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CHRISTIANITY AND COMMUNITY

**ASPECTS OF RELIGIOUS LIFE AND ATTITUDES IN
THE WANGANUI-MANAWATU REGION, 1870-1885**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts in History at Massey University

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ABBREVIATIONS

<i>CC</i>	<i>Church Chronicle</i>
<i>Census</i>	<i>Census of New Zealand</i>
<i>DNZB</i>	<i>Dictionary of New Zealand Biography</i>
<i>MT</i>	<i>Manawatu Times</i>
<i>NZPCN</i>	<i>New Zealand Presbyterian Church News</i>
<i>NZW</i>	<i>New Zealand Wesleyan</i>
<i>PCN</i>	<i>Presbyterian Church News</i>
<i>WC</i>	<i>Wanganui Chronicle</i>
<i>WH</i>	<i>Weekly Herald</i>
<i>WTU</i>	Alexander Turnbull Library

INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the twentieth century, Andre Siegfried, a visiting observer, commented that 'No tradition has remained so strong in New Zealand as the religious one'. This, he felt, was decisively proved by the newspapers in which 'every New Zealand editor must be able on occasion to take up his good theological pen and discuss in a leading article transubstantiation, the rights of the established church, or the legality of ritualism'.¹ These comments could have equally applied twenty or thirty years earlier, for similar conditions existed at that time. A century from then, however, the place of ecclesiastical news occupies a much less prominent place in most newspapers. The weekly activities of the churches are seldom a subject of note, and issues of religious interest are more likely to occupy space in the correspondence pages than in reporting of public life. Topics addressed more frequently concern morality than church life, and the aptitude of the editor's theological pen has noticeably diminished.

Similarly, in the writing of New Zealand history, the historian's pen has often run dry when it comes to appreciating what Laurie Barber terms 'the religious dimension in New Zealand's history'.² In 1994, Jane Simpson commented that 'The standard general histories of New Zealand written from the late 1950s have dismissed religion altogether, restricted the consideration of its impact to the missionary period,

¹ Andre Siegfried, *Democracy in New Zealand*, (London, 1914 [2nd edition, 1982]), p.310.

² L.H. Barber, 'The Religious Dimension in New Zealand's History', in *Religion in New Zealand Society*, (eds) Brian Colless and Peter Donovan (Palmerston North, 1980), pp.15-29.

or trivialised its influence'.³ This pattern has been evident in other influential works in our historiography.

Keith Sinclair often referred vaguely to 'puritanical forces' in New Zealand. This was a heavily value-laden description implying a restrictive moralism in New Zealand religiosity, but its meaning was never justified or explored, though the assumptions persisted through to the writing of his autobiography.⁴ Simpson notes that while the original 1959 edition of Sinclair's *History of New Zealand* contained a single page discussion of religion, this was absent in subsequent editions.⁵ Contributors to the *Oxford History of New Zealand* acknowledged the presence of religion in society, but tended to focus on the institutional nature of the churches. While Graham noted the fundamental role of Christian faith in shaping colonial society, this was seldom explored. Consequentially, religion and religious motivations seemed to be more marginal to society than her comments suggested.⁶

More recently, Miles Fairburn's influential revision of the role of community in later nineteenth century New Zealand was notable for its almost complete absence of reference to the religious dimension in society. His thesis of 'atomisation' contends that the forces which brought people together were 'few and weak', and that, until the

³ Jane Simpson, 'Women, Religion and Society in New Zealand: A Literature Review', *Journal of Religious History*, vol.18 no.2 (1994), p198.

⁴ Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand* (London, 1959), p.278; *Halfway Round the Harbour: An Autobiography* (Auckland, 1993). Stevan Eldred-Grigg has commented on Sinclair and the relatively uncritical perception of colonial puritanism by literary essayists who regard it as 'one of the main forces' in New Zealand's social tradition. *Pleasures of the Flesh: Sex and Drugs in Colonial New Zealand, 1840-1915* (Wellington, 1984), pp.1-2, and his conclusions, pp.241-250.

⁵ Simpson (1994), p.198.

⁶ See Jeanine Graham, 'Settler Society', pp.112-139 (especially pp.126-128), and Erik Olssen, 'Towards a New Society', pp.250-278 (especially pp.263-266.) in W.H. Oliver with B.R. Williams (eds), *The Oxford History of New Zealand* (Wellington, 1981).

turn of the century, colonial society was characterised more by bondlessness and individualism than any sense of community.⁷ Religious community is scarcely mentioned; the rise in church attendance from around a quarter to thirty percent of the population in the 1870s and 1880s is dismissed as inconsequential since it was ‘appreciably lower than in older societies where the church was the “centre of the community”’.⁸ Interestingly, despite the wide scrutiny to which Fairburn’s work has been subjected, perhaps only John Hirst has come close to unfolding the relevance of religion to the debate, reflecting the greater appreciation of religion in the Australian context.⁹

Some groups, particularly evangelical Protestants, value the individual element in religious experience, but there is also a sense in which religious practise is inherently communal rather than individualistic. Although definitions of ‘community’ in Christianity may be complex, certain fundamental elements appear to be widely accepted. Among these are notions of territorialism, social interdependence, common consciousness and shared practices.¹⁰ Despite the fact that colonial Christianity was institutionally weaker than it had been in Britain, in practical terms it was an important thread in the fabric of community life for the very reason that these elements were present. It was an important centre of interaction for those who engaged with religious

⁷ Miles Fairburn, *The Ideal Society and its Enemies: The Foundations of New Zealand Society, 1850-1900* (Auckland, 1989), pp.11-13.

⁸ *ibid*, p.178.

⁹ John Hirst, ‘Australia, Argentina and Atomisation’, *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol.25 no.2 (1991), pp.91-7.

¹⁰ D.G. Pearson, *Johnsonville: Continuity and Change in a New Zealand Township* (Auckland, 1980), p.153. Robert N. Bellah, et.al., *Habits of the Heart: Middle America Observed* (Berkeley, 1985), p.333.

life, but Christian religion was also influential in the wider formation of community because it remained an important element of common consciousness.

Wanganui and the Manawatu provide an interesting region in which to examine the functioning of religion in the settler community. The period of the 1870s and 1880s was one of expansion regionally, as nationally. The opening of bush regions and Vogel's Public Works Scheme had a large impact on the area, and this was reflected in the life of the churches. On the one hand, places like Palmerston North and Halcombe in the Manawatu had their origins and character defined by the changes and expansion of the 1870s, while Wanganui, though also affected by the era of expansion, had been developing for some time. There were also features of religious life that were unique to the area; revivalism in town and country, beginning in the middle of the 1870s, was probably unmatched for its appeal in the country at that time.

The focus of the study is on the functioning of Protestant settler Christianity, largely because this was the dominant religious expression. Other groups are not ignored, but primary sources have been limited to the major Protestant denominations. In examining the shape of the religious community, the study has been divided into four sections. Chapter One deals with the life of the parish, since this was the preeminent institution of colonial Christianity and the focus of religious life. In the first section, the degree to which people affiliated with religion is compared with involvement in Sunday activities in order to trace the extent of the religious community's existence. A second section explores the pattern of parish activity, or the manner in which that community operated during the course of the week.

Chapter Two deals with activities that the churches, and those in them, were involved with in the world outside of the parish. Many leading laity, as well as clergy, were active in the community at large, and their prominence played a part of establishing and defining a Christian presence in the new society. The churches were also anxious to articulate their concerns, particularly in areas of morality, and their comments illustrated attitudes and expectations that were prevalent in the religious community.

The final two chapters are concerned with features of church life in the region which appear to have been particularly important. Though it was less widespread and later to develop in New Zealand than Britain, revivalism emerged as an important religious expression in the later nineteenth century. In the Wanganui-Manawatu region, revivalism was more characteristic of popular religion than elsewhere in the country, with the possible exception of South Otago. Revivalism expressed the needs and aspirations of the religious community, as well as demonstrating the form of piety to which people were attracted.

Finally, Chapter Four deals with the relationship between the Church and its young people. Often neglected in New Zealand history, concerns about the young and provision for them reflected a great deal about the religious community's view of itself. The place of children in the churches, the degree of attention and the kind of nurture they received were all important factors. These reflected apprehensions regarding the moral condition of the community, as well as illustrating perceptions which the church had about its own task in society.

The closer investigation of the religious life of the region is a part of the process of unfolding the religious dimension of New Zealand's history. Exploring the shape of the religious community is a mechanism for reflecting on broader questions, such as the shape and formation of the wider community. Primarily, this research has attempted to explore the religious life of the region through the medium of local newspapers, as well as denominational periodicals and other parish and denominational material.

As Siegfried suggested, the newspapers offered a great deal of information relating to ecclesiastical matters, as indeed they did with numerous other institutions. This information was a mixture of theological debate and descriptions of ordinary parish activity, reflecting the importance of both religious ideas and religious institutions in colonial experience. The religious dimension affected each individual, whether they eschewed or embraced its practise. Therefore, the role and operation of the churches in society requires closer attention, because it was a major contribution to New Zealand identity.

CHAPTER ONE

PARISH LIFE AND INVOLVEMENT

The parish, or local church, was the most important institution in colonial Christianity. More than anywhere, the parish was the place where religious engagement took place and patterns of religious involvement were shaped. Most settlers identified nominally with religion, but actual involvement was less widespread. The range of possibilities for involvement in parish life varied from attendance at Sunday services to numerous other activities during the week, which all catered for different parish and individual needs. Each aspect was still an element of 'church life', and together they played an important part in the formation of community life and identity in the region. The parish was a fundamental expression of the Christian presence in society, so that its operation was an indicator of the shape and influence of the religious presence. To trace the different elements, parish life will be explored in terms of the pattern of Sunday worship, and the other features that characterised the activity of the rest of the week.

1. Sunday Activities: The Pattern of Religious Observance

Sunday activity was the focal point of the religious life of the parish, and church attendance perhaps the fundamental element in the individual's religious observance. For most people, churchgoing was virtually synonymous with religion because it was

one of its most distinctive and readily identifiable features. It was an indication of religious commitment, and an expression that religion was more than nominally important. For the Church as a whole the Sabbath was particularly important in that it represented the 'Christian domination of community space and time'.¹ Where people attended services, the Church could be regarded as exerting a demonstrable influence. Attendance was a parish activity. For the parish, the presence and use of a church building indicated that Christianity was established in a vital and relevant way. There were some differences in attitude, particularly between evangelicals and the Catholic and Episcopalian churches, but few doubted that the extent of parish activity on the day most associated with religion was a reflection of the community's religious health.

While New Zealand was constitutionally a secular nation, there would have been some justification for observers to believe otherwise. Nineteenth century pakeha immigrants to New Zealand affiliated with the religious denominations in overwhelmingly high proportions. In 1871, only 6.57% of census respondents did not identify with some form of Protestant or Catholic Christianity. The majority of 3.36% 'objected to state' their religious affiliation, while smaller numbers of other religions, such as Judaism and the so-called 'pagan, Chinese, and heathen' religions, constituted the remainder. For those who identified explicitly with the Christian denominations, the vast majority were Church of England, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, or Methodist. Together these represented 89.06% of the total population.²

¹ Peter J. Lineham, 'Christian Reaction to Freethought and Rationalism in New Zealand', *Journal of Religious History*, vol.15 no.2 (1988), p.237.

² *Census* (1871), Table 16. In keeping with the practise in later censuses, 'Protestants not otherwise defined' have been incorporated in the Church of England figure. In 1871, this was 1.90%.

By 1886, at the end of the period studied, the national situation had altered only slightly. Despite a rise in the population from about 220 000 to almost 580 000, 86.26% still identified with the four main churches. Of the 8.76% not identified with the Christian denominations, 'otherwise described' (3.78%) were marginally more numerous than those objecting to state (3.34%).³ It is possible that some Christians, particularly in groups like the Brethren, were included in these categories, so that actual affiliation with the Church was arguably higher.

Census information only measures affiliation, and denominational affiliation at that. As an indicator of religiosity, it did not necessarily, or even ordinarily, correlate closely with religious engagement. Motivation came from a combination of influences, but importantly, the high rate of affiliation revealed that religion was assumed as part of the total social context. It had existed 'at home', and it was inconceivable that it would not continue to do so in the new country, albeit on a different footing. As Powell has suggested, the immigrants 'wanted churches with their traditions and had a general affection for religion'.⁴

Denominational measures of affiliation could reveal as much about the social identity and community of origin as it did about the religious engagement of immigrants. Although denominationalism had reached its peak in Britain in the middle of the nineteenth century, it was still a culturally important element in self-definition.⁵ Affiliation with a denomination often reflected the place where important occasions like

³ *Census* (1886), 'Religions of the People', Table 2, p.103.

⁴ M.J. Powell, 'The Church in Auckland Society, 1880-86', MA thesis in History (University of Auckland, 1970), p.2.

⁵ W.R. Ward, *Religion and Society in England 1790 - 1850* (London, 1972), p.6.

baptism, marriage, or funerals occurred. For many, these were determined by family association as much as by religious conviction. There was no assumption of positive involvement or action, and affiliation could even be concluded negatively by a process of elimination. Denominational patterns in Britain were often regionally based, insofar as it was possible to trace geographical areas of strength and weakness for the various denominations. Therefore, cultural and community identity were a key aspect of what the rate and distribution of nominal affiliation indicated.⁶

Perhaps more important than regionalism was the cultural identity attached to so-called 'national churches'. In different parts of Britain, Church and State connections created a relationship between denomination and national identity. Thus, the Church of England, Scottish Presbyterianism, and Irish Catholicism were both national and cultural symbols. This created an additional incentive for many immigrants to identify with their country of origin through denominational associations. The shift to New Zealand eventually reduced the significance of denomination, but for new immigrants conscious of their distance from 'home' it was still important.

There were interesting trends in the pattern of denominational affiliation in the Wanganui-Manawatu region.⁷ As in the rest of the country, the Church of England consistently accounted for a little over forty percent of respondents. Manawatu county had the highest Anglican affiliation rate in the region, though this dropped progressively

⁶ This refers to the simple observation that the distribution of affiliation to denomination may be traced to areas of regional strength and weakness, whereas religious geography generally may also be concerned with a host of other interactions between landscape and religion. See John D. Gay, *The Geography of Religion in England* (London, 1971), pp.1-21.

⁷ Regional denominational statistics are taken from *Census* (1874), p.62; (1878), p.261; (1881), p.225. The census figure for 1874 refers to the electoral boundaries, while those for 1878 and 1881 are by county, but there is a close correlation.

from 50% in 1874 to around 45% in 1881. In Wanganui and Rangitikei, Anglican strength was comparable at a little over 40%. In 1878, Palmerston North borough was 48% Church of England, but Wanganui was as low as anywhere in the region with only 36% affiliation. The town did not reflect the character of the county, despite a presence that dated from 1840 when the missionary John Mason and his companions arrived at Putiki.⁸

Both Presbyterian and Catholic affiliation were lower regionally than the national average, while Methodists were marginally more numerous. In Wanganui county, only the Catholic presence increased during the period, but this was only slightly. Presbyterianism was more evident in the county than the town, but the opposite was true for Methodists. In Wanganui borough, both Methodists and Catholics were more highly represented than in the county. Between 1874 and 1878, both increased at the expense of the Presbyterians.

Rangitikei, and the south and west of Wanganui, had a high concentration of Scottish immigrants involved in sheep farming, and was predictably the centre of Presbyterianism. In 1874 there were almost as many Presbyterians in the county as there were Church of England adherents. This number decreased, but Presbyterianism remained strong as new Scots continued to migrate to areas of greatest Scottish population. By contrast, Palmerston North and the Manawatu generally had a

⁸ Maxwell J.G. Smart and Arthur P. Bates, *The Wanganui Story* (Wanganui, 1972), p.58. Perhaps the relationship between the Church of England and the settlement was influenced by early experiences. Wanganui was not a church settlement, and initial interaction between missionaries like Richard Taylor and the New Zealand Company immigrants involved a certain tension that stemmed from their conflicting ideals and expectations. See Jenny Murray, 'A Missionary in Action: The Rev. Richard Taylor and Christianity among the Wanganui Maoris in the 1840s and early 1850s', in *The Feel of Truth: Essays in New Zealand and Pacific History*, (ed) Peter Munz (Wellington, 1969), p.197.

remarkably low Presbyterian presence. In 1878, Palmerston North was only 6.3% Presbyterian; a figure lower than that of the Methodists, Catholics, and 'Other Protestants'. Despite being amongst the first to hold services in the town, their first church was not opened until 25 March 1877. This was two years after the Methodist and Anglican churches, and an established ministry took even longer to develop.⁹

Methodists fared better in Palmerston North and the Manawatu. In 1878, they had an allegiance of 24% in town, with 15.8% in the county. The absence of a strong Presbyterian influence, and Methodist enthusiasm were probably important factors. Methodist strength there was typical of the pattern in bush settlements, where the benefits of the circuit system and lay preaching were to the fore.¹⁰ But it also reflected the attraction of the newly developing Manawatu for Methodists who tended to be poorer than other denominations.¹¹ Added to this, British immigration drew from areas where Methodism, while less numerous, had considerable vitality.¹² This enthusiasm must have been significant in small new towns where some commitment was necessary to draw together support.

The Manawatu also contained a notably higher level of 'Other Protestants', due primarily to Scandinavian immigration. Their presence was particularly strong in Oroua county and the bush settlements around Palmerston North. In general, Scandinavian immigrants were Methodist or Lutheran, and this was displayed in the high proportion

⁹ *MT*, 28 Mar 1877.

¹⁰ Rollo Arnold, *The Farthest Promised Land: English Villagers, New Zealand Immigrants of the 1870s* (Wellington, 1981), p.292.

¹¹ Arnold has commented on the attractiveness of the bush provinces, particularly for rural labourers and those with yeoman aspirations. For example, Arnold (1981), p.342.

¹² Rollo Arnold, 'The Patterns of Denominationalism in Later Victorian New Zealand', in *Religion in New Zealand*, (eds) Christopher Nichol and James Veitch (Wellington, 1980), pp.98-101.

of each in the district. Originally, Scandinavian immigrants had been brought to the Manawatu in the early 1870s to lay a tramway from Palmerston to Ngawhakarau, but ongoing involvement in Public Works and the timber industry ensured a continuing presence.¹³

Patterns of denominational affiliation reflected the distribution of the settlers, but not necessarily the depth to which patterns of religious belief and behaviour had penetrated society. The extent of church attendance was more indicative, for as Lineham has suggested, church services were 'one of the most basic elements of Protestant piety'.¹⁴ Though only one form of participation, attendance at Sunday worship was fundamental and represented an important and distinctive expression of Christianity.

It was only from 1874 that census figures provided information relating to church attendance in addition to denominational affiliation.¹⁵ Rates of usual attendance give some description of the religious behaviour of the population, but they also elucidate some denominational variations. Nationally, the number of attenders rose between 1874 and 1886. In 1878, the figure increased from 22.94% to 24.15%. It stayed around this level in 1881 before the sharpest rise of the period from 24.02% to

¹³ J.W. Davidson, 'The Scandinavians in New Zealand', BA hons thesis in History (Victoria University, 1938), p.21.

¹⁴ P.J. Lineham, 'How Institutionalised was Protestant Piety in Nineteenth Century New Zealand?', *Journal of Religious History*, vol.13 no.4 (1985), p.375.

¹⁵ From 1874 until 1926, this figure was provided as part of the 'Places of Worship' statistic in the back of the census. For a discussion of the use of these statistics, see Hugh Jackson, 'Church Going in Nineteenth Century New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol.17 no.2 (1983), pp.43ff.

28.28% in 1886.¹⁶ Therefore, while denominational affiliation had fractionally decreased, it was offset by rising attendance.

Census figures for the period only categorised attendance by denomination and provincial regions. In Wellington, like the other 'Bush Provinces', Taranaki and Hawke's Bay, church attendance was lower than the national average. By 1886, attendance in the bush provinces was about one quarter of the population, while in more established provinces such as Auckland, Canterbury and Otago, it was closer to thirty percent.¹⁷ In Wellington Province itself, the proportion of church attenders in 1874 was almost exactly one quarter. Though this dropped to 21.08% in 1881, it climbed again 25.85% in 1886.

Patterns in the region may partially support Jackson's contention that provision of religious accommodation was a key factor in determining the rate of attendance.¹⁸ In the early 1870s, the population in the province had been concentrated in major urban settlements like Wellington and Wanganui, along with a number of other smaller towns. In the following decade, increasing numbers moved into areas like Manawatu and the Wairarapa where church buildings either did not exist, or were not easily accessible. By the mid 1880s, the improved transport and communication brought by Vogel's

¹⁶ Place of worship attendance figures, less Jewish attenders, taken from census for each year noted. Population from *Census* (1886), p.103. Jackson puts the level of churchgoing for the population over the age of fifteen as:

1874	1878	1881	1886
39.4%	42.0%	41.8%	48.3%

This required calculations to determine the population over fifteen that have not been used here. See Jackson (1983), pp.50-51.

¹⁷ See Appendix, Table 1.1.

¹⁸ Jackson (1983), pp.53-54.

Public Works Schemes and a more settled population resulted in church attendance moving in the same direction as the national trend.

The only way to determine attendance in the Wanganui-Manawatu region in particular is by making use of the statistics of the various denominations, which allows some comparison of denominational patterns. In Britain, following a rapid start, growth in the Methodist movement had begun to slow down by the Victorian era.¹⁹ In New Zealand, it fared somewhat better during the same period, both in terms of affiliation and church attendance. From its inception, Methodism had exercised a greater degree of control over its membership than the Church of England from which it had sprung. The same features that brought control also allowed some flexibility, so that lay involvement in corporate worship and the smaller class meetings seemed better able to cater to the needs of an expanding community.

In gross terms, Methodist attendance increased significantly between 1874 and 1886. In 1874, the region, consisting of the Wanganui and Rangitikei circuits, had 1010 attenders.²⁰ The greatest impact was shown in 1878, with a rise to 1960, but after this, growth slowed with 2310 attendances recorded in 1881 and 2420 in 1886. The formation of the Manawatu circuit was one of the main reasons for the increase in 1878. The 600 attendances there highlighted the growth in the area through immigration, but, as a drop in attendance in the Rangitikei circuit demonstrated, much growth in the Manawatu was simply redistribution from other areas. In 1874 there had been no Wesleyan church, and only 23 dwellings in Palmerston North, but by the

¹⁹ A.D. Gilbert, *Religion and Society in Industrial England: Church, Chapel and Social Change 1740 - 1914* (New York, 1976), pp.30-32.

²⁰ See Appendix, Table 1.2.

middle of 1875 a church had been erected within a matter of months of the resolution to build.²¹ There was also a large rise in Wanganui in 1878.

In 1881, the growth in Methodist attendance was lower than in the previous intercensal period, reflecting the slow growth in the Wanganui and Manawatu circuits. In 1886, overall growth was slower still, and any small gross rise was entirely the result of a substantial increase in the Manawatu. By contrast, attendance decreased in the Wanganui and Rangitikei circuits.

The raw figures do not in themselves identify the real pattern of church attendance adequately. Methodist attendance was calculated by combining the total attendance at services over the course of one month. Since these varied from place to place, total attendance does not describe the number of individuals involved. In more settled areas, services were held every week, often in the morning as well as the evening. In the newer districts, congregations took time to build up from a pattern of monthly services. In this context, denominations frequently shared the same facility, rotating the leadership of services. When one denomination established facilities and a regular ministry it could draw attenders from other denominations when their own services were not operating.

While it is not possible to make definite assertions, by allowing for the peculiar characteristics of each district, it is possible to suggest some possibilities regarding the extent of engagement in religious life. The Wanganui circuit contained the most established churches in the region, particularly in the town itself. On the opening of a

²¹ John R. Grigg, *The Last Ripple: A Century of Methodism in the Manawatu* (Levin, 1972), pp.14-16.

new church there in 1873, the *Evening Herald* noted that the 'Wesleyan denomination in Wanganui is not by any means the wealthiest or most numerous, but what it wants in these it more than compensates in zeal and liberality'.²² By 1876, 500 pounds of debt had been cleared and plans for a new church were being drawn up, showing that the parish was indeed active. In the surrounding district, the continuing arrival and dispersal of immigrants meant that new buildings were still being constructed and congregations established. Yet growth was faster there than in other denominations. Nearby Upokongaro only opened its first church in 1875, but this was well before the Church of England in 1879.²³

Comparison of the census affiliation statistic with attendance figures provided by the churches can give some measure of the extent of actual participation. Bearing in mind the particular emphasis Methodists placed on church attendance, it is probably reasonable to assume that on any given Sunday about two thirds of active participants would have been present. In 1874, at least, services in town would have been more frequent than in other centres of worship. Dividing the total monthly attendance by an average of four services per month, and then by the two thirds of participants, may provide some indication of the actual number of Methodist attenders. In 1874, this amounted to something over 40% of census Methodists in the Wanganui electoral district. In following census years, allowing for an increasing average number of

²² Quoted in *NZW*, vol.3 no.31, 1873, p.125.

²³ *WC*, 4 Nov 1876. *WC*, 2 Jan 1875. See H.W. Monaghan, *From Age to Age: The Story of the Church of England in the Diocese of Wellington, 1858 - 1958* (Wellington, 1957), p.221.

services, in 1878 and 1881 the same calculation suggests around sixty five percent attendance.²⁴

The Manawatu was the latest developing area in the region, with substantial settlement only occurring from the 1870s. It represented genuine 'bush province' territory, since other coastal centres had been more accessible, with lighter vegetation and good transport.²⁵ Foxton lay on the coast, but Palmerston North and other smaller settlements like Sandon and Halcombe soon became the centres of activity, since they serviced the bush communities. All the major denominations began services in the region about the same time, but Methodists were the earliest to be established. In Palmerston North, their first chapel was completed some months before the Anglicans.²⁶

The Manawatu circuit was only formed in 1877, so that the 1878 census was the first to enable comparison with Church statistics. In 1878, there were 600 attenders, with 620 in 1881 and 1050 in 1886. Early services in a region were held in schools, courthouses and any other available facilities before church construction. Similarly, when churches were built, sharing often took place in the early stages, and the denomination that completed the building often attracted other parishioners to its services. In the Manawatu services were infrequent for some time, and in 1878 the average number per month would probably have been less than four. Allowing for this,

²⁴ This is calculated by dividing total attendance by six, to account for evening services in the larger centre of Wanganui.

²⁵ S.H. Franklin, 'The Village and the Bush: The Evolution of the Village Community', in John Forster (ed), *Social Process in New Zealand: Readings in Sociology* (Auckland, 1969), p.143.

²⁶ The Methodist chapel was opened on 1 July 1875, while All Saints' foundation stone was only dedicated in late September of the same year.

Methodist attendance was probably something like fifty percent between 1878 and 1881. In the Rangitikei region, where there were lower Methodist rates of affiliation, the figure was nonetheless similar.

The considerable uncertainties, and paucity of sources requires that calculations be treated with some degree of caution. As Jackson has demonstrated, the difficulties do not necessarily lie in conflict between church and census statistics,²⁷ but more in the details that are lacking in some of the church statistics. Electoral and county boundaries did not always correspond with circuit boundaries, but because the major centres of population were common the correlation was close enough to identify trends. More problematic was the frequency of services, and the make-up of the congregations that attended them. Definite conclusions may not be possible, but the material does give the impression that Methodist religious engagement in the form of church attendance was as much as double the average for the region.

Presbyterian statistics were less full, largely because the ministers of the region frequently neglected to submit returns to the General Assembly, or else provided them only in part. Nevertheless, existing records do allow some speculation. Throughout the period, total affiliation to the Presbyterian church in the region ranged between 2160 and 2586. Church figures, unlike the circuit organisation of the Methodists, was provided by parish, but these could be placed within the regional boundaries of census districts.

In the Presbyterian Church, communicant membership has been shown to be quite closely associated with church attendance. During this period, and well beyond, it

²⁷ Jackson (1983), pp.46-47.

was approximately half the level of usual attendance.²⁸ In 1874 a complete set of returns were provided for the region, and this indicated a total of 286 communicants in the district. These were distributed so that there were 176 in the Wanganui region, 50 in Rangitikei, and 13 in Foxton. In 1877 there was also a full return in Rangitikei and Wanganui, but while Foxton figures were provided, the parish that served the rest of the rapidly expanding Manawatu area neglected to provide figures of communicants. The available statistics showed 323 communicants in the region, with 248 in Wanganui, 75 in Rangitikei and 10 at Foxton. In 1881 the only figures of relevance showed 297 communicants around Wanganui, excluding Turakina, and a continuing marginal increase in the parish of the Rev. Doull at Bulls. The growth in Wanganui and the Rangitikei continued through to 1886.²⁹

Applying the relationship of attendance to communicant membership is limited by the gaps in information, but it does reveal patterns within the district. In 1874, almost twenty percent of Presbyterians could be regarded as regular church attenders. The greater proportion attending in Wanganui reflected the rural vocation of many Scots Presbyterians in Rangitikei, and the physical isolation this created. This proportion rose consistently through progressive census periods so that, excluding the Manawatu region, church attendance may have been as high as forty percent. There was again a much higher level in Wanganui, possibly due to the concentration of Presbyterians there. In centres like Turakina, Waverley, and Wanganui where

²⁸ Allan K. Davidson and Peter J. Lineham, *Transplanted Christianity: Documents Illustrating Aspects of New Zealand Church History* (2nd edition, Palmerston North, 1989), pp.247-8.

²⁹ See Appendix, Table 1.3.

distinctive communities of Scots Presbyterians existed, there would have been greater social pressure to attend.³⁰

The Presbyterian church was particularly slow to be established in Palmerston North, reflecting the low level of affiliation in the borough. A church was constructed in 1877, but a communion roll was not entered until 32 were listed in 1881.³¹ Unfortunately, no figures exist simultaneously for Palmerston North and Foxton. However, the low number of communicants there, coupled with the Palmerston North figures, would suggest that church attendance was substantially lower than elsewhere around the district, and probably lower than the average for all denominations.

Presbyterianism seemed to have the greatest hold on its adherents where it was numerically stronger. In Wanganui and Rangitikei where Scottish settlement patterns were distinctive, it was more likely to lead to a higher rate of church going. Community morality, and pressure to conform, was probably a significant influence, whether it was explicit or merely assumed. As Wilson implies, in these communities where national religions were strong, the church was more likely to be an integrating element in community life.³² By contrast, the absence of these factors, and the loss of communal restraints was equally likely to bring lead to a decline in religious engagement. Yet, overall, Presbyterianism attracted greater allegiance than the average in the region, even if church attendance was slightly lower than among Methodists.

³⁰ Wilson has painted a picture of Turakina as a 'parish church' in the fullest sense of the term. By contrast to the Presbyterians, the first Anglican church was only built in 1883, and neither they nor the Catholic church ever had a resident clergyman. Malcolm W. Wilson, *Turakina: The Story of a Country Parish, 1852 -1952*(Christchurch, 1952), p10 and 43. See especially Chapters One and Three.

³¹ Anon., *They Ventured - Who Follows? St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Palmerston North, 1876-1976* (Palmerston North, 1976), p.31.

³² Wilson (1952), pp.38-9.

Anglican records of attendance are more difficult to ascertain, but the trend seems to have been towards rather lower levels of attendance than in the 'non-conformist' churches. In the 1870s, the Anglican presence in Wanganui borough was consistently about thirty five percent of the population. Yet between 1876 and 1879, the number of communicants present at services barely rose above thirty people. Special services, such as Easter, or visits of the Bishop of Wellington might attract forty or more, but the Offertories Ledger for the parish records that there were never more than sixty.³³ If this was representative of other areas, Anglican attendance may have been no higher than about ten percent.

It was commented that there was greater respectability attached to the Church of England than to other denominations. According to the *Yeoman*, it was a matter of common observation that 'when the Wesleyans some times get up in the world, they attach themselves to the more aristocratic and influential Church.'³⁴ If this was true, it did not necessarily result in higher church attendance. If only successful colonists attached themselves to the Church, then this may partially explain low attendances, since prestige was beyond the reach of a majority of immigrants. Perhaps the observation was a reference to particular individuals. The Woon family was prominent in early Wanganui, yet despite their father's career as a Wesleyan missionary, the

³³ *Offertories Ledger, 1876 - 1879* [held at Christ Church, Wanganui]. In particular see, 3 Mar 1878, 20 Mar and 13 Apr 1879. See also J.B. Bennett, *Christ Church, Wanganui - The Continuing Story* (Wanganui, 1976), pp.78-79.

³⁴ *Yeoman*, 20 Oct 1882, p.9. Quoted in Arnold (1980), p.107.

brothers R.W. and J.G. Woon both became closely associated with the Anglican Church.³⁵

Anglicans in the region were often accused of being apathetic in a range of areas pertaining to church life. Most often this criticism was inspired by ongoing financial difficulties, but it reached beyond that. On occasions, important parish meetings were reported to be postponed on account of poor attendance, leading to frustrated claims by some clergy that the 'mass of the laity is callous, unsympathetic, and...pervaded by an apathy and indifference...that is, perhaps, even more injurious than opposition'.³⁶ One 'staunch Churchman' and 'wayfarer' complained to the diocesan magazine of the unwelcoming reception received at an Anglican church in the Wellington diocese. Elsewhere, another Anglican layperson witnessed the 'lethargy and supineness of the Anglican Church' with an inclination to 'forsake' it in favour of one of the other Protestant denominations, 'the members of which, by their energy and enthusiasm, do at all events show that they believe what they profess'.³⁷

Some attempts were made to make Anglican services more attractive, but these appear to have met with mixed success. In 1874, the General Synod sanctioned the use of Harvest Thanksgiving services, but it was not until February 1881 that one was held in the district. The service at Wanganui was organised by the Rev. T.L. Tudor, assisted by the Rev. Arthur Towgood from Marton. It is difficult to gauge how successful these

³⁵ See *Christ Church, Wanganui, Vestry Minutes, 1869-74*, p.20. [Held at Christ Church]. James Garland Woon, *Wanganui Old Settlers* (Wanganui, 1902), pp.71-79.

³⁶ *MT*, 27 Jul 1878. *CC*, vol.6 no.72, 1882, p.557.

³⁷ *CC*, vol.1 no.2, 1877, p.23. *MT*, 4 Jul 1877.

were initially, but they did become a special feature in the life of some parishes.³⁸ In Wanganui, the purchase of an organ at Christ Church was also apparently intended to entice worshippers to attend. The plan back-fired when the churchwardens resigned in protest at the vestry's acceptance of plans to alter the church to allow the organ to fit. Probably as a consequence of divided feelings there were fewer attenders than were hoped for at events like the dedication of the organ.³⁹

The existence of a vigorous Freethought and Rationalist movement in the district was both an illustration of the comparatively weak hold of the churches, and a challenge to the authority it did exert. As early as 1873, provocative calls for the secularisation of religious institutions had been printed in Wanganui newspapers.⁴⁰ During the 1870s newspapers also carried a considerable amount of debate on subjects relating to science and religion, which were inextricably bound to the Freethought cause. There was staunch resistance from some clergy who perceived a threat to the churches in the promotion of these views. In 1873, the Presbyterian minister at Wanganui, the Rev. Elmslie, gave a fundraising lecture dealing with evolution, revelation and myth. He attacked evolutionary theories, claiming them to be as absurd as the 'heathen' stories of Deucalion, Cadmus and Prometheus.⁴¹

For more than six months during 1874 and 1875, the *Wanganui Chronicle* carried reports from Britain, America and Australia critical of Darwin, Huxley, and others regarded as leading the charge against religion. There was also a series on

³⁸ CC, vol.5 no.53, 1881, p.515. Anon., *Here is a Church: St Stephen's, Marton* (Marton, 1973). [Centennial pamphlet for the Anglican parish of St Stephen's], p.17.

³⁹ WC, 6 and 7 Mar, and 3 Apr 1878.

⁴⁰ Reported in *Evangelist*, vol.5 no.7, 1873, p.221.

⁴¹ *ibid*, p.223.

'Anthropology - Its Fact and Fiction'. Close monitoring of overseas debate demonstrated the immense public interest in the issue. When Professor Huxley acknowledged the necessity of religious instruction as a basis of culture, it was received with great satisfaction.⁴² This reflected most of the Christian reaction in the newspapers, where contributors were generally defensive about the implications that new scientific trends might have for religion. If this was a more conservative response than elsewhere in the country, it may indicate that churches in the region were under greater pressure.⁴³

Freethought had some powerful and outspoken promoters in the region, with John Ballance being perhaps the best known. Along with newspaper proprietor, A.D. Willis, he was instrumental in running an active society that published a monthly journal called the *Freethought Review*. There were others with considerable political influence, since Robert Pharazyn, the Wanganui runholder, sat in the Legislative Council, and Willis himself succeeded Ballance as M.H.R. for Wanganui.⁴⁴ If Ballance was bellicose, then Pharazyn was said to have more to offer intellectually.⁴⁵ The ability of

⁴² WC, 11 Nov 1874. This started the series of articles that continued quite consistently through until about July of the following year. Articles included titles such as 'Science and Theology', 'Scientific Ravings', and 'Is Faith Dead?' See for example WC, 19 and 23 Nov 1874; 1 and 16 Mar, and 1 Jul 1875.

⁴³ John Stenhouse has argued that the greater part of the Christian community had few intellectual problems about accepting evolution. See John Stenhouse, 'The "Battle" Between Science and Religion Over Evolution in Nineteenth Century New Zealand', PhD thesis in History (Massey University, 1985).

⁴⁴ P.J. Lineham, 'Freethinkers in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol.19 no.1 (1985), pp.67-69.

⁴⁵ Tim McIvor, 'John Ballance', *DNZB* vol.2, p.24. John Duncan Campbell, 'Freethought in the Manawatu and Wanganui in the 1880s', BA hons research exercise in History (Massey University, 1990), p.19.

Freethinkers to dominate the political representation of Wanganui on the national stage was an interesting reflection on local attitudes.

Freethought had a period of some success elsewhere in the district, too. Informal groups also operated in Palmerston North, Feilding and other smaller towns across into the Wairarapa during the early 1880s. In some of these places, this led to open debate with the Christian community, such as that between the Brethren evangelist C.H. Hinman and R. Ross at Glen Oroua in the Manawatu.⁴⁶ Its success was short-lived, but it was significant that an area of Freethought's greatest influence was also one where revivalist religion was important; it virtually became another variety of sectarian religion.⁴⁷ Its presence and strength served as a challenge to Christianity, but it also highlighted what was distinctively Christian in an essentially non-religious environment.

Freethought was not the only source of criticism, however. One correspondent for the *Auckland Weekly News* who spent Christmas 1885 in Wanganui, noted the 'strange obtrusiveness of the Wanganui churches, which occupy acres of the best frontages, and give a death-in-the-midst-of-life tone to the main street'.⁴⁸ The churches were sensitive to such criticism, despite the fact that their prominence location was suggestive of a standing in the community. When one correspondent to the *Chronicle* had earlier described the appearance of the Anglican church in Wanganui as an

⁴⁶ Lineham (1988), p.240.

⁴⁷ See Chapter Three, 'Revivalism'. P.J. Lineham (*NZJH*, 1985), pp.76-80, discusses similarities with revivalist religion, and the concept of Freethought as a variety of religion.

⁴⁸ *AWN*, reprinted in *Yeoman*, 4 Feb 1887, p.12. Quoted in Arnold (1994), p.182.

'eyesore', the same newspaper reported within days of the efforts that had been made to make the surroundings more attractive.⁴⁹

Overall, the churches in the region exercised less influence over their parishioners than elsewhere in the country, and this was demonstrated in the strength of challenges it received from various quarters. A number of regional factors, such as the comparative isolation, and infrequency of services in some districts may have contributed to this, as did the mobility associated with the developing province. There were regional variations with Methodists making the greatest impact in newly developed regions, and Presbyterians in the more established counties. These churches emphasised the importance of religious engagement, and encouraged wider lay participation in the church, with the result that their levels of church attendance were disproportionately higher. But overall, success was only by comparison to the other denominations in the district, and was not as great as elsewhere in the country or in comparison with levels of practice in Britain.

2. The Rest of the Week: The Shape of Religious Community

In November of 1877, a letter to the *Manawatu Times* complained that breaches of Foxton's closing agreement were leaving people 'unable either to attend public meetings, concerts, prayer meetings, preachings or anything else'.⁵⁰ The list was, in essence, a description of the activities that characterised the parish week beyond the

⁴⁹ WC, 19 and 24 Jan 1877.

⁵⁰ MT, 21 Nov 1877.

sphere of Sunday worship. Fundraising, it seemed, was the catalyst for much of this activity. In the period of church building, there was always a great need for additional funds, but the activities that resulted also facilitated a great deal of social interaction. Institution-building had a physical and a social dimension. It was recognised that social networks needed development as much as facilities required construction, and both needs were frequently met in the same activity.

Keith Sinclair referred to later nineteenth century New Zealand as the 'frontier of debt'. If, as he asserted, 'The New Zealand pioneer bore a load of debt', then the same was equally true of pioneer churches.⁵¹ The greatest source of financial burden was the expenditure on buildings and property that followed expansion of the Church with a growing population. A combination of the purchase of land and the construction of places of worship and Sunday School rooms left most churches operating under the shadow of significant financial obligation. Though exceptions to this pattern existed, they were rare.⁵² But whether payment was completed before or after construction, the cost ensured that fundraising was an important ingredient in the social activities that parishes organised.

The cost of erecting buildings varied greatly depending on the size and location of the individual parish. Often the initial expenditure required for finding a site was met through gifts of land by beneficent donors. These were usually individuals, but the

⁵¹ Keith Sinclair, *A History of New Zealand* (London, 1959, [4th edition, 1991]), p.151.

⁵² The Wesleyan church in Sanson opened free of debt in 1875. Methodism there had enjoyed a fairly strong community presence since the beginning of the town, since a number of Methodists from the Wellington and the Hutt had moved together in 1872 in search of larger farms for their growing families. WC, 31 Mar 1875. W. Morley, *The History of Methodism in New Zealand* (Wellington, 1900), p.307.

New Zealand Company granted land to some churches, like Ridgeway Street Methodist in Wanganui. The gifting of land often stimulated building programmes, as donors granted sites ahead of any obvious arrangements for construction. It was intended that such gifts would encourage building by demonstrating both the enthusiasm of a community for the project and its ability to undertake the greater burden of operating a parish. This was an important impression to convey to relevant regional church councils, since the viability of a building programme often rested on the level of subsidy that could be arranged through denominational funds.

Donors did not always belong to the denomination to which their gift was made. In 1878, Henry Churton gifted a church site worth 30 pounds to Methodists near Wanganui, though he was himself an Anglican.⁵³ Since churches were considered a vital part of social organisation, denoting that a community was established, it was often considered more important to have a church building in operation than a specific denomination. Consequently, donors contributed to the denomination that was likely to create a sustainable parish.

The cost of a site varied according to size and location. A large site in an established centre was predictably more expensive than one required for a rural parish. However, because churches often acquired land in the early stages of settlement when costs were lowest, the variation was minimised. The Presbyterian church was able to purchase two and a half acres for a church and manse in Palmerston North at a cost of only 35 pounds. This was possible because the purchase occurred in 1872, at the

⁵³ Morley (1900), p.294.

beginning of settlement, even though it was another five years before construction was possible.⁵⁴

By far the greatest cost lay in actual construction of buildings, be they churches, schoolrooms, or the ministers residence. In denominational terms, the variation in levels of expenditure was not great, though Methodists seem to have usually been the most frugal. In Palmerston North, the second Anglican church at All Saints' was built during 1881 with seating for 300, at a tendered price of 565 pounds.⁵⁵ By contrast, the Presbyterian church built in 1877 was 400 pounds, and the Methodist, built between 1875 and 1877, cost 250 to 300 pounds. A rebuilding project in 1883 to seat 320 cost 529 pounds.⁵⁶ Anglicans also spent more on their church at Sandon than the Methodists by about 120 pounds.

Methodist building practices were the subject of some contemporary comment. In 1873, William Fox noted with approval the Wesleyan principle of simplicity in places of worship, since churches were 'only intended to afford shelter and accommodation for persons wishing to engage in decency and order in the worship of their Maker'.⁵⁷ One wonders if there was not a note of irony in the comment, since it was occasioned by the laying of a foundation stone at Wanganui. The church accommodated 350 people at a cost of 1500 pounds, though the eventual cost was actually 1748 pounds,

⁵⁴ Anon. (1976), p.27.

⁵⁵ CC, vol.5 no.61, 1881, p.578. R.P. Wigglesworth, *Never Ending, Still Beginning: The Centennial History of All Saints' Church, Palmerston North, New Zealand, 1875-1975* (Palmerston North, 1975), p.11.

⁵⁶ *MT*, 28 Mar 1877. Morley (1900), p.311.

⁵⁷ *NZW*, vol.3 no.24, 1872, p.7.

with a further 375 pounds spent on the parsonage and repairs. Christ Church, the Anglican church in Wanganui, had cost 1200 pounds when it was built in 1865.⁵⁸

Wanganui was the centre of the district, and the expense incurred in building there reflected the concentration of wealth at the larger centres. It also represented the social importance placed on impressive structures at important locations. In smaller centres, particularly where no other churches were yet present, costs were much lower. The Methodist church at Feilding was built for just 138 pounds, with 80 pounds more spent over the following two years, and an Anglican church to seat up to 150 at Upokongaro was to cost no more than 250 pounds.⁵⁹ The place of worship was the symbol of the strength of a denomination's presence in an area. The money spent conveyed an image of the parish to the wider community.

Observations of this kind concerning the pattern of church-building may imply a degree of denominational competition that needs to be balanced - especially in the light of prevailing perceptions about the nature of denominational interaction. Rollo Arnold believes that 'The story of the Christian church in colonial New Zealand is, from the start, a story of competing denominations',⁶⁰ but this is in many ways a misleading organising theme for New Zealand's religious history. Many contemporary observers thought church life in Wanganui-Manawatu area noteworthy for the degree of cooperation that existed. Early in 1874, one correspondent in Wanganui noted the relative closeness of the churches there, commenting that:

I attend Church regularly but not even in confidence will I tell you which church I mean to attend regularly. For let me confidentially tell the good people here

⁵⁸ Bennett (1976), p.67.

⁵⁹ Morley (1900), p.307. *CC*, vol.1 no.3, 1877, p.29.

⁶⁰ Arnold (1980), p.77.

that after all, that is merely a matter of opinion. These differences of opinion are pretty close to one another in Wanganui, whereas in many places they would not come within streets of each other.⁶¹

The Manawatu was likewise considered a place of minimal sectarian division. At Palmerston North, denominationalism was allegedly a later development, for Buick claimed that, initially at least, representatives of the different denominations 'did not stand upon ceremonial differences, but were simply like one happy family'. Quoting the Rev. Hammond, one of the first clergy to minister in the town, he wrote that there was 'no place...within his experience where the people lived in such complete harmony as they did in the early days at Palmerston'.⁶²

Perhaps there was a tendency for perceptions of early days to ameliorate with time, but the pattern was towards cooperation rather than dispute, because this was what pragmatism demanded. Small communities that worked together on a daily basis found sectarian differences unnecessary and irrelevant to the normal pattern of life. Where dispute did arise, communities were quick to establish mechanisms that would resolve them. At Palmerston North, conflict mostly resulted from frustration when ministers of different denominations came prepared to lead services of joint congregations at the same time. Before separate parish facilities were constructed, a recognised rota of Sunday services was established that seemed to serve the community to its own satisfaction.

At Kennedy's, near Wanganui, the Wesleyans were first to construct worship premises, but there was provision for all denominations to use the premises for

⁶¹ WC, 21 Mar 1874.

⁶² T.L. Buick, *Old Manawatu* (Palmerston North, 1903), p.342. Following pages there describe the contexts in which friction was created, and how it was overcome.

services.⁶³ On the one hand, this indicated the fact that weekly attendance was not anticipated in rural areas. It also showed that the denominations preferred a building to be occupied, rather than simply retain a monopoly over its use. The whole community had an interest in the places of worship, whether through involvement in fundraising efforts, or in the common desire to establish institutions. The existence of the different denominations was accepted, but the differences should not be allowed to undermine community relationships.

There was a high degree of support for church-building programmes in other denominations that was evidenced by the extent of mutual involvement in the process. Richard Taylor, the Church Missionary Society missionary, laid the foundation stone of the Wesleyan church in Wanganui in 1872, and the Presbyterian minister, the Rev. John Elmslie, preached at its opening the following year. Presbyterians and Methodists seem to have had a particularly close association in this respect. Similarly, when consecrating St Mary's, Wanganui in 1877, Bishop Redwood acknowledged 'the assistance of the other denominations whose donations had been cheerfully rendered'.⁶⁴ Competition was tempered by an acceptance of the existence of the other denominations, and a pragmatic understanding that diversity was not necessarily an inherent threat.

In addition to the building and use of places of worship, there were also Sunday School rooms and vicarages to be provided. The costs of these varied in the same way that churches did. In Wanganui, the Wesleyan schoolroom, built in the same year as

⁶³ WC, 31 Dec 1874.

⁶⁴ WC, 22 May 1877.

the church, cost 500 pounds, while the rooms at Christ Church were 450 pounds.⁶⁵ Spending on vicarages was significant, since this was often the determining factor as to whether a town had a resident or visiting clergyman. Arnold has suggested that ministers in the region were frequently stationed according to local effort rather than need,⁶⁶ meaning that churches active in raising money and providing facilities were more likely to induce the placement of a minister. As a result, the minister's residence was often relatively substantial, and was seldom built for less than one or two hundred pounds.

It was usual for these various building expenses to leave a parish with a debt of between a quarter and a half of the actual cost of their construction. Therefore, while the most sizeable quantities of debt were in the larger parishes, the burden was no lighter in smaller centres where the population was correspondingly lower. The Wesleyan church in Wanganui opened 500 pounds in arrears, while the smaller church at Aramaho left half its cost of 400 pounds as debt.⁶⁷

The costs of this debt were met in a number of ways. Each denomination had a church extension, or building fund of some kind, and the promise of a grant from this was an essential factor in the viability of a building project. When given, these grants almost always covered between a quarter and a half of the total cost. But because of significant financial demands, churches were not assured of assistance at their first request. Typically, when a project was being contemplated or nearing completion,

⁶⁵ Morley (1900), p.294. *CC*, vol.1 no.3, 1877, p.27.

⁶⁶ R.D. Arnold, 'The Opening of the Great Bush, 1869-1881', PhD thesis in Education (Victoria University, 1971), vol.2. p.607.

⁶⁷ Morley (1900), pp.293-4.

subscriptions were called for. Other regular income for churches came by way of pew rents, special offerings, and the envelope system, which began during the period.⁶⁸ Mostly these monies were allocated towards parish costs and the continuing requirements of regional and national denominational structures, but they could also be used for special parish projects. However, in addition to these mechanisms, a strong emphasis on group events characterised fund-raising and became a basic element in parish social activity.

Particularly in Methodist and Presbyterian churches, tea-meetings were a most common fund-raising activity. Certain institutions included them as a regular fixture of their annual calendar, but they were also organised on a more sporadic basis. The annual parish tea-meeting was a feature, as it was for the Sunday School, Presbytery or Methodist District.⁶⁹ The parish tea-meeting was a major social occasion. Children were generally included, though they were sometimes required to eat separately from the rest of the congregation. After the meal, various speakers addressed the gathering, in order to preserve it from descending to an occasion for pure entertainment. These speakers included the local minister, and leading laity, but often involved clergy from different denominations and around the region. The Wanganui Presbyterian annual tea

⁶⁸ Though pew rents were retained as an acknowledged source of income until well into the twentieth century, they were a notoriously unreliable source. In Wanganui alone, the Presbyterian Church blamed one annual deficit of 68 pounds on slow payment of rents. In 1874 154 seat-holders paid one pound per seat, meaning that there was potentially a large source of revenue. See *WC*, 10 Jan 1878, and *PCN*, vol.2 no.2, 1874, p.265. At Christ Church, the situation was chronic, leading to the Vestry requesting Bishop Hadfield to obtain an opinion from the Attorney General as to whether seat rents could be recovered by legal proceedings. G.F. Allen to Bishop Hadfield, December 1870; *Christ Church Wanganui, Vestry Minutes 1869-74*, pp.34-35. For the envelope system, see for example, *NZW*, vol.12 no.2, 1882, p.40. The Rangitikei Quarterly Meeting attributed its improved financial situation to the adoption of the envelope system at Marton.

⁶⁹ See, for example, *WC*, 16 Jul 1875; *NZW*, vol.8 no.12, Dec 1878, p.281.

meeting was addressed by the five Presbyterian clergy from the region who spoke on topics ranging from education and revival to church management.⁷⁰

Virtually every significant event in the life of the church was, at the time, punctuated by a tea-meeting. Perusal of the activities of the Methodist churches in the region demonstrates the different occasions where they occurred on a less regular basis. There were meetings for welcoming and farewelling ministers, and for the opening of churches and Sunday School buildings, while occasionally they coincided with festive occasions like Good Friday.⁷¹ Other meetings were organised explicitly to raise funds for causes like home missions. Without the benefit of the social and aesthetic attractions a tea-meeting could offer, such causes struggled to attract the support they required. Typically, tea-meetings earned close to 50 pounds.

Another important method was the bazaar, or parish fair. These were widespread, but seem to have been particularly popular in smaller rural parishes, especially in the Church of England. In places like Sandon, they often became institutionalised as annual events.⁷² Bazaars and fetes would become the focus of activity for a long period before the actual event, so that preparations were as important as the occasion itself. Certainly, they offered equal opportunity for socialising and community interaction. The parish bazaar was an occasion for which the parish and the district united. Nowhere was this better illustrated than at Feilding, where an Olde English Faire ran for an entire week, dominating the life of the town

⁷⁰ WC, 24 Jul 1874.

⁷¹ WC, 29 Apr 1878; NZW, vol.2 no.16, 1872, p.61; WC, 31 Mar 1875; NZW, vol.6 no.63, 1876, p.86; MT, 17 Apr 1878.

⁷² See for example, CC, vol.6 no.66, 1882, p.622; CC, vol.8 no.90, 1884, p.712.

with dancing, clowns, theatre and may-poles. Gross receipts were reported to have totalled 270 pounds.⁷³ This was an unusually high return, although one Methodist bazaar in Wanganui also raised 200 pounds.⁷⁴

Parish fairs attracted visitors from around the district, but they occasionally brought support of another kind. In 1881, the Anglican church at Halcombe ran a bazaar that was stocked with surplus material from another at Feilding.⁷⁵ Such occasions were dependant on the involvement of the lay members of the congregation, and this was a significant attraction and element in their success. Often important local families, like the Halcombes, sponsored rural events, either in the provision of a site for the activities, or materials for sale.

Apart from tea-meetings and bazaars, there were also a range of other activities that were used to aid the task of fundraising. At different times there were concerts, picnics, literary evenings, working bees, auctions and tea-parties.⁷⁶ In short, parishes adopted any method that brought the community together. On other occasions, churches attempted to combine fundraising with the task of church extension as preachers used tea-meetings and lecture series to address topics of religious concern.

Not all of parish life was dedicated to social fundraising events, since other groups met regularly for activities that were part of the parish. Church music was one example. At St Paul's Presbyterian, the introduction of instrumental music had been a contentious issue in the early 1870s, as it was in the wider Church where it was said to

⁷³ CC, vol.7 no.75, 1883, p.590.

⁷⁴ Morley (1900), p.292.

⁷⁵ CC, vol.5 no.55, 1881, p.533.

⁷⁶ See, *MT*, 1 Sep 1877; *WC*, 31 Oct 1876; *NZW*, vol.2 no.17, 1872, p.77; *CC*, vol.3 no.26, 1879, p.184; *CC*, vol.4 no.47, 1880, p.467.

be a major issue in the potential union of the Northern church with the Synod of Otago and Southland.⁷⁷ It did not take long before they, like all the churches, widened the musical element in their corporate worship. By 1874, the harmoniumist at St Paul's was being paid 30 pounds a year.⁷⁸

The Church of England had a broader, more diverse musical tradition that it worked hard to maintain. In 1866, the organists salary had been 52 pounds, and whereas the Presbyterian choir in 1874 was said to have been only 'tolerably efficient', the choir at Christ Church was far better established. In 1872, there were at least twenty members involved, and many of these were well known musicians associated with other musical societies outside of the Church.⁷⁹ Where it existed, the choir was an important parish institution. Choirs were an obvious avenue for lay contribution in weekly services, but they were also called upon to participate in fundraising concerts, tea-meetings, and other significant events in parish life. The ongoing commitment to practices and performances inherently created a distinctive social quality in successful choirs. Perhaps this was a major attraction, for choirs often took on a social life of their own, becoming supportive networks in their own right.⁸⁰

Different denominations had institutionalised methods of facilitating social interaction. The Methodist Class Meeting had been instituted by Wesley on the understanding that spiritual development was enhanced in the environment of

⁷⁷ *NZP*, vol.1 no.8, Aug 1872, p.242; *PCN*, vol.4 no.2, Feb 1876, p.13.

⁷⁸ *PCN*, vol.2 no.22, Oct 1874, p.265.

⁷⁹ Bennett (1976), plate 6. G.F. Allen and J.G. Woon, for example, were key members of leading musical groups in Wanganui, such as the Choral and Harmonic societies. See Chapter Two for further discussion.

⁸⁰ This included picnics and other social events, as well as the relationships formed from regular gathering. See, for example Peter Butt, *The Cross and the Stars: An Historical Record of the Anglican Diocese of Wellington* (Wellington, 1993), p.52. Wigglesworth (1975), p.7.

accountability that smaller organisational units provided. Class Meetings were expected to produce greater self-examination and deeper piety, as well as allowing for oversight of membership. They were also a means of organising finances. In New Zealand, opinions were divided as to whether Meetings represented a 'lever or a cross', and the validity of using attendance as a criteria for membership was questioned throughout the 1870s and beyond.⁸¹ While some argued that Class Meetings were the most successful means of grace available, others were concerned about their ineffectiveness. There were occasional complaints that midweek meetings in general were too numerous,⁸² but Conference side-stepped criticisms in 1873, claiming that the meetings had never been so dear to Methodists than at present.⁸³

Locally, the Class Meeting had only a weak hold in parishes. There were never more than seven leaders in any one district, with a maximum of fourteen in total. As the population and number of districts increased, class leadership did not; it was merely redistributed around the region. A small number of leaders usually resulted in a weak Class since much of the burden for its success seemed to rest on the leadership. But, for those who did participate, the Class Meeting was a place where social networks and support were created, as they were at other activities like the weekly prayer meeting at the Presbyterian church. Social cohesion was connected to spiritual oversight and control. Though this dimension was less obvious or explicit elsewhere, it

⁸¹ *The Class Meeting: A Lever or a Cross* was the title of one contemporary article by Oliver Pacis. O.G.A. Harvey and John Stevenson, *Wesleyan Methodism in New Zealand. A paper prepared by the circuit stewards of the Wanganui Circuit. Published by Request of the Office-Bearers.* (Thursday 20 April, 1887), p.2.

⁸² NZW, vol.2 no.2, Aug 1872, c.f. NZW, vol.4 no.42., Jul 1874, p.112.

⁸³ NZW, vol.3 no. 35, Dec 1873, p.183.

was probably also true of regular vestry and parish council meetings, and other committees of the churches, which enhanced a sense of belonging for those involved. Prayer and Class Meetings were simply more accessible to the rest of the community.

There were other groups which met regularly that legitimised their existence by their fundraising activity. In Marton, a Wesleyan Ladies Sewing Association was formed in 1881 to benefit the funds of the parish and the Rangitikei circuit. But there was a strong and explicit social attraction to the monthly gatherings that met in the ministers home initially, but later in different homes around the district. Sewing was complemented by a plain tea provided by the host, with the charge of one shilling each being the primary source of funds. In its first six months of operation the group raised ten pounds. By rotating meetings around the district, it was possible to serve women who lived outside the town and would otherwise have been isolated from regular attendance. As time passed the association extended its involvement in the community further, organising teas by the young ladies and bachelors of the congregation.⁸⁴

Parish life, then, consisted of more than simply attending church on a Sunday. In the context of an expanding and developing region, there was a drive to activity that was centred on constructing an impression of a Christian presence in society. Much corporate life rested on the process of institution-building, which seemed to imply that establishment of religious facilities was a critical evaluation of success. Consequently,

⁸⁴ *Minutes of the Marton Wesleyan Ladies Sewing Association* [Methodist Archives, Christchurch]. See especially, 13 Jun, 31 Aug 1881; 18 Jan 1882; 14 Feb 1883; 26 Mar 1884; 24 Jun 1885.

parish life was often absorbed in the task of fundraising to the point where groups frequently legitimated their existence by adopting it as an element of their operation.

Much work was contributed by a small group of committed members, but the activities that they organised involved many more. The activities attempted to jointly resolve the churches financial and social needs, and did in some ways enhance the bonds of relationship between the parish and the community of the region. In fact, the churches were relatively successful at involving others into the fundraising activities that they organised, but only because they were more attractive and less demanding than the usual Sunday piety. Fundraising and social activity successfully involved the greater part of the community into parish life, but it failed to deepen religious commitments or stimulate real religious engagement.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CHURCH IN THE WORLD

The Church in nineteenth century New Zealand invested a great deal of time, money and energy into organising its communal life, both to establish itself and to extend its influence. Much of this effort was indirect, consisting of groups and organisations that, while associated with the churches through their formation, operation and personal composition, were not tied exclusively to individual parish or denominational interests. Amongst these, the churches of Wanganui and the Manawatu created groups that provided entertainment, assistance for the needy, activities for personal improvement, and a voice in questions of morality. These interrelated areas reflected the expectations, aspirations and worldview of the churches and people involved in them, as well as the range of activities that were a part of church life. The creation of groups to address particular needs represented a more subtle form of interaction with society, and frequently became a mechanism by which the churches helped to shape and define the community as a whole.

Two immediate social needs of the immigrant community were satisfactory patterns of corporate interaction, and stimulating entertainment. To fulfil those objectives the immigrant community resorted particularly to musical entertainment. As was noted in the previous chapter, music was closely linked with the life of the churches in the form of parish choirs, Sunday services and children's music. It was also

an aspect of life for the church community in less formal ways. Settler communities were quickly served by a range of musical organisations that were frequently organised by the churches or their members. The groups that were formed reflected their ecclesiastical associations.

In Wanganui, the Choral Society was the earliest musical institution to be established, and its links with the Christian culture were evident in a variety of ways. Initial meetings took place in the Sunday School room at Christ Church, and from earliest times, there was involvement in significant events in the life of the various churches.¹ When a Wesleyan minister, the Rev. W. Oliver, was farewelled from Wanganui in 1872, the Society's choir occupied the platform, together with ministers of different denominations from around the district.² The welcoming and farewell of ministers were significant community events,³ so that it natural that the most capable and committed musicians of the district should be involved. But the involvement of the Society had more to do with its wider associations with the Church than the individual skills of Philharmonic musicians. These associations were displayed through its personnel, repertoire and accommodation.

Church facilities were used as both practises and concert venues. In the earlier 1870s, practices for the Philharmonic Society were held at Christ Church, while performances were generally at the Freemason's Hall.⁴ In 1875, the Philharmonic was

¹ L.J.B. Chapple and H.C. Veitch, *Wanganui* (Hawera, 1939), p.190.

² *NZW*, vol.2 no.16, 1872, p.61. By this time the organisation was known as the Philharmonic Society.

³ For the newspapers, the arrival, farewell and travel of ministers were always points of comment, as was the process of finding one. *MT*, 23 Mar 1878, notes that 200 people were present at a farewell for the Rev. Jones, the Primitive Methodist minister at Foxton, despite the fact that the congregation was considerably smaller than that.

⁴ *WC*, 29 Sep 1875.

dissolved under the financial strain of some lavish expenditure, but it was replaced immediately by the Harmonic Society. In the wake of falling numbers at performances, a shift of venue was made to the Wesleyan schoolroom in late 1876. The rationale that this would provide greater accessibility to the public probably demonstrated the perception that it was in the churches that receptive audiences were to be found.⁵ Churches were not the only, nor even the largest buildings in Wanganui, but they may have been willing to offer more favourable terms for the use of their premises.

By March the following year, practises were at Christ Church reflecting the close association Anglicans had with the Society, but also the traditional importance of classical music in that denomination's religious expression. The Harmonic Society maintained a particularly close association with the Christ Church choir. It had performed with them on other occasions, but their combined selection of sacred music on Good Friday in 1877 proved particularly popular as the schoolroom was reported to be packed - seating and standing.⁶ Performances for 1877 continued to be held there, whether for light operettas or ordinary recitals.

Anglicans were prominent members of the society. G.F. Allen, a leading architect of Wanganui and a synod representative for much of the period, had conducted the original Choral Society founded in 1862. He returned to the Harmonic Society as conductor in 1878. Other prominent Anglican office-bearers included E.N. Liffiton and J.G. Woon. It was apparently at the instigation of Woon that the original Choral Society had begun.⁷ While different denominations were represented amongst

⁵ WC, 16 Oct 1876.

⁶ eg, WC, 14 Aug 1874; WC, 22 Mar and 2 Apr.

⁷ Chapple and Veitch (1939), p.190.

the office-bearers, such as the Wesleyan Mr Stevenson, and the Presbyterian Mr Webb, Anglicans were most conspicuous. The same pattern was also evident elsewhere in the district. The Foxton Choral Society's first annual meeting was chaired by the Rev. Sherriff at the Anglican church there in 1877, though Methodists and Presbyterians were on the committee as well.⁸

The content of musical performances were predictable. James Obelkevich has noted the dominance of oratorio in nineteenth century English music, so that 'Messiah, it was said, was the first article in England's musical constitution.'⁹ The same was true of New Zealand. Whether it was at Wanganui, Foxton or Feilding, the first half of any performance typically consisted of some piece of sacred music. This might be a mass, cantata or oratorio, amongst which 'Judas Maccabeus' or Mozart's 'Twelfth Mass' were popular, but 'Messiah', or at least excerpts from it, was preferred. Indeed, apart from their light operetta in 1878, the first performance by the Wanganui Harmonic society to not include a sacred selection came only in 1880, shortly after Mr Allen and his pianist had resigned.¹⁰ Quoting Wagner, Obelkevich remarks that in England some regarded attending an Oratorio as 'almost as good as going to Church'.¹¹ This attitude was transplanted in part, so that the sacred portion of musical performances represented a kind of surrogate religious expression.

⁸ *MT*, 11 Jul 1877.

⁹ Jim Obelkevich, 'Music and religion in the nineteenth century', in *Disciplines of Faith: Studies in Religion, Politics and Patriarchy*, (eds) Jim Obelkevich, Lyndal Roper, Raphael Samuel (London, 1987), p.557.

¹⁰ *WC*, 14 Apr and 28 May 1880.

¹¹ Obelkevich (1987), p.557.

By contrast, the second half of a performance was usually dedicated to secular music. Often this meant folk songs, or other well known music, ranging from Caledonian songs to ‘The Caliph of Bagdad.’¹² Yet newspaper reports were quick to note that vocal and instrumental music of a secular nature had been ‘judiciously’ chosen.¹³ Colonials desired at least a morsel of less sophisticated elements in their musical diet, but they were careful to ensure that it was tasteful. The different varieties of music reflected the varieties of cultural identity that immigrants possessed, and they encouraged their preservation. Thus, the music of refinement and high culture was balanced by more rustic stirrings of folk culture.

Tonic-Sol-Fah was another musical development with which the churches were even more closely associated. The invention of a young English Congregational minister, John Curwen, the Sol-Fah movement has been described as one of the most important ingredients in the popularisation of vocal music. Binfield has described his method as attractive, with ‘something immensely moral about it all’.¹⁴ It was popular in the YMCA and circles related to it in Britain, and these also became influential in the Wanganui-Manawatu region and New Zealand generally.

The rise of the movement to prominence in the mid 1870s was an adjunct of the interdenominational revivalism that blossomed in the region from that time.¹⁵ In style and composition, the music of Tonic-Sol-Fah was deliberately more populist than that

¹² eg, *WC*, 3 Aug 1874 and 25 Jun 1877.

¹³ *WC*, 29 Sep 1875.

¹⁴ Clyde Binfield, *George Williams and the YMCA: A Study in Victorian Social Attitudes* (London, 1973), p.94.

¹⁵ See Chapter Three, ‘Revivalism’, for discussion of interdenominational revivalism in the region, and the influence and style of Sankey’s music.

of the choral societies. It attempted to make part-singing easier, and favoured simple harmonies that suited the hymn style. Sankey's tunes were amongst those that were borrowed into the Sol-Fah style, and given their extreme popularity at the time, this was probably an important element in the method's attraction. Greater warmth and accessibility were popular features, and these reflected a pragmatism in colonial tastes.

Tonic-Sol-Fah was particularly popular in Methodist and Presbyterian circles. Foxton's Primitive Methodist church was one with a close association. In July of 1877, the local Tonic-Sol-Fah group assisted at a service of song chaired by the Rev. Sherriff, but the local minister, the Rev. Jones, illustrated the choir's renditions of Sankey with relevant Scriptures. In October they provided a musical entertainment to raise funds to thank the parish for the use of its premises as a practice facility. On this occasion Mrs Flower, the wife of a prominent elder and banker with the Bank of New Zealand, played the harmonium. Earlier, the same role had been filled by Miss Standrin, daughter of the then Primitive Methodist minister.¹⁶

The Marton Tonic-Sol-Fah was reported to have made its first appearance at the Rangitikei District annual tea meeting. The Rev. S.L. Lawry conducted the meeting with Mrs Shannon, wife of the chairman of the Church Extension Fund, at the harmonium. When the Rev. R. Bavin left Wanganui in 1878, he was acknowledged to have been influential in Tonic-Sol-Fah there.¹⁷ The movement had been popular there in Wanganui; within a month of his lessons starting in April of 1878, 55 of the 58 on the group's roll were attending practices. After his departure, his successor at the

¹⁶ *MT*, 28 Jul and 31 Oct 1877. *MT*, 8 Aug 1877.

¹⁷ *NZW*, vol.12 no.8, 1878, p.281. *NZW*, vol.5 no.8, 1878, p.112.

Wesleyan Church, the Rev. W. Lee, was made President with G.F. Allen his Vice President.¹⁸

The movement received significant official sanction from within the churches where it was most successful. From 1879 the *New Zealand Presbyterian* published lessons in each edition, continuing a practise started earlier in the *Evangelist*. Bavin had mentioned as early as August of 1877 that he 'considered music to be ameliorating in its influence. It was a safeguard for youth - a handmaid of religion'.¹⁹ With its moral reputation, Tonic-Sol-Fah was embraced as the ideal instrument by which pressing social and moral needs should be addressed. Its specifically religious origins and connotations gave Tonic-Sol-Fah propriety that was beyond question.

While the connection between Church and music was strong, it was not absolute. Others forms included the music of the public houses, theatres and visiting artists. In 1882, the Wanganui Rifles Volunteer Band and the Wanganui City Rifles Volunteer Band were joined in that town by a Garrison Band,²⁰ and an Orpheus Glee Club was founded in the middle of 1877. Though not bawdy, the Glee Club was far from religious. Given the timing of its formation, it seems that the club was created to be a conscious alternative to the music and ideology of the other musical societies, and in particular, Tonic-Sol-Fah.

While music was seen as having a potentially ameliorating influence, the churches were frequently wary of the potentially harmful effects of entertainment. In the *Wesleyan* in 1872, criticism by one correspondent had been levelled at Methodists

¹⁸ See reports in *WC*, 24 Apr and 18 May 1877, and 3 May 1878.

¹⁹ *MT*, 29 Aug 1877.

²⁰ Chapple and Veitch (1939), p.192.

who attended the Opera. This was followed by considerable debate, and an editorial that sought to define the 'right and wrong' kinds of amusements.²¹ Locally, the editor of the *Wanganui Chronicle* felt compelled to uphold the views of a London clergyman who declared the Music Halls inconsistent with progress in the religious life.²² In some ways the music of Harmonic societies and Tonic-Sol-Fah was a foil to other potentially harmful expressions of music with whom the churches perceived a degree of moral competition. It was a difficult battle to win, however, since the steady stream of every kind of visiting performer became the inevitable focus of great public interest, if only because they were visitors.

Despite this, some groups with no apparent sacred basis were occasionally involved in Church life. Thus, the Palmerston Band was employed to assist the Rev. Bevis by providing music at one of his lectures.²³ Churches provided ready audiences and remained an obvious outlet for musical creativity, so that even where ideologies were not completely in tune, if a group was able to provide suitably appropriate music, then an ecclesiastical involvement was possible.

Overall, these musical societies were formed to be community structures within which those in the churches could operate comfortably. Tonic-Sol-Fah may have been regarded by its promoters as a form of outreach, but overall the governing ethos was less evangelistic than recreational. Sankey's hymns were particularly attractive and popular, as Sol-Fah was, in churches with revivalist sympathies. The sentiments they

²¹ NZW, vol.2 no.15, 1872, p.10. NZW, vol.2 no.17, 1872, pp.65-66. The editorial concluded that the theatre was essentially a depraved place and could not be redeemed by patronage.

²² WC, 27 Jun 1878.

²³ MT, 24 Feb 1877.

expressed were appealing to popular culture, but as the simultaneous appeal of secular groups demonstrated, the music was somewhat less successful at attracting uncommitted people into the full life of the church. Each movement appreciated the social and the potentially uplifting qualities that music offered, and the music they used expressed both cultural and spiritual identity.

As Bavin had expressed, the association of the Church with particular forms of music was an expression of its wider concern for the betterment of individuals and the community as a whole. This agenda was consciously pursued through groups like Mutual Improvement, and Literary Societies, which operated on the principle that mental and moral improvement went hand in hand.²⁴ While generally organised at a parish level, they were intended to reach beyond simple parish loyalties. Their widespread presence was indicative of a belief, crossing denominational boundaries, that the Church was the appropriate location for pursuing and attaining personal improvement.

The Wesleyan and Presbyterian churches were the main promoters of Literary societies, and each ran classes in Wanganui from the early 1870s. Run on a seasonal basis, they appear to have been organised in large measure as a productive form of social entertainment, suitable for occupying the gloom of winter months. Beginning around June or early July, a season would end in late September as the days lengthened and the activity of spring began.²⁵ The content of meetings varied between topics of specifically religious interest to those of a more general literary nature. Religious topics

²⁴ *Minutes of the Sandon Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society*, 13 May 1879. [Methodist Archives, Christchurch].

²⁵ WC, 23 Sep 1874.

were either biblical or related to aspects of Church history, such as 'early non-conformists'. Papers were prepared either by members of the Society themselves or by local clergy, though visiting clergy were especially popular participants and were frequently called upon to offer instruction.²⁶

Literary Societies retained a system of membership, but also encouraged participation by visitors. This was seldom achieved, and membership was drawn almost exclusively from within the churches. It was claimed that visitors were enticed in greater numbers to programmes of a general literary nature, but that members preferred those evenings dominated by Biblical, rather than secular, portions of study.²⁷ In Palmerston North, where the Literary Society was not identified denominationally, church connections were still evident in the presence of the Rev. Dewsbury, along with other church members on the committee. Richard Leary, a prominent Methodist layman and chemist in Palmerston North, was chairman of the Literary and Debating Society for fifteen years. He also chaired early meetings of that town's reading room, and laid the foundations of the Public Library.²⁸

Interest in promoting organisations like Literary and Mutual Improvement Societies was consistent with the attitude of the churches towards education in general. An active participation in school life and the education system dated back to the founding period of Wanganui's history and was continued in various forms throughout the period. According to the Rev. John Mason, the first missionary in charge of the

²⁶ For example, the Rev. Paterson's visit to Wanganui from Wellington in 1875. *WC*, 16 Jul 1875.

²⁷ *WC*, 23 Sep 1874.

²⁸ *MT*, 12 Jan and 7 Sep 1878. John R. Grigg (1972), pp.31-32.

Putiki Mission Station, there were fifteen schools of one description or another established in the region by 1841. These small mission schools at various pa were complemented in the settler community by the so-called 'Dame Schools', run privately in the houses of women of the settlement who taught to supplement the income of their spouse.²⁹

Amongst educational institutions that developed later, denominational schools featured prominently. Yet even where they were not specifically denominational, schools usually had some discernible link to the Church. The Anglican Wanganui Collegiate, founded in 1854, went through some turbulent years involving a Royal Commission in 1878 before it became established as a leading educational institution. A Catholic School had been founded in Wanganui in 1858 and continued to progress, while in 1884 Father Soulas and Mother Aubert reestablished the mission church and school at Jerusalem. The following year a Marist school was opened in Wanganui.

In other places, schools were often founded by people involved in the religious community with particularly strong interests in education. Schools like these included one founded by Francis Watts at Upokongaro in 1858, and the country boarding school for Maori girls on land gifted by the Anglican, Henry Churton.³⁰ Other less conspicuous Church links could also be found, such as the almost obligatory involvement of ministers on school boards. Ministers were also expected to be conversant with matters pertaining to education, so that in the heat of the 1877 Education Act, clergy were frequently required to articulate their position.

²⁹ Smart and Bates (1972), p.209.

³⁰ *ibid*, pp.210-218.

The Act left the religious community with mixed feelings over its connotations, but it was also a spur to greater and more conscious involvement in the educational process. The Presbyterian Church, at its General Assembly in 1877, was urged to 'seek to realise more fully than ever the necessity of having as a church complete machinery for the religious training of the young; and carrying it on earnestly and zealously'.³¹ This realisation had implications for the Sunday School movement and religious life, but it also had consequences in secular education, as the religious community sought greater representation on school boards.

The connection between church and school, then, was multi-faceted and intimate. Perhaps the mutual use of school buildings for church worship, in what Purchas terms the 'Pine period' of church history, is illustrative of this.³² The interaction between the religious and educational use of facilities was indicative of the desire of the religious community to set the terms for the improvement of both the individual and the wider society. For Anglicans and Catholics, activity was focussed on educational institutions, while Methodist and Presbyterians in the region worked harder at creating additional organisations that were more obviously located within the Church. True religion and the mental and moral improvement of persons were believed to be bound together, however they were brought about.

Another area where churches actively engaged themselves in society was in making provision for the needy of the community. Benevolent Societies were directed

³¹ *Proceedings of General Assembly, 1877*, p.16. Quoted in Ian Breward, *Godless Schools? A Study of Protestant Reactions to the Education Act of 1877* (Christchurch, 1967), p.21.

³² See H.T. Purchas, *A History of the English Church in New Zealand*, (Christchurch, Melbourne and London, 1914), pp.220-1. For instance, in Palmerston North, the Presbyterian Church used the School House for services for three years until March of 1877.

towards meeting the physical and material needs of those struggling to cope with the demands of colonial existence. Voluntary parish groups exercising caring ministries were not uncommon in the colony, but the Wanganui Benevolent Society, apparently formed at some point in 1875, was the first of a number of similar organisations in the region.³³ Interdenominational in character, the Society was considered to be a valuable contribution that expressed something of the role of the Church in the community, rather than an activity on the periphery of Church life.

The genuinely interdenominational character of the Benevolent Society in Wanganui reflected the common acceptance, if not conviction, that all the churches had a particular obligation to provide for the truly needy. Accordingly, the committee was composed of a mixture of clergy and laity that represented all the major denominations. The presence of 'the ministers of the several churches' added prestige and respectability to the group, since they legitimated the Society as a ministry sanctioned by the churches. Their presence also underlined the importance the churches attached to the task.³⁴ Catholics were included among the denominations represented. At one of the early meetings in 1875 Father Kirk had been nominated to join the committee, and by December his presence at monthly meetings was being reported.³⁵ The schoolroom of the Anglican church was the venue for regular meetings, but Methodists and Presbyterians also made prominent contributions. In Wanganui, the Rev. Bavin was

³³ Allan K. Davidson, *Pioneers, Protestors and Pluralism: Exploring Presbyterian Identity* (Wellington, 1989), pp.17-18. The earliest report found of a Society meeting was in early September, 1875. Given this timing, and the particular involvement of the Rev. Bavin, it is possible that its formation was connected in some way with the revivalist meetings that were dominating religious and town life at that time. See Chapter Three, 'Revivalism'.

³⁴ WC, 16 May 1877.

³⁵ See WC, 4 Sep and 4 Dec 1875.

acknowledged as having played a leading role, while at Feilding the Primitive Methodist minister, the Rev. Jones, and his Presbyterian counterpart, the Rev. McGregor, were key figures.³⁶

The Wanganui Society planned only to offer assistance where it was absolutely necessary, so that those eligible for aid were to be the most needy. Absolute necessity implied that the beneficiaries were not in a position to earn a living for themselves. In most cases beneficiaries were whole families whose indigence resulted from a variety of causes, including sickness, death and unemployment. Despite sometimes chronic circumstances, entitlements were not to be of an indefinite duration.³⁷ In some ways, this limitation was consistent with the financial pressure that characterised the situation of most churches, but it also reflected attitudes of the community at large. Most settlers had come to New Zealand with expectations of a new and more egalitarian society with greater opportunities. Because it implied a failure in these respects, there was an attitude that amounted to awkwardness surrounding the whole question of poverty. For both provider and recipient, assistance was most acceptable when regarded as a provision for specific circumstances, rather than a statement of ongoing dependency.

The Society's ability to provide and reticence regarding poverty were not necessarily the only factors restraining the granting of assistance, since there were also occasions where the causes of poverty were questioned. This was implied in 1877 when the Rev. Treadwell of St Paul's Presbyterian urged the Society to be involved in

³⁶ *NZW*, vol.8 no.5, 1878, p.112. *MT*, 14 Aug 1878.

³⁷ *WC*, 4 Dec 1875.

lobbying for the Temperance cause. Preventive care would restrain the negative social consequences of liquor consumption that motivated Temperance campaigning.³⁸ The implication, then, was that much poverty was preventable and self-induced. Yet questioning of causes did not always imply a withholding of funds, since there were still those who simultaneously exhorted the churches to increase charitable aid in the light of inadequate provisions by government agencies.³⁹ Eventually, lobbying by the Benevolent Society resulted in a pledge by Ballance to subsidise funds on a pound for pound basis⁴⁰

Benevolent Societies were utilised by the public according to a range of factors that varied from the economic climate, the profile of the group and the urgency of specific individual circumstances. The Feilding Society was formed in 1876, and soon modelled itself on Wanganui by adopting their rules and organisation. The Wanganui formula was copied elsewhere when urgent conditions arose. In Marton, the community had been shocked to hear of one local family said to be virtually starving in their midst.⁴¹ This propelled the Society into existence, but it did not remain active for very long. It was reported to be still functioning the following year, but with only a low public profile. By August 1878, it had supported just four cases in the year.⁴²

This did not prove that there were only low levels of economic distress. Rather, it was symptomatic of the low profile, and a reluctance by many to admit poverty by seeking voluntary assistance. In early 1878, the Wanganui Society announced that

³⁸ *WC*, 9 Jun 1877.

³⁹ *NZW*, vol.7 no.8, 1877, p.180.

⁴⁰ *WC*, 8 May 1878.

⁴¹ *WH*, 22 July 1876, p.5. Taken from Arnold (1981), p.254.

⁴² See reports in *MT*, 28 Jul and 8 Aug 1877; 14 Aug 1878.

work was slowing down, since helpers were reluctant to fundraise when only a few cases of need were being addressed. Publication of this resulted in six new families seeking assistance from the Society within the space of a couple of weeks.⁴³ No one considered themselves to be the most needy, nor did they wish to be regarded as exploitative. However, when funds were readily available - and known to be so - initial reticence disappeared.

A similar situation was observable under the pressures of general economic hardship. From the end of the 1870s, there was widespread recession in New Zealand that followed the borrowing and expansion of Vogel's Public Works Scheme, and the general growth in the country. These difficulties also affected Wanganui and the Manawatu, though it was not reflected in the Benevolent Societies. At the Wanganui Society's fifth Annual Meeting, Mr E.N. Liffiton, reading the annual report, noted that 'the number of persons seeking aid from the society has not been as great as might have been expected from the common depressions and scarcity of work'.⁴⁴ This meant that no assistance was withheld, resulting in a little over two hundred and ninety one pounds being spent on the twenty four cases at hand.

The support of the needy was a moral obligation incumbent on all who were able to provide, so that many services were provided by the wider community at a reduced cost. Medical assistance was generally assured, with doctors assisting both the Wanganui and Feilding Societies. In Wanganui, a Mr Wilcox gave an offer of free medicines, and Dr Tripe ten pounds of free treatment.⁴⁵ Feelings of community

⁴³ WC, 14 Jan and 2 Feb 1878.

⁴⁴ WC, 1 Jun 1880.

⁴⁵ WC, 3 Jul 1875 and 10 May 1878.

responsibility were also illustrated by the apparent reluctance of tradesmen to send their accounts to the Society.

Assistance was probably based on a combination of generosity and moral obligation. Immigrants had come to a new country with high expectations and were affected by examples of failure, leading to expressions of shock when needy cases were discovered. Aware of the vulnerability that went with opportunity, most who did not regard themselves as needy felt that they could afford to be generous. The involvement of the churches in charitable aid also stimulated obligation, since religion and charity in combination quickened consciences. Charitable assistance was an undisputed component of good citizenship and respectable morality, and in this sense the Church acted as both a legitimiser of programmes and a shaper of popular morality.

The Benevolent Societies of the region illuminate aspects of the contribution of women to organised welfare, as well as providing further information concerning women's role and identity in colonial society beyond that of 'wife and mother'. The prominent role they played in the critical task of fundraising may also be illustrative of the way in which women's contributions were encouraged and valued before the emergence of better known temperance and suffrage groups in the 1880s and beyond.⁴⁶ While the office-bearing roles of the committees were the preserve of males, and

⁴⁶ Margaret Tennant, for example, has argued that 'In the 1860s and 1870s there appear to have been very few women involved in organised welfare activities of any kind.' See "'Magdalens and Moral Imbeciles': Women's Homes in Nineteenth Century New Zealand', in *Women in History 2: Essays on Women in New Zealand*, (eds) Barbara Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald and Margaret Tennant (Wellington, 1992), p.55. The functions of 'wife and mother' have been taken as a foundational assumption with respect to understanding Victorian women's roles. See for example, Tennant's article, "'Brazen-faced Beggars of the Female Sex": Women and the Charitable Aid System, 1880-1920', in *Women in History: Essays on European Women in New Zealand*, (eds) Barbara Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald and Margaret Tennant, (Wellington, 1986), p.35.

usually ministers and prominent citizens at that, women were represented in the general committee, though their role was quite specific. These women were frequently the wives of other committee members such as Mesdames Liffiton, Thomson, Sharpe and Hurley in Wanganui, and Mrs Halcombe at Feilding.⁴⁷

The women's role was to organise and coordinate fundraising. In Wanganui, the town was organised into four administrative districts to which two women were assigned.⁴⁸ These women visited the houses of their district with the dual task of raising subscriptions and finding new cases of need. Women who were not ordinarily employed were perceived to have the most time to invest in such a system, but it was also anticipated that they would elicit the most sympathetic responses. Consequently, as well as becoming the public face of religious charitable aid, women had the clearest impression of prevailing social conditions in the wider community.

There were other elements to fundraising as well. The women of the committee clearly organised their own fundraising initiatives, for in March of 1878 a request was published for a room in the library for their sewing group to meet. By the following day their request for a sewing machine had also been accepted.⁴⁹ Such requests were often quickly satisfied because support of groups like the Benevolent Society conferred a special respectability and status on the donor. This in turn reflected the esteem and respectability of the organisation itself and its supporters. Because of the nature of the fundraising activities they employed, groups such as the Benevolent Society provided a

⁴⁷ Taken from various reports in *WC* and *MT*.

⁴⁸ *WC*, 14 Aug 1875.

⁴⁹ *WC*, 1 and 2 Mar, 1878.

place where women's social needs were also met, but in the context of performing a socially useful and admirable function.

The Bible Societies, which sought to minister to the spiritually needy of the community, operated in a similar manner. As with the Benevolent Societies, there was a strong interdenominational element in the Bible Society that reflected the strength of evangelical presence. For evangelicals, the provision of Bibles was especially important, since it was only when the teaching of Scripture was followed that real social and spiritual progress could be expected to be made. Thus, the existence of the Bible Society was an implied, if somewhat circumspect, challenge to the existing values of society. Where Benevolent Societies addressed the material needs of a few, the Bible Society was organised largely by the same people, to serve the spiritual needs of the whole community.

The organisation in the region was actually the Wanganui Auxiliary of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The BFBS had been present in New Zealand for some time; its first Auxiliary having been established in Auckland in 1846.⁵⁰ Likewise, links with Wanganui and district were well established, particularly in connection with missionaries like Richard Taylor. Despite these associations, the formation of an organised committee did not occur until 1876 with the founding of the Wanganui Auxiliary. This probably developed out of the visit of a Society representative, the Rev. Benjamin Backhouse.⁵¹ Wanganui was the main centre, but at the end of 1876 a sub-

⁵⁰ Rev W.C. Comber (et.al.), *The British and Foreign Bible Society in New Zealand, 1846 - 1946* (Wellington, 1946), p.5.

⁵¹ *ibid*, p.18. William Canton, *History of the British and Foreign Bible Society* (London, 1910), vol.4, p.49.

depot was open at Marton, and by the beginning of 1878 more existed in other centres including Bulls and Carlyle.⁵²

In denominational terms the composition of the committee was similar to the Benevolent Society, and even included some of the same personalities. Among the ministers associated were the Wesleyan ministers, Bavin and Stannard, and Abraham Honore, who was largely independent, though he was ordained by the Presbyterian Church and had strong links to the Brethren as well.⁵³ When the Rev. Bavin left, the Rev. Lee took over his secretarial role as he had in the Benevolent Society. The laymen of the committee included Messrs West, Bell, Carson, Webb and Manley, while a Mr Wilcox was in the chair. Between them, these men were representative of the main Protestant denominations.

As with the Benevolent Societies, the role of women in the Bible Society was critical. Writing in the British context, Leslie Howsam has commented that 'Within the Bible Society...women were active organisers, persuasive collectors and powerful contributors....Women were clearly the backbone of the Society.'⁵⁴ From 1859, women were responsible for collection in Auckland, and this pattern was soon adopted elsewhere. Like the Benevolent Societies, this was done on a district rather than church-based system, so that women were allocated to districts in which collecting was

⁵² WC, 23 Dec 1876; WC 16 Feb 1878.

⁵³ WC, 15 Jul 1876; WC 12 Aug 1876.

⁵⁴ Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles: Nineteenth-century Publishing and the British and Foreign Bible Society* (Cambridge, 1991), p.59. Quoted in a draft of a forthcoming history of the Bible Society in New Zealand by Peter J. Lineham, Chapter Eight, 'Bible Women in New Zealand'.

performed under the supervision of the Auxiliary Committee.⁵⁵ Once more, women consciously translated the Victorian charitable ideal into active and practical endeavour.

Financing of the Society came from a mixture of fund-raising and grants. In general, the collectors met with a sympathetic response. Early in 1877, the *Church Chronicle* reported that interest appeared to be high in the districts, and that 92 pounds had been collected.⁵⁶ These efforts were complemented by grants from London of as much as 50 pounds.⁵⁷

The Bible Society had a dual concern to provide Bibles for both the Maori and the settler communities. However, contact between Maori and the settler Church was minimal, meaning that most effort was expended on the needs of the latter. Following the removal of Hadfield from Otaki when he became Bishop of Wellington in 1870, and the deaths of Richard Taylor and his son Basil in 1873 and 1876 respectively, mission work in the region had also waned. Honore was one of the few missionaries still working with Maori in the area by the mid 1870s and 1880s, and it was his presence on the committee that ensured some continuing awareness of demand from that quarter.

At a meeting of the Society reported in the *Wanganui Chronicle* on 15 July 1876, Honore claimed that demand for bibles was very high amongst Maori - much greater than the supply. This was an assertion repeated through the later part of the 1870s, as Honore pointed out the urgent need for copies.⁵⁸ These requests were not ignored, but the vast majority of bibles were intended for the use of English-speaking

⁵⁵ Draft of Lineham's History, Chapter Eight.

⁵⁶ CC, vol.1 no.4, 1877, p.38.

⁵⁷ WC, 23 Dec 1876.

⁵⁸ For example, WC, 13 Jan 1877.

settlers. On one occasion 50 were provided in response to one of Honore's pleas, but orders of a dozen or so were more likely for Maori readers. By contrast, one order from London in early 1877 amounted to 1100 volumes.⁵⁹

The parlous religious condition of the new immigrants was the area the colonial Church identified as its primary concern. The provision of bibles for those immigrants was perceived to be the provision of a fundamental aid to spiritual, and therefore social well-being. Therefore, the presence of a bible in every home was considered vital in the formation of the new society.

Victorian Christianity, and indeed Victorian society, is popularly characterised as moralistic, and encumbered by restrictive minutiae. While there was variation between churches in the character and extent of moral control, there was still a strong sense in which they guarded their role in articulating standards for public morality. The issues of Temperance and Sabbath observance were two issues of public morality that were of particular interest to the churches. Attitudes and comment on these questions illuminate particular beliefs, but they also reveal aspects of their role in the shaping of public opinion, and in shaping and legitimising notions of 'rightness' and morality.

Sabbath observance in Britain was an issue that was undergoing some challenge and redefinition throughout the course of the nineteenth century. In Scotland, standards were more rigid than elsewhere, but the Sabbatarian movement in England and Britain, from which it derived, was active with varying degrees of vigour and success during the course of the century. In New Zealand there were challenges to old assumptions that were based on the new social and religious environment. The

⁵⁹ WC, 17 Mar 1877.

question of Sunday observance was significant because it related to notions relating to the kind of society that settlers envisioned for themselves. For the Christian community, the shape of a much hoped-for 'Christian society' needed to be determined in the light of new conditions.

The continuing significance of Sunday was implied in the structure of the colonial week. As Arnold has noted, Sunday was the linchpin; 'Whether one was a church attender or not, Sunday was commonly observed as a special "at home" day, with leisure for family and friends to visit'.⁶⁰ Thus, patterns of religion, sociability and leisure were inextricably bound. For women, the leisure element was tempered by preparations which could begin as early as Friday night. This would have been exacerbated for many rural church-going families, where worship services in the period before church construction were often taking place in the home.⁶¹

But there were also pressures directed towards relaxing the pattern of Sunday observance. According to Wigley, Victorian Sabbatarianism in Britain was the product of the middle classes. He described its nineteenth century enthusiasts as 'an insecure class, threatened from below and above.'⁶² Pressure towards Sabbatarian controls were also stimulated by conditions of national emotion and tension, and reached heights at times such as the Napoleonic wars, and later, the revivalism of the 1850s.

In New Zealand, the middle classes had neither the strength, energy or the inclination to drive for Sabbatarian controls. Neither were there levels of the same

⁶⁰ Arnold (1994), p.115.

⁶¹ Claire Toynbee, *Her Work and His: Family, Kin and Community in New Zealand 1900-1930*, (Wellington, 1995) See Chapter Nine, 'Community, Sociability and Leisure', especially p.136.

⁶² John Wigley, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Sunday* (Manchester, 1980), pp.183ff.

national emotion, since the nation was scarcely formed. Perhaps most importantly, the physical and practical demands of colonial life meant that the prevailing desire was towards structures that facilitated leisure, mobility and convenience, rather than reducing it. The less restricted colonial environment made strict, legalistic Sabbath observation seem anachronistic.

From the early 1870s, although interest was sporadic, consciousness of the issue was increasing around the country. In Dunedin in early 1874, the decision to open the Athenaeum caused a public commotion. According to Hugh Jackson, 'Quickly thereafter public institutions elsewhere in the colonies were thrown open and some restrictions withdrawn on the running of public transport.'⁶³ News of these developments around the country, including issues like the restriction of steamer whistles in Auckland, were reported widely in the *Wanganui Chronicle* throughout 1874.⁶⁴ A series of articles there between 9 October and 14 November regarding the nature and purpose of the Sabbath aroused some debate in the church-going community, but most Sabbath news continued to come from outside the district.

The climate of national awareness may have aroused some 'controversy' that was for the most part absent in the region. Thus, when a correspondent noted some people's practise of bathing 'just at the time' that those down the river passed on their way to church, the editorial response to this 'most delicate proceeding' merely encouraged the guilty parties to complete their ablutions less tardily.⁶⁵ Debate in the

⁶³ H.R. Jackson, *Churches and people in Australia and New Zealand, 1860-1930* (Wellington, 1987), p.110.

⁶⁴ *WC*, 28 Jan 1874. See also, for example, *WC*, 12 Mar 1874, which notes the excitement in Auckland and Dunedin regarding the running of Sunday trams.

⁶⁵ *WC*, 16 Feb 1874.

district was rarely more heated than that, and there were certainly none of the organisations that developed elsewhere, such as the Otago Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association.⁶⁶ The only significant conflict came in 1878 when it became known that youths around Feilding were playing cricket and racing horses in a semi-organised manner on Sundays. A protracted debate between 'An observer of the Sabbath' and 'Something Arian' revealed that contrasting beliefs existed within the religious community, but it was clear that the importance of the Sabbath was not actually in dispute.⁶⁷

While the keeping of the Sabbath was a well established community principle, it was not universally adhered to. Lindsay Buick recounted the tale of one gentleman who, when reproved by a clergyman for desecrating the Sabbath replied, 'I wuked at Home a Sunday, I'll wuk here a Sunday, and if ya say anything to ma I'll sweer at ya'.⁶⁸ In fact, it was claimed that 'Sabbath desecration' was really quite prevalent in early Manawatu, when the organised religious presence was weakest.⁶⁹ There were, however, aspects of the issue where community sensibilities were quite clear. The sale of liquor on Sunday was one example where the transgression of legal restrictions invariably resulted in widespread condemnation.⁷⁰

There were denominational differences in the attitude towards the Sabbath. The Presbyterian General Assemblies of 1874 and 1877 resolved that Sabbath observance

⁶⁶ See, for example, *NZP*, vol.1 no.1, 1879, p.16.

⁶⁷ *MT*, 20, 23, 27 Nov and 4, 7, 14 Dec.

⁶⁸ Buick (1903), p.341.

⁶⁹ James Guy and William S. Potter, *Fifty Years of Primitive Methodism in New Zealand: A Series of Historical and Biographical Sketches* (Auckland, 1893), p.117.

⁷⁰ See *WC*, 22-26 Jan 1874.

should be an annual topic to be addressed, and this was adhered to locally. Most concern seemed to emanate from Otago, but elsewhere in the country feelings were less strong. One minister, the Rev. D. Wallis, was at pains to note that,

In the colonies the narrow Sabbatarianism of the old, old times does not exist, except as a hallucination that haunts the minds of ignorant scribblers who have got 'Sabbatarianism on the brain'. We colonial Christians lean towards the amplest toleration and freedom.

This attitude was said to be borne of necessity, but the Sabbath was still regarded as having a peculiar and sacred character.⁷¹

Methodists also showed some concern, particularly through correspondence in the *Wesleyan*, but local criticism was not prominent. Amongst comments made in the denominational magazine there was criticism of the Catholic church, which included claims that reverence for the Sabbath tended to decline where Roman Catholicism prevailed.⁷² Anglicans, on the other hand, seem to have been less concerned with broader restrictions than the level of church attendance and maintaining reverence for special days like Good Friday. This was typical of Anglican piety which was comparatively undemanding in religious requirements and sought to avoid excessive regulation.⁷³

The ethos that prevailed, then, was largely one of toleration. The churches in the Wanganui-Manawatu area had established a relationship that was cooperative, and potentially divisive issues such as Sabbatarianism were ones they preferred not to

⁷¹ *PCN*, vol.2 no.14, 1874, p.165.

⁷² *NZW*, vol.2 no.18, 1872, p.87.

⁷³ Chris Collins and Peter Lineham, 'Religion and Leisure', in *Leisure, Recreation and Tourism*, (eds) Harvey C. Perkins and Grant Cushman (Auckland, 1993), p.32.

become embroiled in. Where differing opinions existed, public comment by church leaders was rare. Instruction on appropriate Sunday behaviour was seen as an internal task for each denomination. That Sunday was special was not a notion that was challenged, and in the pragmatic colonial environment, this was enough for most. Sabbatarian issues were a question of degree rather than kind, so that unnecessary debate was unwelcome. The peculiar conditions that lent momentum to Sabbath debate in Britain were largely absent in New Zealand, and furthermore, the churches in the region were reluctant to allow excessive Sabbath controls to enable the churches to be characterised as inhibiting leisure.

The development of a Temperance movement was another area of moral debate in which the churches were closely involved. According to Grigg, this worldwide phenomenon was 'invariably...spearheaded by the involvement and leadership of the evangelical and pietistic Christian churches'.⁷⁴ While Grigg also identifies significant influences beyond the churches, this statement was relevant to the situation in Wanganui and the Manawatu.

The first Temperance Society in New Zealand was founded at Paihia in the Bay of Islands in 1836.⁷⁵ Despite a great proliferation of similar groups around the country in following years, it was not until 1886, with the formation of the New Zealand Alliance, that a national organisation existed to coordinate efforts towards temperance and prohibition. The lack of general coordination, combined with the problems of

⁷⁴ Anthony R. Grigg, 'The Attack on the Citadels of Liquordom: A Study of the Prohibition Movement in New Zealand, 1894 - 1914', PhD thesis in History (University of Otago, 1977), p.1.

⁷⁵ P.F. McKimney, 'The Temperance Movement in New Zealand, 1835- 1894', MA thesis in History (University of Auckland, 1968), p.51.

mobility and time, meant that many of these early groups struggled to survive. Thus, a Wanganui branch of the Independent Order of Rechabites organised in the 1850s soon faded.⁷⁶

Amongst the Temperance organisations operating in the region from the 1870s there were denominational Temperance and Total Abstinence Societies, the Rechabites, and the American-based International Order of Good Templars. Whilst neither the Rechabites, nor the Good Templars were explicitly 'church' groups, strong connections existed, and they received some assistance from within the churches.

The name 'Rechabite' had a biblical basis, being the name of a tribe of Israel which refused to drink wine.⁷⁷ After their initial activities some two decades earlier, the order was re-established in Wanganui in September 1874. Beyond the connotations of their name, there was support for the work by like-minded church members. The Hon. William Fox was a prominent Methodist layman, as well as Member of the House of Representatives for Wanganui and Rangitikei. The Temperance issue was one of his keenest interests, and this led him to support it in many ways. Accordingly, his residence, 'Westoe', was the site for numerous Rechabite social functions.⁷⁸ Fox was said to have become a permanent fixture of the New Zealand political scene, to the degree that in the mid-70s, he was re-elected to Parliament, even though he was overseas at the time.⁷⁹ Support from such prominent individuals was critical to the

⁷⁶ *ibid*, p.55.

⁷⁷ Jeremiah 35.5-6.

⁷⁸ For example, the annual Rechabite picnic was occasionally held there. See *WC*, 26 Feb 1877.

⁷⁹ Raewyn Dalziel and Keith Sinclair. 'William Fox', in *DNZB* vol.1, p.137.

success of movements like Temperance, where persuasive ability and public stature were essential.

Good Templarism's name was said to be derived from a combination of 'Good Samaritan' and the 'Knights Templar' who had protected the Holy Sepulchre from the Saracens. It was a movement in which some saw hope for the unification of the Church and the Temperance movement.⁸⁰ Opposition to the Templars from within the Church was mentioned on occasions. In early 1874 a pamphlet, produced by the Rev James Kerr of Greenock, which attacked Templarism on grounds of 'childishness, secrecy and deism' was replied to by the *Wanganui Chronicle*. In this it was noted that clerical involvement in the movement was significant, and that Christianity and Bible-based values were systematically recognised.⁸¹ Despite this, Anglicans, in particular, expressed reservations about the Christianity expressed in their meetings. The Rev. Towgood of Marton opposed both Rechabites and Good Templars, apparently in dismay at what he regarded as their poor behaviour, while the General Synod expressed concern that there was a tendency to 'omit Christ in prayers' and that it was 'fast becoming a religion in itself'. Others argued that some had been drawn into Church life because of it.⁸²

The emergence of denominational Temperance Societies was a way in which the churches affirmed allegiance to Temperance ideals, whilst offering a moral respectability and legitimacy that they could not, or would not, ensure in non church-based groups. In 1883, the curate at Feilding responded to the advertisement of a

⁸⁰ NZW, vol.3 no.33, 1873, p.145.

⁸¹ WC, 9 Jan 1874.

⁸² WC, 20 Nov 1876. CC, vol.1 no.5, 1877, p.58.

Good Templar picnic on Good Friday by questioning the Templar position on the matter, and querying whether there was 'need for an Anglican Templary'.⁸³ But, in general, Anglicans had been slow to respond to the Temperance issue. While General Synod had made resolutions on intemperance since 1874, specific actions were left to each diocese. The Wellington diocese, reflecting Bishop Hadfield's own position, preferred in turn to leave Temperance efforts up to individual clergy.⁸⁴

By contrast, other denominations were more ready to form organisations and promote Temperance activity. In 1874 the Presbyterian General Assembly made intemperance a topic for an annual discourse, and by late 1876 a Presbyterian Total Abstinence Society was formed in Wanganui that met on a fortnightly basis.⁸⁵ At Feilding, the Temperance Society was not denominational, but was chaired by the Presbyterian minister, the Rev. McGregor.⁸⁶ Amongst Methodists a Temperance Society founded in Wanganui in 1877 was followed a year later by one in the Rangitikei district.⁸⁷ But before this, the Rev. Bavin had already lectured publicly on the matter.⁸⁸ In 1878, a meeting to discuss the formation of a Roman Catholic Temperance Society in Wanganui attracted forty people.⁸⁹

The strategy of these societies hinged essentially on what amounted to the creation of alternative communities, complete with alternative lifestyle and leisure patterns. Most dramatically this was demonstrated in a plan reported in 1875 to

⁸³ CC, vol.7 no.75, 1883, p.592.

⁸⁴ *Proceedings of the Sixth General Synod of the Church of the Province of New Zealand*, (Wellington, 1874), p.58. CC, vol.1 no.1, 1876, p.2.

⁸⁵ WC, 14 Dec 1874; WC, 2 and 21 Nov 1876.

⁸⁶ MT, 9 May 1877.

⁸⁷ WC, 12 May 1877. NZW, vol.8 no.8, 1878, p.185.

⁸⁸ WC, 22 Mar 1877.

⁸⁹ WC, 27 Mar 1878.

develop a completely Templar settlement in Taranaki.⁹⁰ Though the plan never eventuated, it illustrated the purpose to which other activity was directed. Conscious of the need to provide alternative forms of entertainment,⁹¹ Temperance Societies provided an array of musical and literary entertainments. Their annual picnics were community occasions that afforded opportunities to form bonds and commitments between members in a way that day to day life could not. In this sense, picnics were a tool of moral suasion, building community and defining morality in the same process.

As part of their particular moral stance, those within Temperance organisations sought to create an alternative world that offered healthy sociability without alcohol. The formation of the Band of Hope movement, along with Juvenile Templars and Rechabites, were attempts to ensure the ideals and morality of the Temperance world were transmitted to the following generation. It was also a recognition that the young of the colony required protection, and that there was an urgent need to provide adequate social structures for them. It also suggested that the children were seen as the hope for wider and ongoing change, though Church-sponsored activities were invariably held in some suspicion.⁹²

Although the Taranaki settlement never originated, Marton came closest to the ideal that had been expressed, gaining something of a reputation within the district as Temperance town. In January of 1878, a Temperance 'Family' Hotel was established

⁹⁰ WC, 1 Jul 1875.

⁹¹ For example, *MT*, 31 Jan 1877. Editorial noted that Temperance Societies could not afford to merely campaign negatively against alcohol, but needed to provide positive creative entertainment to fill the void.

⁹² WC, 8 Jun 1880. For further discussion, see Chapter Four, 'The Churches and the Young'.

by a Mr and Mrs Wiltshire in line with the spirit of alternative community.⁹³ A month later, William Fox opened the Marton Temperance Hall, which was under the control of the fraternity for its use at meetings, as well as being available for hire.⁹⁴ The presence of Fox in the Marton region was critical to these developments, for he was among the most ardent and longstanding of Temperance campaigners. His significant contribution to the movement at large was recognised in 1886 when he became the first President of the New Zealand Alliance for the Abolition of the Liquor Traffic.⁹⁵

Temperance was a more attractive public moral issue for the churches than Sabbatarianism. Sabbatarianism was inherently and unalterably negative in approach, whereas Temperance could at least promote constructive, if not popular, alternatives. The results of alcohol consumption were also obvious and offensive in ways that failure to keep the Sabbath were not, so that the restraints and inhibitions the Temperance movement sought could be defended from common observation.

But on the whole, the churches were decidedly ambivalent about the extent to which moral control and influence should be exerted. In other areas, this was shown in apparent inconsistencies of attitude. In July 1875, an editorial in the *Wanganui Chronicle* commented on the depth of piety in the district, stating that

There is abroad in the present day a certain amount of respect to church organisation, and attention to the observance of the ordinary Sabbath routine; but religion is not unlikely to be considered an intruder - an interloper - when it shows face in business precincts and in business hours.⁹⁶

⁹³ WC, 18 Jan 1878.

⁹⁴ WC, 21 Feb 1878.

⁹⁵ Allan K. Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa: A History of Church and Society in New Zealand* (Wellington, 1991), p.69.

⁹⁶ WC, 6 Jul 1875.

It was hoped that one result of revival meetings in progress would be the reversal of that situation. Yet a matter of months later, an editorial in the same newspaper was critical of the Catholic Bishop, Redwood, for stepping outside his province as the head of a religious organisation into the world of politics and education.⁹⁷ Undoubtedly, this reflected underlying prejudices and concerns regarding Catholics in general, and particularly their role in the contentious education issue. Yet it demonstrated some of the elements that controlled and constrained the extent to which Christian morality penetrated the wider community.

Many activities that fell outside of direct parish control were still important in Church life. The interrelated elements of moral concern, entertainment, and personal improvement were characteristic of the churches' activities outside of narrower ecclesiastical boundaries. Involvement through these avenues was often a conscious effort to extend the influence of the Church through the formation of structures and institutions within which a Christian world could be seen to exist. The shape and definition of the religious community was influenced by these issues, and they in turn affected the formation and shape of the wider community. Yet, overall, the establishment of institutions represented only a partial penetration of the Christian presence in society.

⁹⁷ WC, 18 Sep 1875.

CHAPTER THREE

REVIVALISM

One of the most distinctive elements of religious life in the nineteenth century was the predominance of 'revivalism'.¹ The urgent concern for a religious society that underlay revivalism was by no means a New Zealand phenomenon, since a revivalist tradition had been established through the work of Edwards, Whitefield, Wesley and others in Britain and North America from the eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century, this trans-Atlantic revivalism had developed and extended significantly as increasing numbers of ministers and evangelists, most often from America, heeded the call to 'save the West'.² Often with refreshing vigour and self-confidence, they operated from a profound conviction that their message contained the power to transform the moral, social and spiritual condition of their generation. Revivalism rose on a tide of preaching to become a distinctive element in popular Protestant expression that could be observed as far away as Canada and the colonies of the Antipodes.³ It was essentially a product of evangelical Protestantism, but a range of expressions emerged during the century that were also translated into new contexts.

¹ Revivalism is understood here as referring to the attempts to promote religious awakenings within particular communities, especially emphasising personal salvation.

² Richard Carwardine, *Trans-Atlantic Revivalism: Popular Evangelicalism in Britain and America, 1790-1865* (Westport, 1978), p.134.

³ See, for example, Marguerite Van Die, "'The Double Vision": Evangelical Piety as Derivative and Indigenous in Victorian English Canada', in Mark A. Noll et.al. (eds) *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism In North America, The British Isles, and Beyond* (New York, 1994), pp.253-272 and Stuart Piggin, 'The American and British Contributions to Evangelicalism in Australia', *ibid* pp.290-309. Also Jackson (1987), Chapter Three, 'Revivalism'.

This chapter seeks to explore the impact of revival movements on religious life in the Wanganui-Manawatu region by tracing some of the influences on its development, the extent of its popularity and the shape of its expression. Understanding the revivalist movement illuminates aspects of the social context of colonial Christianity, as well as revealing attitudes and expectations within the religious community - both with respect to itself and to the wider community as a whole.

The nineteenth century British religious landscape, particularly in the middle decades of the century, was burgeoning with revival evangelists. Their itinerant tours had a significant impact on the development of the popular religious experience and culture that immigrants inherited and transported to New Zealand in the 1860s, 70s and later. Among the best known of these evangelists were the Irish-American James Caughey, associated with Methodist revivalism, and Charles G. Finney. The British revival of 1859 marked the culmination of much of the previous enterprise, and proved to be a significant landmark in Britain's national and religious experience. Its influence and effect was unmatched until the appearance of Dwight L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey in the early 1870s,⁴ though, as Bebbington argues, the frame of mind for this later work was set by the tempo of revivalist religion which had continued, and even quickened in the 60s.⁵

⁴ Jackson (1987), p.49, notes that this was influential in raising revivalistic expectation in Australia.

⁵ D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History From the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1989), p.162.

The emergence of Moody and Sankey, and especially their British campaign between 1873 and 1875, brought new and distinctive features to the revivalist movement, arousing fresh interest and urgency to evangelistic action. Their approach clearly struck a chord in popular consciousness so that their work soon represented the epitome of revivalistic enterprise. Public interest was remarkable even in twentieth century terms; an estimated one and a half million people were preached to during their 1875 London mission alone, with a gross attendance there of around two and a half million.⁶ While the actual impact of their time in Britain has been the subject of some interest and debate,⁷ the apparent success of Moody and Sankey's work gave impetus to the development of revivalist concern in New Zealand, and it was their motivations and methodology that set the agenda for the work which followed.⁸

This was not to say that New Zealand had no previous experience of revivalism. In addition to the great interest with which developments in Britain had been followed,

⁶ J.C. Pollock, *Moody Without Sankey: A New Biographical Portrait* (London, 1963), p.150. John Kent, *Holding the Fort: Studies in Victorian Revivalism* (London, 1978), p.154.

⁷ Kent (1978) argues that Moody and Sankey had relatively little impact except on the 'borders of the Christian sub-culture', and that the work could not make any impression on a people who did not consider themselves to be without religion. See pp.362-363.

⁸ The emergence of revival preaching and the development of the so-called 'saw-dust' trail have received wide comment in the New Zealand context, but the relevance of Moody and Sankey's work to this has remained largely uninvestigated. Peter J. Lincham notes the similarity of style between some preachers in the later 1870s and Moody and Sankey in *There We Found Brethren: A History of the Assemblies of Brethren in New Zealand* (Palmerston North, 1977), p.61. In Douglas Pratt (ed), *"Rescue the Perishing": Comparative Perspectives on Evangelism and Revivalism* (Auckland, 1989), pp.1-22, he picks up the theme of trans-Atlantic revivalism in Canada and New Zealand without tying in this element. Michael J. Powell's MA thesis (*op. cit.*), p.46, notes the background importance of Moody (along with others) in the religious experience of the immigrants. Bryan Gilling, in his major contribution to studies of revivalism in New Zealand, moves quickly from mention of well known preachers like California Taylor, and revivalism inspired by the Keswick movement, the Salvation Army and the Brethren, to the twentieth century evangelistic missions which form the basis of his study. See Bryan Dudley Gilling, 'Retelling the Old, Old Story: A Study of Six Mass Evangelistic Missions in Twentieth Century New Zealand', PhD thesis in History (Waikato University, 1990), especially Chapter Two, 'Christians and Community', pp.62-113.

New Zealand had also received some visiting revival preachers, with the Rev William 'California' Taylor being perhaps the best known of these. A Methodist from America, Taylor had visited for three months in 1865 as part of an extensive world tour. In New Zealand his style was a little more restrained than elsewhere, despite an impressive stature and forceful personality that on occasions drew large crowds of interested onlookers. The country was smaller and more homogeneous than it became with the flood of immigration in the 1870s, so that his preaching, though captivating, had limited ongoing impact. Perhaps the vigorous American 'frontier' style limited his success with an essentially British population that had not yet developed one of its own.⁹

While Moody and Sankey had met with some parochial success in English cities following their arrival at Liverpool in June 1873, it was only with their move north into Scotland in November that reports of their activities began to make news in New Zealand. Probably the first significant mention came in the *Presbyterian Church News* edition of February 1874, with a report sent three weeks into the Edinburgh mission.¹⁰ Wesleyan Methodists soon articulated an interest via reports in the April issue of the *New Zealand Wesleyan*. Revivalism quickly became a point of debate, illustrated by an article in the previous edition which sought to counter 'spurious claims' that revivals caused insanity and led to disorder.¹¹

Clearly, the Scottish Presbyterian connection was important initially, for news of Moody's mission dominated reports from overseas in subsequent editions of the *Church News*. Consequently, Presbyterians were swiftest to attempt to replicate events

⁹ Bryan Gilling, 'Rescuing the Perishing', *Stimulus* vol.1 no.2, 1993, pp.32-33.

¹⁰ *NZPCN*, vol.2 no.14, Feb 1874, p.178.

¹¹ *NZW*, vol.4 no.39, 1874, p.55, and vol.4 no.38, 1874, pp.33-34.

at home in New Zealand. Probably informed by personal correspondence, on 16 April the Wellington Presbytery concluded a discussion on the revival in the churches 'at home', stating that those present,

...having taken into consideration the reports which have reached us respecting the work of grace which has been going on in Edinburgh and other parts of Great Britain, desire to express their gratitude to God...and agree to unite in Special prayer that He would visit with like showering of blessing the land of their adoption, and to engage, as opportunity may offer, in such Evangelistic work as may...be conducive to the bringing about of such a happy result.¹²

The current Moderator of Presbytery was the Rev. John Elmslie of St Paul's, Wanganui. He concluded the meeting in prayer for revival, and his prayers were soon followed by significant developments in his own town.

Elmslie's commitments provide an illuminating reference point for understanding revivalist motivations. Strongly evangelical, he was also profoundly affected by a sense of destiny in terms of the nation-building process that colonial society was intrinsically involved in. Concerned that this be a deliberate process in which the Church take an active role, he had expressed some of his vision as Moderator at the Northern Church's General Assembly in late 1873. He warned the Assembly of the historical impact of the first inhabitants in a country, likening their situation to that of standing at the source of a stream. The chief task of the Church needed to be extension, to ensure that the waters of the stream would not become polluted, leaving future generations struggling to clean it. 'Liberal and energetic' efforts were therefore needed for the 'future prosperity of New Zealand'.¹³

¹² *Minutes of the Presbytery of Wellington*, 16 April 1874, p.209. (WTU: Ms 88-17-35/1)

¹³ *NZPCN*, vol.2 no.13, 1874, pp.154-5.

Given their theological convictions, the sense of the great task lying before them, and perceptions of social and spiritual malaise, it is hardly surprising that evangelicals like Elmslie found inspiration and encouragement in the general awakening being reported in Britain. Instances of specific actions are difficult to establish at that stage, but the attraction of revival was strong all around the country. The Otago Synod's 'Report on the State of Religion', reported in February 1874, firmly suggested a need for evangelistic services aimed at a 'revival of vital religion', reflecting the news from Scotland.¹⁴

Interest in revival was undoubtedly fuelled from abroad. Elmslie was of the Free Kirk, and since it was primarily prominent men of that denomination who had ventured on bringing Moody to Edinburgh, it is highly likely that he was informed of events through that network.¹⁵ Revival meetings had been stimulated elsewhere, such as Sydney, and the reporting of these gave greater immediacy to events in Britain, as well as demonstrating the breadth of global interest. The mention of Otago in prayer at one of Moody's meetings in Scotland only served to heighten anticipation further.¹⁶

Prevailing expectation that news had created meant that it was only natural that the General Assembly, meeting at the end of 1874, 'took cognizance of the Revival movement in Great Britain.' To the pleasure of one Wanganui newspaper, it was Elmslie who moved that 'special prayer and special effort be made in order to bring about...a time of refreshing'. Speaking to that motion Peter Bell, the elder for St

¹⁴ NZPCN, vol.2 no.14, 1874, p.161.

¹⁵ J.G. Elmslie, *John Elmslie, 1831-1907: He Came From Bennachie* (Christchurch, 1963), p.18; Pollock (1963), p.106.

¹⁶ WC, 19 Nov 1874.

Paul's, commented that 'the desire for a period of religious revival was strongly manifested in Wanganui' and that there was great expectation as to how Assembly would respond to the situation.¹⁷

The expectation expressed by Bell was not confined to Presbyterians in Wanganui. The Rev. J. Berry had reported as early as the June Quarterly meeting that the Wesleyan Church there had been 'blessed with a gracious quickening' during the quarter. Whilst conceding that this 'quickness' had not translated into increased membership, Berry conveyed the optimism of his church that the increased 'piety and zeal' displayed was an 'unmistakable token' that increased membership was at hand.¹⁸

The first open attempts by Wanganui churches to replicate the religious activity in Scotland followed the General Assembly's designation of the first week of 1875 as a time for 'special effort'.¹⁹ This replication was revealed in objectives as much as techniques. Expressing familiar evangelical concerns, the tone of the meetings was unmistakably directed at conversion. It seems that this applied to regular and occasional church attenders as much as to non-attenders, for the evangelical emphasis on personal salvation did not discriminate on those grounds. Despite preaching to predominantly church-going audiences, Elmslie's addresses drew on favourite evangelistic texts such as Revelation 3.20, in order to encourage 'decision for Christ'.²⁰

The conduct of meetings echoed that of Moody. In format, there were prayer meetings at noon, while in the evening, main meetings were also followed by a shorter

¹⁷ *NZPCN*, vol.3 no.1, 1875, p.2.; *WC*, 17 Dec 1874.

¹⁸ *NZW*, vol.4 no.43, 1874, p.138.

¹⁹ *WC*, 8 Jan 1875.

²⁰ See reports of various meetings contained in *WC*, 8 Jan 1875.

meeting for prayer. As in Moody's missions, attempts were made to reach specific groups, such as the young, by providing special services for their attendance. At this stage, the clearest example of adoption of practices from Moody's missions came in the use of music. A Prayer and Praise Meeting was instituted at which a soloist offered his rendition of an apparently popular hymn. The writer for the *Wanganui Chronicle*, observing this as a new feature in the conduct of such meetings, offered the opinion that 'if Mr Sankey has rendered such service in this department, others who are gifted with like faculties may do well to follow his example.'²¹

One fundamental element of Moody's approach was an insistence on interdenominational support. Although the element of non-denominationalism had been considered in Wanganui, no steps were taken to guarantee it. The limited extent of the meetings and the fact that they followed recommendations of a denominational body meant that what transpired was essentially a Presbyterian event. Advertising invited all who sympathised with the object of the meetings, but whether in Wanganui itself or at nearby Turakina, meetings were organised and addressed by Presbyterians, or those with close affiliations like Abraham Honore. Certainly, it was the Presbyterian Church with whom the meetings were identified. Whilst participants felt encouraged by proceedings, the denominational factor may well have limited success.

If a favourable mood in some quarters had stimulated evangelistic endeavour, reaction to it also revealed a measure of scepticism and even opposition amongst others. Despite the lack of sensationalism that were said to characterise the work in

²¹ *ibid.*

Britain,²² some were quick to see extravagance in the measures being adopted. The Presbyterian Church in general, and its Moderator in particular, were accused of setting men on a 'wild goose chase after the supernatural in religion.' Not unexpectedly, it was a charge that invited vociferous response, including complaints that meetings were being undermined by sensational reporting that was tailored to solicit suspicion.²³

The reputation of both revivalism and revivalists was an issue to which sympathisers were clearly sensitive. It has been noted that 'in some quarters Finneyism was a synonym for revivalistic extravagance'.²⁴ In an era frequently dubbed by contemporaries as the 'age of sensationalism', suspicion of the motivations and methods of new evangelists was not too difficult to arouse. Such suspicion may have reflected limited sympathies or negative experiences, but it was not confined to those outside of the Church. As a later editorial in the *Wanganui Chronicle* stated, 'not a few, even among church-going people...have an undisguised horror of revival meetings and revivalists.'²⁵ Revivalism always had a controversial edge.

On the whole, Moody and Sankey had avoided the tarnish associated with so many other American revivalists. It was their reputation, combined with concern at the religious and moral state of the colony, that kept support for evangelistic efforts alive. By 20 January, only weeks after the initial meetings, the advertising of further evangelistic meetings demonstrated that the taste for revival had not been satisfied. This was probably stimulated by Moody's successful Glasgow campaign, the news of

²² Denominational newspapers carried frequent testimonies of those who had witnessed the meetings at first hand. See, for example *NZW*, vol.5 no.53, 1875, pp.123-6.

²³ See editorial and correspondence in *WC* from 20 to 26 Jan 1875.

²⁴ Carwardine (1978), p.135.

²⁵ *WC*, 6 Jul 1875.

preparations for a London mission, and by rumours circulating that he was planning a trip to Australia, although this was soon ruled out.²⁶ In the meantime, Elmslie continued to tour the district giving lectures 'for the times' that included talks on Moody and Sankey.²⁷ The Rev. Doull also noted their work when opening the Wesleyan Church at Sanson, and urged those present to pray for the same in the colonies.²⁸

In June of 1875, another series of evangelistic meetings began that developed into the first extended period of locally-led revivalism in the Wanganui region. Perhaps the most significant element in this period was the cooperation that was evident between the Wesleyan and Presbyterian churches there. When special services commenced on 24 June, Elmslie and Bavin were sharing the leadership and organisation. A key element earlier missing from Moody's strategy had therefore been adopted.²⁹

It is possible that this series of meetings was a slightly premature response to the New Zealand Conference of the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church directive that 'the second week of July be offered, and special efforts made for the promotion of a revival of religion.' Despite no apparent previous experience of revival work,³⁰ when the July *Wesleyan* promoted the forthcoming week of evangelism, Bavin was one of the leading protagonists. Clearly, Wanganui churchmen were influential in promoting revivalism on the national stage.

²⁶ *WC*, 18 Feb 1875, p.3, and *NZPCN*, vol.3 no.4, 1875, p.41.

²⁷ See, for example, *WC*, 3 Apr 1875, and 8 Jun 1875.

²⁸ *WC*, 31 Mar 1875.

²⁹ *NZW*, vol.5 no.54, 1875, p.157.

³⁰ See Morley (1900), pp.441-2.

The July *Wesleyan* revealed interesting Methodist attitudes. According to one writer, the necessity for revival and the opportunity of the moment were beyond question: 'Never since the world began was the public mind so stirred upon this subject. Never were men of all classes and creeds so disposed to regard religious revival favourably....Favourable winds are blowing, it only remains for us to spread our sails'.³¹ Sails should not be spread too widely, however. Concern at the potential workload for ministers, and working on the premise that 'true revivals spread from within', it was considered judicious to concentrate efforts on building up those within the Church.

The well discussed order, discipline and regulation of religious experience in Methodist Christianity led in New Zealand to what Lineham has termed 'institutionalised revivalism'.³² Seeking to assist and define revivalistic endeavour, the same *Wesleyan* article identified desirable elements in outreach that were shaped by the experience of the churches in Wanganui, following Moody and Sankey. In particular, this included widespread visitation and the use of special services. Services ought to make use of hymns and solos (preferably Sankey's), and should be followed by a short prayer meeting and an after-meeting for enquirers in the vestry. Where a noon prayer meeting was impractical, 'the next best thing' would be to have the whole church covenanted to pray at the same hour.

The timetable for programmes was likewise a subject of careful consideration. Bavin indicated a formula that would allow special evangelistic services, preceded by an

³¹ *NZW*, vol.5 no.54, 1875, p.157.

³² Peter J. Lineham, *New Zealanders and the Methodist Evangel: An Interpretation of the Policies and Performance of the Methodist Church of New Zealand* (Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society of New Zealand, no.42, Sept 1983), p.8.

appropriate period of prayer, to coincide with a favourable moon.³³ Even the timing in mid-winter may not have been entirely coincidental. Wesleyans had previously been chastised for their inaction during this season in which religious awakenings and conversions were 'generally acknowledged' to be most numerous.³⁴

The cooperative element evident at the beginning came to characterise the winter revival meetings. Daily meetings were held at noon for prayer, and in the evening main meetings beginning at 7.30pm ran until nine or even ten o'clock, with prayer and after-meetings following. Prayer meetings were generally half an hour or so, and the after-meeting was in the style of Moody's 'inquiry room'. Bavin and Elmslie shared the responsibility, alternating charge of the respective services from day to day in a pattern that was maintained, so far as was possible, throughout the course of the meetings. In general the preacher took charge of inquirers, while the other clergyman led the remainder of the assembly in prayer.

Rather than evaporating swiftly as in other centres,³⁵ enthusiasm for revival in the Wanganui region developed with time. On the first evening the Oddfellows Hall was reported to have been crowded to the doors. A week later, despite poor weather, the evening service held 'a much larger number of persons than are usually seen at any other gatherings - however popular their nature may be'. The noon meeting, despite

³³ NZW, vol.5 no.54, 1875, p.158.

³⁴ NZW, vol.4 no.40, 1874, p.72. This was obviously a widely held opinion as it was repeated on other occasions. For example, in NZW, vol.12 no.4, 1882, p.73, the Rev. J. Berry noted that, 'As the winter season approaches, many of the circuits will be bracing themselves up for special services....Whatever may be the philosophy of the subject, experience shows us that winter is the Church's harvest-time....It is with Churches as with apple trees.'

³⁵ Jackson (1987), p.58, notes that while revival prayer meetings were started in a number of Australasian cities, including Dunedin, these soon ran out of momentum.

inconvenient timing, was also noted to be improving in numbers.³⁶ Following another meeting in mid-July, at which the hall was densely packed, it was remarked that 'neither weather or any other obstacle seems to be considered when the day assembly has arrived'.³⁷

Initially, special services were held once a week alongside usual Sunday observance, but it soon became clear that this would not satisfy the present appetite. In the last week of July the first in a series of daily meetings were held over the course of a week. As would be expected, the special meetings took precedence over the activities of other groups. A week of activities afforded more opportunities to target meetings towards particular groups. Once again this included a special service for children during the week, as well as on the closing Sunday, and two days with activities aimed at young men.

The special attention given to the services for the young men illustrated the social concerns from which the initial desire for a revival of religion had arisen. It was the young men who attracted the greatest concern in the religious community since they were least represented in religious observance, and were most vulnerable to the personal isolation and anti-social behaviour analysed in Fairburn's *Ideal Society*. These meetings were planned as a priority, and were widely advertised using circulars delivered extensively by hand post in town and the surrounding suburbs.³⁸ Unfortunately, the effectiveness or otherwise of these efforts was not described.

³⁶ See WC, 24 Jun 1875, and 1 Jul 1875.

³⁷ WC, 15 Jul 1875.

³⁸ WC, 2 Aug 1875.

Increasing numbers of meetings, the attendance at those meetings, and the spread of interest beyond Wanganui all showed that the movement was gathering momentum. The initial week of daily meetings was followed by others with increasing frequency. The next series started on 19 August, while others were advertised on 23 September and 6 October, but each followed a similar format as the first. Between these weeks, single midweek gatherings became increasingly popular. At the beginning of the series a full downstairs of the Oddfellows Hall had been remarked upon as a large attendance for a popular occasion.³⁹ Further reports progressively described a 'sprinkling' of attenders in the gallery, 'several hundreds', and then the building being 'densely packed to the very doors'. By the end, at least 500 attenders left no more room to expand in the present hall.⁴⁰ Perhaps alternating between weekly and daily meetings contributed to the sense of expectation, with the dynamic of the one being stimulated by the deprivation of the other. The daily meetings drew strength from the focussed expectations of preceding weeks; while conversely, less frequent gatherings became a weekly high point without the strain of daily attendance.

Increasing popularity was not peculiar to Wanganui. Whether through local demand or by the enthusiasm of the preachers, revival meetings led mostly by Elmslie were soon being held in surrounding districts. Meetings in Bulls and Turakina in the middle of July met with greater success than expected, indicating that popular interest had spread beyond the main centres, but also that the meetings were probably instigated by a motivated minority.⁴¹ Further reports suggested that meetings as far afield as

³⁹ See note 35 above.

⁴⁰ See *WC* reports, 1 and 15 Jul, 23 Sep, 6 Oct and 14 Oct 1875.

⁴¹ *WC*, 21 Jul 1875.

Marion also became a regular part of the evangelistic itinerary.⁴² Even as these meetings were initiated, some preferred to be part of the bigger events at Wanganui, so that by the time services there were drawing to a close, considerable numbers were coming in from the country and surrounding districts.⁴³

Sponsorship and initiative for this activity was drawn predominantly from Methodist and Presbyterian quarters, partly from denominational sympathy and experience, and partly through the convictions of their leadership. However, the numbers involved suggested that attenders were drawn from beyond these two denominations. Anecdotal evidence confirms some Anglican attendance, but official involvement from the Church of England was conspicuous by its absence.⁴⁴ No public endorsement, tacit or otherwise, was ever offered by Anglican leadership, and parish life appears to have continued as usual - except that events, like parish meetings, which clashed with revival meetings struggled to attract usual levels of support.⁴⁵ The official Anglican attitude was characterised more by indifference than antagonism.

Direct opposition was less likely to be denominationally based than from other sources such as John Ballance's *Weekly Herald*, or from those within the church suspicious of revivalism. While the *Herald* was straightforward in its desire to see the revival meetings draw to an early conclusion, its counterpart and adversary the *Wanganui Chronicle*, with its Presbyterian connections, was supportive. Revivalism

⁴² WC, 18-20 Aug, 9 Sep 1875.

⁴³ WC, 20 Aug, 6 and 13 Oct 1875.

⁴⁴ Elmslie (1963), p.47.

⁴⁵ WC, 29 Jul 1875.

became an issue that fuelled the rivalry characteristic of their relationship.⁴⁶ By and large, however, opposition was not widely articulated, and this reflected both the popularity of proceedings and the manner in which they had been run and reported on. Contributors to the *Chronicle* were at pains to note the lack of any 'excessive' presentation. The tone of the meetings one of 'devotional solemnity',⁴⁷ and according to the *Outlook*, there was a striking 'absence of any extraneous aid or influence; neither was there anything approaching undue excitement, though the whole community was stirred, and many anxious enquirers thronged the meetings every day'.⁴⁸

Preaching at revival meetings had a particular character. According to the *Chronicle*, it was limited to the 'simple expression of Christian doctrine, or plain statement of Gospel narrative'.⁴⁹ The preachers seem to have been conscious of the need to make their messages more accessible than usual, with greater emphasis on communication than doctrine. In this, there were hints of attempts to emulate Moody. Like Spurgeon, whose sermons were also popular in New Zealand, he was famous for the constant use of anecdotes to hold his audiences attention.⁵⁰ He was also said to be conversational in style and uncommonly brief. Moody had a voice to match his large stature, but it was perhaps the combination of sincerity with power that was most compelling.⁵¹ Bavin, preaching on 1 July, entitled his message 'Jesus of Nazareth

⁴⁶ WC, 24 Jul 1875. M.H. Treadwell, *The History of a Century: St Paul's Church Wanganui, 1853-1953* (1953), p.7, notes the family connection between the editor and the first minister at St Paul's. Debate between rival newspapers was notorious for its vigour, and on the basis of their diverging philosophical positions the *Herald* and the *Chronicle* had a reputation for the strength of their disagreement.

⁴⁷ WC, 6 and 22 Jul 1875.

⁴⁸ Quoted in Elmslie (1963), p.48.

⁴⁹ WC, 6 and 22 Jul 1875.

⁵⁰ Lineham (1977), p.33.

⁵¹ Kent (1978), p.169.

passeth by',⁵² and texts chosen by Elmslie matched favourites of Moody. It would be interesting to know whether the Methodist or Presbyterian preachers were more comfortable in the new style. While both appear to have been committed themselves to his approach, it was difficult to convey the warmth and persuasion of Moody merely through imitating his style.

The use of Sankey's hymns, and musical accompaniment in general became increasingly important. Early on, the evening gatherings were described as services of Prayer and Praise, the musical components of which were dominated by selections from Sankey. Musical selections were as much the highlight as the preaching, and newspaper reports left the impression that they were viewed with as much expectation. The music was useful for the purposes of evangelistic services, but they were popular in their own right. As Kent has argued, there was an appealing reassurance about the message of the music. The words concentrated less on doctrines of sin, salvation or eternal damnation than on the reassurance of life in Christ and sentimental yearnings for the perfections of Heaven.⁵³ The language appealed to settlers conscious of being 'far from home' and accustomed to the toil of the colonial environment. Equally as important, the music was uncomplicated, lyrical and memorable.

It did not take long before the new music's popularity was evident. As early as 5 July, Jones' bookseller advertised the arrival of a supply of Sankey's Hymns in the *Chronicle*. Use of Sankey's tunes dominated musical selections at outreach meetings,

⁵² This was one of Sankey's more popular and famous hymns, and had a reputation for stirring emotion. His compilation, *Sacred Songs and Solos* was on sale from September 16, 1873. See Pollock (1963), pp.104-5.

⁵³ Kent (1978), Chapter Six, 'Sacred Songs and Sankey', pp.215-235. See especially, pp.232-4.

inevitably increasing demand, so that in August an order for another 200 was placed.⁵⁴ These hymnbooks became favourite family albums and were subsequently used extensively in services and smaller devotional gatherings.⁵⁵ In many cases the music of Sankey became institutionalised; it came to communicate popular religious belief and community aspirations in ways that few other things could.

It was not just the songs of Sankey that were borrowed at revival meetings, it was the whole approach. While congregational singing was encouraged, increasingly it was used in conjunction with a soloist. The only difference was that where Sankey operated alone, in Wanganui the singer required an accompanist. With Mr Bell singing and Mr Davis on the harmonium,⁵⁶ the partnership gave proceedings a distinctive 'local' feeling that was reinforced by the group of local preachers. While there was an element of performance in this approach, in the small communities of the district it only added to public interest and provided another reason to anticipate meetings.

The announcement of the conclusion of meetings after 16 weeks appears to have been precipitated as much as anything by the strain imposed on ministers who had chosen to bear primary responsibility for endeavours. In December, Elmslie received a call from St Paul's in Christchurch which he accepted with little hesitation, citing the need for a change as his primary reason. His son and biographer also notes the emotional and mental strain imposed by evangelism, added to the anxiety of war in the previous decade. He was exhausted.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ WC, 20 Aug 1875.

⁵⁵ See, for example, H.H. Miller, *Apiti Reminiscences* (c. 1920), p.26, and Wilson (1952), p.41. Both note that Sankey's tunes were the preferred musical accompaniment to services.

⁵⁶ See, for example WC, 30 Sep, 7 and 9 Oct 1875.

⁵⁷ *Minutes of the Presbytery of Wellington*, 10 Feb 1876, p.241. Elmslie (1963), p.48.

In assessing the impact of revival meetings, immediate observers were initially reluctant to gauge success by quantifying conversions, though by the turn of the century initial modesty had disappeared. In sketching Bavin's career, Morley claimed him as the instrument of a revival at Wanganui in which 300 were converted.⁵⁸ Elmslie was generally hesitant about providing numbers, but did note at one communion service in August that 'no fewer than 50 communicants sat down either for the first time or after a long interval'.⁵⁹ The increased piety and enthusiasm of church-goers was a result commented on from the beginning, and was inferred from frequent comments about the 'generally beneficial' results of meetings.

Amidst optimistic rhetoric there were demonstrable signs of change. Perusal of Presbyterian statistics shows an initial rise in numbers of communicant members rather than adherents. For the years 1874 to 1876 numbers at Wanganui in each category were 130 and 550, 200 and 550, and 275 and 625. At Turakina, however, there was only a minor increase in adherents and a fall in communicants, though this is probably attributable to other factors such as removals. Figures for the Upper Rangitikei parish are too incomplete to be illuminating, so that numerical growth was most discernible at Wanganui. Financially, the gross total monies raised actually dropped, due mostly to reduced efforts at debt clearing, but the increase of Elmslie's stipend to 500 pounds made him the highest paid Presbyterian minister in the colony by one hundred pounds.

⁵⁸ Morley (1900), p.442.

⁵⁹ PCN, vol.3. no.9, 1875, p.108.

Sunday School growth was more noticeable in the Presbyterian churches than elsewhere.⁶⁰

Given the fact that Conference met in late February early March, Wesleyan Church figures really pertain to the previous year. At Wanganui, attendance figures had been relatively constant at around 600 from 1873 to 1875, but rose to 766 in 1876, 950 in 1877 and to a plateau of around 1100 in 1878. The increase in full membership from 70 to 90 between 1875 and 1876 was the largest change till 1884, and the figure never rose higher than 97 before that time. The most significant increase came in trial membership, since this represented a critical assessment of Wesleyan health and success. In 1876, there were 56 members on trial as compared with two the previous year. Apart from the following year when there were 11, and 24 in 1884, this was the only time there were more than seven. In Rangitikei district the trend was repeated on a smaller scale. Membership and total attendance at worship made their biggest increases between 1874 and 1876, so that statistically, Methodists fared well from revival.⁶¹

Results for the Anglican churches seem to have been largely inconsequential, although this need not infer that members themselves were untouched. In 1876, attendance at Christ Church varied between eight and 47, with an average attendance being about 30. For the 16 services listed in 1878, only 488 persons were recorded as

⁶⁰ Figures taken from the General Statistics, and Financial Statistics, submitted to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand for each year.

⁶¹ Figures taken from the General Returns of the Middle District (later Wanganui, Rangitikei and Manawatu), of New Zealand at the New Zealand Conference of the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church.

attending, so that there had been little change in patterns during that period.⁶² If, as has been claimed earlier, there is anecdotal evidence suggesting unofficial Anglican involvement, then the practical effects of this are difficult to establish.

Raw statistics, whilst interesting, may only hint at aspects of change in the religious community. As William G. McLoughan has noted, the meaning of an Awakening does not lie in the sum of its statistical parts.⁶³ They cannot trace the shift from occasional to regular attendance, nor can they communicate more subjective elements of attitude and experience. In Wanganui, the condition of the 'professing community' had been the cause of expressed concern and emphasis, and in the effect on them emphatic conclusions were heralded. Elmslie was adamant that in his congregation the cases of 'awakening' could double or triple the number of new communicants.⁶⁴

There was evidence of some concern that interest may not have been extending far beyond the scope of the practising religious community. For instance, special services were undertaken in late August to attract those not of a Church background.⁶⁵ Most attention, however, was drawn to successes. As early as July, the editor of the *Chronicle* expressed his pleasure at the apparent drawing of religious attitudes into everyday affairs in a way that was not ordinarily evident, despite apparent widespread religiosity.⁶⁶

⁶² Bennett (1976), pp.76, 79.

⁶³ Quoted in Gilling (1990), p.10.

⁶⁴ *PCN*, vol.3. no.9. 1875, p.108.

⁶⁵ eg, *WC*, 21 Aug 1875.

⁶⁶ *WC*, 6 Jul 1875.

There was considerable optimism that because events had not been founded on extravagance or extremism, results would be enduring. Some attempts were made to ensure this, such as the formation of an Evangelistic Committee to organise any future meetings and find solutions for pressing concerns. One of these, it was felt, was the lack of opportunities and facilities for recreation for young men. Taking the lead from Moody once more, they established a YMCA.⁶⁷

In some ways cooperation between the churches had been fostered in a way that encouraged working relations, but conversely it may also have inadvertently highlighted existing tensions. Certainly the cooperation between the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches enhanced relations. In November, Elmslie was invited to the Wesleyan District Meeting where he expressed his pleasure at the harmonious cooperation between denominations for the purpose of religious awakening.⁶⁸ In reality this was only the refinement of an existing pattern, since tension had not been characteristic of their previous relationship in the region. Without common ground, initial cooperation would have been highly unlikely.

The limited number of denominations sympathetic to revival, and the relative ease with which they related, provides one explanation for the appeal of revivalism in the region at this stage. Unlike Christchurch or Dunedin, where church-going was already greater, other, smaller denominations were represented poorly in Wanganui.

⁶⁷ WC, 21 Oct 1875. The editorial noted the lack of facilities, and by 3 November a meeting regarding the possible formation of a YMCA was announced. Moody's early work and experience had been in the YMCA and Sunday School movement. Binfield (1973), p.214, notes that 'Moody's campaign of 1873 to 1875 was held where the YMCA was, as it happens, strong....The immediate impact on the branches of the YMCA was great.'

⁶⁸ WC, 18 Nov 1875.

With the Church of England and Catholics largely peripheral to this kind of revivalist interest, success in Wanganui depended to a greater extent on the Wesleyans and Presbyterians who had much in common.⁶⁹ Elsewhere, particularly in southern regions, there were efforts at revival meetings, but with the possible exception of South Otago, none had lasted for very long. Despite this, periodicals continued to carry revival news which indicated that general interest was high. Wanganui was not a 'Church' settlement either, and this may well have assisted cooperation by diminishing denominational tensions.

Wanganui was small enough to retain the advantages of face to face interaction and neighbourly community knowledge. Together with the transition associated with immigration and expansion into the back-blocks of the province, this was conducive to religious enthusiasm. Other influences such as the Freethought movement flourished as well, but vigorous debate was often an aid as much as a hindrance. Perhaps the combination of the size and relative homogeneity of Wanganui's religious community were the key elements that enabled revivalism to become such a feature there. The cooperation between the Methodist and Presbyterian churches was critical, and this was more easily facilitated in a smaller, less diverse town than in the larger centres of population.

⁶⁹ In Christchurch, Anglicans, Presbyterians, Baptists, and Free, Primitive and Wesleyan Methodists had all joined for three weeks of noon-day prayer meetings at the Congregational Church. In Dunedin, all but the Episcopalians had joined in a special religious gathering notable for its use of using Sankey's hymns, and in Invercargill revival meetings were said to be at hand. The *New Zealand Wesleyan* also began publishing 'revival notes' from elsewhere. *NZW*, vol.4. no.42, Jul 1874, p.117, and vol.4. no.43, Aug 1874, pp.134-6. Revival notes from abroad could include anywhere from Britain and America to Australia or Africa.

If cooperation encouraged revival, it is possible that the meetings also highlighted existing tensions with smaller, sectarian groups such as the Brethren assemblies and the Church of Christ. Brethren had been meeting in Wanganui for some time; four converts had been baptised there in 1870, and as early as 1871 Ballance's *Herald* had been impressed by their enthusiasm and zeal.⁷⁰ Their methods and agenda thrived in the social context of the 'bush provinces', and particularly in the climate of religious ferment developing in Wanganui. Concerned that there were attempts to hijack his work, in late January 1876, Elmslie preached a special sermon on a Tuesday evening that amounted to a strenuous attack.⁷¹ Also of concern was the Church of Christ. Present since 1867, its first evangelist, Edward Lewis from Nelson, began ministering to the congregation in 1875. By March their first church was built.⁷² Though the perceived threat passed, these smaller fellowships continued to be excluded from the mainstream by the larger denominations.

The working relationship established between the other churches were maintained with Elmslie's removal to Christchurch, so that successive Presbyterian ministers worked with Bavin in evangelistic endeavours throughout 1876. Bavin remained enthusiastic and was once again instrumental when the Wesleyan Conference of 1876 recommended special prayer for the revival of religion.⁷³ On 10 August 1876, the Wesleyan and Presbyterian churches of Wanganui were again reported to be joining in evangelistic meetings at St Paul's and Trinity churches alternatively. Even

⁷⁰ *WH*, 13 May 1871, p.12. Peter J. Lineham (1977), p.39.

⁷¹ *WH*, 29 Jan 1876, p.9.

⁷² Chapple and Veitch (1939), p.178.

⁷³ *NZW*, vol.6. no.67, 1876, p.179.

Presbyterian ministers who stayed only briefly became involved in evangelistic programmes. The Rev. Horner joined Bavin for the services in August, and soon after the Rev. Martin was also reported at nearby Matarawa.⁷⁴ Similarly, the Rev. James Treadwell was involved in a Market Place afternoon open-air meeting, organised by the Methodist District Meeting, immediately following his arrival and induction at St Paul's.⁷⁵

These initial evangelistic endeavours, stimulated both by social conditions and the success of Moody in Britain were the forerunner of a revivalistic period which continued though the later part of the nineteenth century. Rather than declining after the activity of previous months, special evangelistic and revivalist meetings in coming years became almost common. Developed in different contexts, it may reasonably be regarded as a chief defining characteristic of popular religious expression in the region. It was fuelled by a steady flow of overseas preachers, as well as significant local preaching in general and denominational contexts. Despite these different contexts, the similarity of style which emerged illustrated the form of religion that had the widest appeal.

Dr A.N. Somerville from Scotland was among the first travelling preachers to arrive later in the decade. His personal association with Moody aroused particular interest and expectation. Described as 'firmly Calvinistic', he came from the Free Church of Scotland. As a minister in Glasgow he was involved with Moody's mission there in 1874. He was also closely associated with the well known Bonar brothers and

⁷⁴ WC, 10 Aug and 4 Oct, 1876.

⁷⁵ WC, 25 Nov 1875. Treadwell arrived in Wanganui on 13 November and was inducted into the parish on Saturday and Sunday, 17 and 18 November.

Robert McCheyne, nicknamed as the 'Infant School' by moderates of the Presbyterian old school in Scotland.⁷⁶ Because of this and recent successes in Australia, his arrival in New Zealand was greeted eagerly, and news of his progress followed with interest in Wanganui. In early February when the prominent Wesleyan, Thomas Buddle, preached in Wanganui he dwelt primarily on the success of Somerville's Auckland meetings.⁷⁷

New Zealanders had been disappointed not to receive Moody himself a couple of years earlier, but Somerville did his best to represent him. He adopted Moody's methods to the extent that Jackson speaks of Moody and Sankey's presence 'in a surrogate form'. His son W.F. Somerville apparently played Sankey, organising choirs, playing at the harmonium, and offering renditions of Sankey's hymns and solos. Before commencing meetings in Wanganui, as elsewhere, preparatory meetings spelled out his expectations. This included securing full interdenominational support, and defining the now familiar pattern of midday and evening services.

During the mission itself a large number of special services were organised. These included services for women, children, one for Maori at nearby Putiki, another for men, and a session for young men on the final day as well. His addresses were said to be 'simple in the extreme', though graphic and forceful, and drew on passages Elmslie had used earlier, such as Revelation 3.14-22, and the title 'almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian'.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Jackson (1987), p.58. *WC*, 12 Mar 1878. *MT*, 9 Mar 1878.

⁷⁷ *WC*, 8 Feb 1878. Apparently he had preached to gatherings of up to 2000. See *WC*, 7 Mar 1878.

⁷⁸ See daily reports of the mission in *WC*, 11-19 Mar 1878. King Agrippa's words to Paul in *Acts* 26.28.

While his visit was met with much expectation, and for the most part meetings were exceptionally well attended, the mission had limitations. Somerville was no Moody - either in personality or presence. One newspaper report noted that he was an elderly man and of a nervous disposition. He demanded punctuality and insisted on absolute quiet, so that no children in arms were permitted to attend.⁷⁹ The relatively short duration of just one week, fragmented by the various special meetings, did not allow any real coherence to be established. Furthermore, and perhaps surprisingly for him, he presented little that had not been experienced in Wanganui already.

However, the visit was not without consequence. As well as some significant conversions, the popularity of the mission illustrated the depth of attraction to revivalist religion, and that it was becoming a popular expression of religious culture. The receptiveness of the community belied the obvious limitations of the missionary and his campaign. On his last night in Wanganui, the Oddfellows Hall was reported as being 'crammed' full, as it had been on the first night where the *Chronicle* commended the stewards for their work in finding seating for all but 800 people.⁸⁰ Albert Brown and James Dickie, who later became important Brethren preachers in the region, were amongst those converted through his 'faithful preaching'.⁸¹ The impact of his ministry was also felt indirectly. From Wanganui, Somerville moved to Wellington where he urged the formation of a YMCA. Not long after this, a meeting was called for those in

⁷⁹ WC, 7 Mar 1878.

⁸⁰ 'Within the Hall the stewards did their work so well that they found sitting room for all but [sic?] 800.' WC, 12 Mar 1878.

⁸¹ *Treasury*, 45.32 and 26.88.

Wanganui interested in re-forming an already defunct YMCA. The meeting attracted about forty men from across denominational backgrounds.⁸²

Other overseas preachers continued to pass through New Zealand attracting differing degrees of support. Yet even those who did not visit less developed regional centres, like the Manawatu, were followed with close interest and were a topic of debate. Henry Varley was another British evangelist with close connections to Moody, and a reputation for a strongly non-denominationalist stance.⁸³ With a similar approach to Somerville and Moody, he travelled Australasia with his singer Amy Sherwin. In New Zealand he visited Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch and Dunedin with the Manawatu evangelist Gordon Forlong.⁸⁴ After criticisms that he was 'unctuous' and 'holier than thou' in a Wellington newspaper, an unnamed former curate of Manawatu, of liberal churchmanship, defended him by testifying to the interest with which 2000 had listened to him for two hours. George Bruce, a leading Presbyterian from Palmerston North, also defended him by referring to descriptions of his character in Melbourne newspapers where he had previously engaged in an extensive campaign.⁸⁵ Interested churchfolk followed these tours closely, keeping themselves well informed even at some distance.

Possibly the most influential itinerant revivalist of the period was Margaret Hampson. Apparently indifferent to denominational affiliation, she had twenty years of

⁸² WC, 23 Mar and 16,17 Apr 1878.

⁸³ It was Henry Varley who apparently unconsciously taught Moody the need for prayer, and inspired his ministry when he told him, 'Moody, the world has yet to see what God will do with a man fully consecrated to Him.' Pollock (1963), pp.68 and 94. See *Rangitikei Advertiser*, 18 Jan 1879, p.2.

⁸⁴ Henry Varley, *Henry Varley's Life Story* (London and Glasgow, 1913), p.123.

⁸⁵ MT, 8 and 15 Jan 1879.

preaching experience with her husband in Liverpool before emigrating as a widow to Auckland in the early 1880s.⁸⁶ As with other evangelists, she had gained a reputation from numerous missions in Australia and around New Zealand which led to great expectations. She was invited to Wanganui some twelve months earlier, but her eventual arrival in October 1882 was apparently preceded by six weeks of daily noon prayer meetings, as well as two evening meetings each week.

Mrs Hampson brought a number of new elements into the milieu of itinerant ministry. Women were rarely evangelists, but combined with considerable oratorical skill and presence, her femininity may have been as much an attraction as a barrier. While her approach had many similarities to those of other evangelists, there were also new elements. Her ten day mission opened with a combined communion service which was probably only possible because of her denominational stance. Rather than prayer meetings, noon meetings were described as expositions of bible truth which had been commented on for their earnestness and power. The final Saturday evening was commissioned as a service of testimony. New for Wanganui, this caused something of a sensation, and resulted in 'scores' of people in the packed theatre 'testifying to Christ in rapid succession'.⁸⁷

Following her departure, a service of recognition was held in Trinity Wesleyan where the names of one hundred people intending to join that Church were read. Presbyterians, Anglicans and the newly formed Baptist Churches were also said to have experienced growth as a result. These figures were in line with those from

⁸⁶ David Hilliard, *Popular Revivalism in South Australia from the 1870s to the 1920s* (published by the Uniting Church Historical Society, South Australia, 1982), p.15.

⁸⁷ *NZW*, vol.12, no.12, 1882, pp.270-271.

Christchurch where it was claimed that 500 to 600 had put dependence in Christ.⁸⁸ At very least this illustrated a wide degree of interest and large scale attendance. Wesleyan growth was demonstrated in the figures presented to Conference which showed significant increases in numbers of attenders and members on trial. This may partly reflect the official sanction received when the President of Conference's visit coincided with the start of the mission. It was probably more illustrative of an affinity with Methodist style.

Women's Prayer Unions and Young Women's Prayer Unions were instituted following her departure, along with the now almost mandatory attempts to resurrect a YMCA. It was claimed that 'the publicans of Wanganui complain of a serious falling off in their receipts for the sale of drink; the theatre...fails to have the drawing power it had of yore, and there is a sad wail from managers and actors concerning a beggarly array of empty benches'.⁸⁹ Mrs Hampson and Dr Somerville, like most other itinerants, were theologically conservative and tended to promote temperance and other moral issues.⁹⁰ The social and moral concerns of both the revivalist and the religious community illustrated the directions in which progress was felt to lie.

Travelling revival preachers were not just popular in the Protestant community. The first visit of Redwood, the Catholic Bishop of Wellington, to Palmerston North was timed to coincide with opening of a mission by Father Henneberry in 1878. While the format of his mission contained elements that were familiar in other contexts, such

⁸⁸ NZW, vol 12. no.5, 1882, p.102.

⁸⁹ NZW, vol.12. no.12, 1882, p.271.

⁹⁰ See Walter Phillips, *Defending "A Christian Country": Churchmen and Society in New South Wales in the 1880s and After* (St Lucia, 1981), Chapter Three, 'Waves of Revival', especially pp.59 -70

as the routine of daily morning and evening services, the content was significantly different. Mission was seen to offer the opportunity for explicating distinctive elements of Catholic faith, such as notions of prayer and the intercession of the saints. Revivalism was no less popular in the Catholic community than elsewhere, for when special trains were put on from Wanganui and Foxton to hear Henneberry on Sunday, nine large carriages were required to transport everybody.⁹¹

If travelling overseas evangelists had become a regular feature of religious life, so too had the evangelistic efforts of local revivalists and clergy. Except where preachers were from groups self-conscious about the distinctiveness of their identity, local evangelistic activity was characterised by the cooperation exhibited between churches. The partnership between Methodists and Presbyterians that was strengthened in the wake of 1875 in Wanganui also extended beyond there.

In the spring of 1877 the Revs Hammond and McGregor, the Wesleyan and Presbyterian ministers in Palmerston North, held evangelistic services together in the Public Hall. The object of this meeting was articulated by Hammond as 'the getting together those of the community who go to Church.' Evangelism of the Church was one factor, while another was the social benefits such meetings were widely felt to offer the religious community. The programme of short addresses by Hammond, McGregor and Mr Bruce was punctuated by the music of Sankey. It was attended by an 'attentive and respectable audience' and considered generally to be a success.⁹²

⁹¹ *MT*, 30 Oct 1878.

⁹² *MT*, 1, 15 and 19 Sep 1877. Mr Bruce later became the Rev. Bruce, and was a Presbyterian Home Missionary from 6 August 1878, following McGregor's decision to study full time for the ministry. See Anon., (1976), p.23.

Cooperative efforts directed at more genuinely evangelistic ends followed. In 1882, prior to Mrs Hampson's visit to Wanganui, the churches of Palmerston North combined for a series of meetings using their own preachers, and some others from around the district. Presbyterians and Wesleyans were joined by Anglicans and Lutherans for a week of mission meetings in the Town Hall, where the ministers of each of the congregations were joined by others such as Williams from Wanganui, Fennell from Feilding and Honore and McLean from Foxton. According to reports in the *Wesleyan*, it was a time of genuine revival. In the week of prayer leading up to the services a dozen were said to have been converted, and more still during each week night of the mission. A further week held at the Presbyterian Church in Palmerston North resulted in 50 more accepting Christ, and all the churches were said to have been quickened into greater vitality and zeal.⁹³

There was a tendency by some denominations to claim revival as their own, but this only came with hindsight. Reports in the *Wesleyan* noted an increase in members on trial in their denomination and stated the mission had produced some fifty converts. Rather than specifying their denomination, it was noted that beneficial effect had been widespread. The cooperative spirit was demonstrated by concluding the services with a combined Eucharist.⁹⁴

⁹³ NZW, vol. 9. no.12, 1882, p.210.

⁹⁴ Rev. M.A. Rugby Pratt, *A Jubilee Record of Progress, 1925: St Paul's Methodist Church, Broad Street, Palmerston North, New Zealand*, pp.10-11, emphasises the role of the new 22 year old minister at St Paul's, Samuel Griffiths. Apparently prior to his arrival there had been daily prayer by the women of the Church, and that the 'revival' was the chief cause of demand for a larger building. E.A. Dillon, who became a significant local preacher, was one of the converts.

While the various Churches frequently worked together in their evangelistic work, denominational interests were also advanced using generally the same techniques. The Presbytery of Wellington expressed frequent concern at the need for fresh evangelistic endeavours, which when implemented generally took the form of special services. In 1877, the Revs Treadwell and Ross headed a Committee on arrangements for evangelistic services which organised some at the time of the General Assembly in Wellington. Services, house to house visitation and cottage meetings by local ministers, and others, were prepared in the Wanganui and Rangitikei districts. Gordon Forlong was probably amongst these others, engaging in services in Marton for a fortnight in late September, early October, and earlier in Wanganui. The efforts were regarded as having done much good.⁹⁵

Travelling speakers had an advantage over parish ministers by offering the interest and curiosity of a new face in the pulpit. This was not lost on ministers, so that the exchanging of pulpits became a regular feature. In 1875, during the discussion about revivalism in the light of Moody and Sankey, one General Assembly delegate noted that ministers in Auckland were already exchanging pulpits in an attempt to stimulate ideas and interest. Others, such as the Wesleyan ministers from Taranaki and the Manawatu did the same.⁹⁶

Apart from these efforts, denominations often employed their own evangelists. Given the chronic shortages of ministers for supply, and the increasing population and distances involved, such evangelists performed a gap-filling role by directing most of

⁹⁵ *Minutes of the Presbytery of Wellington*, 1 Aug 1877, pp.276-7, and 5 Dec 1877, p.289. *MT*, 22 Sep 1877; *WH*, 31 Mar 1877, p.6.

⁹⁶ *PCN*, vol.3 no.1, 1875, p.2. *MT*, 1 Dec 1877.

their efforts at maintaining services for the church-going population. Thus, after the necessities of the Palmerston North and Feilding districts were brought before the Wellington Presbytery in 1874, Robert McGregor of Masterton was appointed as Evangelist to the district. Required also to take theological studies, he found the work too great and in May of 1877 he left to engage in those studies full time.⁹⁷

While for Presbyterians 'the cherished principle of the ordained ministry could be departed from only in cases of extreme emergency',⁹⁸ the Methodist system was organised with more deliberate lay involvement. Local preachers, such as E.A. Dillon, were therefore able to be used more extensively for the purpose of extension.

Apart from developments in the mainstream of religious life, other groups were emerging with revivalist approaches of their own. The Salvation Army was one of these. Their rise in Great Britain had been followed with close interest in New Zealand, with opinions as to their merits or otherwise being firmly held. While some could applaud the energy of their efforts, others regarded their existence as an example of 'revivalism gone mad'.⁹⁹ Mostly criticism was focussed on the perceived extravagances of method, or what Wesleyans ministers William Morley and A.R. Fitchett described respectively as 'exhibitionism, lack of reverence, autocracy' and 'mere Moody-and-Sankeyism'.¹⁰⁰ This referred to the music, parades and attire as much as the content of

⁹⁷ See Anon. (1976), pp.19-21, and Harold Scott, *A Pioneering Ministry: Presbyterian Home Missionaries in New Zealand, 1862-1964* (Wellington, 1983), pp.24-25.

⁹⁸ Scott (1983), p.21.

⁹⁹ *NZW*, vol.9 no.8, 1879, p.177, cf. *NZW*, vol.9 no.12, 1879, p.284.

¹⁰⁰ See Cyril R. Bradwell, *Fight the Good Fight: The Story of the Salvation Army in New Zealand, 1883-1983* (Wellington, 1982), pp.12ff.

any instruction. Their distinctive style often resulted in their becoming the focus of harassment from those who considered them 'either irreverent or a pest'.¹⁰¹

Whatever the response of the established Churches, the approach of the Army captured much attention and imagination in New Zealand. Within a month of the first officers' arrival in 1883, a cablegram to Booth reported 'Dunedin, Auckland, blazing. Christchurch shortly. Reinforce sharp.' These reinforcements arrived, and by 1884 it was possible to move to the North Island. Initially work focussed on six centres, including Wanganui and Palmerston North. At Bulls responsiveness was high, and provided an indicator of events elsewhere. Reports in the *Church Chronicle* of April 1884 alluded to revival meetings being held in town, blaming apathetic Christians for creating the need. With some chagrin, the following month's edition complained that, 'The little town of Bulls has been almost distracted of late by the wild excitements of the Salvation Army'.¹⁰²

Although Anglicans generally displayed a serious reluctance in relation to the subject, in 1884, High Church Anglicans emerged with a kind of revivalism of their own.¹⁰³ Understanding the requirement of extra-ordinary efforts in order to inspire congregations, the new vicar of All Saint's in Palmerston North confronted the prevailing revivalism by embarking on a mission of his own, at the request of Rev. Towgood in Marton.

¹⁰¹ Brian Sutton-Smith, *A History of Child's Play, New Zealand 1840 - 1950* (Pennsylvania, 1981), p.67.

¹⁰² *CC*, vol.8 no.88, 1884, p.694, and vol.8 no.89, 1884, p.701.

¹⁰³ *CC*, vol.8 no.94, 1884, p.739. The editor, in referring to the meetings at Marton noted that missions ought to be based on general principles and be authoritatively sanctioned. They might not be suitable for every parish since they are 'fraught with danger to the best qualified priest'. Reports of the mission taken from pp.740-742 unless otherwise stated.

The programme the Rev. Copinger developed was densely packed with services and prayer. Weekdays began with early communion, prayers at 10am and 5pm, services to women or children at 4pm, and an evening sermon and prayer. The missionary, or sub-missioners from other surrounding parishes, were also available for counsel. Rather than Sankey, music was more likely to be hymns such as 'Onward Christian Soldiers'. Attenders were expected to show respect by kneeling during prayers and rising for the minister, and the choir wore symbolic white robes.

Apparently, attendances increased throughout so that services were well filled despite miserable weather. Numerous people sought counsel, and some travelled 'from pretty long distances in the country' to attend.¹⁰⁴ At the conclusion of services, rather than a YMCA, 70 signatories were gathered to form a Guild of St Stephen's. This guild encouraged efforts towards greater and more consistent piety and morality, as well as reverence for the offices of the Church. Among other results, the mission was said to have brought back substantial numbers to regular church attendance, increased communicants, and brought nearly 50 for communicants classes.¹⁰⁵

The general success of the event led some to believe that Copinger might be the answer to the lack of energetic clergy in the colony, leading to suggestions that he might be most effective if dedicated as a touring missionary. While this was never followed up formally, the Marton mission was followed by one in Wanganui in January 1885 where Copinger followed the same principles, resulting in 33 candidates for confirmation. In 1885 there was also a visit from Boddington and Mason, two English

¹⁰⁴ *MS*, 6 Sep 1884.

¹⁰⁵ *CC*, vol.8 no.95, 1884, p.752.

missioners of the same ilk.¹⁰⁶ Such denominational revivalism, especially amongst Anglicans, only reflected the wider importance of revivalism in the general religious culture.

Local undenominational preaching operated largely on the same principles, and had been prominent in the region for some time before the arrival of visiting preachers like Mrs Hampson. Brethren preachers were among the earliest, most industrious, and influential of these. Despite some distinctively undenominational concerns, their approach produced an equally strong and distinctive identity that was a frequent focus of controversy and debate. J.G. Deck, the pioneer of Brethren assemblies in New Zealand, was influential in the region, since the assemblies that emerged were generally founded by him or converts of his work. Alfred Feist, related by marriage to Deck, had arrived in New Zealand in 1866. Reports, predominantly in the *Weekly Herald*, demonstrated that following beginnings in the Wairarapa he was active in Foxton, Turakina and further abroad in the Wanganui-Manawatu region.¹⁰⁷ An authoritarian approach did not prevent Feist forming assemblies as far away as the Wairarapa and Hawke's Bay.

Other itinerants associated with the major denominations also had assembly connections. Abraham Honore had come to New Zealand with the North German Missionary Society, but had soon been linked with the Presbyterian Church, being ordained by the Otago Church in 1869 before moving to Marton in 1871. Fluent in

¹⁰⁶ CC, vol.9 no.98, 1885, pp.776-7, and vol.9 no.100, 1885, p.783. Wigglesworth (1975), p.14, notes a mission to Hawera. George Edward Mason, *Round the Round World on a Church Mission* (London, 1992).

¹⁰⁷ Lineham (1977), Chapters Two to Four, includes descriptions of the work of these men and other prominent Brethren preachers.

Maori, English, Danish and German, his services as a missionary extended beyond Maori to Scandinavian and British immigrants as well. These skills and a distaste for denominationalism brought him into contact with the rural revival efforts the Brethren, as well as work for the major denominations.¹⁰⁸

Gordon Forlong was perhaps the most significant undenominational preacher in the region. A preacher of some repute, he had been warmly welcomed on arrival to New Zealand for health reasons in 1876, when he bought land at Bulls.¹⁰⁹ Before long his preaching there, and in other places like Foxton, saw him reckoned as the 'great sensation of the district'.¹¹⁰ Truly undenominational, he had connections with the bigger churches as well as assemblies, and later, the Salvation Army. Evangelism was the preeminent concern, though the connections it brought caused some criticism.¹¹¹

After travelling with Varley in 1878, and his own tours in the South Island later, he returned to Bulls in 1883. It was probably at his invitation that the Salvation Army preached in the district in 1884. According to Lineham, this mission was followed by a profound religious movement in the district that saw about two hundred converted within a few weeks. Originally this benefited the Wesleyan Church, but when the Evangelical minister moved on Forlong created a stir by advising members to join the Bulls assembly. Forlong's work was influential not only because conversions took place, but because so many of these became influential preachers in their own right.

¹⁰⁸ See obituaries in *MT*, 24 Jul 1894, and *Monthly News of the North German Mission Society*, (Bremen) no.9 Sep 1894; Lineham (1977), pp.33-6.

¹⁰⁹ *WC*, 27 Oct 1876.

¹¹⁰ Peter J. Lineham, 'Gordon Forlong', in *DNZB* vol.2, p.149.

¹¹¹ Bulls: *WC*, 10 Apr 1877; Foxton: *MT*, 16 Feb and 6 Nov 1878; Tract: *WC*, 13 Jun 1878.

The conversion of key Brethren leaders, such as C.H. Hinman, strengthened the presence and impact of assemblies in the region and around the country.¹¹²

The appeal of assemblies in the Manawatu hinged on three main factors. The undenominational nature of the movement was in harmony with the necessities of daily routine, particularly in rural regions where the impact of assemblies was greatest. In this it promised the avoidance of divisions that seemed irrelevant to the new environment. Assemblies had great potential for warmth of interaction. Usually meeting in homes, or later in smaller gospel halls, they facilitated fellowship while avoiding the expense of clergy and the material trappings of religion. Theologically, the emphasis on personal salvation and commitment was challenging and distinctive in a frontier situation that often highlighted irreligiosity. These elements were all part of the undenominational evangelical culture that had flourished at times in the previous decades in Britain. In many ways, they were similar elements that had been important to other successful evangelism in the region, demonstrating the character of popular religiosity that was emerging in the region.

The revivalist religion so successful in recent British experience was embraced in Wanganui and the Manawatu perhaps more than anywhere in New Zealand. For ministers and religious leaders revivalism seemed to meet the needs of the rapidly expanding community in their region. It drew people into the orbit of religious life whom the process of immigration had alienated as well as providing a steady flow of new converts. Revivalism helped the churches to keep pace with the tide of

¹¹² See Linham (1977), pp.61-7.

immigration, and so arguably became a primary mechanism of church growth. It was hugely popular, in part because of the excitement that had been aroused in Britain and around the world, but also because in practise it was simple, dynamic and whole-hearted. Revivalist religion provided an attractive pattern of what church life could be with its music, emotion and colour.

The evangelistic work of denominations, whilst including other elements, frequently applied the same principles as the more lively interdenominational endeavours. Some groups with distinctive identities - including the Brethren, High Church Anglicans, and later the Salvation Army - used the formula independently. Other more 'mainstream' churches found greatest success in cooperating together or with undenominational preachers like Gordon Forlong. For them, the element of interdenominational cooperation was critical in the overall success of the work. The Presbyterian and Methodist churches of Wanganui had managed to work together successfully from early on, and this pattern was maintained even as the town expanded. This was unusual in urban New Zealand where churches were more likely to be preoccupied with denominational interests. In rural regions it was perhaps less surprising to find the community drawn together in this way, but nonetheless, the pattern persisted.

In many ways the various mechanisms in operation displayed more similarity than difference. Above all this similarity was expressed in the common application of the work of Moody and Sankey, from whom the original motivation had arisen. Their work was able to be adapted successfully to the Wanganui-Manawatu region, so that

revivalism provided a unifying focus for religious life, and heightened religious community by drawing people together in a climate of expectation and optimism.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHURCH AND THE YOUNG

Providing for the needs of the young ranked highly among the many concerns of the colonial church in the new world. The revivalism that became so important in the district had demonstrated an urgent concern that the community be religious, and children, it seemed, were an important factor in this concern. The provision and support of numerous mechanisms for 'reaching' children highlighted the general belief that they above all were the vulnerable and needy in colonial society. The young represented hope for the future, so that in theory at least, it was normal for families to associate their young with one or more of the groups organised by the churches to provide for them. By doing so, it was expected that a sure moral basis was being established for the good of the individuals themselves, but more importantly for the community at large. The Sunday School movement was the crucial mechanism by which the churches sought to engage children, and it was there that attitudes were most clearly conveyed. But there were also other groups that sought to cater specifically for the needs of the young. For the churches, ministries to children were foundational in the life of the parish not only because they were considered crucial for the well-being of the colony, but also because they helped to draw the rest of the community into contact with the life of the church.

Modernisation of Europe in the wake of the Industrial Revolution had brought change to every area of society. Amongst the upheaval were changes of consequence for society's young. In particular, increasing fertility and higher life expectancy led to rapid population growth and urbanisation. Changes in working opportunities and conditions accompanied industrialisation, and together with other factors these produced changes in the pattern of age relations and behaviour.¹ The rise of peer groups in urban centres was one visible expression of change, whether on the streets for the poor, or in the various clubs and societies that developed among the middle classes. Change was universal, but for settlers to New Zealand there was also the transition to colonial life.

For most children, colonial existence was a mixed blessing. It offered new experiences and opportunities, but it has also been noted that 'Colonial society revolved around adults, not children, and it emphasised work, not leisure.'² Thus, children and young people were typically drawn into what Arnold has termed the 'family enterprise', in both town and country alike.³ This involved entire families working together at a given occupation in order to make it sustainable. In rural settings this meant yeoman families manning the 'farmyard, garden, dairy, orchard, fields and home' together, while in the towns the same applied in small business settings as well as the home. In consequence, 'thousands of youngsters grew up in New Zealand taking for granted that

¹ See John R. Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770-Present*, (New York, 1974), Chapter Two, 'Troubled Youth: The Consequences of Modernization, 1770-1870', pp.37-93.

² Peter J. Lineham, *No Ordinary Union: The Story of the Scripture Union, Children's Special Service Mission and Crusader Movement of New Zealand, 1880-1980* (Wellington, 1980), p.22.

³ Arnold (1994), p.129.

they were part of a family work-unit.”⁴ For others, despite some legislative restrictions during the 1870s and 1880s, children as young as ten could also be involved in employment outside of the home. This pattern of daily existence placed strong physical demands on the young that were only exacerbated for those receiving regular educational instruction.

Yet attitudes towards youth were mixed, leaving the necessities of the colonial environment tempered by a genuine idealism. The young were not viewed only, or even primarily, as cheap labour, for it was characteristic of Victorian society to view children with a measure of sentimentality, even if as Gillis contends, this did not extend to older youth.⁵ As Thomas Lacqueur has noted, the philosophy of Locke and Rousseau and the poetry of Wordsworth and Blake were representing a kinder, more optimistic view of children than before.⁶ Although the doctrine of ‘original sin’ remained a powerful force in shaping religious attitudes, a shift of perception was in process.

Ideally, childhood represented innocence and moral purity, so that instruction and guidance was a matter of importance. In New Zealand, where children were often living a wilder, less trammelled existence than their English counterparts, such idealism met with other realities.⁷ Sutton-Smith has demonstrated that the play of colonial children, outside the often stringent controls of home and school, could become quite

⁴ Jeanine Graham, ‘Child Employment in New Zealand’, *New Zealand Journal of History*, vol.21 no.1 (1987), pp.63ff.

⁵ Gillis (1974), p.67.

⁶ Quoted by Gerald E. Knoff, ‘Two Centuries and Six Continents After’, in *Christianity, Society and Education*, (ed) John Ferguson (London, 1981), pp.92-3.

⁷ Wayne Mowat interview with Dr James Belich, discussing material on children in colonial New Zealand for his forthcoming history of New Zealand. Radio New Zealand, 5 October 1995.

harsh.⁸ Rather than undermining the idealism surrounding children, this may have provided an incentive to control the conditions that negatively influenced youth. 'Gentle Jesus, meek and mild' was a Victorian picture of the model child. Preserving innocent childhood and providing positive instruction were therefore essential ingredients in the making of a stable and moral society.

The Sunday School movement was the primary means by which the Churches sought to achieve these goals. While Sunday Schools had existed as early as the sixteenth century, the acknowledged founder of the modern movement, Robert Raikes, began his work in Gloucester in the late decades of the eighteenth century.⁹ Shocked by scenes of delinquent children he had witnessed one Sunday in Gloucester, Raikes' school began aiming at 'the reformation of society... by establishing notions of duty and discipline at an early stage'.¹⁰ This involved a mixture of training in literacy and morality. According to William Kennedy, proponents of the movement that followed 'wanted to bring children and young people to Christ, and they wanted to train them in the three 'Rs' and Christian morality so that they would be safe and useful citizens'.¹¹ Similarly, Sangster sees the original purpose of the Sunday Schools established by Raikes and others as 'secular' in that they sought to tackle the relationship of

⁸ 'It was as if the often harsh demands for adaptive social behaviour left them more disposed to cruelty, teasing, obscenity, prejudice, and fighting, as well as rebellious pranks upon both the weak and the strong'. Brian Sutton-Smith, *A History of Child's Play, New Zealand 1840 - 1950* (Pennsylvania, 1981), p.136.

⁹ Frank Booth, 'Robert Raikes: Founder of the Sunday School Movement', in (ed) Ferguson, *op.cit.*, pp.26-34.

¹⁰ David John Coles, 'The Remodelling of the New Zealand Sunday School', MA thesis in Education (University of Auckland, 1966), p.11. Coles is quoting Raikes in 1780 from M.G. Jones, *The Charity School Movement*, p.146.

¹¹ William Bean Kennedy, *The Shaping of Protestant Education* (New York, 1966), p.14. Quoted by Gerald E. Knoff, 'Two Centuries and Six Continents After', in (ed) John Ferguson, *op.cit.*, p.93.

'ignorance and vice'. For Wesley, however, there was the hope that, in time, 'these Schools may become nurseries for Christians'.¹²

The divide between secular and sacred aspirations was not necessarily a point of tension, however, since the two were intimately connected and borne of the same conditions. In the context of a vital voluntary charitable aid movement in nineteenth century Britain, the Sunday School movement expanded quickly precisely because it was at once an instrument of moral rescue, social control, and an effective means for spreading the word of God. In Britain, at least, schools were generally led by laymen in churches of Dissenter origin, with the Church of England apparently slower to adopt the innovations. They were also characteristically for the poor who were deprived of education during the week.¹³

Periods of revival seem to have been connected with development in the Sunday School movement. As Hames has noted, in origin the 'Sunday School Movement was a direct consequence of the Evangelical Revival'.¹⁴ In the eighteenth century, Raikes work had been anticipated by evangelicals like Hannah Ball who was a follower of Wesley. The Sunday School changed, but by the nineteenth century it was still very much a part of the scene in which evangelists like Moody and Varley were immersed.¹⁵ Intense religious awakening frequently stimulated and encouraged involvement with

¹² Paul Sangster, *Pity My Simplicity: The Evangelical Revival and the Religious Education of Children, 1738-1800* (London, 1963), pp.110-111.

¹³ *ibid*, p.95.

¹⁴ E.W. Hames, *Teaching the Faith: Studies in the Doctrine, History and Polity of Methodism* (Auckland, 1962), p.131.

¹⁵ Sangster (1963), p.110. *NZW*, vol.2 no.19, 1872, pp.98-9. See also Pollock (1963), especially pp.33-58, which includes details of Moody's Sunday School work in his earlier years in Chicago.

Sunday School work, as it did in other areas, for the fate of children particularly concerned those otherwise apprehensive about the directions of society.

New Zealand Sunday Schools emerged simultaneously with the advent of missions, beginning as early as 1815 with the Methodists at Rangihoua.¹⁶ Consistent with their recent British origins, these schools were at once a form of charitable assistance, and a means of inculcating Christian teaching and morality through the civilising instrument of education. Sunday School Unions began in the settler church in Auckland in 1865. Wellington followed in 1880, with others forming their own thereafter.¹⁷ These institutions assisted with teacher training, and provided examinations along with other resources such as libraries and bookshops. Their formation indicated the extent of Sunday Schools in those regions, since unions were necessarily dependant on the prior existence of parish Schools. In fact, Sunday Schools had already become a characteristic feature of almost every church.

Borne of the charitable ideal, the ubiquitous presence of Sabbath Schools in the settler church was suggestive of an underlying attitude within the community. In Britain and even America, Schools had been largely the preserve of poor and working class children for whom it was necessary to make special provisions. In England and Wales, the total population attending Sunday Schools rose gradually from below five percent to about twenty in 1887.¹⁸ In New Zealand, however, affiliation with the movement was greater, and attendance more general. By implication, then, the 'needy children' of New Zealand were a wider group, but a reluctance to name and isolate the

¹⁶ Coles (1966), p. 11.

¹⁷ *ibid*, p.17.

¹⁸ Gilbert (1976), p.200.

poor, based on aspirations of equality, allowed more than simply the needy to attend. Before 1877, when compulsory education was introduced, Sunday Schools were the educating and moralising influence to which the colony turned, and this trend continued into the twentieth century.

While there are difficulties in applying figures to accurately represent the extent and shape of Sunday School activity, census and church sources can provide a general overview of their significance in colonial life. Despite suggestions by Coles and others that Sunday Schools struggled to keep pace with the expansion of immigration in the 1860s and 70s,¹⁹ census figures from 1886 suggest that in the country as a whole, the rate of attendance at Sunday School increased between 1874 and 1886. From 52.8% of the population aged five to fifteen years in 1874, the proportion of children on Sunday school rolls rose steadily to 65.8% in 1886. The largest increase in this period was just 6.4% between 1874 and 1878, but it was probably significant that this followed the Education Act of 1877.²⁰

For most children then, some level of attendance at a Sunday School was a normal part of childhood experience. In fact, it was only in the 1870s that Sunday Schools were surpassed in efficiency by other educational facilities in the colony in terms of attendance. Even still, the peak of Sunday School attendance did not occur until 1911 when upwards of 70 percent attendance was recorded, so that they remained an important force.²¹

¹⁹ Coles (1966), p.14.

²⁰ See Appendix, Table 4.1, adapted from *Census* (1886), p.209.

²¹ See graph of 'Sunday School Attendance as a Percentage of Total Number of Children in New Zealand, 1871-1921', collated from Census information in Powell (1970), p.213.

In a negative sense it may be argued that by the mid 1880s some 35 percent of children still did not attend. Yet this figure is misleading. The organisation of Catholic education meant that Sunday Schools were unnecessary, since the same function was provided elsewhere. Sunday Schools were a Protestant phenomena. Allowing an average Catholic population of fifteen percent during the period, by 1886, more than three quarters of Protestant children were involved in Sunday School.²²

Census figures providing localised information regarding attendance were usually given on the basis of Provincial Districts, so that figures pertaining to Wanganui, Rangitikei and the Manawatu are contained in those for Wellington Province. While the general pattern of increasing attendance was observable there as for New Zealand, the almost identical relative increases in Wellington were consistently around five percent lower than the national average. Thus, attendance in the province ranged from 46.2% in 1874 to 60.8% in 1886. Almost all of the increase came between 1874 and 1881, with the highest jump of 9.9% occurring between 1874 and 1878. Again this was in the aftermath of the Education Act, but it also reflected the general growth within of the churches at that time, and the more even balance of population in the smaller towns.²³

If the figures for Wellington showed less involvement in Sunday School activity, it was most pronounced in the north and western part of the province. In 1881 the census included a breakdown of educational statistics by County which showed that the

²² From statistics on 'Religions of the People' we may see that the actual range of Catholic population was between 13.48% and 14.21%. Subtracting this proportion from the total number of children gives a figure of 77.5%. See *Census* (1886), p.110.

²³ See Appendix, Table 4.2.

proportion of attendance in Wanganui, Rangitikei and the Manawatu was behind even the provincial average.²⁴ Whereas the provincial average in 1881 was 60.4%, and nationally it was 62.8%, these three counties trailed significantly with only 46.1%. In Wanganui it was lower still at 41.9%.

There were probably clear reasons why the region lagged behind the rest of the country. South Island provinces were more successful in attracting children to attend classes than elsewhere, reflecting the Church settlement orientation of places like Christchurch and Dunedin. More significant, however, was the isolation and transportation difficulty that settlers faced in newer provinces like Taranaki and the 'bush' regions of Wellington. Thus, while some lamented the fact as an inadequate 'colonial' excuse, poor weather and consequently messy road conditions meant that normal patterns of church life were frequently disrupted.²⁵ The frontier-type conditions of the area only exacerbated what was a wider problem so far as many churches were concerned. Even in the 1880s the children's section of the *New Zealand Wesleyan* carried an extended and rather pointed ditty by Frances Ridley Havergal, entitled 'Why I go to Church on Rainy Sundays'.²⁶

The peculiar isolation of areas like the Wanganui-Manawatu region was suggested by other educational statistics in the Census. Home tuition was generally a symptom of isolation in colonial society. Where schools were readily accessible, it suited both the social and practical interests of families to utilise their presence.

²⁴ See Appendix, Table 4.3.

²⁵ *CC*, vol.4 no.45, 1880, p.456. One 'layman' complaining about the small matters that keep people from Church in the colonies included 'a cold or wet day' amongst excuses offered, along with tiredness and illness.

²⁶ *NZW*, vol.12 no.2, 1882, p.39.

Around the country, the trend through the late 1870s and early 1880s had been towards decreasing levels of home tuition. From 1874 and 1886 the national average had dropped from 11.6% to 5.0%, with the most substantial change being between 1878 and 1881. These changes were mirrored reasonably closely in Wellington Province, the change being from 11.7% to 5.3%, again with a significant decrease after 1878. The rate of home tuition in the Wanganui-Manawatu region, however, remained high. In 1881 it ran at almost twice the national average, remaining at around ten percent of the school age population.²⁷

The pattern of institution building tended to see church construction following that of schools. Where churches existed, so too did educational facilities. Therefore, it was not extraordinary to find that where Sunday School attendance was lower, the rate of home tuition was higher. Physical isolation and transportation difficulties that were typical of newer settlement regions affected church life as they did other institutions. In general, more densely settled counties were likely to have better attendance. Jackson has noted that this was less a reflection of the irreligiosity of people in the backblocks than it was of the difficulties and time involved in reaching places of worship - or, in this case, educational instruction.²⁸

While large numbers of children were not attending Sunday School, a great many still did retain some formal contact. Yet even where attendance was rare or even absent, greater numbers of children were informally connected to the movement and remained on the School roll. A paucity of Anglican statistics and incomplete records

²⁷ See Appendix, Tables 4.4 - 4.6.

²⁸ Jackson (1983), p.48.

for other denominations make precise quantification of membership rolls difficult, but even by exploring existing figures it is still possible to gain an impression of the scope of affiliation.

The Wesleyan Methodist Church records for the region offer the most complete source, with most information being provided in the General Returns from the Annual General Meeting of the District. These indicate that adherence to the Sunday School movement may well have been greater than the attendance figures recorded in the Census statistics. In 1870 there were just two schools in the Wanganui area. This soon grew to five, including Rangitikei in 1873. By 1877 as many as a dozen schools existed, although the number and location of these varied over following years.²⁹ Wesleyan Sunday Schools were strong in the area. In 1881, the year in which the Census gave the most complete indication of schooling, Wesleyan School rolls totalled 806, out of a census total of 1693.

Unfortunately, most of the Presbyterian churches in the district failed to present returns to General Assembly in 1881, so that precise calculations are impossible. However, some clues suggest that growth in Presbyterian numbers kept pace with those of the Wesleyans. Between 1878 and 1881, Wesleyan rolls in the area had increased by about 200. In 1877, there had been 552 scholars at Presbyterian Sunday Schools, but this had undoubtedly expanded. In Wanganui, a new minister, the Rev. James Treadwell, soon became associated with a strong children's work.³⁰ Shortly after his arrival there were six Schools instead of three, and forty more children on the

²⁹ Figures taken from General Returns submitted to the Annual Meeting of the Wellington District (formerly the Middle District) of the Wesleyan Church in New Zealand.

³⁰ Treadwell (1953), p.11.

roll. The Sunday School at Bulls alone was greater than in the entire Rangitikei District four years earlier in 1877.³¹ The trend in the Wesleyan Church had been for greater growth in the newer, readily expanding Rangitikei and Manawatu regions, and this seems likely too for the Presbyterians.

Along with Wesleyans and Presbyterians, Anglicans and Primitive Methodists ran Sunday Schools in the region. Although figures are not available for either denomination, neither appears to have made a significant impact. For Primitive Methodists, this reflected their relative size. More surprising was the struggle in the Church of England to establish a vital Sunday School, despite its expressed general interest in education. In 1875, when Wesleyan and Presbyterian School picnics were able to attract 300 to 400 participants, Christ Church managed about 120.³² By comparing other denominational statistics against census totals for the region, that proportion appears indicative of the relative strength of the denomination's Sunday School programme. By the mid 1880s, one visiting Church of England clergyman noted with some consternation that in Taranaki, as in 'many other parts of the colony', Sunday Schools still seemed to be 'any denomination except the Church'.³³ The weakness of the Anglican work seemed symptomatic of the ponderous rate of its growth in the region generally.

Accurately gauging the extent of genuine involvement, in contrast to affiliation, is problematic, given the sources at our disposal. Although not stated, census figures

³¹ Figures taken from 'General Statistics' submitted to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand in each year.

³² WC, 26 and 27 Feb 1875. WC, 28 Apr 1875.

³³ Mason (1892), p.110.

appear to relate to the number of children on the school roll rather than attendance rates, and these were more frequently organised according to Provincial Districts than by County. Church statistics, such as the annual returns provided by the Presbyterian and Wesleyan Methodist Churches, also indicated affiliation rather than actual participation. The irregularity with which some parishes provided information also affected the completeness of the picture for the region.

The Wesleyan Methodist District Minutes provide the most fruitful source for attempting to gauge real involvement above affiliation. In the Sunday School section, the average attendance was provided alongside other statistics. The District Meeting of 1879 (referring to the previous years statistics) revealed an average attendance rate of 68.5%. The following year, attendance in the Wanganui, Rangitikei and Manawatu circuits, at 74.2%, was higher than that of the District as a whole.³⁴ Occasional figures, such as provided in the *Wanganui Chronicle* in 1878, confirmed a 69% attendance over enrolment rate for the Wesleyan Sunday school in that year, but these were probably only taken from District figures.³⁵ While a useful indicator, the lack of such information for other denominations, and the infrequency of information for even the Wesleyan Church make the figures of questionable wider applicability.

The extent of affiliation with Sunday Schools is significant insofar as it indicates the extent to which the movement had become a fundamental institution in colonial society. Thus, even where families and children did not attend consistently, ties were not abandoned. Despite emerging national concern that the movement was not as

³⁴ *District Minutes of the Taranaki and Wanganui District, 1879 and 1880.*

³⁵ *WC*, 5 Mar 1878.

effective as it might have been, there was some cause for optimism. Whereas churches attracted around a quarter of the total population to public worship on a Sunday, Sabbath Schools achieved around double that proportion. If children were in fact included in church attendance figures then the contrast between the rate of children's church involvement and that of the general population is even greater.³⁶ It would lend considerable weight to Jackson's assertion that Sabbath School was the only link with Church life for many families.³⁷

Sunday School was the arena where it was hoped that a moral dimension could be ensured as part of wider, more idealistic colonial aspirations for their new world. If there was any ambivalence about the practise of religion amongst the adult settler population, then it was covered by a sense of responsibility to the children. Association with a Sabbath School was insurance for the future of the colony. It demonstrated that settler society was conscious that the moral basis afforded by religion was something it should not too easily neglect.

Rather than seeking conversion, as such, the task that Sunday Schools perceived for themselves was one of moral and religious instruction. In providing this, it was regarded as second in importance only to the family. The importance of the family in Evangelical piety was established from the first in the eighteenth century, so that Evangelicalism was soon dubbed 'the religion of the home', with Family Worship 'the badge of evangelical allegiance'.³⁸ Sentiments such as those expressed by the Rev

³⁶ Jackson makes calculations regarding church attendance that compare adult adherents (15 years and over) with usual attenders on the assumption that these include youths of twelve years olds and older. See Jackson (1983), pp.50-51.

³⁷ Jackson (1987), p.23.

³⁸ Sangster (1963), pp.71-72.

William Aikman, that 'The family is the educator of the race' and that 'the atmosphere of the family is what determines the constitution of a man', were common.³⁹

The Sunday School was meant to complement, rather than replace, family devotion. In 1873, one teacher disclaimed any alarm at the decline of religious instruction in public schools, since it was 'the Sabbath Schools and the firesides' that were the only fit nurseries for careful Christian rearing of the young.⁴⁰ By the early 1880s the same attitude was still prevalent, leading to mixed feelings regarding the place of the Sunday School. One correspondent to the *Presbyterian Church News* noted the presence of Schools as a fundamental institution in every branch of the Christian Church, but lamented the neglect of family worship as 'a great mistake... sure to bring with it calamities in its train'.⁴¹ Clearly, there was a fear that the service Sunday Schools offered could become a cause in the neglect of private family devotions.

For the Church, families were not altogether reliable in respect to the fulfilment of religious responsibility, so that the task of the Sunday School had been seen to become increasingly more fundamental for some time. The Rev. William Morley, who had been the Wesleyan minister at Ridgeway St, Wanganui in 1868, noted as early as 1872 that Sunday Schools were an 'essential part of our Church economy.' Echoing Wesley's hope, they had become 'the nurseries of the Church' from where office-bearers and ministers were expected to be drawn. No church was now considered

³⁹ *PCN*, vol.4 no.8, 1876, p.87.

⁴⁰ *Evangelist*, vol.5 no.7, 1873, p.214.

⁴¹ *PCN*, vol.10 no.5, 1882, p.50.

complete without one.⁴² This was especially the case for Wesleyans conscious of Sunday Schools being one of their great contributions to British society, but the care of the young was a prominent topic of discourse in other churches. Certainly by the 1880s it was possible to speak confidently of their importance across the denominations.⁴³

The desire for a strong and effective ministry to children from within the churches clashed with actual colonial conditions to produce an ongoing tension between aspirations and reality. In the country generally there was an almost constant feeling that Sunday Schools were substandard. This led to repeated correspondence to denominational newspapers in search of explanations for deficiencies, and suggestions for their remedy. Various causes, such as the lack of resources and apathy on behalf of families, were among those most commonly ascribed. The Rev. James Copland, having attempted to run after-school classes during the week, complained that access to children for any more than allotted hours was almost impossible.⁴⁴

The charge of apathy was probably not entirely fair. For many, Sunday School was a welcome feature in that it provided the very practical benefit of allowing an afternoons relief from parental responsibility. So far as religious instruction went, there were probably many who felt self-conscious about their own adequacy or ability to provide, and who were only too happy to have churches share the responsibility. Weekday instruction was probably impractical for other reasons, especially in situations where transport was difficult, and children's labour around the home was at a premium.

⁴² Morley (1900), pp.292-293. *NZW*, vol.2 no.19, 1872, p.98.

⁴³ *NZW*, vol.3 no.31, 1872, p.101. *NZP*, vol.1 no.5, 1872, p.132. *PCN*, vol.10 no.5, 1882, p.50.

⁴⁴ *NZP*, vol.1 no.3, 1879, p.61. He claimed that this was largely the result of prevailing parental apathy

Perhaps William Morley's comments in 1872 were the neatest summary of the issues that recurred throughout the following decades. He suggested five main deficiencies; inadequate rooms, poor furniture, inadequate provision for senior scholars, inadequate training and selection of teachers, and methods of governance of the schools.⁴⁵ These observations had been sparked by the realisation that only a comparatively small number of scholars were actually progressing from School into the church. Failure was not simply in levels of attendance, but in the results apparent in the life of the child who did attend. It was not enough to be an instrument of moral and religious uplift if this did not lead into a life of involvement in the Church.

The role of the teacher in this came under the greatest degree of scrutiny. Questions focussed primarily on their competency and numbers, but teacher numbers were also a topic of ongoing concern. As early as 1872, one correspondent to the *Wesleyan* was advocating a preparatory exam for intending teachers as a means to combat what they termed an 'apparent rise in ignorance'.⁴⁶ For some, this was a logical consequence of a tendency to leave instruction to young and inexperienced teachers. It was commonly noted that the main qualification necessary to teach was a willingness to do so, with experience being a welcome if not compulsory addition.⁴⁷ Despite a tendency to compare standards with those 'at home', not all were convinced that things were as bad as was sometimes suggested. It was taken as a sign of hope that some

⁴⁵ *NZW*, vol.2 no.23, 1872, p.164.

⁴⁶ *NZW*, vol.14 no.2, 1872, p.45.

⁴⁷ *Evangelist*, vol.5 no.3, 1873, p.67.

non-biblical and folksy superstition prevalent in the old country was less obvious in teaching in New Zealand.⁴⁸

Children, seemed to attend till around the age of fifteen. Certainly, this is implied in census educational statistics, but also in Morley's reference to those over fifteen years of age when defining senior scholars in his 1872 *Wesleyan* article. It is difficult to establish the exact age of the teachers. James Copland had referred to 'boys and girls' being pressed into service for want of a sufficient number of men and women,⁴⁹ but this was probably an exaggeration. When the winner of a teacher's essay writing competition was announced as a sixteen year old by the name of Agnes Whyte, it was readily acknowledged that she was a young teacher. Apparently she had been the only entrant.⁵⁰

The general questioning of both the age and ability of Sunday School teachers had local consequences. In late 1878, the Rangitikei Quarterly meeting of the Wesleyan Church decided to put its Schools under review, to clear up any lingering doubts.⁵¹ The fact that no further public mention was made of the issue may indicate that problems were either absent or resolved, but this is by no means certain.

Youth and inexperience of teachers followed from a general shortage. This was a subject frequently revisited in the period, with various reasons being offered. There were simply insufficient adults with either the inclination or the energy to devote to the task. Perhaps some parents felt themselves unsuited or unqualified for the

⁴⁸ *NZW*, vol.9 no.7, 1879, p.152.

⁴⁹ *NZP*, vol.1 no.3, 1879, p.61.

⁵⁰ *PCN*, vol.7 no.7, 1879, p.80.

⁵¹ *NZW*, vol.8 no.11, 1878, p.239.

responsibility. Other suitable candidates probably valued the break from their daily responsibilities. One writer complained that there were not as many of the 'better-educated and more respectable' members teaching in New Zealand as at home.⁵² Generally though, there was not a large enough pool of candidates because most people were necessarily absorbed in their own circumstances. If the desire for religious instruction was strong, few were willing to provide it.

In late 1876 the Anglican diocese in Wellington began circulating the *Church Chronicle* with the intention of providing both information and resources to the region. The Sunday School problem was one area that probably stimulated this development, especially in the light of the impending changes to religious instruction. From the first issue, each volume carried at least two pages of Sunday School lessons and material for children. Almost immediately, one correspondent articulated the existing deficiencies by claiming that the diocese could use twice as many teachers as were currently serving.⁵³

That complaint referred to class sizes of around fifteen or sixteen children per teacher, but this was not the case everywhere. At Wanganui in 1878, the Wesleyan Sunday School had 335 children on its roll with 19 teachers. In fact, those figures were slightly misleading, for total attendance was usually about 230 on any given Sunday, leaving the average teacher responsible for about twelve children at one time. A further ten auxiliary teachers and officers meant that in practise numbers were lower still.⁵⁴

⁵² NZW, vol.2 no.16, 1872, p.58.

⁵³ CC, vol.1 no.8, 1877, p.93.

⁵⁴ WC, 5 Mar 1878.

Judging by returns to the General Assembly, Presbyterian Schools in the district fared at least as well. Throughout the period it was unusual to find more than twelve students per teacher, even in smaller more remote areas. Often the ratio was more favourable. At Wanganui, for instance, there were 35 teachers for 250 children in 1879, and 44 to 340 in 1881. In 1880, at Palmerston North, the Methodist Church on Broad St was able to provide 11 staff for its 110 students.⁵⁵ Anglican concern at teacher numbers was therefore more pertinent than for other denominations, and this reflected the general state of their Sunday School work. For other denominations, if the situation was not ideal, it was manageable. Expressions of concern did highlight a desire for provision of high quality religious instruction - even if there was ambivalence about contributing towards it.

The activities of Sunday Schools were an important medium for the process of community creation, since they invariably involved at least the family and wider church community. Picnics were probably one of the most effective ways in which the Sunday schools helped to facilitate wider social interaction, since the annual picnic was an important social occasion for adults as well as children. At Wanganui, all the main denominations held picnics. The Presbyterian and Methodist Churches seem to have held their annual picnics around the same time each year, either in the last week of February or the first week of March, and these proved especially popular. They may not have been the only picnics of the year, however, for in 1876, the Wesleyan school held another in November. They were a popular feature, and frequently attracted as many as three or four hundred participants. While there was no Catholic Sunday

⁵⁵ John R. Grigg (1972), p.54.

School as such, St Mary's School reportedly held picnics of its own, and these were similar to those of any Sunday School.⁵⁶

Picnics followed a number of other similar patterns, with one other predictable feature being the location. Matarawa was a favoured destination for the Wanganui churches, since it was within a reasonable distance. As often as not, however, sites were only a short walking distance to somewhere like St John's Hill. The particular location was generally a field belonging to a church member. The denomination of the benefactor seems to have been relatively unimportant, as Mr Parkes, a local Presbyterian, happily provided fields for the St Mary's picnic of 1877, as well as for others from time to time.⁵⁷ Despite the fact that many Anglican children were probably attending Presbyterian and Methodist Schools, apparent indifference to denomination could be regarded as surprising given that Schools were regarded as a preparation ground for Church. No doubt denominations worked hard to attract children for this reason, but there was also significant cooperation evident. In 1882, the *New Zealand Wesleyan* reported a joint School picnic at Matarawa with Wanganui Presbyterians.⁵⁸ Apparently, shared festive occasions of this kind were not uncommon in Sunday Schools around the colony.⁵⁹

Picnics were no simple outing. In fact, there was a great deal of preparation and organisation involved, for a successful day was characterised by plentiful activity. The day would begin as early as nine, and finish around six in the evening, although this

⁵⁶ WC, 3 Jan 1877.

⁵⁷ *ibid.* WC, 28 Feb 1877.

⁵⁸ NZW, vol.12 no.4, 1882, p.90.

⁵⁹ Jeanine Graham, 'Settler Society', in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, (eds) W.H. Oliver with B.R. Williams (Wellington, 1981), p.127.

could be extended until dark for the older ones.⁶⁰ Depending how far away the picnic site was, a procession would either take picnickers to awaiting transportation or all the way to the picnic ground. Transportation varied, but if the picnic was not up river, it was usually provided by coach, as at Marton in 1877.⁶¹ Processions were colourful affairs accompanied by processional flags, banners and much music-making as the children marched to various hymns. One Methodist picnic, in 1877, drew at least 500 children led by a particularly noteworthy banner proclaiming, 'Suffer the little children to come unto me.'⁶²

Arrangements for the day revolved mainly around a great number of organised games. Cricket, rounders, croquet and running races were popular organised events, while party games like 'drop handkerchief' continued throughout the day. Apparently, athletic activities could become quite vigorous; on one occasion a man found himself the subject of a newspaper report after breaking his leg on the pole-vault.⁶³ Apart from the games, the other highlight of the day was the lunch provided by women of the church. The day did not always finish when they left the picnic site, for on at least two occasions the children returned to church to finish the day with hymn singing.⁶⁴

Perhaps the most enjoyable and important element lay simply in the act of joining in shared leisure. The Sunday School picnic provided an important occasion where adults and children mixed socially in a way and on a scale that was extraordinary. Ministers, elders and parents organised and participated in games in a manner that was

⁶⁰ WC, 16 Feb 1877.

⁶¹ CC, vol.1 no.6, 1877, p.65.

⁶² WC, 28 Feb 1877.

⁶³ *ibid.*

⁶⁴ WC, 26 and 28 Feb 1875.

seldom otherwise seen. Despite the fact that it could fall on any day during the week, there were often as many adults present as children, since picnics were as much for the family as the children alone. At the Waverley Presbyterian Sunday School picnic in 1877, 130 children were outnumbered by about 200 adults.⁶⁵ Their presence was planned and catered for, with some picnics charging them a small admission fee along with children not on the register. At others a general charge was made of one shilling for adults and sixpence for children, which presumably covered food and transport costs, as well as providing a potential fundraising source.⁶⁶ For whatever reason, it proved no discouragement.

Picnics were not the only way in which the Sunday Schools helped to create local community and identity. The manner in which the Schools were run lent themselves to numerous occasions for fundraising, both for their own needs and for various projects which they supported. The Wanganui Sunday schools in particular seem to have placed significant emphasis on raising funds for external sources. In January of 1874, the Presbyterian Sabbath School passed on forty pounds it had raised to allow the Hebrides Mission to replace a vessel, the 'Day Spring', that had recently been lost. The Wesleyan school also seems to have taken some interest in the Navuloa Training Institute in Fiji that the Rev F.W. Isitt sought to promote following a visit there in late 1875. This was probably achieved through the Sunday School Missionary Society attached to that church.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ WC, 26 Feb 1877.

⁶⁶ WC, 16 Feb 1877. *MT*, 27 Feb 1878.

⁶⁷ WC, 26 Jan 1874; *NZW*, vol.6 no.60, 1876, p.3; WC, 8 Jan 1878.

Most efforts towards fundraising were directed at meeting the immediate needs of the School in their own district. Between buildings, furniture, and books and resources, a host of items associated with Sabbath School life created a financial strain for which numerous efforts were exerted. These efforts took various forms, but the provision of entertainment was important. Charlotte Warburton recounts one concert in Palmerston North in 1878 that was provided because the Church of England Sunday School required books. The programme included some 26 items, as well as encores and some provided by 'a well known resident of the town'.⁶⁸ Concerts of this type brought together parents, the church and the wider community both on the night and during the period of rehearsal, for children's programmes were particularly popular occasions.

Books were an important part of the Sunday School economy, reflecting the kind of religious education that was being aimed at, with the old literary and moral aims still evident. It also demonstrated the pleasure children gained from reading, with the stimulation of the imagination and exposure to a wider world that it provided. One statistic provided by Methodist and Presbyterian churches nationally identified the number of volumes in the Sunday School library. The Presbyterian Church began providing information in the 1880s. In 1881, the Wanganui library included 600 volumes, while the smaller parish centred at Bulls had 110. By 1883, returns revealed

⁶⁸ Charlotte E. Warburton, *Changing Days and Changing Ways*, (Palmerston North, 1954), p.18.

that Churches in the Wanganui-Manawatu region had invested in over 1500 books for their Sunday Schools.⁶⁹

Likewise, Methodist Churches were careful to record the progress of their developing libraries. District minutes included a table of Sunday School statistics, and this incorporated a section summarising the state of the library. At Wanganui in 1879, the library, described as being in 'fair order', contained 700 books. By the following year the total in the Wanganui, Rangitikei and Manawatu circuits totalled 1519, with Wanganui accounting for over half of these, and Rangitikei just 200.⁷⁰ In 1876, the *Wanganui Chronicle* reported a Service of Song at Trinity Methodist where, rather than charging for attendance, a collection was taken for the Sunday School library. These services were described as a 'popular class of religious meeting'.⁷¹ Music was an important element of Sunday afternoon meetings, and special Sunday School hymnbooks were available to assist in the process.

The other main investment necessitating fundraising was the provision of buildings and their furnishings. Again, this afforded opportunities for social entertainment and engagement, by parents as well as by regular Church attenders. In 1875 and 1876, St Paul's ran tea-meetings and soirees for their school, and in 1877 used a series of lectures by William Fox for the same purpose.⁷² In 1877 fundraising by Christ Church for its Sunday School included a musical and literary evening at the opening of the new room, and a series of entertainments later to pay for the seating in

⁶⁹ Taken from 'General Statistics' provided in the Appendices of *Minutes of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of New Zealand*, 1881 and 1883.

⁷⁰ *District Minutes of the Taranaki and Wanganui District*, 1879 and 1880.

⁷¹ WC, 18 Jul 1876.

⁷² WC, 8 Jul 1875; WC, 27 Jun 1876; WC, 5 and 26 Jun 1877.

it. One year on, entertainments were again provided to pay for furniture, including a Punch and Judy show.⁷³ The major expense of Sunday School provision was occasionally avoided through converting old church buildings, but at this time accommodation was usually built especially for the purpose.⁷⁴

Sunday Schools, then, were the dominant mechanism through which the Churches sought to reach children in the colonial environment. They were an integral part of the church life of most parishes, and especially in Methodist and Presbyterian circles they were widely attended. As well as providing for the moral and spiritual needs, a heavy emphasis on literature illustrated the agenda for personal and educational development. It was more than merely incidental to their existence that they also became important social and community-building institutions. Sunday Schools existed to meet the needs of children, but in doing so they in turn brought contact for the churches with families and the wider community.

The Band of Hope, along with other children's temperance movements, were another example of developments directed at children and sponsored by the churches. Whereas the Sunday School explicitly engaged in religious instruction, the formation of these other groups was intended to extend the churches' influence. In one sense this meant widening the scope to engage those beyond the existing church community, but it also entailed the shaping of behaviour by reaching into the arena of public morality.

⁷³ CC, vol.1 no.5, 1877, p.54; WC, 14 Jun 1877. WC, 5 and 18 Jun 1878.

⁷⁴ St Andrew's Presbyterian in Palmerston North was one example where this happened in the nineties, and this became more popular as rebuilding became more common. See Anon., *St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Palmerston North, 1878 - 1960* (Palmerston North, 1960), p.7. Chapter One, especially section two, 'The Rest of the Week', contains discussion of the kind of costs involved

In Marton, a Juvenile Templars group was operating from at least as early as 1876.⁷⁵ In Wanganui, the Presbyterian Church was running a Band of Hope by 1877, while the Wesleyan Church sponsored another starting in 1880. In some ways these new groups were a replication of the Sunday School, but as clubs they were at more liberty to entertain. Junior temperance groups organised picnics, and tea-meetings like Sunday Schools, and they were usually run by the same staff. In 1877, Mr Harper, one of the Sunday School teachers, was reported as addressing a Presbyterian Band of Hope meeting of 135 children. Later, the Wesleyan Band of Hope, though hoping not to be regarded as simply a Church group, was organised by Sunday School staff.⁷⁶

Meetings were more colourful than the didactic Sunday School approach. Temperance organisations were renowned for their use of music and poetry as a form of instruction. For some the use of these techniques was a cause for criticism. One correspondent to the *Presbyterian Church News* complained of too much musical, instrumental and elocutionary entertainment being used to enhance numbers. Entertainment, they claimed, 'never sits well with religious instruction', so that a greater earnestness was urged.⁷⁷ Such entertainment did not deter children, however, since on occasions up to five hundred attended these meetings.⁷⁸

The formation of children's temperance groups was in some ways an attempt by the denominations to enforce their moral authority over that of other groups. The morality of the colony's children represented an important area of influence that the

⁷⁵ WC, 3 Nov 1876.

⁷⁶ WC, 19 and 21 Jun 1877; WC, 8 Jun, 1880.

⁷⁷ PCN, vol.10 no.6, 1882, p.66.

⁷⁸ NZW, vol.12 no.10, 1882, p.234.

churches were keen to maintain, since, symbolically, this was a critical definition of overall success. The groups were also a way of occupying children; they used up spare leisure time that children otherwise filled with what were considered to be hazardous pastimes - both morally and physically. In some senses, the duplication of resources required were an implication of the failure of Sunday Schools to either reach beyond the church community, or exert the moral influence in the community that the churches desired.

Sunday Schools were the primary organisation for children, but as Gillis has noted, there was a distinction between childhood and youth.⁷⁹ With the demands of the colonial working environment, childhood drew to an end in early teenage years with the expectation that older youth would move into the working pattern of adulthood. Thus, any idealism that underlay views of children was absent in perceptions of youth. The expectation that they would adopt adult patterns was not simply confined to the working environment, but also to the sphere of social responsibility. Therefore, youths were not quickly excused for behaviour that was tolerable in children, though the age and experience differential was small. Colonial society did not easily recognise distinctive recreational and social needs for this age-group, though it was conscious of the irksome behaviour in which they were prone to engage.

The development of groups for the benefit of older youth, as in the case of the YMCA, frequently developed out of periods of intense religious activity. As the first major series of revival meetings drew to a close in Wanganui in 1875, one editorial had noted the lack of healthy recreational activities available for young folk in the region,

⁷⁹ John R. Gillis (1974), p.67.

saying that 'Hitherto in Wanganui, the means of recreation have been very circumscribed...all classes...have either been forced in some measure to participate in uncongenial pastimes, or have had to remain content with the quiet, humdrum existence suited to the duller portions of the year'.⁸⁰ The YMCA was particularly suited to meet this lack, since the context in which it combined physical and mental recreation was one that was acceptable to the churches. Having had close association with Moody, particularly in his youth, it held the peculiar moral credibility that was deemed necessary.

It was not long after this editorial that the formation of a movement took place, indicating perhaps that the issue had been under discussion.⁸¹ The formation of the YMCA came at the initiative of the committee for evangelism founded at the close of evangelistic meetings, and its purpose clearly combined evangelism with the social function intimated in the editorial. It was, however, a short-lived venture, for following the visits of Dr Somerville and Margaret Hampson there were further attempts to establish the movement, indicating its demise in the interim. There were no reports to suggest when or why this had happened, but all similar groups struggled without concerted leadership and the approval of the young men at whom the groups were aimed.

Revivalist periods also saw the use of special services for both children and youth to an extent that was not otherwise seen. In general, special services were limited to occasions like the annual Sunday School prize-giving and thanksgiving

⁸⁰ WC, 21 Oct 1875.

⁸¹ See Chapter Three, 'Revivalism'.

services.⁸² In periods of revivalism it also became normal to see special services for the young, either on a Sunday afternoon in place of the Sabbath School, or on afternoons or evenings during the week. There too, the concern for the young had translated into the formation of a new group, as at the conclusion of Copinger's Marton mission where 70 signatories pledged to join the Guild of St Stephen. Revivalism and the fate of youth were closely aligned because they were sourced in the same concern. The moral and spiritual well-being of the colony's young people was an important indicator of its overall health, so that there was no direction in which greater urgency for a religious community was expressed.

In the same way that the Wanganui churches took a lead nationally in terms of revivalism, they were also uncommonly conscious of the need to provide programmes for their young people. The Scripture Union began in New Zealand in 1880, and it was Mrs Edith Taylor, widow of the late CMS missionary Basil Taylor, who was Wanganui secretary from 1880 to 1914 following her shift from Putiki.⁸³ She was apparently very fond of young people, and doubtless many of these were among students that used her house for piano examinations. Her own family was involved in delivering Scripture Union cards from an early age to Maori and Pakeha children in the early 1880s. The advent of the Scripture Union was of particular importance, for it gave representation to a portion of the Evangelical community who believed that Sunday Schools had lost their way in seeking education at the expense of conversion.⁸⁴

⁸² Lineham notes the arrival in New Zealand of Thomas W. Kitt and the Children's Special Service Mission (CSSM) in 1872 and 1873, but also notes that the special services did not catch on. Lineham (1980), p21.

⁸³ *ibid*, pp.9-10.

⁸⁴ *ibid*, p.8. Also Lineham (1980), p.23.

Other groups for the young in the region included Mutual Improvement Societies, which again were for young men. While Literary societies were run by all denominations, the Mutual Improvement movement was essentially a Methodist phenomena. At Wanganui, the society based at the Wesleyan lecture room was meeting on a weekly basis in early 1880. This had probably come at the initiative of the Rev. Lee who had come from Lyttelton with the reputation of a strong YMMIA behind him there.⁸⁵ A meeting in the middle of March decided that a name change to the Wanganui Literary Society would provide a more comprehensive description, and meetings were adjourned till July when winter sessions should start.⁸⁶

At this stage it seems to have been a struggle for most groups of this kind to survive for any length of time. In Sandon the Wesleyan Church also had a Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society that functioned essentially as a Literary Society. The minute book shows that a group was formed, with election of officers and statement of rules and objectives, on 13 May 1879. Possibly the weekly meetings were too much for most. By 9 September, when minutes ceased, there had already been three secretaries, and it was resolved to replace the usual course of study with a series on the life of St Paul. It was not until 1886, under the encouragement of the Rev. Griffen, that the society was re-established under a new constitution.⁸⁷ Perhaps this rather academic approach to leisure was only appealing in small doses.

⁸⁵ NZW, vol.8 no.5, 1878, p.112.

⁸⁶ WC, 18 Mar 1880.

⁸⁷ *Minutes of the Sandon Young Men's Mutual Improvement Society (13 May 1879 to 17 Apr 1888).*

The Wesleyan church in Wanganui continued to have a keen interest in young people's programmes. Towards the end of the century, the Wesleyan Young Men's Institute was apparently derived from a group of the same name at Trinity, founded during the Rev. Bond's ministry. This became a large institute of several hundred members, and represented a shift in orientation for ministry to youth. Rather than the usual literary format, there was provision for a range of indoor and outdoor sports, music, debating and a Bible Class. This approach was more in line with that of the YMCA that had failed to take hold earlier, as it sought to take account of a wider range of social needs. Len Bassett, son of one of the TYMI founders, went on to become the first president of the YMCA.⁸⁸

There were clear signs in society at large that the old forms of educational instruction for youth were not working. If children were wilder and less trammelled, then among youth there a disturbing rise in what was termed 'larrikinnism'. Perhaps it was this emergence of a larrikin element that made the want of satisfactory leisure apparent. As early as 1877, concern had been raised at the widespread level of boorish and anti-social behaviour in the district on New Years eve, and there were more references to disruption of musical entertainment in the newspapers.⁸⁹ Larrikinism was a threat to social order that the churches were anxious to restrain, especially since the

⁸⁸ Edgar Percy Blamires, *Youth Movement: The Story of the Rise and Development of the Christian Youth Movement of the Churches of New Zealand - as seen by a Methodist* (Auckland, 1952), pp.11-12.

⁸⁹ WC, 5 Jan 1877; MT, 6 Jul 1878. Such cases were not infrequent in the later 1870s and into the 1880s. As Gregory points out, larrikinism became a greater issue towards the end of the century as the population grew and centres expanded. This led to a more active public stance towards the problem. See P.A. Gregory, 'Saving the Children: A Study of Social Attitudes Towards Larrikinism in the Later Nineteenth Century', BA hon's Dissertation in History (Massey, 1975), especially, 'Introduction', pp.1-5.

youths associated with it were generally those outside the influence of the churches. New programmes were designed to retain influence over those who were involved, as well as appealing to others whose leisure time was being used destructively. The new answer to the problem of youth was to fill available time with attractive and productive pursuits that would create well-rounded individuals.

Recognising that the literary format was not satisfactorily catering for the needs of the young, a group called the St Peter's Young Men's Club was founded soon after the arrival of the Rev Copinger to the Anglican Church at Palmerston North. Opening on 11 June 1884, the institute found a building in the Main Street where for one shilling a month a night school provided books, magazines and basic skills.⁹⁰ By 1885, there were 40 members. A room provided amusements such as chess and bagatelle, there was a library of 130 volumes, a harmonium for singing, German language teaching and a gymnasium.⁹¹ Unlike most young people's organisations, there was also room at the Club for young women. Although their activities remained separate, young women were given access to the rooms on Tuesday and Thursday nights for needlework and singing.⁹² Other activities were obviously deemed either unsuitable or unnecessary for their purposes.

There was in the churches, then, as in the colony, a curiously mixed attitude towards youth. Children were viewed sympathetically, and the desire was widespread that their moral and spiritual welfare be catered for. Sunday Schools were an important

⁹⁰ Wigglesworth (1975), p.14. *CC*, vol.8 no.91, 1884, p.718.

⁹¹ *CC*, vol.9 no.97, 1885, p.766.

⁹² Wigglesworth (1975), p.14.

community institution because of what they offered children, so that most people regarded them as beneficial, if not necessary. They also offered the colony benefits, both from the flow-on effects in children's lives and the social interaction that was afforded to the rest of the community. That they be run efficiently and well was an ongoing concern, and this reflected the esteem in which the cause was held.

Yet there were ongoing difficulties in providing the kind of support for them that was necessary. Particularly as youth grew older, the availability of resources diminished so that it was only later on, when problems were more apparent, that movements developed to cater for a more comprehensive range of social and recreational needs. Otherwise, programmes for youth and children alike were based mostly on the notion that educational advancement, through moral and literary instruction, was the key to the improvement of their position. Churches were concerned at the fate of the young, but struggled with the implications of their concern in an age when other preoccupations dominated.

CONCLUSIONS

The picture of nineteenth century New Zealand that Fairburn's *Ideal Society* portrays is one of individualism and isolation. He depicts a society lacking in real cohesion and mechanisms to integrate individuals together through shared experience and a sense of belonging. Yet this is not entirely borne out in the religious life of Wanganui and the Manawatu. This would suggest that the role of the churches in shaping community should not be down-played or under-estimated.

Though church attendance in the region was lower than in Britain and the rest of New Zealand, religious attachment was not irrelevant. On the criteria of attendance alone, the number for whom it was a familiar activity was still significant. Beyond Sunday attendance a range of activities that the churches instigated were popular. Some parish activities, like the various guilds and choirs for example, were clearly designed for the benefit of church adherents. Other programmes were major community events. Tea-meetings, fairs and picnics were just a few of the ways that church life and concerns met with widespread public support.

In some respects this success was only partial. Many features that attracted people did not produce religious commitment, with the result that the Christian presence in society did not penetrate very deeply. The churches' social and community life was frequently unchallenging of a prevailing worldview that was essentially non-religious. Consequently, they did not completely accomplish their own defined task.

Yet there were still other areas in which the churches had an extensive impact in shaping sociability and culture. Formal and informal institutions with religious connections proliferated, and these attracted patronage from beyond the bounds of the church-attending community. The music of Sankey, and others, was absorbed into the popular vernacular, and various societies with explicitly religious motivations were both prominent and influential.

Amongst children, Sunday School attendance was actually higher than it had been in Britain. This was significant, since children's activities never occurred in isolation from the family context. For much of the period, Sunday Schools were among the few facilities actually catering for children. Other activities for the young developed during the period, and these were frequently associated with the religious community in their formation and objectives. As progressively increasing attendance at Sunday School demonstrated, such groups were a welcome presence in society.

The manner in which the church related together was significant. It has been usual to regard relations between the churches as essentially competitive, but in Wanganui and the Manawatu the trend was overwhelmingly towards collaboration rather than dispute. A notable degree of cooperation was indicative of their desire to encourage communication and interdependence. Not only did this strengthen religious community between denominations, it implied that creation of a more extensive religious presence was a priority. In this respect, the attitude of the religious community was consistent with prevailing social conditions where interaction was both desirable and necessary.

The success of revivalist religion was partially attributable to this high degree of interdenominational cooperation, though it also demonstrated the attractiveness of distinctive and inclusive religion. It was appealing because it was positive, engaging and hopeful. Importantly, it required commitment and involved the whole community, but it also brought the colony in touch with events in the wider world. It seems more than coincidental that revivalism was strong in the region precisely when people were conscious of the need to develop foundations for 'community'. Indeed, revivalism was the product of an urgent concern for a community shaped by religious concerns and principles.

Local religiosity was characterised by communality and strongly influenced by the churches' desire to be the unifying focus for society. It demonstrated what Siegfried's comments about newspapers implied; that religious ideas and religious institutions were crucial elements in the formation of 'community' in New Zealand. However, the nature of the influence was less profound than it was extensive. Popular religion contained a mixture of sociability and sentiment, emotion and entertainment, and attraction to these often seemed to form the basis of church life's broader appeal. These elements catered to particular needs, but ultimately had limited impact in terms of transforming colonial society's predominantly non-religious values.

APPENDIX

A. TABLES FOR CHAPTER ONE

	1874	1878	1881	1886
Wellington	25.20	22.51	21.08	25.85
Taranaki	16.65	24.34	16.37	24.16
Hawke's Bay	21.67	23.48	27.95	26.95
Auckland	26.69	30.48	30.22	31.36
Canterbury	27.12	25.84	25.07	27.58
Otago	20.22	21.01	20.36	28.60

Table 1.1 Table showing church attendance as a percentage of total population of New Zealand, 1874 - 1886.¹

	1874	1878	1881	1886
Region	1010	1960	2810	2420
Wanganui	550	1040	1120	800
Rangitikei	460	320	570	520
Manawatu		600	1120	1100

Table 1.2 Table showing total Methodist Church attendance in the Wanganui-Manawatu region, 1874-1886.²

¹ Adapted from table showing population by provincial district, 1874-1901, *Census* (1901), p.3. Also numbers attending services from places of worship tables, *Census* (1874), p.272; (1878), p.349; (1881), p.305; (1886), p.356.

² Figures taken from General Returns of the Wanganui, Rangitikei and Manawatu Circuits of New Zealand, submitted to the New Zealand Conference of the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church.

	1874	1877	1881	1886
Wanganui	130	172	176	190
Turakina	43	40		
Waverley		36	121	
Marton	30	50		80
Bulls	20	25	27	49
Foxton	13	10		
Manawatu				50

Table 1.3 Table showing Presbyterian communicant membership in the Wanganui - Manawatu region, 1874-1886.³

B. TABLES FOR CHAPTER FOUR

SUNDAY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

	1874	1878	1881	1886
NZ Population (5-15 years, excluding Chinese)	72 134	105 235	125 537	151 685
Attendance at Sunday School	38 081	62 273	78 891	99 884
Sunday School attendance as a percentage of population	52.8%	59.2%	62.8%	65.8%

Table 4.1 Table showing rate of Sunday School attendance relative to population of New Zealand, 1874 - 1886.⁴

³ Taken from the General Returns submitted to the General Assembly for each year. See Presbyterian Church of New Zealand. *Proceeding of General Assembly* for the named years. Note that the names for the parishes in the Manawatu and Rangitikei regions changed names frequently. Names applied here are those used during the period that best designate the location of the parish. 'Manawatu' was originally applied to the parish based at Foxton, but better designated those of Palmerston North, Feilding, Halcombe and Sanson that were the most fluid of the parishes later.

⁴ Adapted from table showing 'Attendance at School - the Colony and Provincial Districts', *Census* (1886), p.209.

	1874	1878	1881	1886
Wellington Province Population (5-15 years, excluding Chinese)	7 526	12 495	15 476	20 763
Attendance at Sunday School	3 478	7 007	9 350	12 629
Sunday School attendance as a percentage of population	46.2%	56.1%	60.4%	60.8%

Table 4.2 Table showing rate of Sunday School attendance relative to population of Wellington Province, 1874 - 1886.⁵

	Wanganui	Rangitikei	Manawatu	Total
Population by County (5-15 years, excluding Chinese)	886	877	1913	3676
Attendance at Sunday School	371	400	922	1693
Sunday School attendance as a proportion of population	41.9%	45.6%	48.2%	46.1%

Table 4.3 Table showing rate of Sunday School attendance relative to population by County, 1881.⁶

HOME TUITION

	1874	1878	1881	1886
Receiving Tuition at Home	8 368	9 706	7 348	7 567
Receiving Tuition at Home as a proportion of NZ population	11.6%	9.2%	5.9%	5.0%

Table 4.4 Table showing rate of Home Tuition relative to NZ population, 1874-1886.⁷

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ Adapted from Table showing 'Attendance at School - Counties', *Census* (1881), p.144.

⁷ See footnote 4 above for source.

	1874	1878	1881	1886
Receiving Tuition at Home	879	1 393	1 042	1 097
Receiving Tuition at Home as a proportion of population of Wellington Province	11.7%	11.1%	6.8%	5.3%

Table 4.5 Table showing rate of Home Tuition relative to population of Wellington Province, 1874-1886. (source as for Table 4.1.)

	Wanganui	Rangitikei	Manawatu	Total
Receiving Home Tuition	90	70	211	371
Receiving Home Tuition as a proportion of population by County	10.2%	8.0%	11.0%	10.1%

Table 4.6 Table showing rate of Home Tuition relative to population by County, 1881. (source as for Table 4.1.)

DENOMINATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOLS

	1874	1878	1881	1886
Wanganui	200	335	375	356
Rangitikei	85	96	171	130
Manawatu		172	260	427
Total	285	603	806	913

Table 4.7 Table showing Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School Rolls by District, 1874-1886.⁸

⁸ Taken from 'General Returns' in *Minutes of Annual General Meeting of Middle District of New Zealand*, and its successors.

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