Church Responses to Social Issues in Depression New Zealand, 1933[1]

ABSTRACT

This essay considers the responses of three denominational presses over a three month period in 1933. At this time the great depression was at its height in New Zealand. On the international scene, the effects of the rise of Nazism were emerging. A study of the Anglican, Baptist and Methodist publications reveals the churches' responses to the economic situation to be consistently pietistic, even whilst providing practical aid. There was greater variation in comments on Nazism but these denominations did not yet present a voice demanding radical responses to these issues.

> Long haired preachers come out every night,
> Try to tell you what's wrong and what's right;
> But when asked about something to eat,
> They will answer in voices so sweet;
> You will eat bye and bye,
> In that glorious land above the sky;
> Work and pray, live on hay,
> You'll get pie in the sky
> When you die.

Kevin Clements, in his doctoral research, notes that Joe Hill's song 'Pie in the Sky' became a catch cry among New

[1] This is adapted from an Honours essay at the University of Auckland. I am grateful for the comments and encouragement of Allan Davidson, Laurie Guy and Martin Sutherland.

Zealand's unemployed during the Great Depression.[2] Was the response of the New Zealand churches, as Hill's song would argue, to promote an escapist pietism in the face of the 'this worldly' need of people? Did the churches simply act as pastoral carer to the distressed during the depression or did they attempt to provide legitimate economic alternatives to pull the country out of the slump? This essay examines the public and social issues facing church and society in New Zealand during the months April, May and June in 1933. It focuses on the two major social issues of that period, the Depression and the rise of Hitler and Nazism. It will examine the way the churches deal with these issues, how the church interacted with society in this and how the church was reflected in the secular press. The three month focus clearly has limitations, however, by this intense examination, some insight is gained into the churches' responses to the issues.

In 1933 New Zealand was a country that was gripped by the Great Depression. In the preceding year there had been riots in Auckland, Wellington and Dunedin, followed by later, more sporadic, incidents in Christchurch.[3] It is estimated that by the end of 1932 two able-bodied men out of every five were without permanent employment and were receiving relief work provided by local bodies or the government.[4] The De-

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[2] Kevin Clements, 'The Churches and Social Polity: A Study in the Relationship of Ideology to Action.' Unpublished PhD Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1970, 98.

[3] James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of New Zealanders From the 1880s to the Year 2000* (Auckland: Penguin Books, 2001), 257-58. See also James Watson, 'No Mean City? Christchurch's Labour City Council During the Depression, 1927-35' *New Zealand Journal of History,* 23 (1989), 127.

[4] Michael Bassett, *Depression of the Thirties* (Auckland: Heinemann Educational Books, 1967), 2.

pression reached its peak in New Zealand in 1933. Export receipts were down 44 percent on 1929[5] and, by October, unemployment was around 80,000.[6] At the same time, New Zealand was experiencing technological development, along with development in economic and political relations with Britain and cultural relations with America.[7] The Hawkes Bay was still recovering from a large earthquake that had killed 256 people.[8] These years were tumultuous years for New Zealand and the world. The Labour party's relationship to the United Party cooled when George Forbes became Prime Minister and began his retrenchment policies.[9] The formation of the coalition government in September 1931 brought together the Reform Party and the United Party to form the National Government, led officially by Forbes and unofficially by Gordon Coates.[10]

Outside of New Zealand, the disarmament process, led by the League of Nations, was taking place around the world. The depression had struck throughout the world and World Conferences were being held to attempt to provide answers to ending it.[11] It is also during this period that the National Socialist Party came to full power in Germany, with Hitler being appointed chancellor in January 1933. There were soon reports from within Germany of the escalating horrors and atrocities

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[5] Belich, 254.
[6] Erik Olssen, 'Depression and War (1931-49)' in *The Oxford Illustrated History of New Zealand* (ed. Keith Sinclair; Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1996), 211-235, 211.
[7] Belich, 245.
[8] Allan K. Davidson, *Christianity in Aotearoa: A History of Church and Society in New Zealand* (Wellington: New Zealand Education For Ministry, 1997), 108.
[9] Bassett, 18.
[10] Belich, 256-57.
[11] *The New Zealand Herald* (24 April 1933): 9.

that were being committed towards Jewish people within Germany.[12]

The impact of the Depression in New Zealand Society:

A survey of the total number of registered unemployed for the week ending 15 April 1933, found that there were 68,265 unemployed, of which 5312 were ineligible for relief for various reasons, leaving 62,943 as a charge on the Unemployment Board's funds. It was estimated that 31,600 were engaged in work of a 'definitely productive nature' in connection with the Dominion's primary industries.[13] This total rose to 70,502 by 13 May.

The depth of suffering that the depression brought to New Zealand society should not be underestimated. A story from the Auckland Baptist Social Service Association tells how a poverty stricken mother, receiving a relief parcel with tears in her eyes, spoke of how she had not known how to get trousers and shirts for her big schoolboys. '[But] she cheerfully said: 'I just bought some sugar sacks and made trousers and shirts out of them and told them they would have to be cowboys and Indians.''[14] As Tony Simpson describes it, these were 'the sugarbag years'.[15]

Often the hardest hit were the rural areas. Taupo relief workers received the lowest rates in New Zealand; married men received only 10s a week in early April 1933. Furthermore, in Taupo there was the absence of the charitable organi-

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[12] *Herald* (1 April 1933): 11.
[13] *Herald* (1 May 1933): 12.
[14] *NZB* (April 1933): 102.
[15] Tony Simpson, *The Sugarbag Years: An Oral History of the 1930s Depression in New Zealand* (Auckland: Hodder, and Stoughton, 1984).

zations that existed in the larger cities and this was coupled with a higher cost of living. Practically no private work was obtainable in the district.[16] It was the same in Paeroa where the men had also missed the Government issues of meat that the city received and they were finding it impossible to pay house rent.[17] The effects of the depression knew no social distinctions. In an article by a member of a relief camp the writer notes that there are men from various professions. 'One is a skilled mechanic, another a clerk, fireman, solicitor, salesman, journalist, labourer, factory worker.'[18] With winter looming there were fears of what toll this might take on the distressed and impoverished.[19]

The inability to provide adequately for returned soldiers caused significant embarrassment within New Zealand Society during this time.[20] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* tells the story of an eighty-year-old Maori man, crippled in the war, who lived in a sack hut with his eight children.[21] The National War Funds Council considered 10,434 cases during the year and it was estimated by them that in five years time the fund would be almost exhausted.[22] The Council was limited to giving funds only to returned soldiers who were wounded in the war and, whilst appreciating the difficulty and hardship many 'fit' men were facing, they were unable to help them.[23] There were many cases of significant distress for soldiers. There was a soldier who had married a New Zealand woman immediately

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[16] *Herald* (1 May 1933): 13.
[17] *Herald* (11 May 1933): 10.
[18] *Herald* (6 May 1933): supplement.
[19] *Herald* (10 April 1933) 10.
[20] *Herald* (21 April 1933): 8.
[21] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* (15 April 1933): 3.
[22] *Herald* (29 June 1933): 11.
[23] *Herald* (29 June 1933): 11.

after the war in London and who was now a 'physical wreck' but he could not get a pension for his wife and children because they married outside of New Zealand.[24] There was also stress on the widows of soldiers. One wife found that although she was receiving a war pension while her veteran husband was alive, when he died (as a result of his war disability), she was not eligible for a widow's pension because she was married over two years after the soldier's discharge and could not prove that they were engaged before he left for the front.[25]

Women faced significant hardship during this time. Many women and girls were severely exploited during these times because of government acts that did not provide them with assistance to find work. Bassett notes 'in April 1932 it was reported that some women and girls were being forced to work 14 hour days, seven days a week, for as little as 2/6 (25c) a week.'[26] Both the public newspapers and the church newspapers are silent on this issue during these three months. However J. J. North, editor of *The New Zealand Baptist*, in the context of speaking of technocracy, exposed the way that in U.S.A. 'Women and children in textile and garment industries earn (some of them) as little as 8s a week. The hours have risen to 80 a week in sweat shops.'[27] Coupled with this, North also forwarded a motion at the 1933 Baptist Assembly that was sent to the government drawing attention to the urgent moral necessity of provision from relief funds for unemployed woman and children.[28] The churches were silent on the issue of the impact of urban drift on Maori. *The New Zealand Her-*

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[24] *Herald* (23 June 1933): 11.
[25] *Herald* (23 June 1933): 11.
[26] Bassett, 13.
[27] *Herald* (April 1933): 98.
[28] *NZB* (November 1933): 335.

ald ran an article on 30th June 1933, which spoke of the lack of prospects and poor living conditions facing urban Maori. It was argued that Maori urban drift was a result of the depression.[29]

The church was not immune to the stresses of the times. The churches relied on the giving of its people who were also impoverished during this time. This impacted on the ability of the church to function. The Presbyterian Church faced a £45 000 shortage in mission funds due to a decline in congregational giving.[30] The Baptists also faced problems. In his President's Message for the annual 'self-denial' appeal, J.J. North wrote: 'You have read of the difficulties of our sister churches in this Dominion. Ours are as real.'[31] North also noted the effect on churches' ability to call ministers. 'The financial blizzard is making it difficult for many to call ministers. We counsel courage.'[32] In the following month North addressed a letter to every vacant church urging that they take courage and call their minister.[33] The Anglican Church faced much hardship too. The loss of income across the board resulted in the Dean and Chapter Estate having to reduce its staff. As a consequence Rev. F. R. Rawles, the Precentor, was discharged of his duties in the Cathedral.[34] It became impossible to allot any general funds for the provision of clerical duty in case of sickness and the provision of such funds fell on the parish or the Vicar. It was hoped that some financially stronger parishes might adopt distressed ones, but the financial pressure made

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[29] *Herald* (30 June 1933): 12.
[30] *Herald* (13 April 1933): 10.
[31] *NZB* (May 1933): 130.
[32] *NZB* (April 1933): 99.
[33] *NZB* (May 1933): 131.
[34] *The Church News* (April 1933): 13.

that impossible.[35] The Methodist Church faced significant reductions in income as well. The Mission Board faced a loss of £2,553 for the year ending December 31st 1932, with the same year having reached the highest amount of overdraft and increasing.[36] The depression affected all of society including the church. Both government and church faced the need for significant shrinkages and had to draw on reserves during this period.

Provision of relief for the distressed:

There were many public initiatives to try and provide food and supplies for the poor. Lord Bledisloe, Governor-General, began a national appeal for winter relief. The appeal was for contributions of money or in kind.[37] The appeal suggested that local Mayors throughout the country work with the appeal and allow people to give donations at a local office. Similarly the local office could have a role to play when it came to distributing the aid, making sure it went to those in need and not to people who were trying to abuse the system.[38] The fund had grown to £10,174 in two months, with the launching of a 'prosperity week' expected to bring in considerably more funds.[39] Farmers were called on to deliver their fruit and produce as part of Lord Bledisloe's appeal and Turners and Growers provided a cool store for the produce to be kept in free of charge.[40] The Auckland Community Singing Commit-

[35] *The Church News* (May 1933): 2-4.
[36] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* (1 April 1933): 10.
[37] *Herald* (10 April 1933): 10.
[38] *Herald* (10 April 1933): 10.
[39] *Herald* (14 June 1933): 14.
[40] *Herald* (14 June 1933): 14.

tee had used their abilities to donate £98 to the Mayor's unemployment fund through the year 1933.[41]

The Labour department began a scheme to provide free meat every Wednesday for the unemployed and distressed.[42] The Unemployment Board also began a scheme of supplying free boots to relief workers. These boots were to be of the best quality so that the men had boots that were adequate for the work that they were doing.[43] There was a reaction from the retailers who sold shoes, saying that it would affect retail trade and retailers would have to shorten staff.[44] The response of the general public, however, was considerable and helped to provide real relief for many of the distressed.

The churches' attempts to provide relief for the distressed were ambiguous. They provided wide ranging social relief from within a conservative pietistic worldview.

Churches were at the forefront of the relief attempts. The effective supply of relief through soup kitchens, local church provisions for the poor, supply of cheap clothes and services, and pastoral care for distressed people has to be admired. The Salvation Army had a travelling soup kitchen that distributed free hot vegetable soup in thermos cans and bread to go with it to the poor and needy.[45] The chairman of the Auckland City Mission committee, Julius Hogben, said that never in the history of the mission had conditions been so difficult and more than once they had had to consider closing it.[46] The mission provided healthcare, dental care, libraries, food, and jumble

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[41] *Herald* (5 April 1933): 14.
[42] *Herald* (8 June 1933): 12.
[43] *Herald* (12 May 1933): 12.
[44] *Herald* (12 May 1933): 8.
[45] *Herald* (7 June 1933): 13.
[46] *Herald* (29 May 1933): 11.

shops all at affordable rates that allowed people to buy good cheap clothes rather than have to beg for it at a Relief Depot.[47] Archbishop Averill was rightly proud of the efforts of the City Mission and said that its splendid record was something of which the Church of England should be proud.[48] The Methodist Church ran the Central Mission Relief Depot, with Rev. L. B. Neale in charge of its operations. Rev. E. T. Cox, a Methodist minister, became Mayor of Dunedin in May 1933 with his election promises of stopping further cuts in unemployment funds.[49] The Baptists did not have a centralised social service as significant as the Methodist or Anglican churches, perhaps due to the nature of their local church autonomy and also the smaller size of the denomination. However, the local churches provided relief within their local contexts. The Oxford Terrace Baptist Church held a harvest thanksgiving service in which the produce was given to the needy in the district.[50] Similarly, the Shackleton Road Baptist Church distributed relief to the distressed from the church kitchen each Saturday afternoon, and the Auckland Baptist Social Service also provided much relief for the distressed.[51]

Yet, although churches were a significant supplier of social relief during the depression, there were some blind spots. There was a complaint from a relief worker that they had not seen any representative of any church come to visit them or take an interest in them.[52] Frank Brookbanks, a Baptist, read this and wrote to *The New Zealand Baptist* arguing that surely

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[47] *The Church News* (April 1933): 10.
[48] *Herald* (30 May 1933): 11.
[49] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* (18 May 1933): 6.
[50] *NZB* (April 1933): 125.
[51] *NZB* (April 1933): 126.
[52] *Herald* (6 May 1933): supplement.

it is time our churches realised their responsibility. He called for Christians to rouse themselves and follow their Master, who went amongst people and comforted the afflicted.[53] As a direct result of this, the Auckland Council of Christian Congregations (ACCC), with J. J. North as president, investigated this issue and attempted to co-ordinate some form of religious service in the unemployment camps throughout the Auckland province.[54]

With the significant emphasis on the church providing relief for the distressed, there was a constant plea going out from the churches to their members for more money. On top of the needs that arose due to the depression, many churches were involved in overseas mission and this too drew on the resources of the churches members. The leaders of churches regularly used guilt tactics to draw resources out of their members. *The New Zealand Methodist Times* published a cartoon that typified this approach. Its caption read 'What! Another Missionary Appeal! We can't afford it - the footstools in our pews need re-covering!'[55] The Anglican publication *The Church News*, reported

> Poor mothers anxious and driven almost to desperation, they come (beyond tears now) because their children are sick or because they can't feed their little babies. Oh the shame, the blistering beastly shame that fair New Zealand should come to this! And this our own Church work is languishing because more half-crowns don't come in, a few more pounds.'[56]

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[53] *NZB* (June 1933): 174.
[54] *Herald* (26 June 1933): 11.
[55] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* (15 April 1933): 10.
[56] *The Church News* (May 1933): 14. Emphasis original.

Such rhetoric in times of poverty and depression must have added guilt to church attendees who were no doubt facing the effects of the depression themselves. That church publications could use such rhetoric shows that they expected to be able to draw on the good will of the people and that they would not allow their own financial distress to excuse them from the gospel imperative of tending to the poor. However, did such rhetoric demand too much of people who were impoverished in the pews?

When it came to dealing with issues of poverty and depression, many of the churches did so only from within the framework of their tight pietistic beliefs. Gambling was a major issue for the churches during this period, as desperate people took what little money they had and spent it on lotteries in the hope of 'striking it lucky'. J.J. North, then president of the Auckland Council of Christian Congregations (ACCC), opposed any form of gambling or the use of gambling proceeds to fund charitable organizations. He challenged anyone who disagreed with him and he fought a long running battle against his opponents in *The New Zealand Herald's* editorial section. These editorial comments were very confrontational and vitriolic in tone and did nothing for the public perception of the church. R. G. Hughes, having North's rhetoric in mind, noted how those who love liberty and freedom of action will want to see that the control of our Dominion does not get into the hands of intolerant clerics.[57] North's heavy-handed approach became an embarrassment to other members on the ACCC committee, sparking an anonymous apologetic letter from one.[58] It was later discovered that Rev. Leslie B. Neale, a Methodist minister, whose denomination was part of the

[57] *Herald* (24 April 1933).
[58] *Herald* (23 May 1933): 13.

ACCC, had applied for a grant from the Art Union proceeds to help feed and clothe needy children at the Children's Camp he ran at Company Bay.[59] The Methodist church publicly stated that it was relentlessly and unequivocally opposed to the use of Art Union proceeds.[60] In reply to this, Neale admitted that he was opposed to Art Unions, but as Neale points out '[it] is a big question whether a man's personal opinions or even those of his Church should forbid food and shelter to little children in a time of unparalleled depression.'[61]

The churches were aware that their role was not only as a social relief organization; it was also interested in the spiritual well being of the people. The Anglican, Methodist and Baptist churches saw the depression as a prime opportunity for the proclamation of the Gospel. The Anglicans eagerly awaited the arrival of the Church Army, an evangelical group from England.[62] The Methodist Church saw the depression as a tremendous and unprecedented time for evangelism. The Baptists also saw it as a chance for evangelistic mission, with their denominational evangelist Rev. Joseph Carlisle seeing many cases of conversion.[63]

Attempts to provide answers to the depression

The Methodists noted how an optimist said 'The trying time is the time to try'.[64] This was a typical response to the depression

[59] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* (27 May 1933): 5.
[60] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* (27 May 1933): 5. See also *Herald* (30 May 1933): 6.
[61] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* (27 May 1933): 5.
[62] *The Church News* (May 1933): 2.
[63] *NZB* (June 1933): 167.
[64] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* (13 May 1933): 2.

from the idealist point of view. It was expected that the answer lay in picking oneself up by one's bootstraps. Rev E. S. Tuckwell wrote of an experience he had observing a young man who was painting his roof. Tuckwell thought he encapsulated the attitude that was needed in these difficult times.

> He may, nay, must, have had his own problems. The shadows doubtless drew across his sky at times. But for the nonce the mood prevailed, and his soul chimed in with harmonious Nature. Wise young man. Can we not all learn to be more receptive of the sunshine when God sends it? Too many of us, I fear, allow the shadows of life to be cast over all its hours. We pass through the most glorious days with downward look and songless heart. Would it not be better to reverse the process and let the sunshine dominate the shadows?[65]

It is doubtful how helpful this 'stiff upper lip' type of advice would be for those suffering poverty and distress. Other attempts to provide answers lay the blame on people's stupidity and laziness.[66] At the anniversary of the Vivian St Baptist Church, the Presbyterian minister Rev. J. R. Blanchard told the congregants that this was a time when God was passing this world through turmoil that she might find in this new age a new way of doing things. This current crisis asked questions about whether their Christianity was paganism tinctured with Christianity.[67] These were pietistic reactions, rather than serious constructive attempts to provide paths forward beyond the depression. Would the advocating of a protestant work ethic and a 'stiff upper lip' as the way to get out of the depression

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[65] *NZB* (April 1933): 101.
[66] *The Church News* (April 1933): 2.
[67] *NZB* (May 1933): 135.

inspire the distressed, or would it only heighten the sense of despair and hopelessness of the people?

The Baptists, the Methodists and the Rotary Club sought also to lay the blame for unemployment at the feet of 'technocracy'. *The New Zealand Methodist Times* quoted Charles G. Girelius in an article entitled 'Voices Prophetic'. 'I am the voice of the unemployed denied a place in the joy of effort and in the comradeship of labour. I am the voice of men matured, but unwanted in the rush and speed of great machines that have no soul...I am the voice of God.'[68] However *The New Zealand Herald* also printed an article in which the president of the New South Wales Chamber of Manufactures, Mr. H. Gordon Bennett, argued that it is nonsense that machines cause unemployment. He used Europe as an example where the population had increased from 150,000,000 to 450,000,000 and modern industry had found employment for this vast increase in population.[69] The fear of machines and technological advancement causing widespread unemployment was prominent among not only churches but also the general public in this time of distress and high unemployment.

There were other constructive attempts by the church to provide answers to the depression, where the churches exercised a more prophetic role within society. They came in the form of the churches offering alternative economic systems that would provide greater growth than the current system and also key questions that not only cut to the core of some central issues, but also provided those within the churches who were discontented with the current governmental response, or lack thereof, a discourse from which to draw.

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[68] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* (24 June 1933): 1.
[69] *Herald* (7 April 1933): 8.

Kevin Clements argues that in the period 1931-34 the churches acted as an interdependent variable within society, attempting to contribute towards an extensive analysis of what was happening and developing appropriate attitudes and responses to take in the circumstances.[70] Clements contrasts this with the common emphasis that religion is a dependent variable in the process of social, economic and political change, which is unable to exert any independent influence and if it did exert any influence, this influence would be less important then the real determinants such as economic rationalisation, urbanisation and the political manipulation of scarce resources.[71] Clements argues that whilst this is true of the earliest period of the churches' response to the depression (1929-31) it is not true of the later responses of the churches where the church acted initially as an interdependent religious variable (1931-34) and then later as an independent religious variable (1934-35) that exerted considerable influence on social change through supporting and legitimating agents of change, specifically the Labour party.[72] In the period of this essay (1931-34), the earlier support for the *status quo*, stability and government policies from within a puritan-pietistic worldview began to be change. Both the Labour party and the churches began to challenge the government's retrenchment policies. They began to develop alternative social schemes. Although at this early stage they were often naïve and impracticable they did lead to the rise of the idea of the Welfare State. Clements argues that 'because they lacked the economic expertise to

[70] Kevin Clements, 'The Religious Variable: Dependent, Independent or Interdependent?' in *A Sociological Yearbook of Religion in Britain* Volume 4 (London: SCM Press, 1971), 36-45, esp. 40-43.
[71] Clements, 36.
[72] Clements, 44-45.

make specific proposals about such things as public expenditure or internal loans, religious groups were forced to develop another role, that of a provider of generalized values and beliefs about the total situation from an individual and corporate perspective.'[73] This can be clearly seen in the developing rejection of the current economic situation and government retrenchment policies by the churches in the three months reviewed.

The New Zealand Baptist ran a four-month series of teachings written by A.D. Mead, a Baptist layman, entitled 'The Economic Teaching of Jesus' and attempted to provide a new economic order.[74] Mead saw the central cause of the depression to be the desire to accumulate wealth rather than use it. For Mead the answer lay in the economic exchange of goods and services where sound commerce and reasonable profits are regulated by the Golden Rule of Jesus 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye even so to them'.[75] Similarly, North, in his President's Message to the Denomination argued that '[t]he world has defied the Law of Love on which God planned it. It has been an acquisitive society, with the hellish motto 'Every man for himself.'...The idea that we come into the world not to make money, not to 'get on,' but for an wholly other purpose—to wit, to serve the world, to fulfil what usefulness we are capable of—that idea has been lost.'[76] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* also engaged with some of the bigger issues of the depression. Percy Paris argued

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[73] Clements, 43.
[74] *NZB* April, May, June 1933. See also Brian K. Smith, 'Baptists and the Working Class in New Zealand' Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Birmingham, 1990, 60-61.
[75] *NZB* (April 1933): 106.
[76] *NZB* (May 1933): 128-29.

that unemployment had been permitted to grow through ruthless economic and political retrenchment.[77] In the same issue a mock 'duologue' about the issue of 'Too Much' helped define Methodist opinions. In the article, the writer noted the absurdity of there being plenty of produce in New Zealand but that it was not being shared throughout the country due to political and economic reasons.[78] In another 'duologue', on the issue of over-production and the destroying of coffee produce in Brazil, 'Brother Juniper' pondered whether the World Economic Conference would advise the supplanting of chaotic production for profit by public organisation of production for use?[79] Similarly, Rev. A. J. Seamer discredited the idea that there is a lack of work and money in New Zealand and suggests '[there] should be equal sacrifice and everyone should be at work improving the condition for all.'[80] Paris saw the current economic system as utterly wicked in its acceptance of unemployment as an inevitable by-product of the economic machinery and he advocated that Christians should protest against such wickedness.

Whilst the ideas of the churches to base a new economic order of the mutual sacrifice found in the cross would have resonated with those within the church, it must be questioned how likely they would be accepted as an answer within broader society. However, as Clements rightly argues, they did develop a discourse of discontent within the churches that rejected the current economic and social situation and sowed the seeds of a change-oriented ideology.

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[77] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* (10 June 1933): 1.
[78] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* (10 June 1933): 9.
[79] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* (24 June 1933): 6.
[80] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* (1 April 1933): 10.

The Rise of Hitler and Nazism

When National Socialism came to full power in 1933, it inherited a country that had lost the Great War and was now being humiliated through huge war reparations and the loss of the identity of once being a great nation. Hitler and the Nazi party were able to draw on these rumblings to rebuild a German nationalism and increase their popularity.

Within just three months of the Nazis being in full power there was horror and condemnation resonating throughout New Zealand and abroad at the atrocities that were being committed in Germany. A headline in *The New Zealand Herald* on 1st April 1933 read 'Torture Charge: Jews as Victims'. *The New Zealand Herald* quoted The World Alliance of Combating Anti-Semitism which asked Hitler if he could deny that Jews had been battered to death and that Jewish babies were being thrown on bonfires.[81] These headlines continued throughout this three-month period, varying only in the degree of the atrocities that the paper accused Hitler and the Nazis of committing. There was continued reports of key Jewish figures being murdered and the general oppression and persecution of the Jews.[82] There was also a day of boycott of Jewish shops in Germany in April 1933, where anyone who bought from the Jewish stores had their faces stamped with 'We are traitors, we have bought from the Jews.' The Nazis told the worldwide press that such measures would be re-instated if the unfavourable comments about Germany continued in the press.[83] With the continued oppression there were reports of increased suicide amongst German Jews.[84] New passport regu-

[81] *Herald* (1 April 1933): 11.
[82] *Herald* (4 April 1933): 9.
[83] *Herald* (3 April 1933): 9.
[84] *Herald* (7 April 1933): 9.

lations within Germany made it difficult for any Jew to leave. As one report from Germany said, 'Despair exists among the Jews, who are neither allowed to leave nor to live.'[85]

Within the church press and the public press there was condemnation of the actions of Hitler and the Nazi party's tactics. The Auckland Hebrew Congregation passed a resolution to protest, expressing indignation at the situation on Germany.[86] The Wellington Ministers Association expressed its horror at the persecution of the Jews in Germany.[87] There were constant reports of European denunciations of Hitler and the Nazi party's tactics. Hitler's approach was seen as draconian and oppressive. Both the Methodist and the Baptist publications covered this issue in detail, leaving their stance on it unambiguous. However, the Anglican publication *The Church News* makes no mention of Hitler within this three-month period.

J.J. North identified the outbreak of the strident nationalism in Germany as 'the most ominous thing on the map just now.'[88] North said that Hitler was weaving a noose for the neck of his nation and likened the burning of books in Germany to the work of the Pope 'in the Dark Ages'.[89] In condemning Hitler, North's ardent sectarianism shone through, he denounced Hitler with his highest damnation in noting that he was a Catholic.[90] 'We agree with the Pope that Hitler is impossible. But the Pope is simply another tyrant, and in the reli-

[85] *Herald* (10 April 1933): 9.
[86] *Herald* (1 April 1933): 11.
[87] *Herald* (5 April 1933): 12.
[88] *NZB* (June 1933): 165.
[89] *NZB* (June 1933): 165.
[90] *NZB* (June 1933): 166.

gious sphere quite as remorseless a tyrant as Hitler himself.'[91] Aside from his sectarianism, it must be acknowledged that North was very perceptive, even to the point of prophetic, about where Hitler's actions would lead. In April 1933 North argued 'He [Hitler] may set Europe in a bath of blood before many moons are past.'[92] North's defence of the Jews had a theological undergirding to it, holding that the Jews had a particular place in history as God's people.[93]

A sermon by the Methodist Rev E. D. Patchett, condemning the German persecution of the Jews, was quoted in *The New Zealand Herald* in April.[94] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* lay much blame on 'one of the wickedest, most cruel and iniquitous treaties ever forced upon a beaten and helpless foe.'[95] It was this that drove Germany into the arms of Hitler. In comparison with North, Paul Douglas wrote, 'Hitler is not a present danger to the peace of Europe. Germany is not prepared for war, its borders are demilitarised, and it lacks aggressive weapons.'[96]

The Baptist attempt to give explicit reasons for the rise of Hitler and the escalating atrocities in Germany was not as strong as that of their Methodist counterparts. North, the mouthpiece of New Zealand Baptists, caged his condemnation of Hitler within his ardent sectarianism and did not engage enough with the issues of why Hitler was able to find such large support within Germany. Whilst being a man of his time, North's condemnation of Hitler as a Catholic was ultimately

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[91] *NZB* (April 1933): 97.
[92] *NZB* (April 1933): 97.
[93] *NZB* (May 1933): 131.
[94] *Herald* (10 April 1933): 11.
[95] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* (1 April 1933): 1.
[96] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* (24 June 1933): 8.

unhelpful for attempting to account for Hitler's rise and popularity.

The Methodist church provided the most in-depth attempt to account for the rise of Hitler. There were regular articles that spoke of 'the wreck of reparations'. The Reparations Committee decided that Germany could repay £24 billion.[97] The sliding scale of the reparations readjusted the figure two years later to £12 billion and finally in 1932 to £150 million. As it was said in *The New Zealand Methodist Times,* it was the parable of the loaves and the fishes played backwards.[98] It was this humiliation of the German people that the Methodist press feared would lead to 'an explosion and the eliminating of the moderate and moderating elements.'[99] This evaluation by the Methodist press was more insightful about causes than the Baptists had been and fitted well with Hitler's address to the Reichstag Chamber in May 1933.[100] In this speech Hitler spoke of how the 'war guilt lie' had made Germans feel like second-class people and that national degradation cannot be maintained forever.[101] However, with the public press almost daily reporting more and more atrocities from Germany, *The New Zealand Methodist Times* could have voiced a stronger denunciation of Hitler on behalf of New Zealand Methodists.

The churches response to the rise of Hitler and the persecution of the Jews was appropriate if it is accepted that the Wellington Ministers Association along with the church publications denunciation of Hitler's actions were representative of the views of the churches. Of the church publications, it is

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[97] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* (13 May 1933): 2.
[98] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* (13 May 1933): 2.
[99] *The New Zealand Methodist Times* (1 April 1933): 2.
[100] *Herald* (19 May 1933): 9.
[101] *Herald* (19 May 1933): 9.

surprising that there was nothing in the Anglican publication *The Church News.* Whilst Patchett, a Methodist, denounced Hitler's actions in the public press, it would have been timely for the denomination also to issue a clear statement on their position in *The New Zealand Methodist Times.* The Baptists, headed by North, were very clear on their position regarding Hitler but unclear on the underlying complexities regarding this issue.

Conclusion

During April, May and June 1933, both church and society faced significant economic stress and hardship. In response to this hardship the Methodist and Baptist churches, more so than the Anglican church, kept to a pietistic worldview and it was from within this worldview that they attempted to deal with the issues facing society. The church was a significant source of practical and pastoral care during this period and played an important part in society. This was reflected in the way that the public press sought church views on the issues of the day and published them as important. However, the public press was cynical regarding the more pietistic elements of the church. *The Herald* published a sarcastic article on the New South Wales Presbyterian Assembly's refusal to allow any 'questionable forms of amusement', such as dancing or card playing, to be used as a means of raising money for church purposes.[102]

Whilst the church was a major provider of pastoral relief and support for the poor, a pietistic worldview often limited its ability to engage with the ambiguities that existed during the depression. This is most obvious when the churches refused to

[102] *Herald* (1 June 1933): 8.

use the proceeds from the Art Union funds to provide relief for the distressed because of the money coming from a gambling source. It is also evident when it comes to the church offering alternative paths forward out of the slump. The Methodist and Baptist churches raised some significant questions about the current economic order but they did not provide a plausible alternative. The church alternatives to the economic system were based on pietistic theological foundations that were too idealistic to be helpful within the wider society.

The response of the churches to the rise of Hitler varied considerably. The Anglican *Church News* was surprisingly quiet on this issue. The Methodist church was careful to recognise the reasons why Hitler and the Nazi party were able to rise to prominence but it did not condemn Hitler within its own church publication (although it did in the public press). The Baptists were quick to condemn Hitler but the condemnation reflected a simplistic analysis. In the combination of the Methodist understanding of the issues at stake and the Baptist condemnation of Hitler lay a more rounded response for both.

In many ways the wolf of the churches' prophetic discourse of discontent came wrapped, almost innocuously, in the sheep's clothing of its broad ranging pastoral care. The churches' response must be seen within the context of the tight society that existed in New Zealand during this period.[103] This conservative worldview was at times a help for the church (e.g. the early condemnation of Nazi oppression) but at other times it was a hindrance (e.g. the vitriolic nature of J.J. North's editorial comments over the question of the use of the proceeds of Art Union money to provide for poor and starving children). During this period the churches legitimately wres-

[103] See Belich, 121-240.

tled with the social issues of the day and attempted to provide specifically Christian forms of response. As has been argued, the provision of a discourse of discontent sowed the seeds of a change-oriented ideology that evolved within the churches and allowed them later to exert considerable pressure for social change.[104]

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[104] Clements, 44-45.