as to the extent to which disarmament can be achieved or defence is necessary'.⁷⁹

By the close of 1922 Gibb had gathered around himself a new force of crusaders, humanists as well as churchmen; in the main disaffected liberals determined that the world should be spared another blood bath. Like all crusaders the devotees of the League of Nations began bravely along the road that led to a new Jerusalem. In 1922 the League of Nations seemed destined to perform miracles; the Cannes conference postponed German reparations payments, the Washington Naval Agreement between Britain, Japan and the United States promised a limitation in the size of capital ships, a Nine-Power-Treaty promised an independent China, a Turco-Greek armistice was signed in October, and in the British General elections the warmongering Lloyd George was soundly defeated. The League of Nations crusaders were confident that the world was turning from madness to sanity, and the future was theirs.

Gibb's changes of direction, from patriotism to pacifism, from fierce anti-Catholicism to cooperation with a Roman Catholic archbishop, and from support of the Reform party to encouragement of the Labour party, have been traced and discussed. The Christian patriot resolved his dilemma by becoming a pacifist and a socialist. The First World War

78. Maoriland Worker, 8 September 1922.

79. New Zealand Worker, 11 June 1924.

obviously presented Gibb with a pastoral challenge. The question that remains to be answered is to what extent did the First World War alter the bounds of Gibb's pastoral frontier and force him to lead the Church in new directions? The war extended Gibb's pastoral responsibility beyond central Wellington and his Home Mission stations to the trenches of France, army hospitals and training camps in Britain and dug-outs in the Dardenelles. Throughout the war Gibb maintained a consistent exchange of correspondence with Presbyterian chaplains to the forces and with every man at the Front from St. John's parish. Amongst the Gibb papers are a selection of several hundred letters written by Gibb to service personnel, and from servicemen to Gibb. These letters are largely repetitious. Gibb reveals in them a high degree of pastoral sensitivity by his references to the loneliness and fears of his charges.

As Gibb's parish bounds pushed into Europe his social concern expanded. New Zealand Presbyterians were fighting and dying to end Europe's madness and given this dreadful fact New Zealand Presbyterian leaders were duty bound to do all in their power to discover what had brought about this disastrous war, and see to it that no second martial catastrophe should erupt. When the war gained momentum and Gibb's assessment of the causes of hostilities became clearer his criticism of Western political leadership and social order became sharper. He turned away from his previously held conviction that Britain and New Zealand's legislators were essentially servants of God who, under the Church's guidance, could be relied upon to daily add a new brick to the building of the Kingdom of God. By 1917 Gibb had begun his rejection of existing social and economic organisation and a search for a new secular order. He had long thought and spoken in terms of crusading, but hitherto these crusades had assumed a basic acceptance of the social order and were reformatory rather than revolutionary. Now a radical bent on a revolutionary re-structuring of society Gibb consigned Massey, Lloyd George and liberal democracy to the militarist inferno he believed they had created, and looked elsewhere for a Messiah.

Henry May described the American Christian radical leaders of 1877-1895 as men different in temperament and manner from liberals and moderate Social Gospel spokesmen. They were, necessarily, willing to leave the mass of church opinion far behind and to accept rebuke, ridicule and

loneliness.⁸⁰ Before 1917 there had been but two Christian radicals within the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, Rutherford Waddell and Charles Murray. From 1917 Gibb took his place with the brave, assuming the leadership of an anti-militarist and world disarmament mission that until his death brought increased loneliness and isolation with each successive year. There was fanaticism in Gibb's radicalism. He at times reduced his gospel to one narrow vibrant message: 'Unless war is outlawed man is doomed!'

Gibb's rejection of the Reform party and his slow realisation that none of the Dominion's established political parties, with the exception of the fledgling Labour party, was remotely interested in establishing a new social order, led him to radical policy changes. Once he realised that the Bible in Schools crusade was never likely to succeed he turned to the creation of a small number of Church schools. The Roman Catholic Church had by 1914 established a network of Church schools and Gibb was impressed by their success. He never forgot the religious basis of the Scottish educational system and was determined that the New Zealand Presbyterian Church should assure adequate Christian training for its youth, either through a state system or through its own schools. Within five years from 1914 nine schools were opened by the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. M.D. Gambrill's assessment that these schools were as much called for by a need for hostels for country children and by dissatisfaction with a free-place system that forced the children from middle-class homes to rub shoulders with grubby working-class children, is a caution against seeing this new policy only in terms of reaction to the failure of the Bible in School's movement.⁸¹ Granted this, it is still clear that this new Church policy was instigated by the persistent refusal of the legislators to accept Bible in School's bills. Alexander Whyte made this plain at the opening of Iona College in 1911 when he described the new school as a remedy to 'the Pagan nature' of the national education system.⁸² At the opening of Scots College, on 9 February 1916, Gibb succinctly declared the Church's reason

80. Henry F. May, Protestant Churches and Industrial America, New York, 1970, p.236.

81. M.D. Gambrill, A History of Queen Margaret College, Wellington, 1969.

82. *Ibid.*, p.19.

for establishing the Hobson street school:

- The failure of their [the Church's] effort to restore the Bible to the State schools of New Zealand demanded that they should themselves, in their own institutions, do what the State had very foolishly refused to undertake.... Their object was to turn out men who could be Christian gentlemen.⁸³

Wellington Presbytery minutes confirm that Gibb was the instigator of the plan to erect both Scots College and Queen Margaret College. He was also the foundation chairman of their boards of governors.

Gibb was determined to provide the religious education the state refused to provide. He was determined to meet a gloomy deficit in the Dominion's social welfare provisions. The Churches were dissatisfied with the Reform government's social policy. The aged, infirm and destitute were given spartan comfort. The Presbyterian Church of New Zealand opened its first orphanage, in Dunedin, in 1907. In the fifteen years that followed Presbyterian social service foundations were established and extended in the major cities. Again the Church's invasion of this field was occasioned by its conviction that the State had failed to do its Christian duty. In 1906 some 1,387 juvenile offenders were imprisoned in Industrial Schools. The 1914 returns show 2,908 in these schools.⁸⁴ It was common belief that wayward youth and neglected children were best reformed by spartan discipline and frugal meals. Orphanages and Children's Homes were established to provide a Christian alternative to the harsh dehumanising Industrial Schools, so well described by John A. Lee.⁸⁵ Gibb inaugurated the Wellington Presbyterian Social Service Association in 1909 and at once established an orphanage at Berhampore. During the war an additional building was erected and in 1918 a Girls' Home came into being in Island Bay. Gibb retained the chairmanship of the Wellington Presbyterian Social Service Association from 1910 until 1935. His annual reports make clear that he was concerned with an area of human reclamation that the state

83. Outlook, 28 March 1916. Further evidence that Gibb believed that the Bible in Schools crusade was beaten is found in Gibb to Gray Dixon, 22 October 1915. There he plainly stated 'I quite agree with the statement that the Bible in Schools League is practically dead'.

84. N.Z. Year Book, 1906, p.138; 1914, p.229.

85. John A. Lee, Children of the Poor, Auckland, 1949.

was not ready to touch. A typical case is presented in his 1915 annual report.

A boy of 12, an habitual truant with only a mother's care, defied her and his school teachers for some time. On being brought up on a charge of theft, the mother was at first anxious that he should be sent to an industrial school, but accepted the alternative of a term of probation for him under Mr Mill's supervision [the Superintendent of the orphanage]. He now attends school regularly.⁸⁶

In any assessment of Gibb's leadership at the New Zealand pastoral frontier a distinction should be made between his tactics and strategy. Tactically, Gibb learnt nothing from the final defeat of the Bible in School's cause. In his dealings with the Massey administration he still demanded too much and refused to be satisfied with a little. He led his supporters in a blind charge at the government, with shouts and threats, and received in return as little support for his peace proposals as for his earlier crusades. Part of Gibb's dissatisfaction with Massey has to do with Gibb's refusal to be satisfied with any other than a lock-stock-and-barrel social change. In 1914 he accepted Massey as a responsible reformer with Christian principles. By 1922 he denounced Massey as a conservative and reactionary. John A. Lee dissents from this judgment on Massey:

It is wrong to say Massey was a reactionary, at most we can say he was conservative. His government established pensions for the blind and caused the State Advances Department to advance millions of pounds for home building for workers, advancing up to ninety-five per cent of the cost of building. His government pursued a policy of land settlement, built Coleridge and Mangahao hydro-electric dams for the state system, established an epidemic pension for those bereaved of bread-winners after the world-wide Spanish influenza outbreak, and did much for miners' pensions.⁸⁷

Lee's defence would not have convinced Gibb for Gibb no longer sought a social reformation solution, he propounded a social revolution

86. Annual Report, Wellington Presbyterian Orphanage and Social Service Association, 1915, p.12.

87. John A. Lee, Rhetoric in the Red Dawn, Auckland, 1965, p.43.

panacea. In an address to the Social Democratic party, in September 1921, Gibb called for an end to 'party government' and a beginning of the rule of Labour. He took for granted that Labour and the Church were in agreement about what should be done with gambling, drunkenness and immorality. Gibb denounced Bolshevism as the road to Leninist dictatorship but affirmed:

There was plentiful evidence that the Church was coming to realise that the existing regime should be replaced by co-operation and profit-sharing in industry. And he meant real co-operation, the association of representatives of the workers with the employers in the control and development of their common business. He meant, also, a real share in the profits, not the merely marginal and shadowy share that had helped to bring many co-operatives to grief.⁸⁸

Above all, Gibb saw Labour allying with the Church in demanding and gaining the outlawry of war. Gibb concluded his speech with an expected affirmation that 'mankind will never know either happiness or peace until human society shall conform to the ideal of the Kingdom of God'.⁸⁹ At this point Gibb's ideal of the Kingdom (and his Social Gospel strategy) reached its narrowest and most secular phase. In 1922 Gibb was convinced that New Zealand's only chance to lead the world to peace on earth depended upon victory for the Labour cause at the Polls.

88. Outlook, 3 October 1921.

89. *Ibid.*

Chapter Seven

The Last Crusade, 1923-1929

But on the question of peace and war his [Gibb's] has been the mightiest voice for years in the Dominion, and to no one man is the changed and changing conscience of our Church and of our nation more due than to the fearless advocacy of Dr Gibb.

General Assembly, 1936¹

In 1926 Gibb turned sixty-nine years of age and resigned from the ministry of St. John's parish. Although plagued by diabetes and disturbed by his wife's failing health he continued his involvement in ecclesiastical affairs and social crusading. Granted the status of an emeritus minister Gibb was able to vote in Presbytery and was eligible for appointment as a Presbytery representative to General Assembly. Between 1923 and 1929 Gibb's authority within the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand diminished dramatically as he became increasingly outspoken in criticism of the Dominion's defence policy and in favour of world disarmament. His retirement considerably reduced his influence within the Church. Presbyterian Church courts rarely take much notice of the views of retired ministers. However, in this period he continued to serve his Church as a pastor, providing pastoral oversight and a preaching ministry to the Sestoun congregation, Wellington. He also provided support and encouragement for younger ministers and theological students who were invited to his home to discuss peace, politics and theology.

From 1923 until the close of 1929 the leaders of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand were plagued by two recurrent and embarrassing issues. Gibb and his associates were forced to decide what support should be given by the Church to those who, wittingly or unwittingly, challenged the 'compulsory loyalism' demanded by jingoists and the upholders of strong military defence.² This question was placed squarely before Gibb in

1. General Assembly, 1939, p.67.

2. Keith Sinclair, A History of New Zealand, London, 1950, p.240.

mid-1923 when two state teachers, A.W. Page and Ormond Burton, refused to swear unqualified allegiance to the King. The issue arose again in 1924 when F.F. Wolter, a British subject of German extraction, appealed to the Wellington Ministers' Association for assistance in finding employment, hitherto denied him by the cancellation of his certificate of naturalisation and by anti-German sentiment. The question was raised even more dramatically from 1927 to 1929 by the case of two Presbyterian divinity students, Lex. Miller and A.M. Richards, who refused to present themselves for military service and were consequently sentenced to a deprivation of all civil rights for ten years.

The second issue that haunted Gibb and the Churches throughout this period was a conflict between the supporters of national disarmament who relied upon the moral influence of the League of Nations to guard world peace, and those who believed that New Zealand could only be secure when defended by a strong Royal Navy and a national territorial army. Gibb was a strong supporter of the League of Nations Union and throughout this period a Dominion vice-president, member of the Dominion council and president of the Wellington branch. In the years 1923-29 Gibb embarked on his last crusade, a campaign aimed at winning public support for the cause of world peace and specifically directed toward ending compulsory military training in New Zealand. During this crusade Gibb was opposed by an array of churchmen who had formerly allied themselves with his causes and by the National Defence League, led by the former ANZAC commander, Sir Andrew Russell.

By the beginning of 1923 Gibb's support for the League of Nations and his violent attacks on British and New Zealand defence policies had gained him a high degree of unpopularity within his Church. In October 1922 he offered his resignation to the Kirk Session of St. John's,³ following a strong reaction by some of his parishioners against his part in a public debate at Victoria University College. The debate, sponsored by the Free Discussion Club, took as its subject the question 'My country, right or wrong?' In the course of the debate Gibb violently attacked Massey, and the Reform party's offer to support Britain in the Chanak crisis.

3. St. John's Kirk Session Minutes, 4 October 1922; Session Clerk (St. John's) to Gibb, 25 October 1922. See also M. Wilson, Three Good Men, Dunedin, 1945, p. 19.

Gibb noted that while the Canadian and South African prime ministers showed no enthusiasm for a show of imperial strength against the Turkish army, that in its pursuit of Greek invaders posed a threat to a British occupation garrison on the Dardanelles, Massey had telegraphed New Zealand's support without even referring the issue to Parliament, then in session.⁴

The Free Lance chastised Gibb for his strictures against the government:

Certain remarks...made by the Rev Dr Gibb with regard to the action taken by the Prime Minister in connection with the Imperial Government's policy in the Near East are so curious as to call for comment. Dr Gibb asked students..."Whether they were going to rush helter-skelter with their heads down and without reflection at the bidding of Mr Massey".⁵

Gibb accused Massey of 'Jingoism' and alleged that the Prime Minister had been carried away by 'Chauvinistic hysteria'. In opposition to Massey Gibb contended that if convinced that his country was wrong then he was forced to take his stand against his country, 'even though it means going on the Cross'. The Free Lance was unimpressed with Gibb's argument, and the likelihood of his crucifixion, the editor derisively remarking 'His comfortable and substantial figure will never be a subject for martyrdom'.⁶

Gibb was persuaded not to resign. However, within the Church his influence was waning. His friend Shannon wrote from Morere to warn him against the 'temptation to exceed in the advocacy of peace'.⁷ Hard core Calvinists began to ally themselves with Howard Elliott as enemies of

4. For a clear account of Commonwealth reaction to the Chanak crisis see I.M. Ross, 'New Zealand and Imperial Defence, 1919-26', unpublished M.A. thesis, Canterbury University, 1961, pp. 159-164. The tone of the Australian reply was reserved. Help was promised only 'if circumstances required'.

5. Free Lance, 4 October 1922.

6. Ibid. The editor of the Free Lance was even harsher in his rejection of Gibb's arguments on 1 November 1922 when he argued: 'Dr Gibb and his friends keep on cackling about the wickedness of war, but they conveniently ignore the fact that the resolutions of the League of Nations are so much waste paper until the League's decisions can be enforced'.

7. Shannon to Gibb, 13 August 1932.

Labourites and pacifists - and Gibb was both a Labourite and a pacifist.⁸ His Kirk session loyally supported him,⁹ and James Aitken, a leading Gisborne Presbyterian minister, added his condemnation of Massey's 'following the beck of the London coteries'.¹⁰ The Wellington meeting of the Society of Friends pledged their support.¹¹ Even so, Gibb had been made aware that it was a dangerous business to challenge British imperialist loyalty and attack antipodean militarism.

Gibb was not intimidated by the increasing opposition to his anti-militarist campaign from leading Presbyterians - Dickie, Merrington, Dutton, and Gibb's brother-in-law, Gibson Smith.¹² When he became aware in 1923 that A.W. Page and Ormond Burton, two able and conscientious teachers, had been deprived of their teaching positions following their failure to make an unreserved oath of loyalty to the crown, Gibb was ready to take up the cudgels again. He supported the dismissed teachers in sermons, public statements and private correspondence.

The Page-Burton affair arose out of the Reform government's hysterical fear of Bolshevism, anarchists, revolutionaries and traitors. In 1919 the Undersirable Immigrants Exclusion Act was passed, to exclude from the Dominion those of undesirable health and habit, and also all likely to threaten law and order. Under this act officers boarded all ships at ports of entry to demand from foreigners an oath binding them to keep the peace, and from British subjects a renewed oath of allegiance to the King. This reliance upon oath-taking as a deterrent against riot and rebellion annoyed

8. Personal interview with Burton, Otaki, 25 July 1973. Also 'A Protestant' to Gibb, 13 August 1922.

9. Hopkirk to Gibb, 24 October 1922.

10. Aitken to Gibb, 22 September 1922.

11. John Rigg and John Howell (Wellington Meeting of the Society of Friends) to Gibb, 6 November 1922.

12. Gibson Smith's opposition to Gibb was particularly fierce in 1928, especially evident in his demand for the resignation of the Presbyterian leaders of the League of Nations Union demanded in a letter to the Outlook, 19 November 1928. Sir David Smith affirms that little love was lost between Gibb, his uncle, and Gibson Smith, his father.

a visiting premier of New South Wales, who complained:

I have on many occasions taken the oath myself. I have, in my capacity as Prime Minister, administered the oath...to over forty-five members of the House in New South Wales, and yet when I come to New Zealand, when I come lame to take a little treatment at Rotorua, before I can put my sick leg on the gangway I have to go through this absurd formula on board ship.¹³

Within New Zealand teachers, indeed all civil servants, were required to renew their oath on taking appointments. A.W. Page, a science master at Christchurch Boys' High School, the brother to a notable conscientious objector of the First World War,¹⁴ requested that he be permitted to alter his oath to explicitly reserve his prior loyalty to God over his obedience to the state. His request was refused and Page, despite the protests and pleas of his colleagues, was dismissed from his post.

Ormond Burton had before Page's dismissal satisfied himself with a mental reservation and with his private decision never to fight again for King and country. Burton had risen from the ranks to lieutenant during the war and had won the Military Medal and the Medaille d'Honneur. Gibb had become acquainted with him in 1921 when Burton worked in the Wellington Y.M.C.A. while finishing his M.A. This acquaintance deepened in 1922 during Burton's term as a lecturer for the New Zealand Alliance. Burton was still a Presbyterian at this time and Gibb realised that this young man was likely to make his mark as a leader. In 1923 Burton was teaching at Newton East school and immediately following Page's dismissal stated his own demand that his oath be regarded as qualified.

Some time in May 1923 Gibb preached a sermon denouncing the treatment meted out to the two teachers. One J.W. Davidson, in congratulating Gibb on his outspoken condemnation, promised that pamphlets were being distributed on behalf of Page and Burton.¹⁵ However, it was not Gibb's sermons nor Davidson's pamphlets but the intervention of J.A. Lee, in his maiden speech

13. Quoted by J.A. Lee, NZPD, 199, 16 February 1923, p.273.

14. For an account of the treatment meted out to New Zealand conscientious objectors see H.E. Holland, Armageddon or Calvary? Wellington, 1919.

15. J.W. Davidson to Gibb, 17 May 1923.

in Parliament, that brought the Page-Burton case into the open. Lee, a wounded hero who had won the D.C.M. in France, used the address-in-reply debate as an opportunity for placing the predicament of the teachers before the House and the country. Lee charged that:

such is the "Prussianistic" nature of the State in this country that the time has arrived when a man cannot work in certain occupations if he possesses certain beliefs without denying those beliefs.¹⁶

After outlining Burton's war record and peacetime service Lee quoted directly from Burton's letter to the Minister of Education wherein he asked to be allowed to add to his oath the simple reservation 'as long as the above continues not to conflict with my duty to God'. Lee closed his reference to the affair by noting that it was not the Reform party, for all its protestations of religion, that defended the rights of religious dissenters, but 'the so-called irreligious party is the champion of toleration in religion'.¹⁷

Lee and Labour were glad to find a civil rights issue with which to belabour the government. Burton resumed his teaching career again in 1924 having accepted the government's assurance that the oath of loyalty need not infringe upon the ultimate Christian loyalty.

Gibb played a far more consequential part in the second civil rights contest of this period. On 5 January 1924 a naturalised British subject, of German extraction, wrote to Gibb urgently requesting the assistance of the Wellington Ministers' Association in securing suitable employment. F.F. Wolter emigrated to New Zealand in 1906 and became a naturalised subject in 1911. In 1913 he graduated B.A. and took an M.A. the following year, winning the Jacob Joseph scholarship in the process. At the eve of the First World War Wolter was negotiating for an academic position in modern languages with an Australian university. Shortly after the declaration of war he was interned on Somes Island, as an enemy alien, and in 1915 his naturalisation was revoked. Wolter was a victim of the fierce anti-German hysteria that infected New Zealand during the war and immediately following

16. NZFD, 199, 16 February 1923, p.272.

17. Ibid., p.273.

the Armistice. In a letter of protest to the Free Lance, in December 1919, wherein he rebutted the charge of sedition levelled at him by that paper in July 1916, Wolter made plain the injustice done to him.

This attack on my honour was the more deeply felt as I was not in a position to defend myself being at that time in the internment camp, where I had been suddenly sent in spite of my protestations of loyalty, without being given a chance to call anybody on my behalf and without being allowed to give evidence myself in repudiation of the accusations brought against me by persons who were absolute strangers to me, with whom I was not confronted.... [I have] always been opposed to Kaiserism and to German militarism, my inability to dissimulate my dislike... having procured me one year and seven months sojourn in a German military prison.¹⁸

Wolter had been prosecuted in 1921 for failing to register as a German subject resident in New Zealand, under the Aliens Act. Since his release from detention he had vainly sought academic employment or employment in a government department. Despite numerous promises and assurances no employment was given. In January 1923 Wolter's persistent petitioning of Parliament secured an Order in Council annulling the revocation of his letters of naturalisation, but he still remained unemployed.¹⁹ While acting-Prime Minister, Downie Stewart obtained a fifty pounds grant for Wolter, as compensation for the injustice done, but Wolter sought employment not charity. Wolter's first letter to Gibb is a last plea from a desperate man.

I have now fought for fully eight years for justice and am now thoroughly tired of the struggle. Already two years ago the degree of Litt.D. has been awarded me, but it has not yet been conferred owing to my not being able to pay the fee of 15 guineas.... Of the £50 granted me last year, after paying the fee, and reserving £5 for ten weeks' rent, there remain only two pound for my living. I shall live on this as long as anything remains, and shall then starve. My only ambition is to keep alive till the capping ceremony at Easter, and I expect to break down during the ceremony in the Town Hall.²⁰

18. Free Lance, 23 December 1919.

19. N.Z. Gazette, 1, 7, 25 January 1923, pp.204-205.

20. Wolter to Gibb, 5 February 1924. See also N.Z. University Roll of Graduates, 1870-1961, Christchurch, 1964, p.38.

Gibb was not able to persuade the government to make a position for Wolter.²¹ Wolter's contention that the public service blocked every attempt made by politicians who espoused his cause may well have been true. However, Gibb did persuade the government to provide Wolter with a grant of £200 and a free passage to the United States. Wolter believed that he owed his improved fortune to Gibb:

I quite realise that I owe it to the deputation that so much has been obtained. I therefore express to you my sincerest thanks for the energetic way in which you have championed my case, begging you to convey my thanks to the other members of the deputation and to the council of the Associated Churches.²¹

Justice was not done, but at least the son New Zealand did not want was able to emigrate to a less bigoted nation with enough money to begin a new life - at the age of fifty.

Wolter's unjust treatment can in part be explained by the long lingering of anti-German feeling in the years following 1918. The 1920s were violent years when political and social polarization deepened old hatreds. The New Zealand government was loath to offend public opinion, and the civil service, by creating a job for a former subject of imperial Germany.

In the mid-1920s a cause célèbre emerged that allowed Gibb to lambaste the Reform administration for its refusal to provide effective protection for dissenting minorities. The occasion was to provide Gibb with an even greater opportunity by creating a common front with Labour in demanding the abolition of compulsory military training. This opportunity came with the series of fines inflicted upon two Presbyterian divinity students who from 1927 until 1929 refused to undergo military training, and who were finally deprived of their civil rights for ten years.

The Richards-Miller affair occurred at a time of political stabilization in Europe, when hopes for continuing world peace were high. Between 1925-1929 people had become confident that the wounds left by the First World War could be healed. The Dawes Plan had fixed the rate of German reparations and had connected the financial interests of the victors with Germany's recovery. The Locarno treaties of late 1925 restored Germany to

21. Wolter to Gibb, 5 April 1924.

the concert of Europe - although as a probationer on parole - and attempted to deter potential aggressors by pacts threatening joint military retaliation. In the mid-1920s war and conscription were unpopular and their opponents were sure of considerable public support. Despite this distaste for the men and machinery of war there existed in New Zealand a powerful section of public opinion who firmly supported a continuation of conscription. The magisterial sentences imposed on Richards and Miller provoked a fierce debate over a question of civil rights and over the desirability of the Dominion preparing for war in a time of peace.

Alun Richards, the first of the two students to defy the state, based his refusal on the judgment of his conscience and on what he believed to be a clear guidance given by his Church in a declaration adopted by the 1926 General Assembly. Richards argued that as the General Assembly had condemned war, and demanded the ending of compulsory military training, he must obey the voice of personal conscience and the wisdom of God revealed through the voice of the Church by refusing military service. His decision was rested upon the traditional Calvinist method for resolving a dilemma of conscience; a conscience reinforced by the declared wisdom of the Church. The Assembly's statement had included the opinion that 'The military activities of this country should be reduced as much and as rapidly as possible, and that as a step in this direction military training should be abolished'.²² Following a series of fines resulting from Richards' persistent refusal to present himself for drill the Assembly Public Questions committee, convened by Gibb, reviewed his case. Gibb's committee warned Richards that the Assembly's resolution was not meant to provoke the youth of the Church to break the law. However, Richards was not abandoned. To the contrary, Gibb advised him to apply for exemption from the military provisions of the act by declaring himself a conscientious objector who was bound by his religion to a pacifist position.

Richards took Gibb's advice only to incur the sarcasm of an Auckland magistrate who suggested that the lad would be well employed cleaning latrines. The magistrate held that conscientious objection on religious grounds could only be granted to members and adherents of those religious bodies that were traditionally and formally pacifist. He declared that

22. General Assembly, 1926, p.24. Also Outlook, 18 July 1927.

the Presbyterian Church was not a pacifist body and dismissed Richards' application in a further tirade of sarcasm.

Gibb responded quickly and in early October he led a delegation of leading Presbyterians to meet the Minister of Justice and Defence F.J. Rolleston. Gibb's deputation made three points. They strongly objected to the abuse addressed to Richards. 'Richards was the son of an honoured minister of their Church, and was himself a young man of unblemished character.... The magistrate spoke to him as if he had been a scallawag and imposter'.²³

The deputation followed this protest with an assurance that the 1926 resolution of General Assembly had not been intended as an incitement to civil disobedience, and had been misinterpreted by Richards. The third point made by the deputation was crucial. They held that the magistrate who refused Richards' plea for exemption had wrongly interpreted the exemption provisions of the 1912 amendment to the Compulsory Military Service Act. The revision stated:

On the application of any person, a magistrate may grant a certificate of exemption from military training and service, if the magistrate is satisfied that the applicant objects in good faith to such training and service, on the ground that it is contrary to his religious belief.²⁴

Gibb and his deputation argued that the act made no mention of the need for the applicant and his Church to agree on pacifist principles; it was a matter of individual conscience and of the magistrate assuring himself of the genuineness of the scruples advanced. Arguing that Richards was clearly entitled to exemption the deputation noted that:

The magistrate made no effort to test his sincerity, directed no inquiry to the Presbytery of Auckland, who had gone into the matter and was assured that Richards was absolutely genuine. The Presbyterian Church, whatever it might hold with regard to compulsory military training, would assuredly stand to the last in defence of the rights of conscience. They

23. Outlook, 24 October 1927.

24. The Defence Act, 1912, 65 (2 and 3).

craved from the Minister of Defence such relief as it might be in his power to afford. If the law justified the magistrate's refusal, the law ought to be altered so that no similar fiasco should occur again.²⁵

The Minister was haughty and unbending toward the deputation. After a homily on the impropriety of political interference in the administration of justice he rejected Gibb's demand that each case be examined in the light of the scruples of the appellant.

If the religious body to which a man belonged had as one of its tenets a definite condemnation of military training, such as the Quakers had, the position was clear. The acceptance of the tenets of that body was proof that the applicant had the conscientious convictions which he affirmed. How else could they arrive at a correct judgment? If apart from Church tenets anybody could claim exemption on purely personal grounds the door would be open to all manner of fraud.²⁶

Gibb still argued that a Presbyterian was as much entitled to an individual conscience as was a Quaker and prepared to take his case further by adding his support to the Labour party's anti-militarist drive.

The Richards' affair had already been raised in the House of Representatives, on 19 October 1927, when H.G.R. Mason, the Labour member for Eden, asked the Minister of Defence if he was acquainted with the case, and for a clarification of the law. Rolleston admitted his awareness of the magisterial decision and declared that he saw no reason to change the law.²⁷ In 1927 and 1928 the Labour party introduced Compulsory Military Service Repeal bills, and on both occasions used the second reading debates to attack the hard-line attitude to conscientious objectors allowed by Reform legislation and supported by Rolleston.

While Richards was still refusing service, and accumulating additional fines, J.A. Lee was pleading for an end to a compulsory military system that sought to force unwilling conscripts into a militarist mould.

25. Outlook, 24 October 1927.

26. *Ibid.*

27. NZPD, 215, 19 October 1927, p.98.

With regard to the Richards' case Lee pleaded:

One might just as well talk about the great conscientious objectors as about the lesser conscientious objectors; and one recalls the case of a Conscientious Objector who delivered the Sermon on the Mount and then had to choose between nails and his opinions, and the public opinion of that day said, "It serves Him right". It has always served the individual right, apparently; but if he suffers to-day for a worth-while cause the hardship imposed upon him by the State frequently causes the community to abolish the harsh law at a later date.²⁸

The Labour bills were defeated but the country was becoming increasingly divided as to the principle and economic usefulness of compulsory military service. Major national newspapers began to add their weight to the call for a repeal of the bill and a more accommodating attitude to individual claims of conscience.²⁹

By 1929 Richards was received in magistrates' courts as an obdurate offender. On 12 June F.K. Hunt, S.M., imposed another fine of five pounds on Richards, and a similar fine on another Presbyterian divinity student, Lex. Miller. On this occasion the magistrate added the more sinister sentence of a ten years deprivation of civil rights. Both students refused to pay their fines and were liable to immediate imprisonment.

Gibb took immediate action. After obtaining legal advice he summoned the General Assembly Public Questions committee and after reviewing the history of both cases requested an urgent interview with the Minister of Justice. Gibb informed the Minister that he wished to discuss: whether it was in the province of a magistrate to offer alternative service without reference to the authority of the Governor-in-Council? He requested that the sentences be remitted in whole or in part, that proceedings to imprison Miller and Richards be stayed pending discussions between Church representatives and the minister over the propriety of a magistrate deciding whether the Presbyterian Church was, or was not, a pacifist Church.³⁰

28. NZPD, 215, 3 August 1927, p.211.

29. Dominion, 21 September 1927; Sun, 3 July 1928.

30. Outlook, 3 July 1929.

On 10 July Gibb again led a further deputation to the Minister of Justice, no longer as convener of the Assembly committee but as convener of the Wellington Presbytery committee. This time the deputation was met not by the unsympathetic Rolleston but by the United Government's Minister of Justice, T.M. Wilford.³¹ The deputation gained important concessions from Wilford, the most important being his promise that future applications for registration as conscientious objectors would be treated on individual merit and not determined on the basis of group connection. Wilford also assured the deputation that provision for alternative service would be gazetted. The Minister refused to review the sentences passed on the students but did indicate that remission of the sentence of deprivation of civil rights might be granted after three months. Gibb and Wilford clashed over one point. Wilford maintained that Richards and Miller were not bona fide conscientious objectors, and agreed with the three magistrates who held that the case advanced by the students was political rather than religious. Gibb, wisely moved away from this point, to cleverly remind the Minister of the Prime Minister's acknowledgement of the rights of dissenting minorities, and on the basis of Ward's utterance requested that the cases of Richards and Miller be submitted to the Governor-General for review.

Gibb and the deputation had done well. In August, Merrington, now convener of the Assembly Public Questions committee, reported satisfaction with the gains made from the United party ministers. Merrington made great play of Ward's support for Richards and Miller, especially the Prime Minister's decision to amend the law to provide for the exemption from military training of divinity students. He informed the Church that Ward had telegraphed his regret that 'it is not possible to vary the decision of the magistrate in these particular cases'.³² Merrington noted that in a further communication, dated 25 July, Ward had promised to give favourable consideration to appeals for a review and remission of the sentences.³³

Gibb had every reason to be satisfied with the outcome of the Church-State conflict over the right of Presbyterians to register as conscientious

31. Outlook, 22 July 1929.

32. Ibid., 5 August 1929.

33. Ibid.

objectors. The refractory Reform government's dismissal from office in December 1928 and the installation of a United ministry that accepted a Liberal philosophy that valued the right to dissent had greatly assisted his cause. For six years New Zealanders had been faced with public debate on specific cases of alleged infringement of civil rights. Only with the displacement of the Reform government had the growing public clamour for relief to those with scruples of conscience been heeded by Parliament. Page and Burton had come to terms with economic necessity and returned, oath given, to teaching. Wolter had rubbed New Zealand's mud from his feet. However, the case of Richards and Miller had resulted in victory for the forces of liberalism. Gibb, his brother Church leaders of pacifist leanings, and the Labour party, wanted one thing more - an end to militarism in New Zealand, and in particular the repeal of the compulsory provisions of the Defence Act. However, Gibb was soon to find that while Cabinet ministers willingly assisted Christian ministers who interceded for individual cases of injustice they were less kind to clerics who sought to upset government policy.

There is no doubt that Gibb was committed to the repeal of the compulsory provisions of the Defence Act, at least from mid-1926. At the General Assembly of that year J.A. Allan, acting as Gibb's substitute, proposed that the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand state its opposition to the continuation of the compulsory system.³⁴ In 1926 the Assembly debate was fierce and emotional. Allan argued that New Zealand owed it to her Pacific destiny to show the surrounding islands the way to peace. D.J. Shaw, minister of Hastings, opposed the motion, claiming that a loop-hole was being left 'for the shirker, the liar, and the coward'.³⁵ D. Dutton, the former chaplain of two wars, supported the motion on an argument that compulsory military training was inefficient and uneconomic.³⁵ On this occasion the General Assembly agreed by only a small majority to a stand against compulsory military training.

At the 1927 General Assembly Gibb asked the Church to reaffirm the

34. General Assembly, 1926, p.24.

35. Outlook, 22 November 1926.

36. Ibid.

previous year's motion, and this time he carried 150 votes against forty-seven.³⁷ Gibb advocated Church pressure for the abolition of the act as the one practical step New Zealanders might take to show themselves in earnest about world peace:

There is not, perhaps, much that New Zealand can do towards the outlawry of war, but we can do something. We can get rid of the system of conscription which obtains here. We can forbid the militarisation of the mind of our youth, a certain product of compulsory training. We can make at least this gesture of peace.³⁸

Gibb's call for action was not made in vacuo. In 1927, and in two succeeding years, the Parliamentary Labour party brought forward bills bent on making the repeal of compulsory military training a nationwide issue. J.A. Lee had sniped at the system for some time. In 1923 he attacked the expenditure outlaid on the Territorial force. Lee argued:

Indeed, it seems that, from the point of view of defence, we are keeping an expensive staff of captains, majors, and Generals, who are gallantly going "over the top" in pursuit of the average small boy who happens to abstain from attending at a compulsory military service parade.³⁹

When Lee introduced the first Labour Compulsory Military Service Repeal bill in August 1927 he affirmed, in moving the second reading, that amongst the Churches there was considerable support for his proposed measure. Referring to the act as then administered Lee charged:

The general public have never been favourable. The overwhelming bulk of the parents and victims have never been favourable, and recently the Council of Christian Churches in Auckland, various Presbyterian organisations throughout New Zealand, and many other responsible and influential bodies amongst the Christian community, protested against the continuance of compulsory military service. These various organisations have passed resolutions calling upon the Government to bring about a repeal of this Prussianistic Act.⁴⁰

37. General Assembly, 1927, p.25.

38. Outlook, 9 January 1928.

39. NZPD, 202, 16 August 1923, p.132.

40. NZPD, 213, 3 August 1927, p.209.

The 'Prussianistic act' was not repealed. In 1927 Lee saw his bill defeated by forty votes, with eleven members voting for and fifty-one against.⁴¹

During 1928 Gibb and the Labour leaders maintained close contact. Robert Semple wrote to Gibb on 28 May pledging his support for Gibb's anti-militarist campaign and informing Gibb that he was himself delivering a course of lectures on the work of the League of Nations to branches of the Labourers' Union.⁴² The New Zealand Worker carried a League of Nations column in every issue and on 5 September Gibb contributed an article appealing for more support from rank and file party members.⁴³ At the close of the 1920s Gibb and the Labour party appeared to be heading in the same direction.

A second anti-conscription bill was introduced into the legislature in August 1928. This time Lee concentrated on exposing the uneconomic nature of compulsory training. Lee and his colleagues denounced the New Zealand system as un-British and uncalled for in a world at peace.⁴⁴ Beside attacking the act as a bastion for military inefficiency Labour members still appealed to Christian principles in their condemnation. H.E. Holland, the party leader, declared 'You cannot have Christianity and war: You must have one or the other'.⁴⁵ Lee, in his reply, quoted at length from a sermon delivered only a few nights previously by a leading pacifist minister, at the Terrace Congregational Church in Wellington.

The presentation of the Peace proposals by Mr Kellogg and their acceptance by Sir Austen Chamberlain form the most momentous forward step the world has witnessed since the time of Christ. It means that the tap-root of militarism

41. Ibid., p.242.

42. Semple to Gibb, 23 May 1928.

43. New Zealand Worker, 5 September 1928.

44. NZPD, 217, 2 August 1928, pp.1024 and 1034. Expenditure for compulsory military training was as follows:

| | |
|------|-----------|
| 1922 | £328,000 |
| 1923 | £348,000 |
| 1924 | £420,000. |

45. NZPD, 217, 2 August 1928, p.1051.

has been out. The dogs of war are no longer merely chained; they have been taken to the lethal chamber, from which they can never return.⁴⁶

Again, the Labour anti-conscription bill was voted out. The second bill, like the first, was defeated by a majority of forty votes.⁴⁷

Labour was not yet done with its attempts to force the House to face the mounting opposition within the country toward conscription. On 10 July 1929 a third repeal bill was introduced and this time fared slightly better than had its predecessors, being defeated by a majority of twenty-five.⁴⁸ National newspapers were now decrying the expense involved in administering the compulsory provisions of the Defence Act and their correspondence columns indicated that the nation was divided on the issue. Jessie MacKay, the poetess, made a personal appeal to her fellow Presbyterians, immediately before Lee's bill came forward for its second reading debate:

It is for us Presbyterians to lead the way. Let us, as a Church, boldly call for the repeal of an antiquated law that has brought us nothing but discontent and misery since it was first foisted on us.⁴⁹

The Parliamentary Labour party had found a useful stick with which to beat governments and the party grew in popularity through its support for apprentices who lost pay through their attendance at parades and youths who were sentenced to loss of civil rights through their failure to present themselves for drill.

While Labour gained popularity in the country Gibb declined in popularity within his Church. He was now branded as a 'pacifist' and a 'Quaker'. His pacifism was noted well beyond New Zealand for the quarterly review of Imperial politics, the Round Table, twice drew attention to the extreme pacifism of the Wellington branch of the League

46. NZPD, 217, p. 1056. The minister was the Rev. Ernest Weeks.

47. Ibid., pp. 1056-1057.

48. NZPD, 121, 17 July 1929, p. 260f.

49. Outlook, 22 July 1929.

of Nations Union - and Gibb was chairman of that branch.⁵⁰ Many of the fathers of the Presbyterian Church began to feel uncomfortable in Gibb's presence and refused to have any truck with his anti-militarism. On 23 January 1926, W. Trotter, minister of Mornington parish (Dunedin), attacked the points made by Gibb in his anti-conscription speech at the 1927 General Assembly. Trotter demanded to know whether Gibb believed 'both armies were guilty of a crime against God and man at Bannockburn'. He affirmed that Presbyterians were bound to adhere to the Westminster Confession's statement that the civil magistrate may wage war 'upon just and necessary occasion'.⁵¹ Trotter argued that military training produced character and moulded gentlemen, and that 'the true soldier is a gentleman and the true gentleman is a Christian'.⁵² Gibb was an embarrassment to churchmen committed to the traditional Presbyterian doctrine that the Church was duty bound to support Christian rulers.

Further embarrassment was caused by Gibb's close liaison with the Labour party, evidenced by his contribution of a personal testimonial for the party in the 1923 election manifesto.⁵³ His part in 'No More War' demonstrations,⁵⁴ his anti-militarist outbursts at meetings and from the pulpit, and his friendship with pacifists who had been gaoled during the First World War, brought frowns from the more respectable and conservative within the Presbyterian camp.

At the 1927 General Assembly the mounting opposition to Gibb's attempts to make the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand a spearhead for disarmament reached its peak. This Assembly saw the defeat of one of

50. Round Table, XIII (1922-23), p.231. 'In Wellington the strong pacifist tinge of the leading members makes it doubtful whether the organisation is not doing the cause of the League more harm than good'. Round Table, XV (1924-25), p.625. 'The pacifists...of the League of Nations Union at its headquarters in Wellington'.

51. Outlook, 23 January 1926. On 27 February Trotter received an acid retort from 'J.D.' who noted: 'You simply cannot drive a bayonet through a brother man's vitals...in a gentlemanly, Christian way'. See Westminster Confession, XXIII, 2.

52. *Ibid.*

53. Walter Nash to Gibb, 24 September 1923.

54. C.R. Mackie to Gibb, 8 September 1923.

Gibb's most cherished crusades. A 'Peace Manifesto', carefully prepared by an inter-Church committee of representatives from all the major Churches in the Dominion, was soundly defeated, and a weak alternative manifesto substituted for it.⁵⁵

Gibb's 'Peace Manifesto' was a carefully constructed affirmation of Christian responsibility to bring peace and security to the world. There was much in the Manifesto that all churchmen could unequivocally affirm. It denounced war as an inadequate, disastrous and evil method of settling international disputes. The Manifesto demanded that New Zealanders give full support to the League of Nations' attempts to outlaw war. It was at the point where the statement demanded universal disarmament, 'even at the risk of loss and humiliation', that opposition within the Presbyterian Church became clamorous.⁵⁶

Gibb's manifesto was sent to Presbyteries for study and comment and the Presbyteries returned it to the 1928 General Assembly in a badly mauled state. Immediately prior to the Assembly Gibb's brother-in-law, J. Gibson-Smith, launched a fierce attack on the Manifesto, in the Outlook. Smith made much of the 'Quakerism' of Presbyterian pacifists:

Our Quaker friends, however, seem to have the power of persuading themselves that they can afford to act here below as if they were already in heaven.... But since the millennium is still manifestly far away, and the forces of evil are everywhere close at hand and aggressive, the Quaker's visions, being preposterously premature, would, if seriously carried out in practice on a large scale, issue in nothing but sheer disaster, disgrace and anarchy. Yet it is just into such disaster, disgrace, and anarchy that the ultra-pacifists of our Church are deliberately and persistently attempting to push us.... First came the question of conscientious objectors to military service and the clamour for the abolition of compulsory military training in New Zealand. Then came the now notorious Peace Manifesto, into which were woven a number of thoroughly ultra-pacifist declarations.⁵⁷

55. General Assembly, 1927, pp. 198-201.

56. Ibid., p. 200. The Manifesto is reproduced in full as appendix I.

57. Outlook, 17 September 1928.

Gibson Smith's main objection was that the Peace Manifesto contradicted the Westminster Confession of Faith. The Manifesto stated that war was 'utterly opposed to the mind of Christ', while the Confession declared that Christians may lawfully 'wage war upon just and necessary occasions'.⁵⁸ Gibb had already denied that the Manifesto would commit the Church to absolute pacifism. In July 1927 he protested: 'There is not a sentence in it which would prevent a signatory from taking arms against an actual invader of his country';⁵⁹ a somewhat naive contention in that disarmed signatories would possess no arms to take up.

Gibb's Manifesto was not accepted by the General Assembly. Instead the Assembly preferred a less rigorous condemnation of war, the compromise 'Peace Resolution of the Jerusalem Conference of Churches'. This resolution's strength was dependent upon the power of prayer, for its movers thought it sufficient for the Churches to pray for the renunciation of war and the adoption by international leaders of peaceful methods for settling disputes.⁶⁰ From Sydney, John Rosewood, a member of the London Peace society, commiserated with Gibb on his defeat.

In to-day's cable message I notice the rejection of your Peace Manifesto in favour of disarmament.... It is astonishing, if not lamentable, that an assembly of Churchmen professing to follow the Prince of Peace should show very "bitter feeling" as reported in the press, at any movement favouring World Peace.⁶¹

Gibb had never before faced such bitter defeat at the hands of a Presbyterian General Assembly. His crusade for unilateral New Zealand disarmament was betrayed by his own denomination. In his humiliation salt was rubbed into his wounds by his own brother-in-law who publicly condemned the 'mischief done to the League by the ultra-pacifism of the Presbyterian leaders of the New Zealand union'.⁶²

58. Outlook, 17 September 1923.

59. Ibid., 16 July 1928.

60. General Assembly, 1928, p.42.

61. Rosewood to Gibb, 29 November 1928.

62. Outlook, 19 November 1928.

Gibb's usefulness to the League of Nations Union and his leadership of his last crusade were almost at an end by the beginning of 1929. In February he suffered a heart attack that forced him to resign from the chairmanship of the Wellington branch and from the Dominion Council.⁶³ His retirement from office in the New Zealand League of Nations Union coincided with a decline in the Union's prestige and popularity within the Dominion. I.M. Ross notes that New Zealand had only three possible Pacific enemies of sufficient power to pose a serious threat to her security - Australia, the United States and Japan.⁶⁴ As the 1920s passed their mid-point New Zealanders became increasingly aware of Japan's potential danger to the South Seas, and of their own isolation. Japan had gained more from the 1927 Washington Naval Conference than either of the two allied powers who bargained with her. Britain and the United States agreed to Japan maintaining a fleet in fixed ratio to their own and insisted that the Japanese navy scrap only eighteen ships, while the United States committed itself to discard thirty and Britain pledged herself to scrap twenty. Britain, formerly holding to a 'two power standard' that aimed at a navy of sufficient strength to deal with her two greatest potential enemies simultaneously, now declared that her maximum naval capability was that of a 'one power standard'. Japan had retained her latest battleship and the virtual hegemony of the north-west Pacific.

New Zealand newspaper readers were alarmed at the militant imperialism of Japanese involvement in the Asian mainland. In April 1928 Japanese troops seized Shantung, and in September 1929 a Japanese army began military action in Manchuria. Massey had hoped that Japan would renew the 1902 Anglo-Japanese treaty, and the end of this alliance together with subsequent signs that Japan had emerged as a military and naval power possessing efficient modern armaments, and led by a militarist party of unknown ambition, led many New Zealanders to prefer a base in Singapore, a strengthened Royal Navy and a conscript army, to the security pledged by a League of Nations' covenant.

63. Denton Leed to Gibb, 8 April 1929. Also, Corkill to Gibb, 23 June 1929.

64. I.M. Ross, p.1.

Fearful of Japanese imperialist aspirations many New Zealanders began to pay more heed to the appeals made by several General Officers Commanding for an increased defence budget. The National Defence League pleaded that New Zealand was dangerously neglecting her defences and by so doing was inviting invasion. By the close of the 1920s the pacifists were being shouted down by ex-officers and those citizens who believed that the League of Nations did not possess the strength to play more than the role of a paper tiger. On 10 December 1929 James Burn, a Scots minister in temporary charge of Knox Church (Dunedin), complained to Gibb that he seemed to have been the only minister in Dunedin to have observed League of Nations Sunday, and that he was 'disturbed at the military spirit abroad'.⁶⁵

The National Defence League, primarily an ex-servicemen's association, was Gibb's bête noire. Formed in 1920 the Defence League was successor to a pre-war body of the same name and largely responsible for the establishment of compulsory military training in New Zealand. The Defence League stood for a white New Zealand, the maintenance of a universal military training system, an adequately equipped army, state production of ammunition and a preliminary three years in the ranks for all who aspired to commissioned rank.⁶⁶

Gibb could not find fault with the high moral tone of many of the Defence League's ideals. He was himself committed to many of these ideals - moral training of youth, education in good citizenship, harsh suppression of bad language in military camps and the employment of women of high moral character as workers in camp kitchens.⁶⁷ The Defence League was led by Major-General Sir Andrew Russell, former commander of the New Zealand division in France; a man of impeccable character.

By the close of 1921 the Defence League had established branches in Christchurch and Wellington and its leaders were involved in countering the propaganda (they believed it to be subversive propaganda) of the

65. Burns to Gibb, 10 December 1929.

66. Round Table, XI (1920-21), p.218.

67. Ibid.

League of Nations Unions. Throughout the 1920s the Defence League was involved in deputations to governments, aimed at an expanded and more efficient defence force. The Defence League strongly advocated New Zealand's support for the building of the Royal Navy base at Singapore and opposed all treasury attempts to prune the defence budget during lean years. The League's concern for New Zealand's defence is understood in the light of the strength of the regular army in 1926 - 102 officers and 391 other ranks.⁶⁸

Disillusionment with a League of Nations that had failed to bring trust to the world sent nations to look to their defences. United States isolationism and the French intention that the League of Nations should develop into a system of security directed against Germany doomed it from the start. However, it was not only the increase of Japanese militarism and the seeming impotence of the League of Nations that hastened the defeat of Gibb's last crusade, its demise was further assisted by the declining fervour of the Labour party conference.

The 1924 party conference showed that the party was far from unanimously behind the pacifist measures proposed by the Parliamentary members. It forcefully declared that when the party gained the treasury benches it would deal with the question of defence in the light of the exigencies of that moment. The conference resolved:

That the New Zealand Labour Party wholeheartedly supports the British Labour Government in its efforts to secure disarmament by agreement among nations, and declares that it will be prepared to face the problem of defence in assuming office as the Government of the Dominion in the light of that policy, and will be guided by the circumstances prevailing at that time as to the extent to which disarmament can be achieved or defence is necessary.⁶⁹

By September 1928 Gibb recognised that the League of Nations Union was not receiving any appreciable support from rank and file party members. The Labour party was opening new branches and steadily expanding its membership, but the League of Nations Union was static, with an elitist

68. AJHR, 1926, H-19. Report of General Officer Commanding. See also I.M. Ross, p.217.

69. New Zealand Worker, 11 June 1924.

core of 2,000 members.⁷⁰ On 5 September 1928 Gibb addressed an open letter entitled 'Labour's Attitude Towards the League of Nations' to the New Zealand Worker, and complained of:

next to no encouragement at all from our manual toilers. They have the best of reasons for hating what even that stout Tory, Lord Cushenden, terms "the sickening abomination of war".⁷¹

Gibb pointed to the International Labour Organisation as an indication of the League's concern for the just claims of labour. He admitted that the League had made some political blunders in the field of international affairs and yet insisted that its weakness was caused by the failure of the world's workers to rally behind it. With regard the dearth of membership within the New Zealand League of Nations Union Gibb complained that 'Labour men are conspicuous by their absence... Is that playing the game? Is that helping the cause of peace?'⁷²

The Labour party's conference and branches had decided that the state of the Hutt roads was a more useful topic at the hustings than the state of the road to war. The short-lived liaison of Labour and the Churches began to dissolve as the party moved from narrow sectionalism into a national party. At the close of the 1920s a more tense international situation and the Wall Street stockmarket crash pushed the campaign to abolish compulsory military training to the periphery of New Zealand politics. The great depression accomplished the end Gibb and Lee had failed to attain. In 1930 conscription was suspended by a government determined to balance the budget.

Gibb's last crusade failed to deliver New Zealand from the militarists, warmongers, and imperialists, he believed to be leading the Dominion to disaster. After his crusaders had retreated, defeated in three sorties against conscription, the bastion was surrendered to a more fearsome enemy - economic necessity. In the five years between 1923 and 1929 Gibb's

70. New Zealand Worker, 5 September 1928.

71. Ibid.

72. Ibid.

leadership of the social gospel legion had gained the Churches few victories. Gibb was seventy-two in 1929, an old man from another age who when he ventured into the streets appeared in the formal garb of a Victorian clergyman. He had resigned from his parish in 1926, suffered the annoyance of diabetes and increasing breathlessness, and after 1929 was forced, by failing health, to conclude his pastoral work in the Seatoun parish. Gibb had grown old and his Social Gospel philosophy had grown old with him. The Kingdom of Heaven had not been built by the legislation of Christian statesmen, nor had these statesmen secured world peace.

Gibb's anti-militarist crusade was a Social Gospel crusade and with its failure his faith in the Social Gospel dream crumbled. His dream had been shared, perhaps seeded, by Walter Rauschenbusch, the American Social Gospel leader, who had associated himself with the pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation shortly before his death in 1918. Throughout the western world during the 1920s Social Gospellers moved into the anti-military and pacifist camps. Peter Brock affirms that for these men and women the coming of the Kingdom was no dream but a real possibility:

The elimination of war between nations and the ending of economic exploitation within society were merely different aspects of one struggle: the struggle for the realization of Christ's Kingdom.⁷³

Why did this Social Gospel crusade fail? A major flaw in the crusaders' case was their failure to appreciate that the general and widespread abhorrence of war that abounded did not indicate a corresponding increase in actual pacifism. Thousands of New Zealanders who longed for a peaceable world held no truck with pacifism. While during the early 1920s the internationalist and pacifist solutions - allegiance to the League of Nations and opposition to conscription - were compatible, by the close of the 1920s advocates of the internationalist solution demanded a strong League of Nations, backed with military teeth if needed. The crusaders took little note of change of mood that accompanied the rise of the Japanese threat. At a time when they might well have accepted that covenant signatures and League moral authority were insufficient guarantors of world peace they continued to plead their social Darwinist argument

73. Peter Brock, Twentieth Century Pacifism, New York, 1970, p.143.

that education, propaganda and the goodwill of an enlightened mankind would soon force the militarist clique to disband their armies and defuse their bombs. A basic cause for the dismal failure of Gibb's last crusade was its unqualified acceptance of the Social Gospel assumption that man is essentially reasonable and eager to build a better world. The Social Gospellers expected that renunciation of war would be forced upon the leaders of the nations by a mass protest by this basically reasonable and awakened mankind. The editor of the Free Lance held no such delusion. He spoke for a large number of New Zealanders when in November 1922 he chastised Gibb for his simplistic ultra-pacifism:

Dr Gibb and his friends keep on cackling about the wickedness of war, but they conveniently ignore the fact that the resolutions of the League of Nations are just so much waste paper until the League's decisions can be enforced.⁷⁴

For the pro-League pacifists the idea of enforcing the League's decisions by force was reprehensible. Armed aggression posed a moral dilemma; should the League use the devil's tools to maintain international law and order?

Gibb's idealism gained support from only a small elitist group. Gordon Coates accused the League of Nations Union of 'sectionalism'⁷⁵ - a reference to its radical following - and his accusation was fair. In New Zealand as in the United States the pacifist and disarmament groups, including the League of Nations Union, gained their greatest ecclesiastical support from the Methodists, Congregationalists and the Society of Friends. Gibb carried only a small number of Presbyterians with him and sympathy for his cause within his own denomination lessened as hard core Calvinists charged him with an unorthodox denial of the Confession's dogma concerning the duty of the state to wage defensive war. The non-ecclesiastical supporters of his cause were mainly academics and socialists - Pringle and Leech were good examples. Communist involvement in the Linkspazifismus

74. Free Lance, 1 November 1922.

75. Gordon Coates was a vice president of the New Zealand League of Nations Union. Coates did not take the League of Nations very seriously. See B.H. Farland, 'The Political Career of J.G. Coates', unpublished M.A. thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1965.

(Left Pacificism), a movement advocating the refusal of military service in all wars between capitalist states, made socialist support for the crusade a doubtful asset. Many middle-class New Zealanders were convinced that the Labour party was a Communist party in sheep's clothing and believed that the parliamentary party's move to abolish conscription was a part in a dangerous conspiracy aimed at establishing the rule of the proletariat by some cunning sleight of hand.

Gibb was at first superficial in his assessments of the League of Nations' success in international politics. In 1925 he informed the Presbyterian General Assembly that 'the League of Nations pursues its beneficial career, growing day by day in influence and authority'.⁷⁶ Gibb's statement gives clear evidence of his enthusiasm for the League but is scarcely an accurate assessment of the League's record. By the close of 1925 the League of Nations had shown little capacity for keeping the mad dogs of Europe in hand. In 1920 the Council had heard the Vilna dispute between Poland and Lithuania and capitulated in the face of French support for her ally, Poland. Corfu was seized by the Italians in August 1923 and Greece was forced to deposit 50,000,000 Italian lire before Mussolini's forces evacuated the town. While the Geneva Protocol on wars of aggression was signed in October 1924, in May 1925 the Foreign Secretary of a Conservative government, Austen Chamberlain, announced that Britain would not ratify the treaty. The Protocol required all signatories to resist any aggressor who refused to agree to a settlement of the dispute engaged in, by the League Council, judicial settlement or arbitration. Austen Chamberlain had no intention of involving Britain in wars where Britain's imperial interests were not involved.

In August 1927 Gibb informed readers of the Outlook that 'the League has already indeed prevented the outbreak of several wars by direct action'.⁷⁷ Assuming that Gibb used the words 'direct action' to designate the use or threat of force his claim is somewhat astounding. The only threat of military action offered in the name of the League up to August 1927 was the threat offered by Britain and France in October 1925

76. General Assembly, 1925, p. 151.

77. Outlook, 29 August 1927.

when they used the League's name to put an end to a dangerous frontier clash between Greece and Bulgaria. This was indeed a modest triumph for the League.

By the close of 1927 Gibb himself cast a more critical eye at the use made of the League by European statesmen. He asked:

Why has not the China question been discussed by the League? Why was the dispute between Italy and Jugo Slavia over Albania dealt with privately? Chamberlain says it was wiser not to bring any question before the League till all other methods of disposing of it have failed. Perhaps; but we may be pardoned for the suspicion that reluctance to trust the League, a preference for the old discredited methods of secret diplomacy, instead of the open and manifest methods of the League, is the real occasion of his reluctance.⁷⁸

Gibb's questioning of the sincerity of Europe's statesmen was justified. The French signed the Locarno pact and began building the Maginot line. While Stresemann lunched with Briand, as they worked out the final details of the pact, President Hindenburg commented at the Reichswehr manoeuvres that 'the German army's traditional standard of spirit and skill have been preserved'.⁷⁹

In 1928 Gibb made an appreciation of the Kellogg-Briand pact. This agreement resulted from a suggestion made by the United States Secretary of State, Frank Kellogg, who in early 1928 proposed a treaty to outlaw war. Kellogg insisted that any nation might sign and that the right to self defence if attacked should be reserved. Gibb responded to the signing of the Kellogg-Briand pact with the observation that any pact for the outlawry of war had to prove itself by test. He seized upon possible defects, arguing:

For one thing, it has been signed by some with certain reservations that go far to neutralise its provisions. France, for example, accepts the Pact, but reserves to itself the right to fight against aggression. If that meant only against invasion no one would demur, but France

78. Outlook, 29 August 1927.

79. Raymond J. Sontag, A Broken World, 1919-1939, New York, 1971, p.133.

means much more than that. Aggression against her might, in her opinion, take place in the New Hebrides where, as we know, the British and French factions of the Condominium do not live together in perfect amity.⁸⁰

Gibb would have done better to focus his gaze on the Polish corridor rather than the New Hebrides. He missed the main defect in the Locarno agreement, the dangerous combination of a French-British alliance with an eastern alliance with Czechoslovakia and Poland. A short fuse had already been lit to this volatile mixture by Stresemann's warning that Germany reserved the right to revise her frontiers with the two eastern frontier states at some future date.

It was not only Gibb's perspective that was defective in his leadership of his last crusade. His tactics were equally faulty. As with his previous crusades he depended upon the creation of a favourable climate of public support to persuade politicians that it was in their interest to disarm and strengthen the Dominion's support for the League of Nations. This he never gained. His movement remained a numerically small elitist group taken seriously by no political party except the Labour party. Public demonstrations accomplished as little for the 'No More War' movement as similar rallies had gained for the Bible in Schools crusade. Monster petitions from New Zealand joined the thousands that arrived in Geneva from all over the globe, all imploring the world's statesmen to give peace for all time. Philip Gibbs, in Across the Frontiers, asked what happened to those petitions, and answered his own question.

Perhaps they are still there in Geneva getting mouldy in dark vaults. The hearts of the world's statesmen were untouched. Their brains were untouched by this universal yearning for something to be done to prevent.... - the rearmament of the world.⁸¹

The failure of Gibb's last crusade coincided with the Wall Street crash of October 1929. Old, weary, a relic from another age, clinging to an outdated and failed Social Gospel, Gibb counted his losses and found the mood of the Great Depression in tune with his own.

80. General Assembly, 1928 p.122.

81. Philip Gibbs, Across the Frontiers, London, 1938, p.138.

Chapter Eight

The Black Frost of Barthianism, 1930-1935

The Church has seen all mankind involved in crisis and has sought to offer help - only to discover the utter insufficiency of its resources.... It has made pronouncements against wars, promoted schemes for peace [and] leagues of nations...but the march of Mars is halted not for a moment The church has set up programs of social justice, preached utopian ideals...but neither the progressive impoverishment of the life of the many nor the growth of the privileges of the few have been stayed by its efforts.

H. Richard Niebuhr, 1935¹

In this chapter an aged Gibb faces the liberal democracies' apparent failure to ensure world peace, build economic stability, and create social cohesion and a sense of social purpose. Gibb, and Social Gospellers throughout the world, saw liberal democracy's failure as the failure of the Social Gospel. Most of them had hitched their waggon to a capitalist star, and now that star was falling. A large number of Social Gospellers had attempted to create the kingdom of God within a democratic and capitalist system and in so doing they had accepted many of that system's aspirations. Gibb had sought a humanized capitalism. He had supported the Labour movement's demands for a just wage and healthy working conditions only occasionally espousing the cause of radical socialism. The catastrophes of the 1930s convinced Gibb that the problems facing the human race were beyond the solutions offered by politicians and business leaders. Faced by the disaster of world depression, the failure of the parliamentary democracies to support the League of Nations, and the success of political extremism in Russia, Italy, Japan and Germany, Gibb became convinced that the Church had sinned by becoming the servant of an anthropocentric civilization.

Gibb turned his back on the Social Gospel some time in 1932 and as the remaining years of his life unfolded he became more and more captivated

1. H. Richard Niebuhr, The Church Against the World, Chicago, 1935, p.8.

by the 'crisis theology' of Karl Barth, a theology that took the English-speaking world by storm in the 1930s and 1940s.² Barth's 'neo-orthodoxy' was in part a return to the classical theology of Calvin, in part a protest against the Social Gospel's compromise with Western materialism, and in part a resurgence of supernaturalism. Against Harnack's reduction of Jesus to the role of supreme teacher Barth proclaimed Christ as the Word of God, the judge, and saviour of mankind. Barth rejected the speculative and rationalist elements in Hegel's Christology, and rejected Schleiermacher's subjectivism. He denounced Ritschl's positivistic theology, with its demotion of Christianity to the status of one religion amongst other equally fascinating religious phenomena. Rudolf Otto had recovered the category of 'the numinous' and reasserted the mystery and majesty of God.³ Gustaf Aulen restated the classic doctrine of the atonement, wherein God invades history to rescue helpless fallen man.⁴

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2. Karl Barth (1886-1968) wrote Der Romerbrief, his commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, in 1919. His 'Crisis Theology' was intensified by his conflict with Nazi Christians. The Barmen Declaration of 1934, a theological resistance to Nazi theological revisionism, was largely his work. Gibb's first published mention of Barth was in the Outlook, 12 March 1931. On this occasion he referred to Barth as 'a Calvin of the twentieth century', and applauded his stress on the sovereignty of God and his rejection of 'dear Jesus' and 'Sweet Saviour' sentimentality. In the Outlook, 3 August 1931 Gibb reviewed Dickie's The Organism of Christian Truth and noted with approval that, following Schleiermacher, Dickie began his theology from an interpretation of religious experience. At this stage Gibb was obviously far from a Barthian position.
 3. Rudolf Otto (1869-1937) was professor of Systematic Theology at Breslau and Marburg. His Das Heilige, with its emphasis on the mystery of God, was translated into English in 1923, as The Idea of the Holy. [Duncan Hercus and John Hubbard, when young ministers, both frequently discussed theology with Gibb and affirm that he was sensitive to the most recent theological movements.] For Gibb's knowledge of Otto see J. Gibb, 'A Minister's Books', Outlook, 16 February 1931. In a series of articles in the Outlook in February-March 1931 Gibb discussed recently published works in literature, politics, psychology, theology and ethics. He recommended that young ministers read the works of H.E. Fosdick, James Denney, T.P. Forsyth, McLeod Campbell, Hugh McIntosh, Bismell and Rudolf Otto. R.H. Thouless, An Introduction to the Psychology of Religion, was given high praise.
 4. Gustav Aulen (1879-) was professor of Systematic Theology at Lund and then Bishop of Lund. His major English translation is Christus Victor, translated by A.G. Herbert in 1931.

Karl Barth went much further in this movement back to Christocentrism. He attacked liberal theology's assumption that man was the criterion of understanding and demanded that God be acknowledged as the judge, master and only hope for man.

Gibb's initial reaction to Barthian theology, in late 1931, shows him shocked by Barth's radical rejection of the theological methodology that had been taken for granted since the Aufklärung, the continuing refashioning of doctrine to make it reasonable. In a sermon preached in late November 1931, on the occasion of the licensing of J.M. Patterson and S.W. Webber as licentiatees for the ministry, Gibb attacked Barth's denigration of preaching about the Jesus of history, the sermon on the Mount, and Jesus' ministry:

You must preach the Galilean Gospel, only, while you do so, never forget that the Christ of time is also the Christ of eternity.... Let me also say that on the subject of the teaching of Jesus, you must from time to time preach what is called the Social Gospel. Apart from all other considerations, the Church must do battle on behalf of moral righteousness if men are to listen and accept Christ's message of salvation.⁵

In November 1931 the first number of the new, and short lived, New Zealand Journal of Theology was published. Pride of place was given to an article by Gibb, entitled 'The Theology of Karl Barth'.⁶ Gibb's penchant for discovering and analysing the latest theological vogues was well known to his brother ministers and J.T.V. Steele, minister of Duntroon parish and editor of the newly launched journal, invited Gibb to contribute this article in the hope that the appearance of an article by the Church's most eminent minister might increase the number of subscribers. Gibb had already read R.B. Hoyle's The Teaching of Karl Barth (1930)⁷ and

5. Outlook, 7 December 1931.

6. New Zealand Journal of Theology, 1. (November 1931) 1, pp.4-15. The journal survived until the close of 1935 and ended with volume four.

7. John Dickie, professor of Systematic Theology at Knox College, was highly critical of the translations made by Hoyle and MacConnachie. See Dickie to Gibb, 30 March 1931.

J. MacConnachie's The Significance of Karl Barth (1931),⁸ the first English language assessments of Parthian theology. He had also read Barth's The Word of God and the Word of Man⁹ and had gained a clear understanding of the key elements in the theology of Emil Brunner, second only to Barth as an exponent of 'neo-orthodoxy'.¹⁰

Gibb's eleven page critique of Barth's theology is a balanced and masterly survey of the strengths and weaknesses of the new 'crisis theology' and shows Gibb to be far more attracted by Barth's position than his sermon at the licensing of Patterson and Webber suggested. During his near fifty years as a minister Gibb had seen the theological pendulum swing back and forward many times and he was well aware that new theological movements often overstated their cases in an effort to correct errors and omissions in the dogma they wished to replace. He noted Barth's exaggeration of God's transcendence at the expense of His immanence, and criticised Barth's insistence on human total depravity. With regard God's immanence Gibb pertinently questioned:

Does not sunset, or the moon "which with delight looks round her when the heavens are bare" convey no message from God to the soul of man to impress him with a sense of the manifested presence of the great original?¹¹

Barth's insistence on man's total depravity was met by an observation from Gibb that 'Barth's categories seem to recognise only sheep and goats, there is no room for alpacas'.¹² Gibb made the obvious objection that if a man was totally depraved he would be incapable of making any response to

8. Several leading Presbyterian Churchmen warned Gibb in 1931 that Barth was an extremist. James Aitken to Gibb, 1 September 1931, is a case in point. Aitken suggests that British theology had never lost the emphasis Barth was properly re-making in Germany. See also Malcolm Wilson to Gibb, 23 December 1931.

9. Karl Barth, The Word of God and the Word of Man, London, 1928.

10. Gibb's knowledge of Brunner's theology antedated the translation of Brunner's early works into English.

11. James Gibb, 'The Theology of Karl Barth', New Zealand Journal of Theology, 1 (November 1931), 1,p.7.

12. Ibid., p.10.

a righteous God and would be incapable of receiving salvation.

It was not only Barth's exaggerated emphasis of divine transcendence and his doctrine of total depravity that drew Gibb's fire. Gibb noted that Barth presented God as a 'consuming fire',¹³ but had little to say about God as Father. He identified as a defect Barth's lack of interest in Jesus' earthly ministry and his portrayal of the drama of salvation as an act performed by a cosmic Christ about whose human activities man need give little concern. The paradoxical style of Barth's writing, his over-subtlety and obscurity, was denounced.

Gibb's praise for Barth outweighs his criticism. In Barth's favour Gibb argued that his theocentricity was a needed corrective to the anthropocentric basis of contemporary theology where 'the gulf between God and man is narrowed so that it practically disappears, and God and man face each other almost as equals'.¹⁴ Despite Gibb's objection to Barth's assumption of human total depravity he sided with Barth, against the apostles of evolution and optimism, in his assessment of the human predicament:

Admitting that Barth's corrective requires itself to be corrected, or at least modified in certain particulars, is he not in much closer accord on the whole with the teaching of the Scriptures concerning man than much present day theology and in a good deal of present day preaching too? It was Jesus who said of the natural man that unless he is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. And though the apostle Paul stresses more than Barth does the freedom of man's choice, it is he who speaks of the natural man as "dead in trespasses and sins".¹⁵

Barth's harshest strictures were made against the Church itself. He accused the Church of compromising its apostolic mission by its acceptance of the values of Western civilization and by its watering down the gospel with humanism and idealism. Gibb accepted Barth's

13. James Gibb, 'The Theology of Karl Barth', New Zealand Journal of Theology, 1 (November 1931), 1, p.6.

14. Ibid., p.5.

15. Ibid., p.10.

condemnation as justified, and well substantiated, and emphasised that Barth's theology 'is a tonic much needed in this day of spiritual anaemia and an inspiration to our standing firm in a world whose moral and spiritual foundations are but as shifting sand'.¹⁶

Gibb's acceptance of Barthian 'crisis theology' intensified as his life drew to a close and as economic catastrophe and the League of Nations failure became more obvious. In late 1934 and early 1935 Gibb journeyed to Australia, to see his son Malcolm, who ministered to a New South Wales congregation,¹⁷ and to visit his relatives and friends in Melbourne. While in Melbourne he preached in Scots Church and from his former pulpit in Footscray, and on both occasions he revealed his rejection of his former Social Gospel emphasis and his adoption of Barthian theology. Frail, halting of speech following a stroke earlier in 1934, but as intense and dogmatic as ever, Gibb informed the Footscray congregation that he lived only to undo the evil he had been a party to by his involvement with the Social Gospel and theological liberalism. He called upon the few surviving ministers from his Footscray days and impressed upon them the need for the Church to face the world with a firm announcement of Christ's judgment. Murdoch, who had aligned himself throughout his ministry as a firm confessionalist and denominationalist, was both upset and angered by Gibb's charge that even he had been tainted by liberalism and needed to adopt the Barthian position.¹⁸ In his last published theological statement, an article discussing the new 'Brief Statement of the Church's Faith', a Church of Scotland theological revision placed before the 1934 New Zealand General Assembly, Gibb praised the proposed revision as a guard 'against the perils of modernism and the merely humanistic conception of Christ'.¹⁹ The new creed made no reference to the Christian's social obligations and

16. James Gibb, 'The Theology of Karl Barth', New Zealand Journal of Theology, 1 (November 1931) 1, pp.14-15.

17. Malcolm Gibb (d. 1969) was minister to the Huntly Presbyterian parish in New Zealand. In 1935 he moved to New South Wales and was in turn minister of Moree, Cessnock and Broken Hill.

18. Personal interview with F. Maxwell Bradshaw, procurator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, Melbourne, 12 January 1974. The Bradshaw and Gibb families were close friends during Gibb's Victorian ministry.

19. Outlook, 24 January 1935. The statement is given in full in the Outlook, 17 September 1934.

focussed its attention on the relationship of the individual with God. It was essentially a re-statement of classic Calvinism, freed from the later accretions of Westminster Scholasticism. Gibb applauded the 'neo-orthodox' emphasis made by the 'Brief Statement':

It is interesting to note how close is the correspondence between the Statement's attitude on inspiration and that of Karl Barth and Emil Brunner. They also accept the validity of criticism and Barth's special contention is that the Bible is for a man the Word of the Living God only when it has found him and become alive in his own soul.²⁰

In fifty-two years Gibb had moved his theological loyalty from Calvinist confessionalist orthodoxy to a Calvinist rearrangement of the Social Gospel, and now he completed the full circle to end his days a 'neo-orthodox' Barthian. His Barthianism was a far more sophisticated creed than the confessional Calvinism he affirmed in the 1880s, but it was as dogmatic and theocentric. From the close of 1931 until his death in October 1935 Gibb did much to popularise Barthian theology within the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand; especially by his discussions with younger ministers and students whom he made welcome in his home. In the ten years following his death the Church moved away from much of its previous social concern into an ecclesiastical stockade where it prayerfully contemplated its theological navel. Ormond Burton, the celebrated Methodist minister and pacifist, who in the late 1920s moved from the Presbyterian Church to Methodism, remarked of the 1930s that 'the black frost of Barthianism crept over the Presbyterian theological landscape'.²¹ Gibb was the first of New Zealand's Social Gospellers to be transformed by its icy and purifying touch.

What brought about Gibb's volte-face? Part of the answer is to be found in the personal loneliness and despair that invested his final years.²² It was also caused by four disastrous failures that haunted Gibb and the Social Gospellers: the failure of capitalism to bring in the

20. Outlook, 24 January 1935.

21. Personal interview with Ormond Burton, Otaki, 25 July 1973.

22. Personal interview with J.R. Blanchard, Wellington, 12 July 1973.

Kingdom of God revealed in the economic depression, the dissolution of the Church's alliance with the Labour party, the failure of all attempts to revive the pre-war crusades, and increasing set-backs suffered by the League of Nations and the cause of world disarmament.

In one sense old age was kind to Gibb. In June 1930 he reached his seventy-third year, with an active mind and a continuing interest in many of his old campaigns: Bible in Schools, anti-gambling crusading and the League of Nations Union. His support for these campaigns had become a habit and in his old age he did not desert a lifetime interest. Like many crusaders he found his crusades self-authenticating and continued to espouse their causes despite their lack of success. Gibb no longer expected these causes to succeed. Barth had convinced him that the Church must take its stand in the face of a sinful world and Gibb now supported these dying crusades as a Jeremiah denouncing his times and expecting help from God alone. His general health was sound, despite his diabetes, and he occasionally sallied forth from his Seatoun home to lend his presence to deputations of ecclesiastics bent upon lobbying some cabinet minister, or to make yet another public plea for a belated world disarmament. He preached infrequently now, only by special invitation; at licensings, inductions, and ordinations, or when parish ministers urgently needed a deputy. In late 1931 he braved Cook Strait to preach at the induction of his protege, Stanley Webber, and thereafter accepted charge of the Roslyn pulpit, in Dunedin, for three months.

Gibb's autumn years were busy years. He engaged in a voluminous weekly correspondence, exchanging views with League of Nations Union branch secretaries, advising leading clerics on Church policy, and contributing to the Outlook, the New Zealand Worker, and to the correspondence columns of the Wellington newspapers. In his seventy-sixth year he delivered a series of 'wireless talks', commentaries on the international situation, from Wellington's pioneer radio station.²³ Within the Presbyterian General Assembly his rare interventions in debate were greeted by those expressions of appreciation the Assembly reserves for distinguished visitors, or Church fathers who have lingered on from another age, who should be venerated but need not be taken too seriously. When the Presbytery of Waikato nominated

23. Most of these talks were reproduced in the Outlook soon after their delivery. See Outlook, 1 August 1932; 8 August 1932 and 22 August 1932.

Gibb as moderator for the 1930 General Assembly it did not seriously expect his election; its members made a gesture of salute to the Church leader who had made possible the founding of their Presbytery.²⁴ However, Gibb still had his uses and in 1931 the General Assembly selected him to present the first Stuart lectures to the staff and students of Knox College, seven lectures on pastoral theology delivered by Gibb later in that year.²⁵

As the 1930s fell away Gibb's autumn years gave way to bleak winter. In April 1932 Rutherford Waddell, his oldest and closest colleague and friend, died. Gibb and his wife, Jeanie, had celebrated their golden wedding jubilee in November 1931. In November 1932 Gibb buried his wife. His last few years were lonely years. Both his minister sons had left New Zealand, his elder son, George, for the Presbyterian Church of England,²⁶ and Malcolm for a New South Wales parish. A stroke in early 1934, followed by a temporary loss of speech, increased his feeling that he had lived too long in a world now alien and frightening. In early 1932 Waddell had admitted to Gibb that as death approached he found himself becoming more introspective and more disturbed by the possibility of annihilation. This psychic disturbance influenced Waddell's world view. He admitted to Gibb that he now held a most pessimistic view of the world's future and asked 'will there be any Church in another generation?'²⁷ Gibb echoed Waddell's judgment and like Waddell identified the winter of his life with the winter of the world's despair.

Of the four disastrous failures that haunted Gibb and the Social Gospellers the economic depression that gripped New Zealand from the last year of the 1920s, and continued its stranglehold past the mid-years of the 1930s, was the most obvious. Between the beginning of 1928 and 1933

24. General Assembly, 1932 p.30. See also G.H. Judd to Gibb, 8 February 1932.

25. These seven lectures were later published: James Gibb, Making Proof of the Ministry, Wellington, 1935.

26. Correspondence between Gibb and his elder son shows George to have been a rather pompous young man. Minister of Queenstown, Nelson and Parnell, he left New Zealand for England in 1926.

27. Waddell to Gibb, 2 January 1932.

Presbyterian congregational giving decreased by £45,000. Paul Carter, in The Decline and Revival of the Social Gospel, tells that during this period in the United States ministers were informed that they would need to get along on 'nice, nourishing stews'.²⁸ Some pastors and Home Mission agents, in New Zealand and the United States, had been forced to endure a perpetual diet of 'nice, nourishing stews' well before the Wall Street crash of October 1929. The depression strained an already stretched Church budget even further. Ministers were asked not to retire because the addition of new gratuitants to the list paid from the beneficiary fund would necessitate a reduction in monthly payments to those already on the list. Some ministers, with large families to support, were presented with a difficult moral dilemma; 'You can either have our family at Church, or have our weekly offering? We cannot afford both. The ten mile trip to church costs money'.²⁹

To live in Wellington and walk its streets without becoming aware of the social havoc caused by the depression was impossible. Gibb was aware of the capital's growing numbers of unemployed and he had impressed on him by ministers that more and more of their time was being spent in attempts to provide food, clothing and employment for the needy. Between 1928 and 1931 New Zealand's export returns fell by 43 per cent, there was a decline in the amount of money in circulation, a strangling of trade and commerce, many farmers had their mortgages foreclosed, and workers were given their notice as businesses attempted to stave off disaster by reducing their overheads. G.W. Forbes, Prime Minister following Ward's resignation in 1930, held that the budget must be balanced. Instead of embarking upon a policy of government spending, public works and credit facility for wavering businesses, he reduced public service salaries and offered the increasing numbers of unemployed 'pick and shovel' relief work that had been instituted in the 1890s. The Coalition government's primitive economic ideology, and its lack of systematic relief programme, led to the separation of unemployed husbands and fathers from their wives

28. Paul A. Carter, The Decline and Revival of the Social Gospel: Social and Political Liberalism in American Protestant Churches, 1920-1940, New York, 1956, p.142.

29. A family friend confided to me that he had been 'forced' to make this offer to his minister during the depression.

and families. Men were offered, as an alternative to starvation, work hundreds of miles from home, as road navvies, forest workers, scrub clearers, and even gold miners. Even more destructive to any sense of human dignity was the government's rationing of the amount of work any unemployed man might gain. In order to share the 'privilege' of work the unemployed were 'stood down' for a number of days each fortnight. Queues occasionally exploded into riots as men jostled and fought to gain a temporary job that would bring food to their families.

Gibb and the Churches offered more piety and charity than practical solution to this national problem. At the 1931 General Assembly Gibb seconded a motion proposed by E.N. Merrington, the Master of Knox College, asking Assembly to appoint a committee to consider the depression and its social implications.³⁰ Gibb also shared the Wellington Presbytery's concern over the situation in the capital and attended a Presbytery conference on unemployment in June 1932.³¹ The Presbytery criticised the government's separation of heads of family from their charges and attacked the concept of unemployment camps, suggesting that these camps added to the psychological trauma of the unemployed, encouraged social dislocation, and opened the door to immorality. The Presbytery especially urged the government to increase the rates of pay allowed to relief workers. Gibb, and most of the Presbyterian clergy, had as many ideas as had Coates and Forbes on how best to deal with the problems raised by the depression. However, like the politicians they offered only first aid solutions to a surgical problem. In 1933, J.R. Blanchard, Gibb's successor at St. John's Church, reported to the General Assembly that:

Congregations throughout the land are doing much to hold out a helping hand.... Inter-Church Relief Committees are bearing the burden of dispensing assistance to those who are outside Church connections. Bible Classes are doing a great deal.... Good work is being done in the way of spiritual ministrations in unemployment camps and such organisations as the Y.M.C.A.³²

30. General Assembly, 1931, p.43.

31. Wellington Presbytery, 10 May 1932; 12 July 1932.

32. General Assembly, 1933. Appendix II, pp.81-82.

The General Assembly's economic sub-committee made an attempt to identify the economic mistakes and social inequities that both caused the depression and were revealed by it. While the committee realised that 'enforced leisure' for a section of the community was the responsibility of the entire community, and that longer or shorter working hours, and movement of workers from town to country, only played with the problem, it produced few signs of having received special insight into the best way another such catastrophe might be prevented. By 1934 Blanchard had, like Gibb, combined a Barthian condemnation of liberal capitalism with Christian socialism. The convener offered criticism but admitted he had no practical alternative to offer:

Many will say, no doubt, that the Church must not face the possibility of having to declare against the Capitalist economy until she is prepared with something to take its place. But surely the Church of God has not to wait until she has a substitute for a thing ere she makes up her mind as to whether or not that thing is the will of God, according to the Gospel of His Son! The task of the Church, then, is to turn upon the Capitalist economy the white light of what she knows of the will of God, and completely to separate herself from everything in that economy which does not stand that investigation - and from the whole if it need be.³³

Gibb does not appear to be amongst the few Presbyterian ministers who flirted with Douglas credit at this time.³⁴ With no temporal panacea to offer he joined with the 1933 General Assembly in its pious protestation that 'a revival of vital religious faith...would go a long way toward dispelling the clouds of fear and depression'.³⁵ In July 1934 Gibb's Presbytery, Wellington, added its gesture to the Assembly's empty words by agreeing that 1935 be recognised as a year of national humiliation and that during this year no minister should accept a stipend higher than the wage of the

33. Outlook, 12 March 1934.

34. Personal Interview with Diamond Burton, Otaki, 25 July 1973. For an indication of Church interest in Douglas credit see R. Clifton, 'Douglas Credit and the Labour Party, 1930-1935', unpublished M.A. thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1961, p. 112.

35. General Assembly, 1933, p. 84.

poorest head of family, and all elders should reduce their incomes.³⁶ Perhaps the most useful statement made by a Presbyterian committee about the depression was a warning against the creation of scapegoats to blame for the world's economic ills:

For example, condemnation of the unemployed as being ungrateful, indolent, dissatisfied, blaming the Jews for the depression, ranting about Capitalism, and uncritical enthusiasm over new created schemes or Communism, are positively dangerous.³⁷

In the last analysis the Social Gospellers had nothing to offer but their penitence for the assumption they had lived with for three decades. They had held that for all its faults the Western economic system accepted responsibility for the maintenance of minimal standards of human dignity and the maintenance of social cohesion. Stunned by the impotence of capitalism some of the Social Gospellers turned from Christian socialism to Marxism and others entered the Barthian refuge of a Church that is not obliged to offer a secular programme.

In the mid-1930s, at a time when many New Zealanders began to look towards the Labour party as the only alternative to the pre-Keynesian economic primitivism of the Coalition administration, the Presbyterian leadership was strangely apolitical. Gibb no longer beat the socialist drum. Waddell was dead, and J.D. Salmond was too much a 'new man' for his 'salvation is coming from the east'³⁸ (admiration of Communism's achievements expressed on his return from Russia in late 1931) to be taken too seriously. Christian socialism received its greatest support from Arnold Nordmeyer, who left his Kurok parish in 1935 when elected to Parliament, and from Walter Nash, an Anglican lay reader. Few speeches advocating the end of capitalism, and proposing a socialist alternative, were now made from the floor of General Assembly. A few Methodists picked up Gibb's dropped mantle and espoused the cause of Labour. Percy Paris, a dynamic Methodist leader, made clear that not all ministers had withdrawn

36. Wellington Presbytery, 10 July 1935.

37. General Assembly, 1933, p.83.

38. J.D. Salmond to Gibb, 26 January 1932.

from the class struggle when he addressed a meeting of trade unionists at the Dunedin Central Mission, in September 1931. Paris prophesied:

The end of capitalism, with its inequalities and injustices, and its production for private profit, was in sight. They were about to see the advent of industrial democracy, and production for use and not profit; a co-operative commonwealth making it possible for God's work to be done on earth.³⁹

Paris and his friends had no practical programme to offer. They were continuing the Social Gospel rhetoric, attempting to translate the ethics of the Kingdom of God into economic slogans, but they did not clarify whether this new Zion would be created by guild socialism, industrial co-operatives, or through state nationalisation.

The apolitical stance taken by the Presbyterian leadership reflected their conviction that United, Reform and Labour seemed almost equally at loss in the face of the depression. Their dismissal of Ward, Forbes and Coates is understandable. Ward's muddled promise of a £70 million overseas loan, Forbes' support for the London banker, Sir Otto Niemeyer's policy of stringent economies, and Coates' patch work relief programme were hardly likely to breed confidence. But why this disenchantment with the Labour party?

In the early and mid-1920s Gibb had been an eager supporter of the party. His younger son, Malcolm, had roomed with Nordmeyer at Knox College, and Walter Nash, at that time the travelling representative of a publishing firm, often visited them, to drink tea and discuss politics.⁴⁰ During Malcolm's college vacations he and his father debated the merits and demerits of socialism and the Labour party. The son converted the father who saw in Labour another chance for the Social Gospel.

Gibb's enchantment with the Labour party in the 1920s arose from a happy coincidence of his interests with those held by the party. It was noted in chapter six that Peter Fraser and Robert Semple had been arrested

39. New Zealand Methodist Times, 5 September 1931.

40. Personal interview with Mrs Phyllis Gibb, Melbourne, 5 January 1974.

in December 1916 for their participation in anti-conscription rallies.⁴¹ In chapter seven the 1922 party annual conference's decision to disband the military when elected, and the 1924 revocation of this decision, reveal the decline in doctrinaire pacifism within the Labour party as the likelihood of real political power developed.⁴² Gibb applauded a Labour movement whose parliamentary members had fought the 1911 conscription bill at all stages. He lost interest and faith in a party that in the late 1920s was desultory in backing his campaign for total disarmament, and showed more interest in national and local issues than in world peace. The party had wooed Gibb and made use of his propaganda when it needed him most, immediately after the First World War. In the 1930s with an enlarged leadership, with less Christian socialist emphasis and more attention to the rhetoric of state socialism, and with a likely election victory ahead, the Labour party safely left Gibb, and his lost Social Gospellers, behind. Clyde Carr, once a Congregational minister, no longer even pretended to support the old crusades.⁴³ Robert Semple ceased being a member of the Board of Managers of the Island Bay Presbyterian Church, and Labour members made clear that they would not support the last of the Bible in Schools bills.⁴⁴ Had Gibb lived to vote in the election of 27 November 1935 he would undoubtedly have voted Labour, but without much enthusiasm. Gibb had continued to place his trust in politicians long after he denounced Seddon with his 'put not your trust in princes'.⁴⁵ In the five years before his death he ranged Forbes, Coates, and Savage, alongside Seddon.

The third cause of Gibb's disillusionment was the failure of all attempts made to revive the pre-War Social Gospel crusades. In 1928 Gibb had attempted to re-open Church union discussion between the

41. See above, p.204.

42. See above, p.246.

43. An undated letter from Carr to Garland, held in the Churches Commission on Education office, Wellington, shows Carr frankly abusive toward the Bible in Schools movement.

44. Personal Interview with John A. Allan, Hutt City, 29 June 1973.

45. See above, p.125.

Congregationalists, Methodists and Presbyterians, with no success.⁴⁶ Although the United Church of Canada had been formed in 1925, from a union of Congregationalists and Methodists with most of the Dominion's Presbyterians, New Zealand's Presbyterians were not prepared to engage in serious negotiations. In 1930 Wellington Presbytery was appointed as the Church's central committee on Church union and in 1932 a ballot was held amongst the nation's Presbyterian congregations. At the 1933 General Assembly the Church Union committee reported that the temper of the Church was not yet ready for the opening of negotiations.⁴⁷ The Congregationalists and the Methodists were willing to talk, but the Presbyterians were not, and did not look seriously at the issue again until 1939.

Gibb continued his anti-gambling crusading in the 1930s. In 1931 he threw his weight behind Protestant resistance to the Gaming Amendment bill, a private measure introduced into Parliament by H.T. Armstrong, member for Christchurch East. In a hectic frenzy to balance the budget, legislators, during the depression years, looked about for any hitherto untapped sources of revenue. In August 1931 Gibb had complained to the Wellington Presbytery about the increased use of Art Unions by the government.⁴⁸ Gibb was not impressed by arguments suggesting that the increase in raffles and lotteries was necessitated by a need to gain money for the relief of the unemployed. In October 1931 Armstrong's bill, designed to tax bookmakers (who legally did not exist) on the profits made from their occupation, was given its first and second readings in the House of Representatives. Armstrong made no bone about his intention:

All I want to do is to regulate and control the bookmakers, and to insist upon their contributing their share to the taxation of the country and to the upkeep of the sport of racing.⁴⁹

46. Outlook, 11 December 1928.

47. L.G. Geering (ed), Shall We Unite? Christchurch, 1956, p.20.

48. Wellington Presbytery, 11 August 1931.

49. NZPD, 230, 9 October 1931, p.173.

Many members agreed with Armstrong's contention that as the police had failed to eliminate bookmaking, and as there was obviously a public demand for the services of bookmakers, it was better to recognise their existence, regulate their activities, and gain revenue from their profits, than to allow the law to fall into disrespect. Despite this plea the Statutes Revision Committee recommended that the bill be not proceeded with. The committee's convener, T.E. Barnard, revealed that several groups of lobbyists had brought pressure to bear against the private measure:

We had evidence from eminently respectable clergymen, respectable racing-club authorities, and from gentlemen... who, quite possibly, for all I know, may have been bookmakers.⁵⁰

Owen Robinson asserts that the defeat of Armstrong's bill was 'the one major success of the Churches in stemming the advance of gambling'.⁵¹ Robinson exaggerates the impact of the Churches in the defeat of this measure. Racing interests in the main did not wish to see bookmaking legalised for fear that the profits gained by the racing clubs through totalisator betting would be diminished. Robinson admits that moves to gain the publication of totalisator business, information most useful to bookmakers, and attempts to legalise the telegraphing of bets, also failed in this period. The defeat of these two proposed changes, together with the defeat of Armstrong's bill, form a pattern. Government and racing interests could not be sure that the bookmakers could be sufficiently regulated to gain any more monetary return from them, if they were legalised, than was being extracted from the public through easily policed totalisator betting. The Church's opposition played a part in the defeat of the Gaming Amendment Bill, but only a minor part, equivalent to its diminished impact on the social conscience. The public was consistently apathetic to all attempted revivals of the old crusades. The 1934 Presbyterian General Assembly was out of step with public opinion when it denounced gambling as an irresponsible use of money in a time of

50. NZPD, 235. 9 February 1933, p.377.

51. Owen Robinson, 'Some Aspects of the Attitudes of the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches to Social Questions in New Zealand', unpublished M.A. thesis, Auckland University College, 1950, chapter 3, p.7.

national economic crisis.⁵² Many New Zealanders wondered if life would be worth living without the exciting prospect of a sudden bettering of their financial situation by the horse of their fancy finishing first past the judges' box.

In his latter days Gibb showed little interest in the crusade for national prohibition. He had never been a convinced advocate of total national prohibition and the failure of the 'Prohibition era' in the United States increased his distaste for 'wowserism'. In the 1930s the Presbyterian Church became less fervent and unified in its support for the New Zealand Alliance. The 1928 licensing poll gave national continuance an absolute majority; 373,692 votes against national prohibition's 294,453. In the 1919 poll national prohibition had gained 270,250 votes and national continuance only 241,251. National prohibition had been prevented from closing the nation's public houses in 1919 only by the 32,261 votes polled by state control.⁵³ Obviously there were Presbyterians amongst those who by 1928 had changed their minds and this change of mind revealed itself in the decision made by the 1928 General Assembly to recommend the restoration of local option.⁵⁴ When the 1930 General Assembly appealed to city councils to refuse requests from potential cabaret owners for the permission needed to seek liquor licences, it was speaking for fewer New Zealanders than in the 1903-1920 period.⁵⁵ The 1935 licensing returns indicate that the national trend away from prohibition was strong and steady. In 1935 only 243,091 voted for national prohibition, while 57,499 voted for state control and 521,167 for national continuance.⁵⁶

Gibb persevered with the Bible in Schools movement until the end. The 1930s saw several last ditch stands by the Bible in Schools crusaders. A Religious Exercises for Public Schools Enabling bill was brought before the Legislative Council in September 1932, by Sir James Allen. Holland made a second attempt with a slightly modified version of

52. General Assembly, 1934, p.20.

53. N.Z. Year Book, 1930, p.985.

54. General Assembly, 1928, p.53.

55. General Assembly, 1930, p.40.

56. N.Z. Year Book, 1937, p.773.

the 1912 bill in 1934 when he introduced the Religious Instruction in Public Schools Enabling bill to the House of Representatives. Gibb was still a member of the Bible in Schools national executive in the 1930s, and a General Assembly representative on the League. He attended nearly one in every three executive committee meetings between 1930 and his death and played a leading role in the preparation of Bible in Schools bills and their reception in the Legislature.

The entry of this final batch of Bible in Schools bills into the parliamentary arena was preceded by an attempt by the League to arrange a concordat with the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Between February and March 1930 the League executive made a volte-face in its attitude to the Roman Catholic Church. On 4 February 1930 L.M. Isitt informed the executive that Protestant children in primary schools were being kept in ignorance of the Bible 'largely because of Roman Catholic influences in political circles'.⁵⁷ Gibb applauded the sentiments expressed by his old Methodist colleague, aged seventy-five that very day.⁵⁸ However, in March 1930 C.J. Carrington, a Roman Catholic Legislative Councillor, gave the first indication that the Roman Catholic metropolitan, Archbishop Redwood, was prepared to withdraw his Church's opposition to the introduction of Bible instruction in State schools for Protestant children, providing suitable safeguards for Roman Catholic teachers and children, and a way of providing finance for this innovation without Roman Catholic taxes being used, could be found.⁵⁹ On 27 March a hard line anti-Roman Catholic tract, prepared before any hope of a detente had arisen, was on Gibb's advice set aside.⁶⁰ The hierarchy received a deputation from the League on 29 April, and on 25 July the nation's newspapers carried parallel statements affirming that a concordat had been made. The Roman Catholic metropolitan promised:

If a Bill containing the exemptions and safeguards for the consciences of Catholics...is introduced into Parliament it will not be opposed by us.⁶¹

57. Bible in Schools Executive Committee Minutes, 4 February 1930.

58. Ibid.

59. Carrington made this intimation to the Parliamentary Education Committee.

60. Bible in Schools Executive Committee Minutes, 27 March 1930.

61. Evening Post, 25 July 1930.

The League was jubilant. Without offering any support for Roman Catholic state aid demands it had apparently persuaded its largest ecclesiastical source of opposition to sit quietly whilst a new bill was introduced into the legislature. Carrington, and other Roman Catholic parliamentarians, seemed willing to vote for such a bill. Gibb and his fellow members of the executive failed to recognise the warning in Archbishop O'Shea's comments, made in a meeting requested by the coadjutor to the Metropolitan, on 10 July. The minutes of 24 July record that the coadjutor informed the League's secretary:

that the Statement [a joint statement to the newspapers was intended] was not entirely acceptable to all the Bishops, and he thought it better to discard it as the official statement rather than divide the Hierarchy.⁶²

O'Shea seems to have indicated to the League executive that although the suffragan bishops were divided on the issue of the ending of Roman Catholic opposition to attempts to enact Bible in Schools legislation the Metropolitan had made a firm decision. The executive had no cause to expect the Metropolitan to renounce the concordat.

On 9 April 1931 Gibb was elected to a committee entrusted with preparing and introducing a new Bible in Schools measure.⁶³ The Religious Exercises for Public Schools Enabling bill received its first reading on 1 July 1931 and was read a second time on 31 July.⁶⁴ It was then referred to the Education committee. The committee reported to the House in November and recommended that the bill be not proceeded with on the grounds that legislation already existed to allow school committees the right to declare their schools 'out of session' for one half-hour period each week, and allow Bible instruction by visiting clergy during these periods.⁶⁵ The bill's progress was hardly aided by Bishop Brodie, Roman Catholic Bishop of Christchurch, who, on 24 June 1931, had publicly denied that any concordat had been made. Hopes for the bill were further dampened by opposition from Labour members in the House. Peter Fraser announced that he was pledged to defend the secular system and indicated

62. Bible in Schools Executive Committee Minutes. 24 July 1930.

63. Ibid., 9 April 1931.

64. NZPD, 228, 1 July 1931, p.96; NZPD, 228, 30 July 1931, p.911.

65. NZPD, 230, 7 November 1931, p.871.

that electors would do well to concern themselves with issues more relevant to the needs of the Dominion:

There are certain questions coming before the electors for decision - questions of an economic, financial and industrial nature - and the clearer these issues are put before the people and the fewer cross-currents that disturb the issues the better it will be for all concerned.⁶⁶

The 1931 bill was killed by the House of Representative's Education committee. While the bill was before the committee, the Metropolitan, who had returned to New Zealand and reassumed command from O'Shea, stated that the hierarchy would oppose the bill.⁶⁷ The bill did not pass the second reading.

Gibb and his friends tried again on 29 September 1932 when the chairman of the League's executive, Sir James Allen, introduced the Religious Instruction in Public Schools Enabling bill into the Council. This bill was debated over several sitting days and on several occasions the Council divided evenly over its clauses, the chairman being forced to deliver a casting vote.

Allen's bill was not only designed to introduce religious observances at the beginning of the school day but also to allow the teaching of Biblical studies by head teachers, their appointed deputies, or by specialists. Sir James attempted to counter Roman Catholic opposition by revealing that the leaders of eight Churches supported the bill: the heads of the Church of England, the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches, the Baptist and Congregational Unions, and the Salvation Army commissioner as well as the Evangelical Lutheran president. He was less impressive when he added that the Mothers' Union, the W.C.T.U., and the Loyal Orange Lodge, also approved the bill. Allen revealed his close association with Gibb

66. NZPD, 230, 7 November 1931, p.871.

67. E.O. Blamires, A Christian Core for New Zealand Education, Auckland 1960. Addenda 5, p.89. See also, I.A. Snook, 'Religion in Schools: A Catholic Controversy, 1930-1934', New Zealand Journal of History, VI, October 1972, 2, pp.169-177.

over the proposed measure when he referred to the Scottish educational system:

Within the last hour or so I have had placed in my hands a note indicating that the Reverend Dr. Gibb has stated he can go back sixty-five years, and that he received full instruction in religious teaching.⁶⁸

In the second reading debate Allen was supported by Isitt, Sir William Hall-Jones, W. Snodgrass and Sir James Parr. The opposition was led by Sir Francis Bell, J.A. Hanan, and R. Masters, the Minister of Education. The bill's supporters re-introduced well worn arguments - national moral survival and the need for a rounded education - with the novel additional suggestion that as the Farmers' Union and Fruitgrowers' Association had recently decided to begin their meetings with prayer the schools should not lag behind.⁶⁹

The opponents of the bill were relentless in their rebuttal of the arguments presented. The Minister of Education revealed that in 1931 50,000 children had received religious instruction under the 'Nelson system'⁷⁰ in the Dominion's state schools. Protestant clergy were charged with asking for more without fully using opportunities already open to them. W.H. McIntyre countered the argument that without the teaching of the Bible in the State schools the nation's morals would crumble, by presenting statistics that showed a decline in summary convictions under a secular education system. Sir Francis Bell, with the Tennessee 'Scopes trial' of 1925 in mind, asked who would decide how Creation should be taught? Bell wanted no resurgence of bigotry and sectarian Fundamentalism:

It is not the fires of Smithfield that will be rekindled, it is the law courts of Tennessee.... The bill provides that the leader is to instruct. Is he to instruct according to the doctrine of Tennessee, or is he to instruct according to the view of most enlightened men on that subject?⁷¹

Allen withdrew his bill when a casting vote by the chairman negated

68. NZPD. 233, 12 October 1932, p.462.

69. Ibid., p.463.

70. Ibid., p.462.

71. Ibid., 13 October 1932, p.522.

an amendment aimed at making the Nelson system the starting point for the teaching of religion as a curriculum subject. E.O. Blamires, furious that his bill had been destroyed in the Council for the lack of a single vote, vented his spleen on the Roman Catholics:

The betrayal of our cause by the Hon. C.J. Carrington was not unexpected after that of Archbishop Redwood, though he stated up to the time of the voting that not even the Pope himself could make him change his mind.⁷²

Gibb and his friends should not really have been surprised at the Roman Catholic Church's suspicion of their moves, and sudden return to an attitude of confrontation. The Bible in Schools League offered no support for state aid, did not present their bills to the hierarchy for consideration, and Gibb, with other Presbyterian League members, had hardly endeared themselves to the Metropolitan by their accusations that the Roman Catholic priests and teaching orders were failing to contribute to unemployment relief because they were not subject to the depression poll tax.⁷³ Snook makes clear that Bishop Liston had expected that some sort of concession to state aid claims would be made in return for any withdrawal of support for Bible in Schools legislation.⁷⁴ Archbishop O'Shea, in the absence of the Metropolitan, stated that the Roman Catholic Church was satisfied that the state aid issue should be kept separate. O'Shea was only assistant to the Metropolitan. When the Metropolitan was exercising his prerogatives O'Shea was not even a member of the hierarchy. When the Metropolitan changed his mind and surrendered to the misgivings of his hierarchy O'Shea was made the scapegoat for the hierarchy. It was not only the hierarchy that broke its word. At the initial meeting between the League representatives and the hierarchy it had been agreed that:

This meeting accepts the general principle that if the introduction of religious observances or instruction involves any additional cost, the Roman Catholics shall be exempted from paying any share of this additional cost.⁷⁵

72. Confidential Report to the Bible in Schools Executive: Report on the Campaign in the Upper House, October 1932.

73. Wellington Presbytery, 12 July 1932.

74. Snook, p.175; Liston to O'Shea, 29 May 1930.

75. Blamires, p.86.

Both League bills would have required government expenditure and no suggestion was made that such expenditure should come from any other source than taxation revenue, extracted equitably from Roman Catholics and Protestants.

The 1932 bill was the final charge by the stricken Bible in School Leaguers. Sir James Allen was seventy-seven, Isitt and Sir Heaton Rhodes left Parliament at the close of 1932; support was decaying and dying. Henry Holland's attempt to win the House's support for a slightly modified bill in 1934 was doomed to failure. The League executive was uncertain and delayed from pushing the bill at the point where it might have gained some support. In the end it was withdrawn and Holland's frustrated and pathetic protest is an epitaph to a discarded cause:

...I had stated that the Bill had been badly bungled, and I hold to that opinion. It is now three months since I moved the second reading on Aug 1st, and we are not as far forward now as we were on Aug 1st, because the second reading has been withdrawn, and there is now nothing before the House, and the second reading will have to be moved again, that is, if the Bill does come before the House again this session.... Mr Forbes stated that when he promised to give the Bill a fair run, the House was slack with business, and it is now a very different thing at the closing moments of the House.... The delay has resulted in a deputation to the Prime Minister and to three petitions being lodged against the Bill. It has enabled the N.Z.E.I. to circularise 300 teachers in Wellington with the result that 138 have voted against the Bill and only 26 in favour.... I have put a great deal of work into this Bill, it has been a worry and anxiety to me for the past three months, and as the second reading has been withdrawn, it is quite open to the executive to appoint some other member to move its second reading should it come up before the House again.⁷⁶

The fourth failure to haunt Gibb in his last five years was the failure of the League of Nations to implement world disarmament and maintain international peace. In 1930 this failure was not apparent. The advocates of the Covenant of the League and of world disarmament still had cause to be optimistic. In January 1930 the second Reparation Conference reduced the allies reparation demands on Germany from an impossible 132,000 million gold marks to 38 million gold marks, payable over

76. Holland to Robertshaw, 22 October 1934. Robertshaw was acting secretary to the League executive.

fifty-nine years. The London Naval Conference met in April, and under the guidance of Ramsay MacDonald extended the 1921 limitation of battleship construction to a wider class of warships.

Gibb was again president of the Wellington branch of the League of Nations Union in 1930 and he began the year with a flurry of activity. He had been disheartened in late 1929 by the New Zealand government's failure to commit the Dominion to the optional clause of the League Covenant, a clause that pledged signatories to submit any international dispute to the International Court of Justice. In September 1929 he headed a deputation to Ward, the Prime Minister, urging him to sign. Following the deputation's return Gibb gave a radio broadcast, announcing:

Where New Zealand stands no one outside the cabinet knows. A delegation...waited on the Prime Minister urging him to sign, or at least to let the people know the Government's attitude, but in vain.⁷⁷

By the close of 1929, Gibb had recovered his confidence and began the new year by dispatching personal letters to every member of Parliament, advocating disarmament and the signing of the optional clause. The League of Nations Union was very much in the public eye. During January and February 1930 John Allan, a combatant in the war but now a supporter of the League, fought a duel in the Outlook's correspondence columns with Isaac Jolly, a defender of the concept of a 'just war'.⁷⁸ Gibb's radio talks, public lectures and addresses, together with his encouragement for League branches and sister peace movements - the International Fellowship of Reconciliation and the New Zealand 'No More War' movement - increased public interest. In mid-1930 a film version of Remarque's anti-war novel, 'All Quiet on the Western Front' was released in New Zealand. This film had been previously banned by the censor and a large public queued to see the ravages of war.⁷⁹

77. Outlook, 23 September 1929.

78. *Ibid.*, 27 January 1930; 17 February 1930.

79. George Hunt to Gibb, 15 August 1930.

In July 1930 Gibb capitalised on the mood of national sympathy for the League of Nations by leading a deputation to meet Forbes, the new Prime Minister. This deputation included Walter Nash, R.S. Watson (a Presbyterian Minister and Military Cross winner) and several of the younger clergy. The deputation advocated an end to compulsory military training, noting that New Zealand was the last nation within the empire to retain conscription.⁸⁰ Forbes was sympathetic and within a few months abolished compulsory military training, though not out of idealistic pacifist notions but as a depression economy.

It was not until September 1931 that Japan began military operations in Manchuria and until then Gibb and the League of Nations Union presented a credible case. World opinion did not immediately interpret Japanese aggression in Manchuria as a sign that Japan was embarking on a new foreign policy. F.P. Walters, a former deputy Secretary-General to the League of Nations, noted Japan's consistent loyalty and hitherto precise and detailed support for League undertakings and persuaded many observers that Japan was intervening to end the feudal anarchy that was despoiling Manchuria.⁸¹ Edgar Foa, from the London office of the League of Nations Union, presented this view to Gibb in November 1931.⁸² Even so, Japanese military activity, the nearness of the mooted meeting of the Disarmament Conference, and the seeming interest of Forbes in the League, persuaded Gibb that it was time to hold his biggest rally ever.

Gibb's monster disarmament meeting was held in the Wellington Town Hall on 5 October 1931. Forbes, Coates, and Holland (the Labour leader) were present and addressed the gathering, as did Gibb. The meetings proceedings were broadcast and Gibb received congratulatory messages from his friends throughout the Dominion, most agreeing with John Allan that this was 'surely the greatest triumph you have ever had in the Peace line'.⁸³

80. Outlook, 28 July 1930.

81. F.P. Walters, A History of the League of Nations, London, 1952, pp.333-334; 414.

82. Foa to Gibb, 25 November 1931.

83. Allan to Gibb, 27 October 1931.

However, from the close of 1931 Gibb received warnings from his closest relatives and friends that the League of Nations was a man of straw. On 14 October his son Malcolm complained:

The League's hesitating to deal with the China-Japanese problem is far from reassuring.... It really is a race between education and catastrophe and it looks as if catastrophe will win.⁸⁴

In 1932 Gibb still hoped that New Zealand might lead the world to perpetual peace by disarmament, by strenuous support for the League and its principles, and by constant moral pressure applied to Britain, who could lead the world along a new path. With the ending of compulsory military training in 1930 New Zealand was left with only a few hundred regular soldiers and a volunteer territorial force of 3,655. Gibb saw the abolition of this remnant as the next step. Gibb believed that New Zealand would most certainly continue the role Forbes and Coates cast her for, as Britain's most dutiful daughter, if she persuaded Britain to prosecute a more vigorous role in promoting world disarmament. The Disarmament Conference began in Geneva on 2 February 1932. Gibb heralded its coming with an article in the Outlook on 25 January.

In his two page article Gibb revealed that the nations were spending £900 million annually on armaments. Gibb saw this renewed armaments race as a certain movement toward war and blamed French intransigence toward disarmament proposals for escalated rearmament. Gibb's sense of urgency was accompanied by a fear that the major powers had already committed themselves intractably to a policy of armed confrontation. Gibb was reserved in his estimation of the Conference's chances of success:

Partial disarmament - and that is all that is aimed at for the present - may not be an infallible specific for world peace, but if the conference effects, as is suggested it well may, a uniform reduction of 25 per cent. in the budgetary appropriations of the nations for military purposes, the race in armaments will cease, and peace will in all probability prevail throughout the world.⁸⁵

84. Malcolm Gibb to Gibb, 14 October 1931.

85. Outlook, 25 January 1932.

In a series of radio talks Gibb revealed his growing pessimism over the turn the Disarmament Conference was taking. He applauded the delegates at the Lausanne Reparation conference, who in June and July 1932 reduced Germany's war debt to 3 milliard marks. Lausanne was the one brightspot in a grey and frightening year:

Lausanne will go down in history, with the establishment of the League of Nations, with Locarno and the Kellogg Pact, as amongst the greatest happenings of the Christian centuries. Lausanne has abolished the wrong which could before long have locked France and Germany once more in deadliest strife.⁸⁶

Gibb was over optimistic as to the likely consequences of Lausanne. He was closer to the mark in August 1932, when he assessed that the Disarmament Conference's chances of success were nullified from the moment military experts were called in to negotiate the levels of military safeguard beyond which their governments were not prepared to go. Gibb predicted that these experts would ruin everything:

As well set a cat to instruct mice how best to prevent the cat from endangering their safety as set these gentlemen to advise about the prevention of war. They do not believe in disarmament. They believe that war is inevitable. And war is their job.⁸⁷

Although Gibb was well versed in international politics, in making his assessments he had failed to take into account Germany's internal political situation. In 1932 Germany possessed seven million unemployed and no gold reserves and was governed by a weak and unpopular Papen. Lausanne deprived the republican government of a rhetorical grievance - the 'squeezing of Germany until the pips squeaked'.⁸⁸ In a frantic attempt to maintain some semblance of popular support, in the face of increasing Nazi arrogance, Papen instructed Germany's representatives to leave the conference table. In 1932 allied statesmen feared the total collapse of Germany and, to Papen's chagrin, agreed easily to Germany being granted

86. Outlook, 4 August 1932.

87. Ibid., 8 August 1932.

88. Lloyd George declared during the 'Khaki Election' of December 1918, that Germany 'should be squeezed until the pips squeaked'.

equality of status within a system of security. Under Papen massive German rearmament was impossible. But on 30 January 1933 Papen was no longer in power. The new chancellor was Adolph Hitler.

Following the death of his wife, at the close of 1932, Gibb's health deteriorated. He continued his crusading for the League of Nations Union, but he now addressed fewer meetings, ceased giving radio talks, and only rarely contributed articles to the Outlook and the newspapers. Events in Germany increased the momentum of his movement to Barthianism. In September 1933 the German Church struggle began with Barth leading the opposition in their stand against the Nazi German Christians. On 13 November 1933, at the celebrated Sports-palace meeting, the 'German Christians' demanded that the Church jettison the Old Testament (described as a Jewish library) and accept the implications of the new 'Aryan paragraph' in the constitution, a Nazi addition outlawing everything Jewish. Gibb had followed the pattern of increasing Nazi persecution of the Jews, in the newspapers and in the Outlook. Louis Phillips, an Auckland barrister and solicitor and also a Jew, in congratulating Gibb on his decision to remain president of the League executive - Gibb's likely successor was Willis Airey, the historian - appealed to him to add his protest to those of Gilbert Murray and Robert Cecil.⁸⁹

What lesson did the coming to power of the Nazis teach Gibb? Nazi violence, persecution of the Jews unparalleled in Germany for centuries, and the valiant struggle by the Pastors' Emergency League to maintain the integrity of the Church, did not so much suggest to Gibb that the Nazis were dangerous as reinforce his conviction that theological liberalism always leaves a Church so lacking in commitment to the Christian gospel that it easily becomes the willing pawn of any social order, even a brutal and neo-pagan Third Reich. In the mid-1930s Hitler was not seen by New Zealand's Church leaders as a mad dog. He was seen as a scourge needed to expel a listless and purposeless liberalism. Alex Salmond, in 1934 a post-graduate student at Cambridge, suggested that in Germany:

The Church was...lethargic, it was the Church of the "Old Rich Men" which spent its time on remote sermons and trifling

89. Phillips to Gibb, 19 September 1933.

social endeavours.... To-day Hitler stands as the champion of the younger generation against the old; the leader of the sons against the fathers, the ideology of Middle Europe against that of Western Europe.⁹⁰

The Methodist Times and the New Zealand Tablet were for a time equally determined to explain Hitler's appearance and forbear from condemnation.⁹¹

The Nazi party's successful attempt to bend much of the German Church, the universities, and the middle-class, to the service of the third Reich strengthened Gibb's revulsion against the Social Gospel and theological liberalism. The theology of Karl Barth was a bastion against the siren seduction of national socialism, liberalism and every cultural order that sought to use the Church as a pawn. Barthian theology proclaimed an assured revealed theology and allowed no compromise with sub-Christian ideals and behavioural patterns. The Barthians countered an elite party with an elite Church, and blind obedience to the Führer with absolute devotion to Christ.

It was Gibb's Barthianism that kept him true to the cause of world disarmament as the war clouds gathered. Barth's personal rejection of theological liberalism arose from his rejection of the moral leadership of the German professors of theology who unhesitatingly blessed the Kaiser's militarism in 1914. It was only in desperation, under persecution, that the 'neo-orthodox' responded to repression with militancy. Gibb argued that the Church must not allow the liberal democracies in their feverish mistrust of each other, and their mistrust of the new men in Europe, to enlist the Church's support for their militarist policy of rearmament and mutual defence pacts. The Church held a prior duty to proclaim peace as the servant of the Prince of Peace. This is the theological rationale behind Gibb's support for the General Secretary of the Australian League of Nations Union, Raymond Watt, who in May 1934 asked Gibb to support his

90. Outlook, 26 March 1934.

91. N.Z. Tablet, 10 January 1934 and 4 July 1934; Methodist Times, 3 August 1935. The Methodist Times article applauded a reported statement by Hitler that 'The New Germany is against war, not only because it does not pay, but because it violates every instinct of civilized man'.

efforts to persuade the Dominions to exert pressure on Britain for more definite support for the League and collective security.⁹²

By the close of 1934 the London Naval Disarmament Conference had failed, Japan had denounced the Washington Treaty and its attempted political settlement of the Pacific and the Far East, and in New Zealand recruitment for the regular army had recommenced. Ill health plagued Gibb more and more as the early months of 1935 dropped away. The international situation seemed to deteriorate apace with his health: in March Germany repudiated the military clauses of the Versailles Treaty, the European powers were accelerating their programmes of rearmament, and the Italian army assembled supplies for an invasion of Abyssinia.

Gibb had one more plea to make. On 23 April 1935 a full column letter by Gibb appeared in the Dominion and was given a place of honour next to the editorial. While Gibb in his article on the Disarmament Conference, in January 1932, had praised British foreign policy for its implementation of preliminary armament cuts in his final assessment he condemned Britain. He demanded:

Who began this race for armaments, for race it is? The British Resolution and the White Paper came before the German intimation that they were adopting conscription. But that is a trifle. It is not a trifle, however, that all the years since the so-called peace was proclaimed we have failed to keep faith with Germany. Says the last issue of the Round Table: "The vital function for Great Britain is to take initiative in bringing Germany into the comity of Europe". What did we do to keep Germany in that comity? Consent to France's piling up of armaments and fortifications without end, and with withers unwrung see Europe become an armed camp in defiance if not of definite provisions of the Versailles Treaty then in contempt of our definite promise that German disarmament would be followed by disarmament of all the Allies.⁹³

Gibb went on to argue that it had been clear to him since 1920 that Britain's slavish following of French policy would end in a resurgence of German militarism:

92. Watt to Gibb, 23 May 1934.

93. Dominion, 23 April 1935.

If we had met her in the spirit of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, if we had been true to our promises, if we had added a strain of generosity to our dealings with her and had initiated a movement for the restoration of the colonies of which she should never have been deprived, how different the situation might have been at this hour.⁹⁴

His final word was to the Church:

It is now or never for the Christian Church to take its stand against war... If the Church refuses to take this stand, the time will have come...when men will leave the Church in order to become Christians.⁹⁵

This was Gibb's last public statement and in it he blurred Germany's partial responsibility for the heightening of international tension. His biased apportionment of blame was part and parcel of his Barthian discountenancing of the merits of democratic liberalism. The political and cultural leaders of Britain and France had brought decadence, despair and decay to Western civilization. God had judged democratic liberalism and found it wanting. Hitler, Stalin and Mussolini had arisen as scourges of God, designed to destroy a corrupt and faithless social order. Faced with the probability of a catastrophic world war the Church, her warnings unheeded, must retreat to her sanctuaries, her message of salvation unsullied by compromise, and offer to the world prayer and sanctuary, as she had at the fall of Roman civilization.

Gibb died on 24 October 1935, a little more than one month before the Labour party he had once expected so much from became New Zealand's government, and a little less than five years before the outbreak of the Second World War he had attempted to prevent.

94. Dominion, 23 April 1935.

95. Ibid.

Conclusion

Frustrated Leadership

I am very sensible of the honour the General Assembly has laid upon me in asking me to initiate this new lectureship. But it is with a trembling heart I venture to undertake its duties. "Students", it has been said, "are at the age when we agree with Carlyle that most folk are fools, and pronounce every man over five-and-forty who does not happen to agree with our opinions an old fogey". Well, I was over five-and-forty a good many years before any of you arrived on this planet, but it is not your criticism that daunts me. It is a sense of my own failure to come within a measurable distance of my ideals.

James Gibb, 1933¹

On the occasion of Gibb's farewell from the parish ministry in 1926 Rutherford Waddell expressed a commonly felt amazement at Gibb's capacity for work:

I have often marvelled at the amount of work he got through. In spite of all the outside claims upon him, he has lived a studious life. He kept himself abreast of all the movements in the world of thought, and so his preaching never grew thin or dull, but was instinct with life.²

Waddell was right about Gibb's work habits. In the course of his Stuart lectures Gibb admitted to the students of Knox College that only an ox-like constitution had enabled him to work regularly until three or four in the morning, and sometimes work the whole night through. He confessed that sometimes his Sunday sermons were delivered with the ink barely dry on the pages.

Gibb's idealistic concept of the Christian ministry drove him hard throughout his career. His wife and family were given little opportunity to enjoy his company, although they were aware of his presence in his study, evidenced by clouds of pipe tobacco smoke billowing through the Manse. Because he worked himself remorselessly, often to the point of collapse, he had little time for bungling mediocrities who wasted his

1. James Gibb, Making Proof of the Ministry, Wellington, 1935, pp.8-9.

2. Outlook, 10 May 1926.

time, and frittered away their own. Those who survive him are unanimous that he did not suffer fools and time wasters gladly.

That Gibb was a man with a tremendous drive and capacity for work is beyond cavil. However, no historian judges his subject's success or failure merely on his capacity for work. This concluding assessment of Gibb's career certainly reflects his busyness, but builds its judgments on his apparent impact, as a parish minister, ecclesiastical leader and social crusader.

How did Gibb fare as a parish minister? It is only just that this question should be answered before attention is given to the more fascinating areas of his career - his activities as a Church statesman and a social crusader. Gibb was first and foremost a parish minister. His stipend was in turn paid by three parishes that expected him to provide a dynamic preaching and pastoral ministry.

Gibb saw himself as first and foremost a parish minister, although with a concomitant social crusading duty, and he is entitled to be judged on his success in this role. What standards does an historian use to measure the utility of an ecclesiastical ministry? The religious devotee might argue that any judgment based on an analysis of Church attendance, popular response to sermons, number of pastoral visits made and parish finances, is not only superficial but irreligious, in that God alone can judge the success or failure of the cure of souls. The historian can agree that the Eschaton can be safely left to God but must insist that the social impact of an ecclesiastical ministry is open to the same tests used in the historical assessment of any other career.

A convenient starting point is Gibb's own estimate of his ministry. Any cleric who leaves a large trunk of personal correspondence and papers, neatly arranged for the preparation of an autobiography prevented by death, obviously considered his career to have been of some moment. Gibb knew his own worth and realistically determined that his part in the birth and consolidation of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand should not be forgotten. His correspondence and public utterances take for granted his 'success' as a parish minister. He excelled according to the traditional Calvinist model of the ministry. Gibb preached the Christian

message thoughtfully, convincingly and with regard to its manifold implications. His parishioners were visited regularly and systematically, and he was quick to respond to crisis situations. He followed the prophetic tradition in leading his people in a crusade against all forms of vice and irreligion. Gibb was consistently applauded as the New Zealand Presbyterian Church's most successful minister and he had no reason to doubt the judgment of colleagues, parishioners, visitors and correspondents, who were insistent with their praise.

Gibb's clerical introspection tells more about his self-confidence than about his actual effectiveness. Parish statistics provide a much more reliable guide. Many clerics profess to despise parish statistics and denounce their use as a register of success or failure (although they invariably make use of them when selecting a new parish). Gibb had no such misgiving and often cited statistical evidence to assess the success of his policies.

The statistical records of his three parishes do not register unquestionable success. Gibb left Footscray because he felt his sphere of influence was too small; he had failed to attract the workers of that semi-industrial suburb into his Church. He left the First Church of Otago in 1903, admitting that the suburban parishes, whose boundaries encompassed more of First Church pastoral territory with every Presbytery boundary revision, were seriously reducing the role of his Church in the life of Dunedin. However, First Church, at the time of Gibb's translation to St. John's, was one of the largest Presbyterian congregations in Australasia. In 1836, when Gibb arrived, First Church possessed a congregational roll of 540 members and in 1903 the roll stood at 760. During his seventeen years at First Church Gibb preached to packed congregations, administered a Sunday School system that at times numbered nearly 100 teachers on its staff, and led a vigorous youth movement. But his success was the suburban parishes' loss. Presbyterians who were expected by suburban ministers to aid in the foundation and extension of new Presbyterian causes were drawn to First Church by Gibb's dynamic preaching and leadership. Parish boundaries meant little to Gibb. His success at First Church depended upon his skimming the cream from Presbyterian parishes throughout the city. His congregational roll remained comparatively small because most of his congregation came from outside his parish bounds, a fact he admitted at his farewell from Dunedin.

In his ministry at St. John's Church Gibb did well until the close of the First World War. At his farewell he immodestly suggested that there was an unbroken growth in congregational numbers and revenue during his ministerial tenure. He noted a gain of 2,417 new members during his twenty-three years, and a total income of £80,000, of which £30,000 had been donated to missions. Gibb contended that the parish income had doubled during his ministry, from £1,969 in 1902 to £3,364 in 1925.³ However, Gibb did not tell the whole story. He did not acknowledge that from his conversion to pacifism at the close of the First World War until his retirement congregational numbers had steadily declined. St. John's parish income remained at its peak for the last five years of Gibb's ministry mainly because several wealthy parishioners increased their giving.

Blanchard, Gibb's successor, found on his arrival in 1927 that Gibb had 'emptied St. John's'.⁴ His testimony is supported by J. Allan, J. Hubbard and J.D. Salmond. Ormond Burton also agreed. Gibb had become a fanatic and fanatics usually bore. At the close of his parish ministry the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand's most talented preacher was a man with only one message - the League of Nations and disarmament - and after months of hearing the same refrain many parishioners quietly stole away. Gibb explained away their departure by suggesting that St. John's loss was a gain for the surrounding suburban parishes. The Kirk Session informed parishioners who gathered for Gibb's farewell that the small numbers in Church was due to 'the increasing difficulties incidental to the working of a down-town Church'.⁵ Some of the dissatisfied did join suburban congregations, while others joined the increasing numbers of the capital's unchurched.

From the close of the First World War Gibb found New Zealanders less prepared than before the war to take the clergy's right to moral leadership for granted. The war acted as a watershed allowing many New Zealanders to break links with the Churches that had gradually weakened over the two preceding decades. The Benthamite test of utility was applied to Gibb

3. Outlook, 22 March 1926.

4. Personal interview with J.R. Blanchard, Wellington, 12 July 1973.

5. Outlook, 22 March 1926.

and the clergy. Unchurched New Zealanders saw little reason for providing stipends for ministers who required a moral rigorism to which they were no longer prepared to subscribe. The sermon no longer rated as either good entertainment or acceptable moral guidance. The minister's social usefulness was diminishing. For most communities the ministers were still the only readily available counsellors, but those who had voluntarily opted out of the Churches were often too embarrassed to seek clerical aid in times of crisis. The decline in congregational attendance at St. John's Church following the First World War was accelerated but not caused by Gibb's obsession with pacifism. Even so, nearby preachers, who preached the Christian gospel in all its variety, suffered similar decimation of numbers; it was a national trend. Ministers and sermons were being edged further on to the periphery of everyday life.

A decline in clerical status in the community accompanied this divorce of the citizenry from the Church. After the war leading clerics were rarely the subject of cartoonist satire; they were no longer considered consequential enough to receive this attention. The Wellington newspapers ceased to report the proceedings of the Wellington Presbytery in any detail and fewer Presbyterian ministers graced the Governor-General's dinner table. Gibb himself realised that New Zealanders no longer held the same respect for the clergy. He informed the Knox College students of 1933 that:

The pendulum has now swung to the opposite extreme. For the "cloth" itself there was a quite common feeling of something like disparagement. It finds expression in the gibe which divides the population into men, women, and ministers of religion.⁶

Despite this deterioration of social status, and relegation to mere sectarian leadership, ministers were still expected to live in the style of the upper middle-class. This expectation, and the additional requirement that parish ministers lead with contributions to local charities, embarrassed ministers who were expected to exist on stipends that were not expanded to meet increases in the cost of living. Gibb's stipend remained at £650 throughout his ministry at St. John's. During this twenty-three years the consumers' price index registered an increase from 308 to 534.

6. James Gibb, Making Proof of the Ministry, p.7.

The cost of living increased by approximately 43 per cent; and yet Gibb remained on the same fixed emolument. Gibb's stipend was far higher than the average ministerial stipend, where meeting weekly household expenses required financial wizardry.⁷

As a parish minister Gibb offered wares most New Zealanders did not wish to buy. His career as a Church leader was also frustrated by lack of support, first of all because the Presbyterian Church had no place in its leadership for de facto bishops, and also because the pan-Protestant support he enlisted for his crusades was disparate in aims, diffuse in character, and impermanent.

Fate played a cruel joke on Gibb in making him a Presbyterian. His dynamic drive, administrative capacity and charisma were fine prerequisites for an archbishop or a cardinal. But Gibb was born a Presbyterian and Presbyterianism traditionally abhors episcopacy and designs its Church polity to prevent talented individuals dominating the courts of the Church. Presbyterian Church order is based on the concept of a corporate episcopacy, a hierarchy of Church courts wherein ministers and elders exercise equal privilege in legislating the affairs of their communion. Moderators (Chairmen) of Presbyteries and the General Assembly do not hold office for more than one year at a time and the General Assembly reviews carefully decisions made in its name by ambitious committee conveners. Gibb gained a high degree of national eminence from his convenerships but his status was usually greater than his power. At the annual General Assembly an elder-farmer from Riverton carried the same voting power as did the D.D. from Wellington - one vote. Gibb was usually able to carry the farmer-elder with him, by his oratory and by carefully cultivated acquaintance during his visits to extension charges, but this usually gained him little for the Presbyterian system of Church government was weakened by a basic defect, it had no effective executive arm. Ministers and elders shouted their 'Ayes' to Gibb's motions and assumed that voting was some magic that would actually achieve the end they required. They returned to their parishes believing something would be done. Most times little was done simply

7. Consumers' Price Index, 1955, Wellington, 1956. The index takes 1907 as its base year but in doing so notes that the economy had been stable for the preceding five years. On the basis of this explanation I have assumed that the 1907 and 1903 situations were the same.

because the Church refused to delegate executive power to any leader capable of getting its decisions implemented.

New Zealand Presbyterianism was without an effective executive arm and Gibb suffered from this defect. The General Assembly accepted Gibb's Home Mission policies without concurrent attention to practical measures to raise the funds needed to support these plans. Gibb was too able to be too much trusted. He was convener of the Home Mission committee for thirteen years, but he was forced to share power with a superintendent who had little love for him, and after Fraser's retirement, when he made known that he wished to be superintendent, the Assembly appointed someone else. Gibb did the best he could with what he had and often faced his lack of funds by hurling angry letters at defaulting parishes where elders and deacons placed their new organ fund ahead of the Home Mission allocation. He expected his colleagues to have his sense of urgency, and his capacity for work, and he was easily angered by their failure to measure to his standards.

Gibb was equally frustrated by the Church's lack of grass-roots commitment to his Bible in Schools and League of Nations' crusades. In the service of these crusades he attempted to build the General Assembly and the Presbyteries into something they refused to be, executive action groups rather than discussion forums. Gibb expected the General Assembly to ensure that Presbyteries implemented Assembly decisions. He expected Presbytery conveners to form local committees, publicise his crusades, exert pressure on politicians, gather local support and raise funds. Presbytery conveners usually preferred to remain scribes rather than assume any executive role, and little was done.

On the floor of General Assembly Gibb's self-confidence, intolerance of opposition and crushing repartee made him feared by leaders who had no desire for a Presbyterian pope. His worthiest opponent, the dwarfish clerk to the Assembly, James MacKenzie, harassed Gibb as a terrier annoys a hound. MacKenzie was the guardian of the Book of Order, the manual of Presbyterian Church law, and he usefully familiarised himself with little known precedents from Scottish General Assemblies. He made it his business to see that Gibb kept to the letter of the law. MacKenzie made no secret of his conviction that Gibb was a potential ecclesiastical

dictator, on one occasion sarcastically informing Assembly representatives that 'Dr Gibb appears to be privy to the secret councils of the Almighty'.⁸

Within his own communion Gibb's designs were thwarted by the suspicion of clerical mediocrities, the refusal of Church courts to implement Church policies and the absence of an executive officer who would bring defaulting parishes before the bar of Assembly in the event of contumacy. However, Gibb was a leader of the national Protestant cause as well as a denominational leader. Did he fare any better in this broader ecclesiastical setting? Gibb's plan to combine the nation's Congregationalists, Methodists and Presbyterians into a National Evangelical Church was not only his most ambitious design, it also marked the peak of his personal ambition. Had Gibb succeeded in 1904 he would have created a national Church comprising 34.60 per cent of the population and ministered to by 442 clergy. Given that the proposed national Church might have been at least as dynamic as its constituent parts it could in time have achieved an ecclesiastical pre-eminence. In 1904 the Church of England received 40.84 per cent of census affiliations and possessed 336 clergy.⁹

Gibb undoubtedly saw himself as the most likely contender, perhaps as the only candidate, for the moderatorial chair in the National Evangelical Church. Had this Church become a reality it is possible that Gibb might have been able to induce the Methodist element, familiar with long tenured district synodical chairmen, to advocate a longer moderatorial tenure, allowing the establishment of a form of de facto episcopacy. Even had Gibb failed to secure the permanent presidency of the proposed Church, had he succeeded in concluding this merger his personal prestige would have made him the unchallenged leader of the new communion. The merger was never completed. Gibb was frustrated by suspicion within his own Church, by the House of Lords' judgment and by a desire amongst many Presbyterian leaders for a consolidated national Presbyterian Church rather than a broad-based National Evangelical Church.

8. MacKenzie's retort is part of the folk lore of the New Zealand Presbyterian Church and its actuality is affirmed by all of my interviewed sources present at that particular General Assembly.

9. N.Z. Year Book, 1905, pp. 1228 and 242.

Although Gibb failed to consolidate a formal Protestant Evangelical union he did succeed in expanding an informal Evangelical alliance. Even before the turn of the century Gibb's Church Councils and deputations gathered leading Evangelical Protestants together in informal protests against secular education and vice. Outstanding Protestant leaders often garner more popularity outside their own denomination than within and Gibb was no exception to this rule. During the first two decades of the twentieth century photographs of Evangelical deputations and meetings usually revealed Gibb placed centre in the front row, obviously the unchallenged leader of those present. Even so, leadership of an informal Evangelical alliance was not without its problems. Gibb was forced to take cognisance of the wide variety of theological opinion that gathered beneath the alliance's umbrella. He was forced to wend his way between the Scylla of Loyal Orange Lodge and Protestant Political Association bigotry and the Charybdis of Broad Church Anglican multiformity. At the close of the First World War, when the Lodge and the P.P.A. entered the epidemic stage of their anti-Romanism, Gibb became adept at finding excuses for not preaching to Lodge Church parades and discovering prior engagements when asked to chair P.P.A. meetings.

This should not be taken to signify that Gibb always stood with the forces of moderation and liberal good sense within the Evangelical alliance. On occasions he was betrayed by his own obsessions and fears into irrational and damaging stances. The case of 'The Girl from Rectors' was the most notable occasion, with Gibb and Worth finally isolating themselves from the rest of the Protestant clergy, and the Wellington community, by the irrationality and extremism of their stand against a play they had neither seen nor read.

Hardy annuals, the Bible in Schools bills and anti-gambling tirades, provided Gibb with a fine opportunity to re-assert his leadership in areas where all true Evangelicals might be expected to rally to the defence of the party. Anti-Catholicism was a useful unifying device, though less useful once Archbishop O'Shea became an advocate of the League of Nations. Gibb's post-war pacifism did him far less harm with the Methodists and Congregationalists than within his own Church where Jolly, Dickie and Dutton joined to oppose him. In fact his support for the League of Nations and disarmament extended the base of the alliance, with the Society of Friends and the Salvation Army throwing in their lot on this issue.

As a Presbyterian leader and as an Evangelical Church statesman Gibb failed in his overall design. He succeeded in planting Presbyterian agents in nearly every community, and he rallied the Evangelical forces to support the crusades of the Kingdom of God, but he and his legion did not Christianize the nation. At the close of his career more New Zealanders were looser in their religious affiliation, in proportion to the overall population, than when Gibb arrived in Otago in 1886. His last crusade, for the League of Nations, was as strongly supported by humanists and agnostics as by Churchmen. Gibb had argued that the nation must be Christianized to prevent Anglo-Saxons, entrusted with a unique Christian civilization, being barbarised by their environment. By 1930 it was most apparent that the Churches had not captured the vital allegiance of the nation and yet New Zealanders had not degenerated into savagery.

Gibb also failed in his social crusading. This is hardly surprising in view of the extremism and inflexibility of his demands. He continued to insist that religious education be incorporated within the state school syllabus, even though the 'Nelson system' for religious instruction was working well in numerous schools. He was dissatisfied with anything less than a complete ban on gambling and he demanded rigorous censorship of harmless plays, and books he believed pornographic. Gibb was a Calvinist who like the New England founding fathers demanded conformity to a social blueprint he believed was designed by God himself. He believed that he possessed the absolute revealed will of God for human society and this belief led him to reject all suggested compromises. For Gibb, compromise, acceptance of marginal gains and variation of policy, were sins - betrayals of the revealed will of a Calvinist sovereign God.

The Social Gospel crusading army Gibb gathered about him was diverse in aim and in social philosophy. North was a Baptist arch-conservative, both in polity and theology; Rutherford Waddell was a theological radical and a Christian socialist, while Willis Airey was a humanist. Methodist supporters were not much interested in the theology of the Social Gospel, and its final goal, as in practical political measures to alleviate current misery. The Salvation Army contingent was made up of busy pragmatists. Marching under his own orders, and viewed with disfavour by Gibb, Colin Scrimgeour, with his 'Church of the Friendly Road', had eliminated Jesus'

divinity, supernaturalism and continuity with the Church of past ages from his creed, and was literally broadcasting a call for economic, political and social reformation.

Gibb's extremism and the divergent aims of his crusaders weakened his cause and reduced the impact of his leadership. His leadership as a social crusader was further weakened by his political mistakes. Seddon misjudged Gibb when he denounced him as 'more of a politician than a parson'.¹¹ Gibb was politically naive in the 1890s and remained almost as naive in the early 1930s. He learnt late in life that politicians' promises should not be taken at face value and he never learnt that in politics a half loaf is usually a measure well worth accepting. Gibb seems to have been constitutionally incapable of learning from his mistakes. He used the technique of introducing Bible in Schools legislation by way of an almost annual private member's bill for forty years. This consistency is hardly a virtue. He would have done better either to concentrate on persuading a major party to accept his measure or to accept defeat. His blustering attempts to intimidate politicians with threats that he would see to their defeat at the polls were equally unrealistic. He never realised that he had little grass-roots support, and that the nation's politicians realised this. Gibb's most fallacious assumption was that applause for his oratory at some crusade rally meant that people would return home eager to fight for his cause - they invariably went home to sleep, their appetite for golden-tongued oratory satiated.

Gibb's Social Gospel had its blind spots. He was enthusiastic about the need of the New Hebrideans for Christian Protestant civilization, demanded that the Chinese be protected from opium and he protected expatriate Germans from New Zealand xenophobia, but largely ignored the Maori race. With most New Zealanders of his time he accepted the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century verdict that as an ethnic entity the Maori was doomed, and that survivors must be absorbed into the British master race. This judgment followed naturally from his racialist

10. See A.J.S. Reid, 'Church and State in New Zealand, 1930-1935', unpublished M.A. thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1961 Part 5, p.137 et seq. See also L. Edwards, Scrim: Radio Rebel in Retrospect, Auckland, 1971.

11. See above, p.126.

social Darwinism, with its assumption of Anglo-Saxon superiority and civilizing mission. Gibb was a disciple of Josiah Strong.

Taken all in all Gibb was in many ways a failure. Lawrence Levine wrote of William Jennings Bryan that 'he never understood his own ethnocentrism or the increasing narrowness of his following'.¹² The same can be written of James Gibb. Gibb never really escaped from his youthful, mid-nineteenth century and romantic view of the ministry and the Church. Throughout his career he remained very much the patronising Scottish clerical gentleman, expecting deference to his wisdom and status from those who had not been blessed with his benefits of ordination and education. He remained an expatriate Scot and sought to duplicate the pattern of the Scottish Presbyterian Church-State interaction in the New Zealand parliament. He expected New Zealand parliamentarians to treat the findings of the New Zealand Presbyterian General Assembly with the respect accorded in Scotland to the findings of the Assembly of the established Church of Scotland, a body popularly known as 'the Scottish Parliament'. His Scottophilism is affirmed in his attempts to introduce the Scottish system of religious education into New Zealand's schools and his constant referral to Scottish 'theological models' as his 'theological revisions'.

This is not to suggest that the Australasian pastoral frontier was without any impact on Gibb. Gibb was imaginative and he produced several notable innovations designed to meet New Zealand's peculiar situation. His introduction of a second order into the Presbyterian ministry and his introduction of the office of Home Mission Superintendent (although the office of Superintendent existed in John Knox' polity) indicate that he could, and did, adapt to circumstances. However, allowing that Gibb was to some degree flexible, and on occasions proposed innovations, the case still holds that he was essentially concerned with moulding New Zealand to the ideals and patterns he saw enshrined in Scottish Calvinism. His Social Gospel goal was an idealised nineteenth century Scotland transplanted on New Zealand soil.

12. Lawrence W. Levine, Defender of the Faith. William Jennings Bryan: The Last Decade 1915-1925, Oxford, 1965, p.360.

The second part of Levine's criticism of Bryan applies just as aptly to Gibb. Gibb failed to appreciate that his aspirations and social criticisms were supported only by a minority sectional group, and that this group grew smaller year by year. He failed to appreciate that material success was secularism's greatest ally and that rural parishioners who succeeded in carving farms from bush and swamp by their own efforts were likely to rely less on God and more on human agencies in the future. Urbanization and the expansion of suburbia were fertile soil wherein secularism thrived. Gibb regarded the incoming flood of secularism as a momentary aberration, a flash flood likely to disappear leaving life as it had been before. Until the early 1930s he deluded himself that religious revival and the Kingdom of God on earth were around the next bend. When in the mid 1930s he returned to a stockade theology he still retained a basic optimism as to the final outcome, expecting the Kingdom of Heaven to conquer the earth by divine fiat.

The story of James Gibb's career on the Australasian pastoral frontier is the tale of the rise and fall of a Calvinist interpretation of the Social Gospel. When he left Victoria he left a pietistic, socially myopic Calvinism, that specialised in persecutions against 'orthodoxy and vice. From this climate of Calvinist pietism he gradually moved to an acceptance of the Social Gospel tenet that the social order of the present must be reformed in the image of the Kingdom of God. Within the Social Gospel camp Gibb remained more a realistic Calvinist than a radical humanitarian. He kept an important place for traditional doctrines of sin and salvation while attempting to secure the legislating of a few of the blessings of the Kingdom of God. His promotion of the cause of Labour, as with his earlier support for Massey and the Reform party, sprang from his belief that these earthly powers could be converted to heavenly use. His pacifism was no perfectionist renunciation of a sinful world but a world - affirming Calvinist attempt to convert the nation to an acceptance of God's demand that men live in a state of peace and trust. Although Gibb failed to convince New Zealand's political leadership, and many New Zealanders, that national disarmament, Bible in Schools, suppression of gambling, and rigorous censorship, were necessary for the nation's welfare, his leadership of the Social Gospel cause in New Zealand was not a total failure. He had fulfilled a prophetic role and his warnings of imminent disaster at least made the community stop and

consider its goals and the threats facing it. It was the Church itself that gained the most from Gibb's Social Gospel leadership. Without his efforts as Home Mission convener the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand would not possess a network of parishes spanning the Dominion; it would be without its national social service organisation and its several Church schools.

Gibb's Barthianism, and his simultaneous support for the League of Nations, did not conflict. When he discovered that political and theological liberalism had become the servants of bourgeois self-interest he retained his previous conviction that the message of Christ was not merely a preparation for a future world, but a mandate for this. His Barthianism and his continued support for the League both asserted his belief that the human situation could be radically improved by alteration in environmental circumstances. Barth's demand that the Church reform her life and purge her doctrine and the League's offer of peace on earth were two sides of the one gospel. At the end Gibb rejected a Social Gospel betrayed by liberals and wrote from his death bed, as a New Zealand Cassandra, to prophesy war, death and disaster for a world that consistently refused the salvation of God offered in the League and by the Church.

Appendix I

The Peace Manifesto Refused by the New Zealand
Presbyterian General Assembly in 1928

We, the members of a Peace committee to which delegates have been appointed by the authorities of the following Churches of the Dominion, namely, the Church of England, the Presbyterian Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church, the Congregational Church, the Salvation Army, the Church of Christ, and the Society of Friends, being assured that war as a means of settling disputes between nations is utterly opposed to the mind of Christ, believe that the time has come for the churches and all men of goodwill to take a definite stand against war, and so to use their influence with the people and Government of this Dominion that our country shall play its part in bringing about good and friendly relations among the nations.

With this end in view we are resolved to adhere to the following platform:-

1. Realising the evil nature of the usual causes, the conditions, and the results of war, we regard it as the most inadequate, disastrous, and wrong method of attempting to settle international disputes and urge all the people of the Churches, and all ministers and priests in particular, to an outspoken and uncompromising declaration that the war system and the Gospel of Christ are diametrically and irreconcilably opposed.
2. While acknowledging with admiration the courage and self-sacrifice nobly displayed in past wars, we warn all against the tendency to extend to war itself the admiration which belongs only to such courage and self-sacrifice - qualities for which men can find ample scope under conditions of peace.
3. We believe that peace can be secured only as adequate machinery for the settlement of disputes is set up and made effective by the hearty support of the great nations, and we consider that the influence of the British Empire is of especial significance in this respect. We shall therefore co-operate with the League of Nations Union in urging that this Dominion give the fullest support to the work of the League of Nations.
4. We shall also support every other effort which may be made for the promotion of mutual understanding and friendship among the nations.

and the removal of all actual and potential causes of dispute; and in particular we shall urge upon the whole community the duty of maintaining a spirit of calmness, reasonableness, and conciliation in the face of any threatened international crisis, so that the attainment of a settlement may not be made more difficult by provocative words or acts on the part of the Government, the press, or the people.

5. In view of the intolerable burdens imposed on the nations by the maintenance of vast armies and navies, and especially of the fact, now generally recognised, that preparation for war inevitably leads to war, we shall urge upon the Government, vigorous co-operation with all efforts for universal disarmament; and realising that the task is one of such extreme difficulty that it may well prove impracticable apart from the active sympathy and co-operation of the people, we shall appeal to the Churches and all men of goodwill to be unceasing in their advocacy of disarmament and in the endeavour to quicken in the mind of the community a sense of the momentous urgency of this matter.

6. We shall also explore the proposals being supported by the Federal Council of Christian Churches in America and the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches with reference to the outlawry of war by an international conference, treaty, court, and code of law, and shall disseminate information about this scheme, with a view to linking up our efforts with those of kindred organisations overseas.

7. Realising that in all the matters above referred to an educational campaign to inform public opinion is necessary, we shall endeavour to lead the Churches to regard it as a foremost duty to instruct the minds and consciences of their members, and of the people generally, not only as to the waste, the horror, the wickedness, the demoralisation, and the sheer futility of war, but also as to the ways in which peace may be finally established amongst the nations of the earth.

In conclusion, being convinced that the gracious design of Almighty God in sending His Son Jesus Christ into the world was that His Kingdom might come, and all men dwell together as brethren, and believing that "not by right, nor by power, but by His Spirit" is this Kingdom being set up, we feel justified in calling on all Christian people to adhere to the principles of peace even at a risk of loss and humiliation, in the faith that by our living in the spirit of Christ that day will indeed be brought nearer when "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more".¹

1. General Assembly, 1927, pp. 198-200.

Bibliography

This is a selective bibliography which includes only those sources which proved to be of direct use in the preparation of this thesis. The principal sources of information were the Gibb papers, the Jeanie Gibb papers, and the minutes of Presbyterian church courts and committees. These, together with newspaper reports and correspondence, articles in periodicals, Gibb's few published works, and the recollections of those who knew him, have enabled me to portray Gibb's successes and failures as others, as well as he, saw them.

The Gibb papers have not hitherto been used extensively and it may be appropriate to make some comment on their value. Gibb selected the papers in the collection, with an autobiography in mind, and his act of selection gives some guide to his assessment of the priorities of his ministry. On this basis, his social crusading activities would appear to have been his major concern.

The evidence presented in the Gibb papers is, however, of uneven quality. Gibb kept few drafts of his outgoing correspondence during the decade before his purchase of a typewriter, at the turn of the century. There is also an unfortunate absence of political comment from the 1890s; Gibb may well have cleared his desk before moving from Dunedin in 1903. The Jeanie Gibb papers, mainly newspaper cuttings, provide an excellent insight into Gibb's youth in Scotland and reflect his family's concern with the theological strife that divided the Presbyterian churches in the 1880s and 1890s.

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2. PRIMARY SOURCES

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- (b) Gibb's correspondence with soldiers during the First World War.
- (c) Gibb's correspondence as Home Mission Committee Convenor.
- (d) Some family correspondence.
- (e) Minutes of several meetings of the New Zealand Anti-Opium Association.
- (f) Two books of press cuttings concerned with Gibb's crusades and preaching.
- (g) A collection of pamphlets, including:

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- (a) Two books of newspaper cuttings, mainly concerned with Gibb's career before 1893.
- (b) An autographed copy of Gibb's sermon on the occasion of the union of the Presbyterian Church in New Zealand.

McPherson Press Cuttings, State Library of Victoria, La Trobe, Melbourne:

This collection identifies the main interests of Victorian Presbyterianism from 1842 to 1883.

New Zealand Labour Party Papers, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington.

Lady Stout Collection, Hocken Library, Dunedin.

Rutherford Waddell notebooks, Hocken Library, Dunedin:

Forty-seven notebooks of cuttings and comment from nineteenth century and early twentieth century theological, literary, and political works.

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4. PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS

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- Very Rev. J.R. Blanchard, Wellington, 12 July 1973.
- F. Maxwell Bradshaw (Procurator of the Presbyterian Church of Australia), Melbourne, 12 January 1974.
- Rev. O.E. Burton, Otaki, 25 July 1973.
- Mrs F.M. Colquhoun, Palmerston North, 28 March 1974.
- Rev. Professor I. Dixon, Dunedin, 29 October 1973.
- Mrs Phyllis Gibb, Melbourne, January 1973.
- Very Rev. L.F. Gunn (Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church of Australia), Melbourne, 6 January 1974.
- Rev. J. Hubbard, Palmerston North, 17 May 1974.
- Rev. D. Hercus, Hamilton, 4 October 1974.
- Rev. E.R.E. Ross, Dunedin, 29 October 1973.
- Very Rev. J.D. Salmond, Dunedin, 29 October 1973.
- Hon. Sir David Smith, Wellington, 13 July 1974.
- Rev. A. Swainton (Archivist of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria), Melbourne, 6 January 1974.
- Dr H. Miller, Wellington, 19 September 1974.

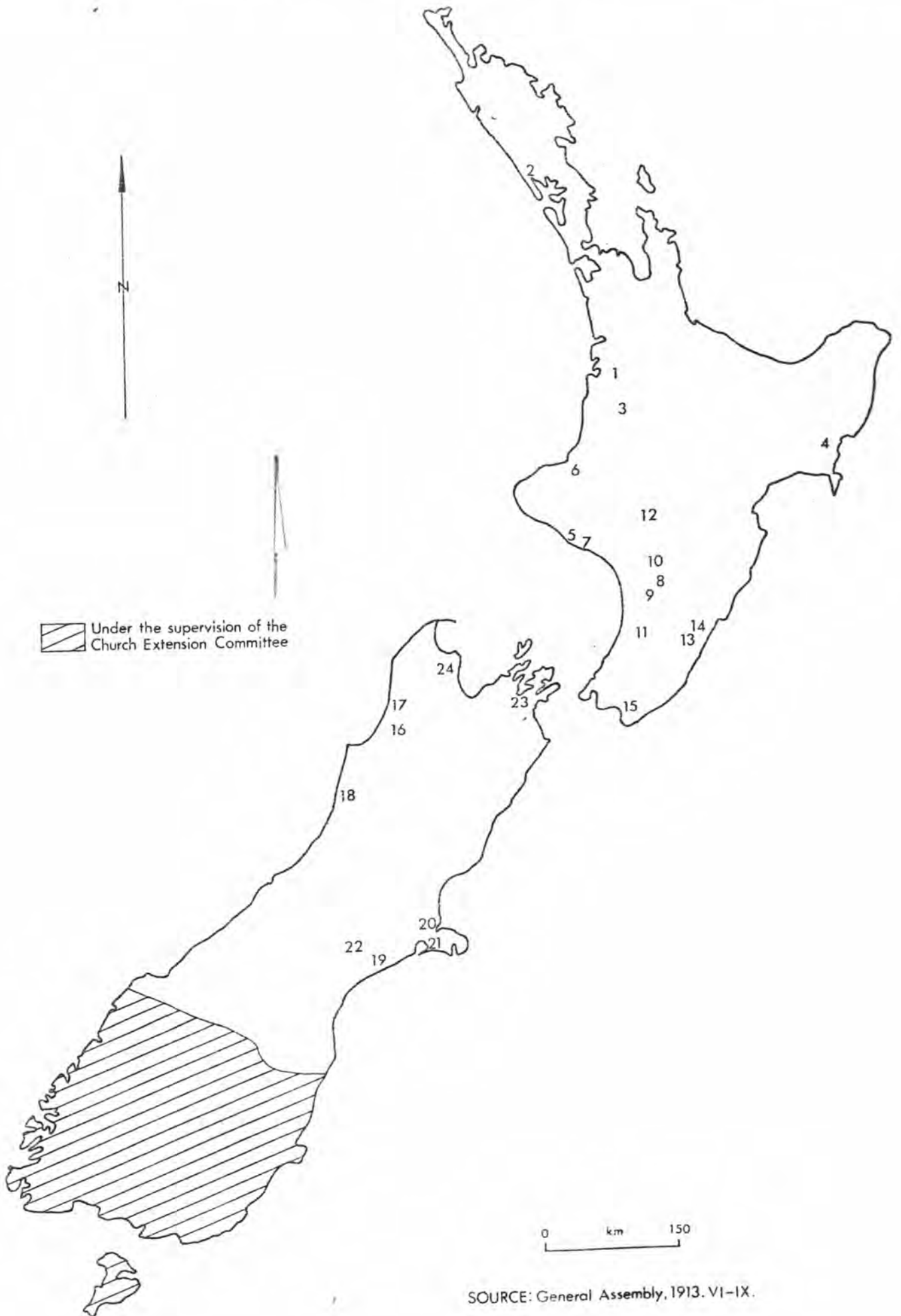
(b) Correspondence

Very Rev. J.A. Allan, Lower Hut.
 Rev. D. Borrie, Wellington.
 Mrs J.M. Craven, Wellington.
 Rev. Dr G.R. Ferguson, Wellington.
 R.B. Fowler, Wellington.
 Very Rev. I.W. Fraser, Wellington.
 Sister H. Hercus, Christchurch.
 W.R.A. Lake, Wellington.
 Rev. G. Laurenson, Auckland.
 J.A. Lee, Auckland.
 Archbishop J. Liston, Auckland.
 Loyal Orange Lodge of New Zealand, Auckland.
 J. McFarlane, Wellington.
 Rev. J. McPhail, Footscray.
 Rt. Hon. Sir John Marshall, Wellington.
 Rev. Dr S. Mechie, Glasgow.
 Dr A. Mitchell, Leeds.
 Presbytery of Aberdeen, Scotland.
 Rev. I. Purdie, Hamilton.
 Registrar-General for Scotland, Edinburgh.
 Rev. M. Reid, Wellington.
 Rev. A. Richards, Auckland.
 Very Rev. J.D. Salmond, Dunedin.
 Rev. Fr. E.R. Simmond, Auckland.
 Rev. Fr. B.U. Scott, Mosgiel.
 Rev. R. Swainton, Melbourne.
 Rev. D.M. Taylor, Christchurch.
 R.M. Towers, Wellington.
 G. Troup, Christchurch.
 Prof. A.F. Walls, Aberdeen.
 Historical Records Section, World Council of Churches, Geneva.

Placement of home missionaries by the Presbyterian
Church Extension Committee (Northern), 1906.

1. Ngaruawahia - Huntly
2. Northern Wairoa.
3. Mangapehi
4. Ormond
5. Patea
6. Inglewood
7. Waitotara
8. Halcombe
9. Kiwitea
10. Mangaweka
11. Shannon
12. Taihape
13. Eketahuna
14. Pongaroa
15. Upper Hutt
16. Denniston
17. Granity
18. Ross
19. Ashburton Outfields
20. Halkett
21. Motukarara
22. Springburn
23. Renwick
24. Riwaka

PLACEMENT OF HOME MISSIONARIES BY THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH EXTENSION COMMITTEE (NORTHERN) 1906



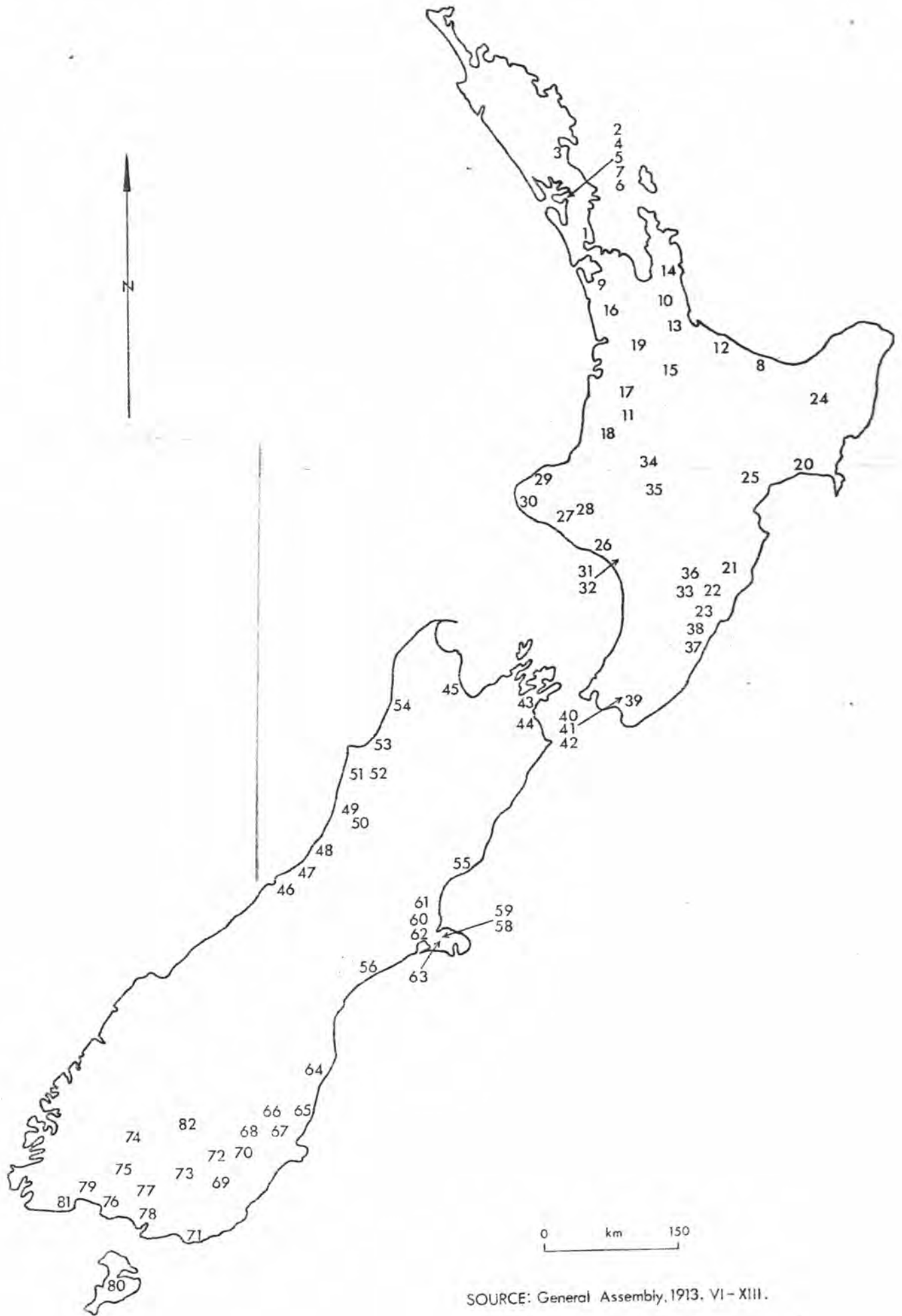
SOURCE: General Assembly, 1913. VI-IX.

Placement of home missionaries by the Home Mission
 Committee of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand, 1913

- | | |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Hunua | 42. Island Bay |
| 2. Hobsonville | 43. Renwick |
| 3. Mangapai | 44. Seddon |
| 4. Morningside | 45. Riwaka |
| 5. Mt. Albert | 46. Ross |
| 6. Pokeno | 47. Kanieri |
| 7. Richmond | 48. Kuanara |
| 8. Whakatane | 49. Rimanga |
| 9. Huntly | 50. Brunnerton |
| 10. Morrinsville | 51. Blackball |
| 11. Te Kuiti | 52. Totara Flat |
| 12. Te Puke | 53. Denniston |
| 13. Kati Kati | 54. Seddonville |
| 14. Thames Valley | 55. Oneviot |
| 15. Manaku | 56. Hinds |
| 16. Ngaruawahia | 57. Hornby |
| 17. Otorohanga | 58. Linwood |
| 18. Ohura | 59. Motukurara |
| 19. Cambridge Outfields | 60. Oxford West |
| 20. Morere - Nuhaka | 61. Scargill |
| 21. Onga Onga | 62. Springburn |
| 22. Norsewood | 63. Sumner |
| 23. Weber - Wainui | 64. Waimate Outfields |
| 24. Motu | 65. Purakanui |
| 25. Puketitiri | 66. Beaumont |
| 26. Patea | 67. Clydevale |
| 27. Kaponga | 68. Ratarui |
| 28. Toko | 69. South Molyneaux |
| 29. Waitara | 70. Tuapeka West |
| 30. Okato | 71. Waikawa |
| 31. Wanganui East | 72. Waimumu |
| 32. Gonville | 73. Mokoreta |
| 33. Apiti | 74. Athol |
| 34. Owhango | 75. Centrebush |
| 35. Raetihi | 76. Colac Bay |
| 36. Rewa | 77. Hedgehope |
| 37. Eketahuna | 78. Invercargill South |
| 38. Pongaroa | 79. Merrivale |
| 39. Upper Hutt | 80. Stewart Is. |
| 40. Wadestown | 81. Tuatapere |
| 41. Rewa Bay | 82. Ida Valley |

Note: In 1913 twenty-five new agents were appointed, twenty-seven stations and parishes were without ministers and fifty home missionaries were without mansees.

PLACEMENT OF HOME MISSIONARIES BY THE HOME MISSION COMMITTEE
OF THE PREBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NEW ZEALAND, 1913



SOURCE: General Assembly, 1913, VI-XIII.