both dissenters and evangelicals, Baptists have had an intriguing and complex relationship with society. This book sheds light on that relationship by tracing the history of Baptist involvement in public debate within New Zealand. It analyses significant public debates to have occurred since the 1880s, comparing the Baptist contribution with that of other denominations. By showing how Baptist approaches to public issues have changed over time, this study provides significant insights into the evolving nature of Baptist identity. It argues that evangelical theology fundamentally shaped the Baptist movement's engagement in public debate. On the other hand, it also shows how Baptist involvement was influenced by the interaction of various theological ideas and a changing social environment. A particular feature of this book is the way it places the story within a wider transnational context, highlighting early English influence on the New Zealand Baptist movement and the growing impact of North American Baptist models of church in the latter half of the twentieth century.

John Tucker is Director of Ministry Training at Carey Baptist College in Auckland, New Zealand, where he teaches in pastoral theology, preaching, and Christian spirituality. He has worked as a lawyer and pastor and has a particular interest in the history of teaching in New Zealand.
5. ‘An utter solemnity’: The Defence of Conscientious Objectors, 1899-1945

[We view with alarm the growing tendencies towards militarism as embodied in recent legislation so contrary to the teaching of Christ and the principles of brotherhood laid down by Him. We emphatically condemn the training of the children of the State in the arts of war … and the introduction of the principle of Conscription, which is totally opposed to liberty of conscience.]

For much of the first half of the twentieth century, New Zealand was either embroiled in war or in preparation for war. In 1909 New Zealand was the first country in the British Empire to introduce compulsory military training. During the first and second World Wars the New Zealand government, by contrast with other Commonwealth countries, imposed a very strict regime of military conscription. Throughout this period the government and public showed very little tolerance towards pacifists and conscientious objectors. In a country at times awash with imperial patriotism and jingoistic hysteria, such dissidents were often cruelly mistreated. Laurie Barber notes that in this warlike atmosphere the major churches showed themselves to be cowardly ‘conformists to the demands of government and popular hysterical pressure. They seemed to lack in prophetic zeal.’ Their failure to denounce the persecution of pacifists and conscientious objectors, he says, ‘makes a sad chapter in New Zealand’s history.’ This may have been true in regards to the major denominations, but was it true of the Baptist Union?

1 Draft resolution prepared by C.R.N. Mackie for 1912 Baptist Assembly. See letter, Mackie to J.K. Archer, 12 August 1912, C.R.N. Mackie Papers, Box 9, Folder 33, Series 104, Canterbury Museum Library (CML), Christchurch.

Baptist commitment to freedom of conscience

A key component in the genetic code of most Baptists is a commitment to freedom of conscience. This stems from their particular understanding of the church. According to the theological tradition they inhabit, the church ought to be 'gathered' (meaning that it is comprised only of true believers who have been drawn out of the world), 'voluntary' (meaning that those so gathered have freely chosen to do so), and 'independent' (meaning that the local congregation is answerable only to Christ for its actions). From that ecclesiastical starting point, Baptists have insisted frequently that governments should not interfere in matters of religion, but should leave every person free to follow his or her own conscience. The very first appeal in English for religious liberty — for everyone, not just Christians — was made by the minister of the first Baptist church on English soil. In *A Short Declaration of the Mystery of Iniquity* (1612), Thomas Helwys declared that 'men's religion to God, is betwixt God and themselves; the King shall not answer for it, neither may the King be judge between God and man. Let them be heretics, Turks, Jews, or whatsoever, it appertains not to the earthly power to punish them in the least measure.\(^3\)

Given the climate of the day, this insistence on toleration for heretics, Muslims, Jews and even atheists was quite remarkable. Most Protestants in seventeenth-century England — even the separatists, themselves victims of religious persecution — argued for the legitimacy of force against heretics.\(^4\) They were convinced that religious unity was vital to the well-being and security of the state, that toleration was a recipe for disaster. The first Baptists, by contrast, declared that 'the magistrate is not by virtue of his office to meddle with religion, or matters of conscience, to force and compel men to this or that form of religion, or doctrine: but to leave Christian religion free, to every man's conscience ... for Christ only is the king, and lawgiver of the church and conscience.'\(^6\) Indeed, it was a Baptist, John Clarke, who founded the state of Rhode Island — the first state in the world with the constitutional guarantee of religious liberty.\(^7\)

In the nineteenth century English Baptists invested enormous energy fighting for the separation of church and state. They were in the vanguard of the movement to have the Church of England disestablished.\(^8\) They strongly supported the campaigns for Catholic emancipation in 1829 and Jewish emancipation in the 1840s.\(^9\) And their convictions about freedom of conscience caused them in the 1870s to oppose legislation that would establish a national system of state-supported schools and, with it, religious education.\(^10\) While the level of their commitment to religious toleration has varied over time,\(^11\) Baptists have consistently argued that it was wrong for the state to try to determine what people believe and how they think, to enforce religion or ideology: 'As the church is called to be free, so too society is to be free; free from religious compulsion, discrimination and penalty, free for the exercise of the informed conscience.'\(^12\) This historic Baptist conviction was one of which New Zealand Baptists were proud.\(^13\) In New Zealand, however, between 1899 and 1945 this conviction would be subjected to the sternest of tests.

The rise of militarism in New Zealand

In the 1890s New Zealand became an increasingly militaristic society. Military training for schoolboys became widespread with the government's

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5 Coffey, 'From Helwys to Leland', 18.

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6 This is from a Declaration issued around 1612-1614 by the congregation of John Smyth, one of the founders of the Baptist movement. Quoted in Fiddes, *Tricks and Traps*, 260-1.
7 McBeth, *Baptist Heritage*, 137.
8 Bebbington, 'Baptist Conscience', 16; Coker, 'Social Conscience', 24-25.
9 Larsen, "Contested Christianity", 153-5.
10 Coker, 'Social Conscience', 34.
11 See John Coffey, 'From Helwys to Leland,' 13-37.
12 Wright, *Free Church, Free State*, 206.
13 See, for example, 'The Influence of the Baptists in the World', NZB, August 1904, 316-17 at 317.
provision of drill instructors from 1893. The number of military volunteers increased from 5000 to 18,000 between 1897 and 1902. In the 1900s, militarism intensified further with the development of a cadet system, which involved some 30,000 boys by 1912, and with the enthusiastic adoption of Britain's Boy Scout movement in 1908. During this period, according to Belich, 'The whole orientation of New Zealand thinking on military issues shifted from local defence to contributing to an imperial war effort.' To some extent, this rise in militarism can be traced to the ideology of New Zealand as a 'Better Britain.' This idea, that New Zealanders represented the very 'Best of British', that they were more loyal to Britain than other neo-Britains, and in some respects superior to Old Britains, was remarkably widespread. It found perhaps its clearest expression in a passionate commitment to supporting Britain militarily.

This was strikingly evident in the Boer War, which Britain fought against the Afrikaners of the Transvaal and Orange Free State between 1899 and 1902. The fundamental cause of the war, as historians have noted, was Britain's determination to dominate South Africa. It was essentially a war of aggression driven by imperial and commercial ambition. The vast majority of the New Zealand public, though, did not see it that way. The Prime Minister, Richard Seddon, 'seized upon the outbreak of war in 1899 to mount a competitive demonstration of loyalty to Britain.' New Zealand was the first colony to volunteer troops for the war, and did so two weeks before war itself was declared. The first 200 troops and their horses were despatched only ten days after the declaration. Seddon's apparent keenness to see the contingent off quickly appears to have been motivated by a desire to have New Zealand provide the first colonial unit to reach the scene of the conflict.

In his speech at their departure, Seddon solemnly intoned that while the blood of some of the pride of their country would flow, 'there would be consolation in the fact that they would be fighting shoulder to shoulder with the forces of the Imperial Army, and from that would spring up and be maintained a bond of union which would last forever and ever.' This enthusiasm for strengthening ties with Britain, and proving the colony's worth to Britain, was not Seddon's alone. In an editorial headed, 'For England, Home, and Duty', the Evening Post proclaimed that the colony's soldiers 'go forward to the fight, bearing with them high hopes for their achievement as well as many tender fears, but more than all the belief of their fellow countrymen that they will bear themselves as men of the old breed, brave and true.' Like later and greater conflicts,' Belich says, 'the Boer War held a mirror to the face of New Zealand's collective identity and self-image."

Not surprisingly, then, support for the war was widespread and fierce. Altogether, New Zealand sent nearly 6500 troops to South Africa, representing a higher proportion of its population than Australia or Canada. Huge crowds welcomed the departing contingents. A massive crowd of some 40,000 people — more than a twentieth of New Zealand's population — gathered to witness the departure of the first contingent. Public subscriptions paid for a substantial part of the war effort. According to one critic, New Zealand was gripped by a 'wild delirium of jingoism.' There was no room for dissent or opposition to the war. A New Zealand editorial twice repeated the words of Lord Rosebery that 'the British Empire is the greatest secular agency for good known to the world', and called for a closing of ranks behind Britain and an avoidance of controversy and conflicting viewpoints until the war was over.

So overwhelming was support for Britain in the war that the Westland Harbour Board could threaten its employees with dismissal if they voiced 'disloyal and unpatriotic sentiments' in relation to the war. J. Grattan Grey,

15 Belich, Paradise Reforged, 79.
16 Ibid., 11, 29, 76-78.
17 For example, see Belich, Paradise Reforged, 81.
18 King, Penguin History of New Zealand, 286.
19 Belich, Paradise Reforged, 79.
20 John Crawford and Ellen Ellis, To Fight for the Empire: an Illustrated History of New Zealand and the South African War, 1899-1902 (Auckland: Reed, 1999), 21.
21 EP, 23 October 1899, 2.
22 EP, 21 October 1899, 4.
23 Belich, Paradise Reforged, 79.
26 NZH, 17 October 1899, 4.
chief Hansard reporter at Parliament, was removed from his position because he wrote a newspaper article and two pamphlets setting out his opposition to New Zealand's involvement in the war. Politicians who opposed the war were branded as disloyal and suffered electorally. When Tommy Taylor, the radical Christchurch MP, denounced the war as the fruit of an aggressive policy aimed at securing control of the Transvaal goldmines, he was chased by a stone-throwing mob. His defeat in the 1899 general election was probably partly due to the unpopularity of his anti-war stance.

The mainstream churches, for the most part, produced a ‘flood of patriotic and martial fervour’. Very few religious leaders opposed the war or spoke up in defence of those who suffered for their anti-war stance. Within the Baptist movement, however, there were some who raised their voices against British aggression. One of them was the Rev. J.J. Doke, minister of Oxford Terrace Baptist Church. He had previously held a pastorate in South Africa and was familiar with the background to the war, which he traced to the greed of English financiers and imperial statesmen. The Dutch republics were right, he said, to resist ‘the advancing tide of British aggression’. Doke suffered for his outspokenness. It appears his home was attacked by an angry crowd that hurled stones through the windows of the manse. And his relationship with his congregation was severely strained. His church secretary publicly opposed him. Sixteen months later, without a call to another church, Doke reluctantly resigned from his very effective ministry at Oxford Terrace and returned to Baptist ministry in South Africa. According to one of his contemporaries, Doke’s sympathy with the Boers was what ended his New Zealand ministry. This assessment tends to be supported by the fact that, in other respects, Doke’s ministry was highly successful and widely appreciated within the church.

Another Baptist leader who publicly opposed the war was the minister of Ponsonby Baptist Church, the Rev. A.H. Collins. In a pungent letter to the editor of the New Zealand Herald, he criticised that paper for its appeal to patriotism: ‘my country, right or wrong’. That approach, argued Collins, was ‘devilish’ and ‘immoral’:

It means that a stretch of country is of greater consequence than the eternal law of right; that equity, fair dealing, and honour are merely local and parochial bylaws; that truth is a thing of the tent or tribe; morality, a matter of mileage; and love a question of longitude. Against that false and narrow outlook we protest with intense moral indignation.

According to Collins, the question was whether the war was morally right. In his view it was not. It was ‘murder’, he said, ‘treachery’. Like Doke, and possibly for the same reasons, Collins resigned his pastorate and left the colony within months. His letter of resignation and the minutes of the church member’s meeting at which it was accepted, suggest that his relationship with the congregation may have been strained to breaking point by his outspoken criticism of the war.

Most New Zealand Baptists, it seems, supported the war. The overall voice in the Baptist magazine was markedly pro-war. F.W. Boreham, in successive editorial comments, loyally supported British war policy. Articulating Better British ideology as well as anyone, he wrote that ‘the New Zealand contingent were doing more than they knew to make this colony famous and popular’. Their sacrifice, he said, will have a lasting influence for good: ‘The colony will be bound by additional ties to the Mother Land. We value what costs us most. And the rich offering of the life-blood of our bravest citizens for the defence of the Empire will be a

27 Crawford and Ellis, To Fight for the Empire, 29.
28 NZPD, 1899, vol. 110, 81-82.
29 Crawford and Ellis, To Fight for the Empire, 29.
30 Allan Davidson, Christianity in Aotearoa: A History of Church and Society in New Zealand (Wellington: Education for Ministry, 1991), 96.
31 NZB, May 1900, 68-69.
32 NZB, November 1957, 271; November 1962, 281.
34 NZB, December 1945, 303.
35 During the seven years of his pastorate 219 members were added to the church. See minutes of Oxford Terrace Baptist Church meeting, 11 September 1901, ANZC No. 63, Box 2, File 1/9, CPL.
38 The majority of correspondents to the Baptist apparently expressed faith in the justice of the war. NZB, June 1900, 88.
39 E.g. NZB, February 1900, 18, 24; March 1900, 40-41, 48; April 1900, 49.
40 NZB, March 1900, 48.
fresh tie — beautiful as silken cords and strong as golden chains — that will bind New Zealand afresh in its allegiance to the Home Land.41

It is interesting to note that in England, by contrast, many leading Baptist ministers — men like John Clifford, F.B. Meyer, Archibald Brown and Thomas Spurgeon — opposed the war.42 Clifford estimated that 10 out of 20 of his congregation agreed with him.43 At the beginning of the century New Zealand Baptists looked closely to their British mother church for guidance and inspiration.44 So it might have been expected that the New Zealanders would have also taken an anti-war, or at least a more neutral, stance. But they did not. The editor of the Baptist, H.H. Driver, dismissed the British Baptist position as 'perplexing and 'extraordinary'.45 New Zealand Baptists, like most churches, were indeed caught up in the tide of militaristic patriotism sweeping the colony. But while the cultural ideology of 'Better Britainism' might trump English Baptist attitudes to war, it did not so easily override the historic Baptist commitment to freedom of conscience. That became obvious when the focus of debate shifted from the merits of war to the rights of individuals to abstain from military service.

The introduction of compulsory military training

In 1909 Britain was engaged in an escalating arms race with Germany. An Imperial Naval and Military Conference recommended to the British government that the Empire build expeditionary forces in preparation for the outbreak of war. The New Zealand government, as it had done in the Boer War, responded immediately and enthusiastically. By December, with almost unanimous parliamentary support, it had passed the Defence Act. This introduced compulsory military training for the first time in the British Empire, something Britain itself was not prepared to do. The first step in putting the scheme into operation was the compulsory registration of all boys between the ages of 14 and 20. Registration commenced in April 1911. Fines were imposed for refusing to register and, if these were unpaid, objectors could be sent to jail. Later the government added a further sanction: youths failing to register could be deprived of civil rights for up to ten years, thereby losing their right to vote and any chance of employment in the public service.46 Most sections of the community accepted the change from a voluntary defence force to compulsory military training, but not all. For the first time in New Zealand's history, there developed a broad campaign of opposition to official defence policy.47 Notwithstanding their markedly imperialist sentiment, Baptists took a leading role.

To implement the new policy, the Department of Defence wrote to every Ministers' Association asking churches to supply names of boys eligible for military training. When this request was made at the Oxford Terrace Baptist Church, a member protested against the introduction of militarism into the church and against churches serving as a recruiting ground for the army. Within a few days Charles Mackie, a Baptist lay preacher and pacifist, called together a joint meeting of the Christchurch Ministers' Association and the Canterbury Baptist Lay Preachers' Association. The meeting passed a resolution opposing every form of militarism and calling upon the people to 'passively resist' the Government on the issue.48 This gathering led to a further, public meeting to protest against the Defence Act. Out of it Mackie and H.A. Atkinson founded the National Peace Council (NPC), an organisation devoted to securing the abolition of compulsory military training. It comprised delegates from a number of church and community groups — mainly Baptists and Methodists.49 As secretary, Mackie organised a vigorous propaganda campaign, writing to newspapers and public bodies at every opportunity. Over the next 30 years Mackie would become one of New Zealand's leading pacifists, maintaining a voluminous correspondence with an extraordinarily wide range of politicians, editors, and church leaders.

Given the militaristic tone of New Zealand society, Mackie and his colleagues faced fierce opposition. When the NPC held a meeting in August

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41 NZB, February 1900, 24.
42 Randall, English Baptists, 41.
43 NZB, March 1900, 40-41.
44 See Guy, 'Baptist Pacifists', 490-1.
45 NZB, March 1900, 40-41.
46 Elsie Locke, Peace People: A History of Peace Activities in New Zealand (Hazard: Christchurch, 1992), 44.
47 Ibid, 34.
1911, a massive crowd gathered outside, smashing windows and attempting to break down the door. It was only because the NPC followed police advice and closed the 'stormy' meeting minutes after it started that serious injury was avoided. Three months later the NPC was ejected from the Christchurch A & P Show after distributing anti-militarist literature there. The NPC possessed a contractual right to maintain a stall at the show, but the show's organisers decided that the group and its literature were an affront to New Zealand. From March 1912 the NPC held weekly open-air meetings in front of the Christchurch clock tower and in the town square. But in early 1913 the Christchurch City Council began invoking city bylaws, usually concerning obstruction of traffic, in an attempt to prevent these meetings from taking place. Mackie was convicted of obstructing traffic, despite the fact that his supporters had hired a taxi and driven around the clock tower to prove there was no obstruction. Mackie also pointed out that in the week preceding the incident no less than a mayor, evangelist, and 14 city councillors had spoken on street corners without obstructing traffic, but to no avail. In pre-war New Zealand, pacifists were clearly in the minority.

The other significant movement to arise in resistance to compulsory military training was the Passive Resisters' Union (PRU). Its members pledged themselves to 'resist coercion, conscription and compulsory military training under all circumstances, and in defiance of all plans and penalties that may be imposed'. In July 1911 the government instituted a series of test cases against leaders of the PRU. One of them was a young Baptist pacifist, Thomas Nuttall, whose prominence was such that he was cited in Parliament as a leader of the 'We Won'ts' or PRU. He was prosecuted because he had 'posed prominently in the public eye as a resistant to the compulsory military scheme'. The authorities ultimately withdrew the charge. Nuttall, however, was defiant, and wrote to the Lyttelton Times declaring, 'I do not intend to let my conscience be browbeaten by the administration of this iniquitous Act'.

In February 1912 the persecutions began with a new intensity. In 1912 and 1913 10,000 young men were prosecuted for not attending military training, nearly 7000 convicted, and 259 imprisoned. For the first time in New Zealand's history, the country's jails held Pakeha political prisoners. The Defence Act did contain provisions for objection to military service, but they were limited. The law suggested that objectors must first register and take the oath of allegiance before being able to state their objections to bearing arms, something many objectors would not do. Moreover, there was little or no machinery for dealing with the religious objector.

In some cases the government's treatment of objectors—many of them mere teenagers—was nothing short of barbaric. In 1913 Thomas Nuttall was fined for failing to attend compulsory military parades. As a strict pacifist, he refused to pay the fine and was 'marched through Lyttelton under a military guard with fixed bayonets' and, along with twelve other youths, imprisoned for twenty-eight days in Port Jervois on Ripa Island. For their refusal to do military work the youths were placed on half rations and subjected to solitary confinement. The thirteen young men, who came to be known as 'the Ripa Island martyrs', responded by launching a hunger strike. In a letter from prison to Mackie, Nuttall expressed the strength of conviction driving these young men: 'They cannot coerce us into submission. They never will. They have got the most determined ringleaders here. We are all old fighters for the cause and if we break down, the cause of anti-militarism will have a great set back'. The case became national news. To maximise publicity, Mackie filed a petition in Parliament in the name of the NPC. This prompted a parliamentary inquiry and the subsequent suspension of military detention for conscientious objectors.

On their release the Ripa Island martyrs were welcomed as heroes by a substantial crowd. But antimilitarists were clearly not a majority: 2500 welcomed the heroes; 130,000 welcomed the visiting battle-cruiser New

50 Press, 22 August 1911, 10.
51 Press, 20 December 1911, 2.
52 Wietzel, 'Pacifists and Anti-Militarists', 142.
53 Ibid., 131.
54 NZPD, 1911, vol. 155, 341.
55 The letter is quoted in NZPD, 1911, vol. 155, 341.
57 Locke, _Peace People_, 44.
58 Letter C.R.N. Mackie to H.H. Driver, 28 June 1913, C.R.N. Mackie papers, Box 8, Folder 30, Series 78, CML.
59 Letter T. Nuttall to C.R.N. Mackie, 3 July 1913, C.R.N. Mackie papers, Box 12, Folder 44, Series 347, CML.
60 Press, 12 July 1913, 13.
61 AJHR, 1913, I-7 and I-7A.
Zealand the same year. Popular opinion was certainly not on the side of conscientious objectors. The Press articulated the scorn which wider society felt for these disloyal ‘conspirators’:

The average ‘passive resister’ is usually of a type that the defence system of the country could well do without, but when the law is directly challenged – and especially a law which is supported by all save for a small class who want to enjoy citizenship without paying for it – there is only one course to be followed by any Government worthy its salt... There will be no profit, but only discredit, for anyone who attempts to embarrass the Government in its resistance to the mean conspiracy of the shirkers.63

This kind of opinion was common in the churches. The concerns of Nuttall and Mackie were probably not shared by the overwhelming majority of their denomination. In September 1911, on the eve of the annual Baptist Assembly, Mackie wrote to the Baptist calling on the church to issue a clear statement against compulsory military training. ‘Is the Church of Jesus Christ’, he demanded, ‘going to calmly acquiesce in this flagrant infringement of our conscience, and make no protest’64 Mackie was a prominent lay leader in the denomination, serving on the main national committee that year.65 But Assembly was silent on the subject. At the following year’s Assembly Mackie led a delegation from the NPC and spoke on ‘the evils of war, the iniquity of conscription, and the special wrongs inflicted by the Defence Act’.66 In response, the President assured Mackie that all Baptists felt sympathy with those who suffered for conscience’s sake.67 But while the Assembly felt moved to pass resolutions on the drink traffic, the opium trade, prostitution, racing and tobacco, no formal statement was made in defence of conscientious objectors. Perhaps, as Mackie suggested, New Zealand Baptists were reluctant to criticise the government on this issue for fear of injuring the chance of government support for their prohibition campaign.68

By contrast, Baptists in Australia were willing at this stage to voice their opposition to compulsory military training. In September 1912 the South Australian Baptist Assembly passed a motion which called on the government to broaden the provisions for conscientious objection in the Australian Defence Act. In Queensland the Baptist Union declared the Act to be ‘anti-Christian’, and a menace to the civil and religious liberty of the youths of our Commonwealth.69 In Britain, the Baptist Union and the Free Church Council of England also passed resolutions protesting against compulsory military training. Charles Mackie sent copies of those resolutions to the New Zealand Baptist for publication, but the editor, H.H. Driver, refused to print them, citing insufficient space – even though space could be found for lots of other material emanating from England.70 In his personal reply to Mackie, Driver gave his real reasons: ‘Few of our people share your views and feelings against the Defence Act’.71 Consequently, the next month Driver also refused to publish a letter from Thomas Nuttall’s mother regarding her son’s imprisonment as a conscientious objector: ‘We... cannot open our columns for the discussion of the great questions which emerge on these issues. They must be fought out on a broader arena.’72

But while Driver might not have been willing to take up the cause of conscientious objectors to compulsory military training, others were.73 When the government threatened to refuse educational advantages to the
children of conscientious objectors, the Rev. J.J. North declared it a revival of the Test Act and the Act of Uniformity in twentieth century garb. His championship of the rights of conscientious objectors was published in the secular press. North carried enormous influence in the denomination, and he was able to persuade his fellow Baptists to join him in speaking out. At its annual Assembly in October 1913, the Baptist Union passed a unanimous resolution regretting the prosecution of conscientious objectors under the Defence Act, urging the government to make provision for such cases, and protesting against the withdrawal of educational privileges from those who refuse to undergo military training. Baptist commitment to freedom of conscience was still alive. But, with war clouds on the horizon, it would come under even greater pressure the following year.

Military conscription during World War One

When the clouds broke in August 1914 New Zealand as a country quickly promised 'any sacrifice', even to the 'last man and the last shilling'. The colony sent a vast army: 100,000 men, over 40% of all men of military age. In proportion to her population New Zealand contributed a larger percentage than any other overseas portion of the British Empire. At a popular level, there was enormous moral pressure to support the war effort. Young men who did not enlist, whether because of pacifist principles or not, soon learned what it was like to be members of a persecuted minority. Numerous calls were issued for such 'shirkers' to be disenfranchised, denied property rights, subjected to a special tax, or dismissed from their jobs. Many employers refused to take on these men. Sports organisations banned single men of military age. White Feather Brigades proliferated. According to one historian, 'Enough white feathers were sent for the country to resemble a chicken coop on a windy day'. The Boy of Plenty Times may have been alone in advocating the death penalty, but it reflected the public mood. Anti-shirker feeling was so intense that eligible men who had volunteered and been rejected on medical grounds found themselves obliged to wear badges to prove it. Pacifist organisations also felt the sharp bite of public antagonism. Lacking numbers and popular support, the Anti-Militarist League and the PRU both dissolved. Mackie's NPC survived, but was forced to keep its head down, retiring to behind-doors 'study groups'.

What drove this rabid militarism? For women and older men one motive may have been the frustration at their passive role in the midst of a collective crisis. One way to contribute was to encourage volunteering. Another motive was equality of sacrifice: 'There appears to have been a conception of family sacrifice, a tax in sons that should be evenly shared.'

If you had risked a son, then others should do so too. Basic affectation for Britain also played a role, as did the belief that defeat by Germany would ultimately be fatal to New Zealand. The ideology of Better Britonism, the desire to outdo the other dominions in loyalty and sacrifice, was also significant.

The government and press, for their part, stoked feelings of patriotism and anti-German hysteria in speeches and editorials. Dissenting voices were brutally suppressed. When, for instance, a Unitarian minister, the Rev. James Chapple, publicly denounced the war as a 'blasphemy', led by 'war profiteers', he was sentenced to an eleven-month jail term for sedition.

Churches also played a part in feeding this 'war fever'. From the outset all the major churches provided divine sanction for the Allied cause. In the words of Ormond Burton, one of New Zealand's leading pacifists after World War One, the churches were the 'obedient servants of patriotism and imperialism'. They 'closed their New Testaments, preached more paganism and became the recruiting sergeants of the armies'.

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74 See NZB, April 1913, 76.
75 Baptist Yearbook, 1913-1914, 23.
76 Belich, Paradise Reforged, 96-97.
77 New Zealand sent 19.4% of all its males. Australia and Canada sent only 13.5% each, while South Africa sent 11.1% of its whites. Baker, King and Country Call, 220.
78 Baker, King and Country Call, 46.
79 Ibid., 51.
80 David Grant, Out in the Cold: Pacifists and Conscientious Objectors in New Zealand during World War II (Reed Methuen: Auckland, 1986), 17.
81 Belich, Paradise Reforged, 100.
82 Ibid., 112.
83 NZH, 11 May 1918, 6; 18 May 1918, 6.
Davidson suggests that Baptists, with 'a long history of asserting their independence in matters of secular authority', were less vocal in their support of the war effort than the Anglicans, Presbyterians and Methodists. However, the *Baptist* magazine still adopted a jingoistic tone: 'We honour all who have sprung to the defence of their country in the hour of her need ... Their patriotism is worthy of all praise.'

The editor, H.H. Driver, repeatedly stressed the righteousness of Britain's cause: 'Never', he wrote, 'has Britain waged war with purer motives and nobler aims. She may safely make her appeal to the righteous Lord, whose right hand is full of righteousness, to vindicate her and her Allies in this tremendous conflict.' Driver assigned the blame for this 'swift uprush of savagery' to 'Prussian militarism'. The Kaiser had 'covered himself with infamy, and his name will go down to posterity as a synonym for perfidy and pride, ambition and lust of power.' Germany's war methods were also denounced: 'Germany's cup of iniquity is full to the brim. ... The Dark Ages witnessed no barbarities more disgraceful and appalling than those which have marked Germany's methods during the present war.' So Driver concluded: 'In view of her colossal crime against civilisation and Christianity, the Allies will be fully justified in exacting the utmost penalty which their power enables them to enforce.'

Charles Mackie, who found little support within the Baptist denomination for his pacifist views and became a Quaker towards the end of the war, recalled that the Baptist movement 'made no effort to resist the war fever in 1914, but rather went out of its way to encourage recruiting and support the war.' To a certain extent, he was right. Relatively thoughtful preachers, like the Rev. T.A. Williams, assumed the role of recruiting sergeants:

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86 Davidson, 'New Zealand Churches and Death', 450.
87 NZB, October 1913, 183.
88 NZB, September 1914, 171-3.
89 NZB, October 1914, 181-3; May 1915, 81.
90 NZB, September 1914, 171-3.
91 NZB, June 1915, 97.
92 NZB, May 1915, 81.
93 The journey into Quakerism was not an unusual one among Nonconformists with pacifist convictions. See Michael Hughes, *Conscience and Conflict: Methodist, Peace and War in the Twentieth Century* (Werrington: Epworth, 2008), 70.
94 Letter, Mackie to J.H. Rushbrooke, 3 October 1932, C.R.N. Mackie Papers, Box 29, Folder 126, Series 1373, CML.
95 NZB, April 1915, 61-62.
97 NZB, June 1915, 97.
98 NZB, August 1915, 138.
100 NZB, September 1915, 158; October 1915, 177.
ty, the independence of small States and the cause of truth and righteousness." We are, said R.S. Gray, Secretary of the Union, a 'liberty-loving people', and we are 'fighting for the enfranchisement of humanity'. 102

This commitment to freedom for oppressed peoples would present Baptists with a dilemma. By mid-1916 army recruitment quotas had fallen to such an extent that the government decided to introduce military conscription. The majority of New Zealanders appeared to take it in their stride. But not everyone. In Parliament a group of Labour MPs, including the Baptist Labour MP, Andrew Walker, voted against the Military Service Bill. 103 The more militant labour leaders denounced conscription as an unacceptable extension of state control, the 'Prussianising' of New Zealand, the beginnings of 'the servile state'. 104

Pacifists provided the other main source of overt resistance to wartime conscription. On a formal level, New Zealand showed very little tolerance towards pacifists, much less so than did Britain, where conscription was also introduced. 105 New Zealand's legislation made very little allowance for conscientious objection. Only those who belonged at the start of the war to a religious sect whose written doctrine forbade the bearing of arms could be recognised as conscientious objectors. This meant that only a few small groups like the Quakers, Christadelphians, and Seventh Day Adventists could win exemption. Members of the mainstream churches did not qualify and members of smaller Christian groups, like the Brethren, who largely held to a pacifist line, were also excluded. Even those who could gain exemption often chose not to because the law also required that conscientious objectors perform non-combatant duties, in the Medical Corps for example. This was unacceptable to many strict pacifists, who objected not just to bearing arms personally, but to killing by the armed forces, to which non-combatant service indirectly contributed.

New Zealand not only gave far less leeway than Britain for exemption from conscription on the grounds of pacifist beliefs, it also treated conscien-106 tious objectors much more harshly. 106 The standard penalty for defying the law was two years' jail with hard labour, and a repeat sentence on release if the objector still refused to enlist. In total some 273 were imprisoned. Many of them were treated terribly. Some, for example, were 'woken late at night and held upside down for an anal search for hidden objects' - and they were 'the lucky ones'. 107

Given the pervasive militarism within New Zealand society at large, there was very little sympathy within the churches for these objectors. There were exceptions. A committee set up by the Christchurch Presbytery, for example, argued that suppression of genuine conscientious objection ran counter to the liberties for which the country claimed to be fighting. The Congregational Union and the Anglican Bishop of Wellington called for a broader test to relieve genuine conscientious objectors. 108 The Methodist Synod in 1917 urged the government to provide a non-military service option to conscientious objectors. 109 But these tended to be the exception. Most denominational papers gave very little support to the conscientious objector. The Methodist Times, for example, declared that 'it can only be a very diseased type of religiousness that would lead any man to enrol himself among that do-nothing squad on the ground of conscientious objection.' 111

Compared to other church publications, and reflecting traditional Baptist concerns for the freedom of individual conscience, the New Zealand Baptist gave much more room to discussing the rights of conscientious objectors and the question of conscription. 112 J.J. North, editor from late 1915, was reluctant to see the government resort to conscription. 'We are shocked', he wrote, 'at the readiness and jauntiness with which conscription is advocated.' 113 Conscription, he argued, 'destroys the already narrow margin of choice open to us, a margin which all enlightened people regard as the most sacred of possessions, to be at all costs enlarged.' 114 However, like

102 NZB, November 1915, 202.
103 Locke, Peace People, 54.
104 See Belich, Paradise Reforged, 101.
106 For a good discussion of conscientious objection in Britain during this period, and the Methodist church's response, see Hughes, Conscience and Conflict, 57-70.
107 Belich, Paradise Reforged, 101.
109 Ibid.
110 MW, 5 December 1917, 7.
111 NZMT, 24 December 1915, 1.
112 Davidson, 'New Zealand Churches and Death', 451.
113 See Batt and MacLeod, J.J. North, 50.
114 NZB, June 1916, 110-112.
most of his British counterparts, he reluctantly submitted to conscription because it would not be used to wage aggressive war, but to defend freedom: 'The very existence of our country, which more than any other country stands for freedom and truth, is threatened. Its invaluable ministry among 400,000,000 backward people is in danger. Small nationalities to whom we have pledged our honour, are threatened with pitiless absorption.'

However, when it became apparent that the Military Service Bill would not provide adequate exemption for conscientious objectors, North vigorously opposed the legislation: 'It will be reminiscent of Siberia.' While North did not agree with the Quaker conscience, he insisted that 'if the struggles of the past 300 years mean anything, they mean that that conscience has to be respected ... The modern state is aping the mediaeval church. ... Let us not sacrifice the fruits of the long struggle of the past on the altar of the modern State.' In August North declared in bold on the front page of the Baptist that the Parliament of New Zealand had 'declared war' on the consciences of religious objectors to military service. Friday 21 July, the day Parliament passed the Military Service Act, had become 'The Black Friday of N.Z. history'. North expected that 'high-minded men who disagree with the conclusions of [conscientious] objectors, will, in sympathy and love, be found on their side.' North certainly was. He repeatedly condemned the 'vindictive clauses' of the Act which, in his view, 'exceed[ed] in savagery anything we've heard of outside Germany.' The churches, he insisted, should resist the state's invasion of 'the liberty which was the costly guerdon of centuries of strife'.

But while North was outspoken in his defence of the principle of liberty of conscience, and therefore of the need to respect the conscience of religious objectors to military service, this principle had limits. In 1916 the Baptist pacifist, Thomas Nuttall, was summoned to military service. Nuttall was clearly a genuine conscientious objector. He was born, it seems, with a clubfoot. All he needed to do to secure exemption from military service was to enlist and submit to a medical examination. But he refused, such was the strength of his religious commitment to pacifism. His subsequent appeal against service was declined. Already out of work, almost certainly because of his anti-militarist position, he now also faced arrest and imprisonment. North came to his defence: 'For a man to suppress his conscience (even if it is a mistaken conscience) at the bidding of State or Church is his unmanning. We wish our strange Government could be brought to see this simple fact.' However, North insisted that Nuttall should be willing to undertake non-combatant duties. This, North felt, would secure him greater sympathy from the government. Nuttall refused. For one thing, he said, the Military Service Act specifically stated that non-combatant service must be under military control, something against which Nuttall's conscience recoiled. Secondly, Nuttall argued that performing essential service for the state would still be supporting the war effort: 'It seems a poor sort of conviction that would lead a man to object to doing the work of killing for himself, yet would permit him to contribute directly or indirectly the materials or services which enable others to do the killing more efficiently.' Mackie agreed, arguing that North was expecting the conscientious objector to deny 'the very right of conscience for which he is contending.'

While North was not convinced, he – and other Baptist leaders continued to fight for conscientious objectors, some of whom were subjected to very harsh treatment. In one notorious incident, fourteen were forcefully shipped to the front lines in Europe 'in a process objectively akin to sustained torture.' One who refused to walk the last mile to the front was dragged over rugged ground and through shell-holes by a cable wire tied around his chest, leaving a gaping hole in his back and hip 'about a foot long and nearly as wide.' Some were lashed to poles in a kind of mock...

115 Clements, 'Baptists and the Outbreak of the First World War', 90.
116 NZB, June 1916, 110-12.
117 NZB, July 1916, 121.
118 NZB, August 1916, 141.
120 NZB, October 1916, 182.
122 NZB, February 1917, 17.
123 NZB, March 1917, 34.
124 NZB, April 1917, 51-52.
125 NZB, April 1917, 52.
126 NZB, November 1917, 166.
'crucifixion': Field Punishment No.1. North was trenchant in his criticism of this policy of torturing conscientious objectors to the front. 'Conscience is being bludgeoned,' he thundered. 'Liberty herself is affronted by the crimes that are done in her name.' Like John Clifford in Britain, North saw the massive contradiction. 'The war, begun as a fight for liberty and independence for men and nations, was now to be pursued by illiberal means, methods which seemed to deny those very same values.' In March 1918 North described reports of the treatment of conscientious objectors deported to Europe and held in New Zealand camps as 'revolting in the extreme' and 'exceedingly disturbing', and called on the government to appoint a commission of inquiry into the question of the treatment of these men. On North's motion the Christchurch Ministers' Association also urged the appointment of such a commission.

Eventually the government did appoint a commission of inquiry. In May 1918 there were complaints that conscientious objectors were being treated with brutality by the officer in command at Wanganui, Lieutenant J.W. Crampton. The inquiry found that the allegations were substantially true. Four conscientious objectors 'had been forcibly dressed in uniform, had weighted packs strapped to their backs and rifles tied or handcuffed in position. They had been pushed, dragged, punched and kicked around the yard ... Some had been dragged along by ropes or by the hair.' The press and public reaction showed how little sympathy was felt towards such 'shirkers'. The Manawatu Times noted that 'no bones were broken and no permanent injuries inflicted.' This, it said, contrasted favourably with the fate of many soldiers. The Martin Advocate remarked that the objectors would have been shot in Europe. In its view discipline had demanded that Crampton's will prevail and it had no sympathy to waste on a few stubborn shirkers. The Rangitikei Advocate took a similar line under the heading, 'Howls of the Shirker'. Since the shirker was little better than an animal, humane punishment had no effect on him. In any case, it said, pulling a man around by rope was harder on the puller than on the pulled. By contrast, North denounced 'the Wanganui Outrage' and called for Crampton and those responsible for 'the most damnable cruelties' to be held to account. According to North a military court martial - as suggested by the Defence Minister, Sir James Allen - was not sufficient. Crampton should be properly tried and sentenced in a civil court.

Peter O'Connor has suggested that North's stand on conscription and the treatment of conscientious objectors was motivated by anti-Catholic prejudice. This is an overstatement but there is probably some truth to the claim. During the war the Catholic hierarchy vigorously opposed the conscription of its clergy, theological students and schoolteachers. This clearly generated among many Protestants the feeling that Catholics were not willing to shoulder a full share of the burden imposed by the war. Their resentment was deepened when it emerged that Catholics were probably going to get away with their collective 'shirking' because they had made with the government a secret and exclusive agreement along those lines. North was clearly outraged. He described the apparent collusion between the Catholic Church and the government as an unfair arrangement that had caused 'irreparable damage'. It simply was not fair that the government should treat the Roman Catholic conscience with the utmost circumspection, exempting Catholic priests and brothers, while the Protestant conscience was ignored. Repeatedly, North used the Baptist as his pupil to denounce this private bargain between the government and the Catholic Church. In a widely reported sermon on 'Privilege of Clergy', North argued that the government should exempt all teachers, divinity students and ministers from conscription - Catholic and Protestant. The State, he said, could urge them to volunteer, and patriotic Protestants would, but it must admit that it could not demand of them what it was afraid to demand of the 'papists'.

129 Ibid., 105-7. For a recent examination of this form of torture and New Zealand's mistreatment of conscientious objectors, see David Grant, Field Punishment No. 1: Archibald Baxter, Mark Brigg and New Zealand's Anti-Militarist Tradition (Wellington: Steele Roberts, 2008).
130 NZB, September 1917, 113.
131 Clements, 'Baptists and the Outbreak of the First World War', 90.
132 NZB, March 1918, 34.
133 O'Connor, 'Awkward Ones', 136, n.58.
134 Ibid.
135 NZB, January 1919, 1-2.
137 NZH, 27 February 1917, 4.
138 NZB, February 1917, 18; April 1918, 49-50.
139 NZB, March 1917, 33-34; April 1917, 49; June 1917, 82; August 1917, 113; September 1917, 130; November 1917, 162; February 1918, 18; July 1918, 98.
140 'Clergy and the Ballot', Tīmaru Post, 28 February 1917, 3.
North’s outrage at the government’s special treatment of Catholics was, doubtless, fuelled by his deep antipathy towards ‘the Roman menace’. But this was not his primary concern. North was fighting for the cause of conscientious objectors before any secret deal between the Catholics and the government became public. Like his British counterparts, he was motivated by a historic Baptist commitment to freedom of conscience.

The 1920s and 1930s: a calm between storms?

Conscription ended with the Allies’ victory in 1918, but the issue of conscientious objection did not. The last of the conscientious objectors were not freed until June 1920. Even on release, they found themselves deprived of their civil rights. In a leaflet entitled, ‘The Military Defaulters List’, Charles Mackie called upon candidates in the 1919 elections to pledge themselves to repeal the law depriving these men of their civil rights. But ‘shirkers’ were still objects of public opprobrium, and Parliament was not disposed to restore those rights. In New Zealand, militarism survived the carnage of World War One. While the obvious futility of the conflict fostered pacifist sentiment within certain sections of society, there was still a stridently martial strain to New Zealand culture.

This was evident in a post-war scheme for compulsory military training championed by the Minister of Defence, Sir James Allen. He justified the scheme on the twin basis of the potential threat posed by Japan and a desire to combat juvenile delinquency. J.J. North strenuously opposed the plan. In the Baptist he dismissed it as ‘nascent Prussianism’, and Allen’s attempts to rear a ‘yellow bogey’ as unconvincing.

North also introduced the matter to the wider public through the Christchurch Council of Churches, deriding the Defence Minister as ‘military mad’ and provoking nationwide opposition to Allen’s bill. According to North, Allen’s ‘Six Month Camp’ Bill was defeated largely by church protest.

The issue flared up again several years later. In 1927 a Presbyterian theological student, Alun Richards, refused to undertake compulsory military training and was fined and deprived of civil rights for ten years. In 1928 he again refused and was fined. North rallied to the student’s defence: ‘We are clear in our mind that a man who feels profoundly the wrong of war, and who cannot without hurting his sense of right, engage in warlike preparations, should be safeguarded.’ As editor of the Baptist North was the primary spokesperson for Baptists on this issue, but he was not a lone voice within the denomination. For three years running, between 1927 and 1929, the Baptist Assembly passed resolutions urging the government either to abolish the scheme or allow all conscientious objectors to be exempted from military training. ‘We want to get rid of two detestable things,’ said the Rev. L.B. Busfield at the 1929 Assembly, ‘compulsory military training and the idea that conscientious objection is a thing for certain sects. It should be for every bona fide objector, no matter what his creed.’ On one level this reflected growing support for the League of Nations and peaceful methods of international arbitration. But it also articulated traditional concerns for freedom of conscience. At the 1935 Assembly the Baptist Union passed a resolution reaffirming ‘its historic faith in the principle of liberty of conscience for every man’, and declaring that the principle applied ‘equally to conscientious objectors to military service as to all others.’

141 This was obvious, for example, when Britain prepared to move against the Turks at Chanak in September 1922. The New Zealand government offered immediate and unconditional military help. Within a day 12,000 New Zealanders had volunteered to go and fight. Grant, Out in the Cold, 19-20.
144 NZB, August 1919, 113-14.
It was a Baptist pacifist who played arguably the key role in bringing compulsory military training to an end. In 1929 Baptist Minister Charles Cole became the organising secretary and first full-time worker of New Zealand’s first doctrinaire pacifist group, the No More War Movement (NMWM).\(^{152}\) In September 1929 the NMWM circulated a nationwide petition urging repeal of the Defence Act. Cole enlisted the support of sympathetic churches, trade unions, Labour Party branches and the WCTU. By May 1930 he had obtained 15,000 signatures. In July he led two delegations to the Prime Minister. Forbes expressed sympathy but stressed that his government must maintain a minimum of defence ‘consistent with national safety.’\(^{153}\) However, just twelve days later his Defence Minister, J.G. Cobbe, announced the suspension of compulsory military training. Cole’s petition was almost certainly a catalyst for that decision.\(^{154}\) But the issue of conscientious objection did not go away for long. Within a decade military conscription was reactivated when the country again found itself drawn into the maelstrom of world war.

Conscientious objection during World War Two

Given the increased support for pacifism since World War One, it might have been expected that the country would show greater sympathy for conscientious objectors in the Second World War. That was not, however, to be the case. On 30 May 1940 the Emergency Regulations Amendment Bill was put before Parliament, giving the government almost unlimited powers of compulsion for military service. Initially the rules for obtaining exemption were the same as those in World War One. Appeals were allowed only where the objector was a member of a religious sect whose written doctrine declared that all war was contrary to divine revelation. However, in June 1940 a delegation of church leaders met with the government and this led to a widening of criteria for conscientious objection. Consequently, in order to gain a full exemption from military service, conscientious objectors had only to establish that they personally held the belief that it was wrong to engage in warfare under any circumstances. Alternatively, if they could show that they held a belief that it was wrong to perform combatant duties in the armed forces, conscientious objectors could obtain a partial exemption, in which case they were only required to perform non-combatant duties. This meant that for the first time non-religious pacifists, and Christian pacifists from the mainstream churches, had the chance of winning exemption on conscientious grounds.

In practice, however, the conditions for gaining recognition as a conscientious objector remained very tough. New Zealand allowed only 19% of appeals against military service on grounds of conscience, compared with over 50% in Britain. And there was no provision for appeals against the decisions of these Boards. In total approximately 800 were interned in defaulters’ camps, and 60 of the most stubborn were sent to civil prison for long terms. In no other Commonwealth country was a proportionate number of conscientious objectors detained or imprisoned.\(^{155}\) ‘These men were banned from civil service, and from voting until 1951. One was still being prevented from returning to his job as a schoolteacher in 1962.\(^{156}\) But without reason, some historians have concluded that conscientious objectors in New Zealand ‘received much harsher treatment than did those in Britain and other Commonwealth countries’ during World War Two.\(^{157}\)

This is somewhat surprising, given that New Zealand was governed by a Labour Party born in the anti-militarist struggles of 1916, and which for many years had close cooperation with pacifists. For explanation one could point to the Prime Minister, Peter Fraser, who, though he himself went to jail during World War One for his opposition to conscription, was authoritarin in nature and known for his ‘intolerance of criticism and hatred of dissent.’\(^{158}\) But the better explanation is that this policy of treating conscien-

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152 Cole was pastor of St Albans Baptist Church (1926-1929). David Grant is mistaken to call him an Anglican minister in A Question of Faith, 11. In August 1929 Cole issued an emotional appeal to his fellow Baptists to take ‘a bold lead in the crusade against war’. NZB, August 1929, 230.

153 Grant, Out in the Cold, 26.

154 Cobbe argued first that the suspension was an economy measure, but he also told Parliament, ‘I cannot ignore the strong feelings in favour of world peace and opposition to militarism, especially compulsory military training, that has grown up, not only in New Zealand but in most civilised countries’. Grant, Out in the Cold, 26.

155 Locke, Peace People, 115.

156 Belich, Paradise Reforged, 295.


158 Belich, Paradise Reforged, 295.
rious objects harshly was politically expedient. It met a popular demand for equality of sacrifice and an intensive war effort. On one level it was an expression 'of recolonial ideology, of a genuine shared identity with Britain, a desire to help it through danger.' But Hitler's extremism, and the clearly evil nature of German totalitarianism also meant that, for the overwhelming majority of the population, opposition to the war was simply inconceivable. This was a struggle for the survival of democracy and freedom throughout the world, not – as in World War One – merely a European power struggle camouflaged under rhetoric about the evils of Prussian militarism. Japan's entry into the war also brought the conflict terrifyingly close and served to intensify public antagonism towards those of a pacifist persuasion. In the minds of many, pacifists were little better than traitors. The Returned Servicemen's Association went so far as to suggest that conscientious objects should be branded and exiled to a desert island. Intolerance towards conscientious objects was, therefore, only marginally less severe than in World War One. Conscientious objects faced public antagonism, press derision and retributive punishment from a government that regarded opposition to the war as untenable.

Within the New Zealand Baptist movement, however, pacifists and conscientious objects continued to find a sympathetic voice. In December 1939 the New Zealand Baptist Union Council issued a guiding statement for Baptists concerning participation in the war. It outlined three possible Christian approaches to war and concluded: 'Human limitations prevent us from seeing clearly the whole will of God; and, therefore, the need for every Christian to be deeply respectful towards the conscience of his fellow believers.' The Baptist magazine took a similar line. The Rev. L.J. Boulton-Smith affirmed the Baptist heritage of fighting for the freedom of conscience and encouraged his countrymen to obey the dictates of their conscience even if that meant disobeying the state:

We are loyal to the State, but we do not bow to any despotism over the religious conscience. There is a Law-Giver in Zion Who commands the conscience. We are blood brothers of that first-century group who declared, 'We ought to obey God rather than men'. ... British democracy, with all its flaws, is the product of our Baptist social axi-

om of a free man in a free state. In the great ultimate questions of the soul's loyalty to God the commands of man ... must be repudiated.163

Several other leading Baptist ministers articulated that strong commitment to liberty of conscience. The Rev. C.W. Duncumb demanded that, in the event of conscription, conscientious objects should be shown 'respect and reasonable consideration'. He said, 'European Baptists were foremost in declaration and sacrifice for freedom of consciences as touching spiritual things. The genuine conscientious objector has a real claim upon our sympathy, even though we may not appreciate his views.'164 In the early months of the war Dr Alexander Hodge, minister at the Auckland Baptist Tabernacle, published a sermon on the Christian attitude to war.165 He argued that absolute pacifism was not possible and threw his support behind the war effort. However, he also expressed concern for those with sensitive consciences, noting that the mood of public opinion was starting to run heavily against pacifism: 'It is easier to enlist than to resist, if we have regard for the rising public feeling. A popular clamour, the sound of martial music, will decide the issue for many.' With prophetic zeal, Hodge insisted that, 'The true pacifist is to be respected for his convictions. We shall tolerate no injustice or persecution of those who for conscience sake refuse to bear arms.' Five years later, with the war drawing to a close, Hodge again publicly demanded justice for conscientious objects. In April 1945 he convened a one thousand-strong public meeting in the Auckland Baptist Tabernacle to protest against the harsh treatment of military defaulters and demand an immediate investigation into the treatment of 'otherwise well behaved prisoners who are honestly adhering to principle'.

J.J. North was again outspoken in his support for those suffering on account of their conscience. When the 'plucky' Methodist minister, Ormond Burton, was jailed for his pacifist rhetoric, North thundered: 'Every man's conscience is to be respected. ... We ask as those who regard conscience as an utter solemnity, a holy of holies in the bosom of man, that the utmost courtesy be shown toward those who decline military service ... If the Government resorts to brutal methods, we shall have something to say

159 Grant, Out in the Cold, 85.
160 Belich, Paradise Reforged, 296.
161 Ibid.
163 NZB, November 1939, 331.
164 'The Church in a World at War', NZB, November 1939, 336
165 Dr Alexander Hodge, 'War and the Christian', address delivered at the Auckland Baptist Tabernacle, 3 March 1940, MA 227/9, MS 1006657, NZBRHSA.
166 Grant, On a Roll, 219.
about it.'\textsuperscript{167} When North observed that an influential section of Methodist young men had taken a strongly pacifist stance, he insisted: 'They ought to be respected by those who (like ourselves) differ from them. We will be no party to a savage attack on conscience.'\textsuperscript{168}

But again, as in World War One, North's adherence to this principle had its limits. In October 1940 the Jehovah's Witnesses sect was declared a subversive organisation under the Public Safety Regulations. This sect refused, as a matter of religious principle, to take oaths of allegiance or to serve in the armed forces. When the ban was announced, North defined it as 'religious persecution', but was unusually tepid in his criticism of the government. 'In a sense,' he said, 'we are sorry. Religious persecution (even of a nonsense religion) is against the genius of our nation.' But while North was sorry, he was clearly not \textit{that} sorry. This 'queer sect' was too pernicious in its influence for him to shed too many tears: 'ill-armed people are taken in by the tracta and by the tides, the ideas of which they have no means of checking.'\textsuperscript{169}

In the dark days of the war North's attitude towards conscientious objectors seemed to harden somewhat. They were, he said, 'very uncomfortably placed in a world dominated by Hitler'. Given the desperate situation, insincere objectors had to be weeded out. They robbed the nation of crucial help in time of need. The only way, North said, for a conscientious objector to prove the sincerity of his convictions was to be willing to suffer for them. 'Unless he is entirely ready for that his appeal must fail.' So, in North's opinion, conscientious objectors should suffer: 'They must pay for their belief … The silly idea that, when the Empire is in jeopardy, exemption from service can be procured without cost is dead against common sense and dead against all precedent.'\textsuperscript{170}

Throughout the war Baptist Assemblies repeatedly expressed concern about the treatment of conscientious objectors. The 1940 Assembly, for example, passed a resolution reaffirming 'the historic faith in the principle of liberty of conscience' and its application to conscientious objectors.\textsuperscript{171} The following year, Assembly passed a motion deploring the omission of provision for full religious liberty.\textsuperscript{172} In 1944 it considered a motion in defence of the Jehovah's Witnesses. This stated that the Baptist Union, 'while not in any sense approving of the tenets and doctrines of the religious group known as the Jehovah's Witnesses', urges the government to re-examine the discriminatory ban upon that group. 'We claim for all men complete liberty of conscience and freedom of worship, a claim which is in the spirit of the Atlantic Charter and our battle for world freedom.' It seems, however, that this resolution was too controversial. After discussion, delegates agreed that the motion 'lie on the table'.\textsuperscript{173} In 1945 Assembly again addressed the issue, with several speakers pleading for the true Baptist approach to the issue: "The cause of religious freedom must be upheld."\textsuperscript{174}

Not all Baptists were so liberal in their attitude to those with pacifist convictions. Many lay Baptists were clearly swept along by the public mood of antipathy towards this group. The Rev. N.R. Wood, minister of Colombo Street Baptist Church, and a fervent pacifist, experienced this first hand. Through correspondence in the Baptist he clashed sharply with Dr Hodge over the merits of pacifism.\textsuperscript{175} Wood explained that he had not, until then, written to the Baptist on the question of pacifism because he wanted 'to avoid arousing feelings that might cause division in the Church.' Instead, out of respect for the views of his church, he had confined his activities to the public platform and daily press. However, division did arise. One of his congregation was the redoubtable J.K. Archer, by now a member of New Zealand's Legislative Council. Archer was so offended by Wood's position that he pronounced him a 'traitor'. It appears that Wood's relationship with the congregation was so severely strained over the issue that he was forced during the war to accept a call to another church.\textsuperscript{176} This reflects the fact that many Baptists, like the members of many other churches, were influenced profoundly by the perspectives of their society. It possibly also reflects the fact that in New Zealand, with no established church, Baptist memories of social disqualifications and religious persecution in Britain

167 NZB, October 1939, 298.
168 NZB, January 1940, 34.
169 NZB, December 1940, 366.
170 NZB, December 1941, 359.
171 NZB, November 1940, 346.
172 NZB, November 1941, 339-40. Assembly passed a resolution reaffirming 'its firm adherence to the sacred principle of the integrity and liberty of the individual conscience' and deprecating 'the humiliating and unfair treatment accorded certain conscientious objectors to war'. See AS, 22 October 1941, 6.
173 Minutes of 1944 Assembly, MA A45, B1/124, NZB/HSA.
174 NZB, December 1945, 299.
175 NZB, February 1940, 36-37; March 1940, 78.
176 Ray French, interview by author, telephone, Auckland, 2 November 2009.
were starting to fade — and with it their sensitivity to freedom of conscience.177

However, even if Baptist sensitivities were starting to wilt, it could not be said, in Laurie Barber's words, that Baptists were 'conformists to the demands of government and popular hysterical pressure' and lacking in 'prophetic zeal'.178 While many Baptists were clearly swept along by the tide of militarism and blind patriotism that prevailed in New Zealand during the early twentieth century, a number of leading Baptist ministers, lay people, and assemblies were outspoken in defence of those who suffered for conscience's sake. Motivated by an historic commitment to freedom of conscience, they did denounce the mistreatment of conscientious objectors. And not without effect. The efforts of people like Mackie, Nuttall, North and Cole helped force the suspension of military detention for conscientious objectors in 1913 and the suspension of compulsory military training in 1930. This stream of Baptists demonstrated a breadth of social vision. In the first half of the twentieth century, therefore, the social conscience of New Zealand Baptists frequently extended well beyond the confines of gambling, alcohol and sex. By the 1950s, however, there was a growing sense among some leading Baptists that their movement's social conscience was on the wane.

6. 'The burning problems of our time': Questions of Defence Policy, 1965-1986

Baptists, if they so wish, may try to withdraw from this disturbing world. Our Churches can become dag-souts of refuge for people afraid or unable to face the tensions of our time. The gospel preached can become increasingly pietistic, individualistic and other-worldly. Assembly can easily concern itself with domestic affairs and leave the burning problems of our time to politicians. But is not this to deny the gospel? The Master said, 'Ye are the salt of the earth.' Salt must keep its savour and must be in contact with what it is to preserve. ... The Christian Church must relate its gospel to the world in which God has placed it.1

Elaine Bolitho has observed that in the post-war period Baptists became 'more aware of and responsive to questions relating to life in this world'.2 Through their involvement in ecumenical bodies, some Baptist leaders did engage directly with the government over a large number of social issues.3 And the range of topics to which successive assemblies in the 1960s and 1970s addressed themselves was reasonably wide.4 From the late 1940s, however, there was a growing sense among some New Zealand Baptists that their denomination was failing to relate the gospel to the wider world.

177 However, when Wood succeeded J.J. North as editor of the Baptist he continued to highlight the treatment of conscientious objectors. He argued that they should not be 'ruthlessly trampled underfoot' and that the government should provide alternative methods of service for them: NZB, July 1949, 191; September 1949, 255. And Baptist Assemblies continued in the first half of the 1950s to speak out in defence of liberty of conscience and those who objected to military training on humanitarian or ethical grounds: NZB, December 1950, 363; January 1956, 11.

178 Barber, 'Historical Aspect', 21.

1 N.R. Wood, NZB, November 1963, 297.
4 See, for example, Edgar, Handful of Grain, 64; Angus MacLeod, 'Public Questions at Assembly', NZB, August 1973, 10-11.