

## ‘Amen, Amen!’

### CHRISTIANITY, SOCIETY AND VISIONS OF THE FUTURE IN 1920s NEW ZEALAND



‘SO THEY STOOD, tenderly and reverently, Gay in the hollow of her lover’s arm, her hands clasped close to his breast, while in simple faltering phrases she put up her petition for happiness and help.’<sup>1</sup> Thus Nick Daunt and Gay Saville confessed their love for one another: ‘her heart beating against his, her cheeks hot under his lips, her lips seeking his out in an ecstasy of loving surrender’ after her erstwhile swain, the bounder Dion Westaway, had attempted to swindle Saville, Daunt’s ward, out of her inheritance. Having finally discovered their mutual passion, the star-crossed couple slowly broke from their fervent embrace. What they did next might surprise latter-day readers more than the villainy of Westaway or the dénouement of their romance. Arm in arm, they prayed: “... and make us grow in love and understanding as the years go by, and fail not one another ever, in sorrow or in joy.” said Gay. “Amen. Amen!”, added Daunt.’<sup>2</sup>

Saville and Daunt’s love was fictional, appearing in Auckland novelist Isabel Peacocke’s popular romance *The Guardian* [Figure 1]. This novel, which was



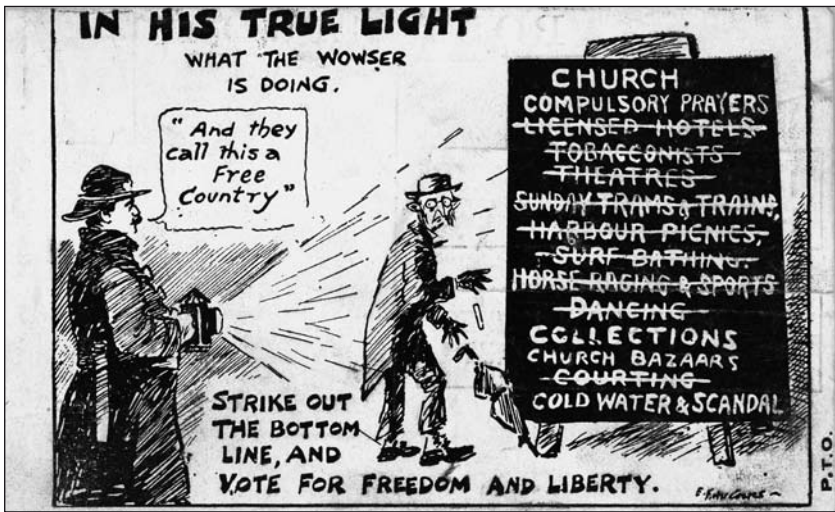
**Figure 1:** Gay Saville and Nick Daunt in troubled times. Gay, incensed by the way Nick had broken the news of her father’s death to her, strikes him with her whip and runs away. Isabel Maud Peacocke, *The Guardian*, London, 1920, frontispiece.

distributed in both New Zealand and Britain, combined a strongly moralist subtext with a traditional romance narrative. This subtext, however, was only explicitly linked to religion at the very end of the tale. Daunt and Saville were busy young people — the path to true love was blocked not only by Westaway's schemes but also by forest fires, flash floods and quicksand — too busy to go to church or get involved in formal religious activities. Moreover, Saville was a child of nature, a kind of Anglo–Maoriland wood nymph; Daunt a solid, practical-minded scientist (he had deferred his training as an engineer in order to support the orphaned Saville). Both preferred the temple of nature to church buildings. Yet prayer sanctified their union.

Passion and prayer have been entirely estranged in historical stereotypes of New Zealand religious belief and practice in the 1920s. When historians have thought about religion in the early twentieth century they have tended to focus on the grim and repressive caricature of Christians as wowsers. In his study of sex and drugs in colonial New Zealand Stevan Eldred-Grigg implied that the churches were engaged in a vigorous but futile fight against the momentum of lust and desire in New Zealand society.<sup>3</sup> A.R. Grigg's work on temperance demonstrated that nonconformist denominations placed prohibition high on their agenda in a 'programme for social reform'.<sup>4</sup> James Belich has seen the wowler as symptomatic of a 'crusade for moral harmony'.<sup>5</sup> According to Belich, the regular demands by religious and secular groups for restrictions on alcohol and other wowsers activities was itself part of 'the Great Tightening', a period of puritanism and 'moral evangelism'.<sup>6</sup> Our religious past, it seems, was populated by dour puritans.<sup>7</sup>

All these historians have located the wowler as a central figure in the interactions between church and society during this period. However, while the image of the wowler was a frequent one in 1920s discourse, it was almost universally negative, and was always a caricature. Frowning, black-clad and sometimes ambiguously gendered, wowsers were portrayed as seeking to impose control over all aspects of other people's lives. Their sinister agenda was to extinguish colour and oppress fun. Activities associated with the popular image of the wowler went beyond merely agitating for the prohibition of alcohol; sabbatarianism and censorship were also associated with their sinister plots, which in some cases acquired the dimensions of conspiracy theories<sup>8</sup> [Figure 2].

The use of the term 'wowler' in historical writing has mirrored, often without acknowledgement, the negative baggage that it already carried in early twentieth-century discourse. The wowsers' words and deeds have been presented by historians as characterizing one of the major trends in New Zealand society — by implication the more moderate elements opposing or apathetic to prohibition were less religious or not religious at all. However, while many nonconformist church organizations were deeply involved in the movement for temperance — the Methodist church was active in fighting what it called 'one of the most terrible evils that afflict and retard civilisation' — that involvement should not be seen as meaning that to be religious was to be a wowler, or that belief in God equated to wholehearted belief in the absolute evil of drink.<sup>9</sup> While, as Grigg has argued, the prohibition movement



**Figure 2:** A 1911 anti-temperance postcard stereotyping organized religion as the preferred recreational activity of wowsers and killjoys. E.F. Hiscocks, 'In his true light', PUBL-0220-5, Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington (ATL).

should by no means be ignored, it should not be seen as the fundamental characteristic of early twentieth-century Christian belief, or of New Zealand society as a whole.<sup>10</sup> The wowler was presented as a religious fanatic, not as the stereotypical Christian.

As John Stenhouse has argued, this focus on repression reflects a wider disinterest in the historical meaning of religion in New Zealand historiography.<sup>11</sup> According to Stenhouse, historians have too often portrayed Christian figures in New Zealand's past as either impotent or villainous, and in doing so have not only elided an important influence on New Zealand history, but have also ignored a potentially useful framework for historical analysis.<sup>12</sup> In the case of the 1920s, the central focus on wowsers has obscured the diverse range of other discourses about what it meant to be Christian that appeared throughout New Zealand print culture, including those that were important in many of the same texts — such as *Truth* — in which wowsers were roundly condemned.<sup>13</sup> For all the grim portrayals of wowsers that populate our history, we have very little sense of what Christianity actually meant to New Zealand society during this period. Seeing the wowler as the main Christian personality in New Zealand culture during the 1920s is akin to arguing that gin was the only alcoholic beverage that New Zealand's tipplers consumed during that same decade.

In fact, even as the New Zealand media cast wowsers as pantomime villains a vast majority (well over 90%) of New Zealanders in the 1920s identified with one Christian denomination or another.<sup>14</sup> Yet, only a minority of these people regularly attended formal church services on Sunday mornings.<sup>15</sup> Who, then, were New Zealand's Christians? When we think about religion in the past, we tend to consider first and foremost the official actions and beliefs of religious institutions, but in 1920s New Zealand the majority of those who claimed affiliation with these institutions do not appear to have actually participated a

great deal in them. The romantic characters of Daunt and Saville, while hardly typical of Pakeha young people, did reflect the majority's behaviour in relation to church attendance.

In order to decode the meaning of this Christianity in New Zealand society, and following Stenhouse's call for a revitalization of the historical study of religion in our past, this article addresses the role that Christianity, as the dominant religion, played in New Zealand culture, with particular focus on the extent and nature of Christian ideas in public forums outside of the institutional churches themselves. In doing this, I am intentionally avoiding the traditional approach to religious history that first and foremost focuses on the churches and their activities. Theological and organizational developments within institutional churches are relevant to understanding the impact of Christianity on society, but to appreciate the broader role of Christian ideas we need to examine how they were played out and contested in public and popular discourse. I am concerned here with the role and meaning of Christianity in New Zealand culture broadly, not with the role of, or changes within, the churches. While they are linked, they are not the same.

Allan Davidson and Peter Lineham have argued that in the inter-war period 'the churches had settled into a particular role in New Zealand society, accepted and even respected by most people, and behaving as the religious representatives of the community'.<sup>16</sup> They also suggested that there was discontent among the churches about 'nominalism' and declining passion for and interest in church on the part of members.<sup>17</sup> According to Hugh Jackson, the religious ideas expressed by those Protestants who actually attended church were diverse and formless.<sup>18</sup> Such narratives of post-Great War religion imply that the churches had lost any grip they ever had on New Zealand society because of their support for the war, and the theological changes in Protestantism from the nineteenth century. This in turn suggests a disjunction between the church and society in general, where the churches were nominally the 'representatives' of religion but were of limited relevance to most people's lives.

However, just because people were labelled irreligious by churches and diverged from orthodox Christian expectations about behaviour does not necessarily mean that they did not believe in some sort of Christian cosmology. As Alison Clarke has pointed out, the 'woeful reports of religious experts' in the past should not be seen as the final word on whether or not their wayward flocks were Christian.<sup>19</sup> Historians have too often assumed the role of religion in society can be discerned only in the actions of committed churchgoers and moral activists. In fact, as Clarke has shown in the context of late nineteenth-century Pakeha life, religion's impact went far beyond the pulpit and the congregation.<sup>20</sup>

We can catch glimpses of what Christianity meant to New Zealand society and culture more broadly through an analysis of what Callum Brown has called 'discursive Christianity'.<sup>21</sup> In his investigation of Christianity in twentieth-century Britain, Brown focused his discussion less on statistics about church attendance and stated adherence, and more on the nature of Christian religiosity and what it meant to be a 'Christian nation'.<sup>22</sup> Central to his approach was the idea that the role of religion in a culture is not so much generated by the

theology, or even the official activities of religious institutions, but by the discursive position of the church in society — the way in which Christianity is encoded and discussed in popular culture and public discourse. According to Brown it is through a society's level of 'discursive Christianity' that other expressions of church find traction and are generated.<sup>23</sup>

The idea of discursive Christianity has its limits. While it is a useful concept for investigating questions about the overall religiosity of a culture, how this discourse translated into and affected personal experience and practice of religion is also important. Chris Hilliard has strongly warned against what he calls the "'representations of' syndrome" in New Zealand history — that is, an approach that prioritizes discourse above all else, and 'divorces experience and textuality'.<sup>24</sup> At worst, this trend can lead to an impression of past individuals being powerless automatons, pulled every which way by cultural forces, helpless against the social and discursive structures that encased them. An understanding of the discourses surrounding Christianity must be placed within the context of how these discourses translated into practice. When thinking about religion, we need to take into account how people behaved as well as what they believed. And when we explore the competing and sometimes converging things that people were saying and doing about religion in 1920s New Zealand, we can find some interesting manifestations of religious, political and social ideas. As I will show, these manifestations do not conform to the traditional interpretations of early twentieth-century religion and society.

*Truth* loved wowsers-bashing, but the grim puritan was not the only religious stereotype peopling the pages of the popular weekly. Almost as much attention was lavished on a contradictory Christian figure — the fallen minister or 'randy reverend'. In 1922, for example, the public were informed that the evidence against Presbyterian social worker Andrew Axelsen was 'of so REVOLTING A NATURE as to make it entirely unsuitable for publication in detail'.<sup>25</sup> *Truth* could tell its readers that Axelsen had attempted to 'hypnotise' two boys aged 11 and 13. The suggestion of sexual deviance associated with a man who had held the prominent position of Dunedin Presbyterian Social Service Association Superintendent warranted copious column inches. Clerics and sex scandals made for a potent mix.

This incident was by no means unique, and more importantly the relish with which it was recounted in the pages of *Truth* was characteristic of numerous other similar stories. Even in cases where links to the church were peripheral, headlines would emphasize the involvement of religion in scandalous relationships or events.<sup>26</sup> While the Axelsen story, with its overtones of homosexuality and paedophilia, was designed to provoke disgust and outrage, other scandals involving heterosexual, consenting couplings often had a different tone. The reporting of such scandals tended more towards the curious than the disgusted.

At times clerical sex scandals were presented as a blatant abuse of power, a case of predator and victim; in other cases the reporting was more ambivalent. *Truth* was quick to take the moral high ground against adulterous clerics, but it also revelled in details about the virility of the ministers and the beauty of the women involved. According to *Truth*, when Methodist minister Valmont

Trigge (already a married man) arrived at a Hastings church in 1921, there was ‘an extraordinary revival of piety among the damsels of Long Gully ... and Trigge had no difficulty in recruiting zealous teachers for his Sabbath school’<sup>27</sup> [Figure 3]. There was an element of admiration for Trigge, who was accorded ‘the dual role of both hero and villain’; he ‘played football ... and wielded the willow with even greater skill’.<sup>28</sup> *Truth* even seemed uncertain about whether Trigge was seducer or seducee. The paper portrayed Evelyn Pascoe, the object of his affections, as a loose ‘flapper’, yet it was clear that Trigge was the elder and more experienced of the two, willing to teach Pascoe the ‘mysteries of theology, and in a still greater measure the wonders of “creation”’.<sup>29</sup>



**Figure 3:** Rev. Val Trigge and a mission group photographed outside the Richmond Methodist Church c. 1917. F.N. Jones collection, G-11508-1/1, ATL.

As Bronwyn Dalley has pointed out, newspapers in the 1920s (and *Truth* in particular) were prepared and even eager to present the public with ‘erotically charged’ copy.<sup>30</sup> Dalley has suggested that stories such as that of murder victim Elsie Walker’s provided a way of discussing taboo subjects such as rape and incest in a legitimate way.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, tales of predatory preachers and seductive Sunday school teachers titillated readers by locating illicit sexual relationships in the respectable religious world. Situations involving clergy and sex were not only interesting, they could also be funny. Humorists also played with the awkward mix of churchmen (in particular, young curates) and sexuality. One joke related the tribulations of a ‘young and innocent’ curate who found himself at a risqué country house party. Not wanting to share in the dubious entertainments of his fellow guests, he went to bed, only to wake up at two in the morning to find ‘a comely maiden’ in his room: “Pardon me,” he cried in alarm. “I think you have made a mistake. This is my room!” “This is No. 21, isn’t it?” was the reply. “Yes, it’s No. 21, and it’s my room. You’ve plainly made a mistake.” “No, there’s no mistake,” cooed the damsel. “You see, I drew you in a sweep!”<sup>32</sup> Far from condemning the young woman

outright, the story conveyed a sense that the experience might be good for the naïve young man. She and the tale itself were a bit naughty, but in an amusing way.

Still another scandal erupted in the Anglican Diocese of Waikato in 1928, when Bishop Cecil Cherrington married a domestic servant loaned to his household by Archbishop Averill's wife.<sup>33</sup> This story made front-page headline news in *Truth*; though in this case the paper's editorializing was decidedly favourable to the clergyman. The answer to the question asked in the headline 'Should Bishops Marry their Maids?' seemed to be a resounding 'yes'. Apparently this 'was no hasty courtship followed by a sudden marriage'.<sup>34</sup> His secretive wooing and subsequent wedding were presented as 'romantic' rather than reprehensible, and it was implied that dissident elements within the diocese were using the marriage as a way of attacking a bishop with whom they had doctrinal differences.<sup>35</sup> While the story could easily have been turned into a saucy tale of intra-household passion, the paper condemned the 'wagging tongues and suspicious minds' of those who criticized the marriage, and depicted Cherrington as manly and dignified, and his wife as upright and respectable.<sup>36</sup> A year later *Truth* further supported Cherrington by giving him another highly favourable front-page story.<sup>37</sup>

In 1928 a respected Anglican social worker, Canon Fielden Taylor, was accused of sexually assaulting boys in his care and *Truth* again hesitated to condemn, despite the opportunities for exploring broken taboos and aberrant behaviour.<sup>38</sup> When Taylor was acquitted on all counts *Truth* celebrated his vindication.<sup>39</sup> The boys who accused Taylor were called 'Shifty-eyed, illiterate and, in some cases, indisputably deceitful', and Taylor presented as heroically striving to warn the boys against 'habits which could have only one end — physical and intellectual depravity'.<sup>40</sup> Both situations — Cherrington's romance with a housekeeper and the accusations against Taylor — had the potential to become titillating tales about deviant authority figures. Yet *Truth*, hardly the most godly and dignified of newspapers, defended and affirmed both men, portraying them as solid, uncorrupted victims of the spite of lesser, morally weaker individuals. The respective villains were those who exploited private gossip for political gain within the Diocese of Waikato and the 'shifty-eyed' boys of Wellington's slums. The churchmen themselves were portrayed as strong, moral and responsible figures. Randy reverends were reprobates, but churchmen could also be heroes, and *Truth* was as quick to defend the latter as to attack the former.

Throughout the 1920s the 'sporting parson' was another common Christian 'type' featured in the newspapers. Triggs's fall was portrayed as all the more tragic and dramatic because of his prowess with bat and ball. Those ministers who displayed skill on the cricket or football field (and resisted the temptation to run off with Sunday school teachers) earned respect by integrating spiritual and manly virtues. 'Muscular Christianity' was highly valued by the secular media. At the ceremony farewelling the Reverend E.E. Ramford, Vicar of St John's Waihi Anglican church, the president of the local rugby league club praised Ramford's masculine qualities and his 'just and speedy' refereeing.<sup>41</sup> When Archdeacon William Calder, vicar of All Saints Ponsonby, died in 1923,

a warm obituary in the *New Zealand Observer* emphasized his involvement in boxing and athletics.<sup>42</sup> The sporting parson was a social asset. With reference to one Dunedin vicar, *Truth* went so far as to say that ‘sporting parsons are a must in any community’.<sup>43</sup>

The popular press credited Christian ministers with other desirable traits too. While male wowsers were portrayed as effete, thin weaklings, positive images of clergy dwelt on strong, masculine qualities. Firmness, justice, dignity and courage were affirmed as ideal qualities in ministers. And according to New Zealand’s press these virtues were not uncommon. Weekly newspapers frequently profiled or discussed the activities of bishops, both Anglican and Catholic. Averill, who by 1927 was Archbishop of New Zealand, was commended by the *Observer* for his erudition in a speech at the ‘Auckland Savage Club korero’ on the rather secular topic of ‘pottering around’.<sup>44</sup> The Wellington Catholic Coadjutor Archbishop, Thomas O’Shea, was presented by *Truth* as a ‘Man of God — and Man of Men’.<sup>45</sup> He deserved respect, readers were told, because he ‘has found time in which he may concentrate his innate ability towards ennobling and stabilizing the fraternity of mankind; to elucidate its many problems, both civic or domestic, national or personal, thus unconsciously providing an example of what a true New Zealander should represent’, all this despite his ‘heavy administrative responsibility’.<sup>46</sup>

Another church figure who received considerable media attention was the extroverted Auckland city missionary Jasper Calder (the son of the aforementioned William).<sup>47</sup> His social service activities won him high praise — while ‘his methods may not be orthodox he does truly Christian work’.<sup>48</sup> A great deal of public respect was accorded to those religious ministers who, like Calder, were seen to be applying practical (and not merely suggesting spiritual) solutions to modern social problems. Calder and his fellow city missionaries were important public figures. Most famously, in the early 1930s the Auckland Methodist missionary Colin Scrimgeour (Uncle Scrim) became a prominent public figure through his radio show, proffering the ‘fellowship of the Friendly Road’.<sup>49</sup> Both Calder and Scrimgeour were noted and acclaimed for the unconventional modern innovations that they brought to their social ministry, such as the use of music and film in promoting their messages.<sup>50</sup>

‘Muscular Christianity’ was a concept that those not directly or frequently involved in church life could appreciate and admire. Clerics who served as chaplains in the Great War were singled out for particular praise. Experiencing ‘face to face the frailties of man’ on the battlefield was important, as it showed that a minister was grounded in reality and not simply preoccupied with spiritual concerns.<sup>51</sup> An unnamed retired Anglican minister who had volunteered to serve as a chaplain at Gallipoli was initially spurned by the soldiers who made up his new flock.<sup>52</sup> However, after demonstrating that he cared about the soldiers by going out to the front lines and being under fire and having his hat pierced by a bullet, he found that ‘everyone wanted to know him’.<sup>53</sup> The moral of the story was not only that courage was more important than prayers or fine sermons, but also that manly men of God deserved respect.

The overwhelming impression from all these images of Christian ministers is that a learned but practical-minded, virile, muscular parson who kept his



head out of the clouds and his feet planted firmly on the ground of physical and social reality was the ideal. Through profiling individual ministers, reporting scandals and condemning wowsers, newspapers such as *Truth* and *Observer* set limits on what they regarded as acceptable, and what they praised as good, Christian behaviour. These limits were not the same as the ideals presented by many church newspapers, which often praised leaders more for their spiritual characteristics (although the ability to apply these spiritual characteristics to worldly problems was greatly prized).<sup>54</sup> They were not, therefore, universal or even necessarily hegemonic portrayals of what people expected or hoped parsons would be like. However, their existence and prominence in the discursive milieu demonstrates that they played an important role in constructing and reinforcing what people expected from religion, and in reflecting what religion meant to society. This is particularly significant given that much of the material cited above came from *Truth*, a newspaper that pushed the boundaries of what was acceptable in print, and which claimed the largest readership of any weekly in New Zealand. Often hostile to the conservative establishment, *Truth* nonetheless constructed these images of masculine parsons and practical missionaries as being both normal and good. The regularity of these images in 1920s New Zealand discourse both reflected and reinforced cultural ideas about the normality, acceptability and importance of the churches as institutions, and of Christian ministers as central members of a functional society.

Interest in the doings of the churches went deeper than simply defining what type of Christian was acceptable and good in society. As Lloyd Geering has observed, church meetings, statements and business were 'given full coverage in the newspapers, many of which had regular columns discussing matters of religious importance'.<sup>55</sup> Newspapers took a routine interest in church affairs and in issues of religion in society and the future of Christianity more broadly. Church reporting was commonplace. The *Auckland Star*, for example, regularly detailed the activities of a range of denominations and other church groups. From parish meetings to international Catholic Eucharistic congresses, the *Star* carried church-related news almost every day.<sup>56</sup> The Saturday 'Religious World' column contained news stories, sermon notes and commentary from a range of denominations and theological positions.<sup>57</sup>

This reporting on church affairs covered both prosaic and controversial issues. Interest in the appointments of bishops and local vicars has already been mentioned, while synods and other church meetings were periodically covered. Seemingly mundane topics such as the expansion of the Mount Albert Presbyterian Church hall or the purchase of land for a new Anglican cathedral were deemed to be of sufficient public interest to be included in the news columns of daily newspapers.<sup>58</sup>

Sunday sermons, too, were regularly printed or summarized in newspapers. The topics were many and varied. Those that touched on unorthodox or new ideas were recounted with some interest, such as a talk by George Aldridge at the West Street Church of Christ in Auckland in which Aldridge questioned the existence of Hell. According to the reporter he was heckled, with one listener suggesting that Aldridge would discover that he was wrong in a particularly unpleasant and direct way.<sup>59</sup>

Conflicts within local churches and synods were considered especially newsworthy. Sex scandals involving clergy were not the only grist the churches could offer a journalistic mill: theological controversies were reported with great interest and considerable dignity. When St Andrews Presbyterian Church split away from the Auckland Presbytery over the issue of child baptism, the media took an active interest in events.<sup>60</sup> Bishop Cherrington's marriage may have been a subject of interest to *Truth*, but the underlying conflict between him and some members of his diocese over his Anglo-Catholic tendencies received more sustained and detailed media coverage than his love life.<sup>61</sup>

Church debates, meetings and 'historic decisions' were, therefore, treated as being something of great interest to the public.<sup>62</sup> Regardless of which newspapers New Zealanders read, they were constantly surrounded by news and ideas relating to churches, and were treated as if they had the knowledge, vocabulary and awareness to understand and care about church matters. Newspaper editors assumed a degree of familiarity on the part of their readers with these theological issues and a kind of literacy about Christianity and Christian ideas. It was expected that people would understand casual references to Biblical characters and phrases. New Zealand society of the 1920s was permeated with Christianity on multiple levels.

The newsworthiness of Christian events and the ubiquity of Christian ideas and images in society can be interpreted in a number of ways. New Zealand culture was suffused with religious ideas, but this does not necessarily mean that New Zealand was particularly Christian. Perhaps they were just relics of the past, a colonial atavism with little direct relevance to modern society? This view fits well with narratives of secularization that locate 1920s religiosity within a narrative about New Zealand's gradual slide (or ascent) towards secular values.<sup>63</sup> However, the concern and passion invested by commentators and columnists into religious issues belies the notion that these issues were of limited relevance or importance to New Zealand culture.

When the Anglican Bishop of Auckland, Arthur Averill, made a public call for church unity in 1920, the *Observer* printed a cartoon in support of his sentiments. It showed a naked boy looking out over a New Zealand town packed with churches of all shapes and sizes. Its caption read: 'The boy — what will he become? — A plea for church unity'.<sup>64</sup> In addition to the delightful variety of church architecture of early twentieth-century New Zealand — the tall Anglican spire, the Baptists' neo-classical pillars, the cruciform Catholic building and the modest wooden halls of the smaller sects — this cartoon and its caption betrayed a deeper preoccupation within New Zealand culture. Underlying the *Observer's* eloquent image is the concern that after witnessing the division of the churches, the boy will make no choice, and that sectarian division will result in future abandonment of Christianity by the young Dominion.<sup>65</sup> And throughout the decade it was clear to readers of New Zealand's newspapers that such an abandonment would be unequivocally disastrous.

Church matters such as Averill's support for union were not routine filler for newspapers short of other material. Rather, they were central to a series of concerns and ideals about modern New Zealand that were circulating during the 1920s. Newspaper writers were ready, willing and eager to go beyond

mere reporting, and to comment on church news from New Zealand and abroad. *Truth* was consistently critical of churches for perceived conservatism, with Anglican policies on women being targeted for particular attention.<sup>66</sup> Newspaper columnists and editors were quick to point out the things they felt were wrong with the modern church. Newspapers other than *Truth* were no less direct in their criticism of perceived problems with church institutions. In late 1923, possibly motivated by the release of census figures concerning church attendance, a series of columns in the *Auckland Star* suggested a variety of factors that were barring 'church progress' in New Zealand.<sup>67</sup> 'Scopa Nuova' suggested that boring, impractical preachers were at fault for 'half-empty churches', once again drawing on the idea that the ideal parson was 'practical' and involved in social issues.<sup>68</sup> Scopa Nuova's colleague, Simon Muir, was more inclined to blame sectarianism.<sup>69</sup> When the Auckland synod met a few weeks later, the *Star* focused on the discussions that touched on issues of 'church progress' and the need for more ordination candidates, a shortage that was perceived as 'holding back' the church.<sup>70</sup>

In a 1926 editorial, *Truth* suggested that the modern world, with all its pleasures and diversions, provided an alluring alternative to church attendance. According to the editor, 'the time was once when the Church not only governed the moral code of the people but also regulated its recreation and amusement', but that era was lost, replaced by a situation where 'young girls of 15, who should be at home in bed, can be seen any night of the week stepping to the rhythm of King Jazz'.<sup>71</sup> The tone of the editorial was highly critical of modern clergy, whom the writer saw as being lazy and careless in their pastoral duties. However, while the article slammed the church, in its final paragraph it did not suggest that there should be an abandonment of Christianity or Christian values. Instead, it returned to an ideal of the Church in society: 'The only method of rectifying all this is through the Church. And this can only be done by getting down to rock-bottom — in the homes of the people and inculcating into the young a knowledge and a love of God that will be lasting and that will carry them through life.'<sup>72</sup> The ultimate reference point for the hard-bitten, cynical editor was still Christian, and he saw no alternative other than an appeal to the 'love of God'. Ironically, this critique of dancing mirrored and was mirrored by 'wowsers' rhetoric about the perils of modernity.<sup>73</sup> *Truth* seemed to have a low tolerance for a great many church groups and ideas — wowsers, faith healers, evangelists, the Salvation Army — but it still held up Christianity as the foundation of and the source of hope for civilization.<sup>74</sup>

A closer reading of Isabel Peacocke's 'puritan' prose, discussed at the beginning of this article, reveals a similar attitude towards the role of the churches and of religion in society. The only significant mention of religion in *The Guardian* apart from the final scene comes when Daunt, in despair at the suggestion that Saville will move in with Westaway, makes a speech to her about the importance of conventional sexual morality. Such a scene seems to fit well with an understanding of religious discourse as an oppressive, wowsersish force. However, he follows this speech with the comment that 'I've preached you quite a sermon, and I don't believe in preaching.'<sup>75</sup> Daunt was moral, and Christian, yet he was portrayed as uncomfortable with 'preaching'

and ‘superstition’. He had mixed feelings about church, but never questioned Christianity.

Every week, the *Observer* declared on its front page that it was ‘unsectarian, but not irreligious’. This was a significant assertion. For all their complaints about the way churches were run, newspapers such as the *Observer*, the *Star* and *Truth* were not ‘secular’ in the sense of religious neutrality or disdain. Their critique stemmed from concern that Christianity in the form of the organized churches was not doing enough to meet the challenges and threats of modern society. On the one hand, modernity brought technological advancement and a more ‘civilized’ existence for New Zealanders. On the other, these new opportunities — recreational, educational, social, geographical — presented new threats to society. Jazz music and ‘flappers’ were representative of these threats, and the church was seen as having a key role in returning society to an equilibrium of the traditional and the modern, of the sacred and the secular.

This hypothetical equilibrium was a negotiation between modernity and older Christian values. On the one hand, the church needed to change. On the other, only ‘belief’ could free society from negative naysayers, be they wowsers or rationalist sceptics.<sup>76</sup> Positive, generous, progressive Christian attitudes were widely seen as the solution to the problems of modern society. Rejection of Christianity, in particular through excessive scepticism of what were perceived to be its founding values, was a threat to the stability and progress of civilization, just as excessively conservative and dogmatic churches were portrayed as holding back society.

Ultimately, in critiquing the church yet affirming Christianity, this discursive environment promoted a somewhat different approach to Christianity than that authorized by the main churches. These discourses demanded practical, applied Christianity. Action on social issues was paramount; preaching and ‘censoriousness’ were scorned.<sup>77</sup> This demand was reflected in the attention received by individuals and organizations who suggested ways in which this modernized, practical Christianity could be applied.

When Maude Royden visited New Zealand in May 1928, she was singled out for particular praise by those in the media who felt that the church needed to orient its mission more around practical social issues. Royden was a devoted Anglican and feminist who was one of the most well-known and lauded women in Britain.<sup>78</sup> She was the first significant woman preacher in the Church of England and was widely known as a lecturer on secular and sacred topics.<sup>79</sup> While she was staunchly Anglican, Royden’s personal life was by no means conventional. For much of her life, she had a ‘passionate but platonic’ relationship with the famous Anglican lecturer and priest, Hudson Shaw. Shaw was married to his cousin Effie, who was mentally unstable but who does not seem to have shown any jealousy towards Royden, whom she relied on for company and support. When Effie died, Shaw and Royden finally married. It was 1944, and she was 69, while he was 85.<sup>80</sup> He died two months later, and almost did not survive their wedding day. After Shaw’s death, Royden wrote an autobiography about the relationship between the three entitled *A Threefold Cord*, which was successful, although many friends considered its detailed descriptions of Effie inappropriate, in particular Effie’s fear of sex and lack of jealousy at the obvious attraction between her husband and her friend.<sup>81</sup>

This unusual relationship was not public knowledge until the 1940s (although many of their friends understood some of its complexities), but Royden's behaviour was still noticeably divergent from conventional expectations about Christian women. She smoked, lectured about sex, preached, promoted the disestablishment of the Church of England and taught in the Oxford University Extension programme.<sup>82</sup> Despite (or, perhaps, because of) these eccentricities, Royden received a welcome in Wellington such as no overseas woman visitor had received before. The Mayor of Wellington, G.A. Troup, Anglican Bishop T.H. Sprott, Sir Robert Stout and Prime Minister Gordon Coates all attended a reception in her honour. According to Troup, she was the first woman to be given a civic welcome in that city 'for her own work'.<sup>83</sup> Sprott went so far as to offer her a vacant parish in Wellington if she wanted to immigrate.<sup>84</sup> For herself, she hoped that 'the attitude of hope, eagerness and freshness of a comparatively new country would invigorate and encourage one who had come from a different atmosphere'.<sup>85</sup>

This reception indicates a high level of interest among government and church officials in Royden. She received similarly warm official welcomes in a number of other cities that she visited in New Zealand — in Christchurch she was greeted with 'spontaneous applause' from a large gathering in the city council chambers.<sup>86</sup> This interest was mirrored by newspapers, which seemed to have been excited by the visit of such a famous and interesting woman, with one reporter describing her speaking style in adulatory terms: 'her beautiful voice carried conviction. Every word rang true. Her hearers were impressed with her quick vision, her clear brain, her logical conclusions, and, above all, her sweet womanliness.'<sup>87</sup> The *Lyttelton Times* in particular ran regular reports about her talks while she was in Christchurch, noting that her talk at the Christchurch Cathedral was so well-attended that people ended up being turned away from the door.<sup>88</sup> While she was not universally popular — her smoking habit attracted criticism from some Christians, with one Methodist church in the United States even cancelling a speaking engagement because of it — the New Zealand press presented her in an overwhelmingly positive light, and were quick to report what she said.<sup>89</sup>

Royden's message was an interesting one, appealing to both the sense of the need for progressive, practical Christianity and the value of the British Empire. A pacifist, she promoted an internationalist vision in which women, Christians, the League of Nations and the British Commonwealth worked together to ensure peace.<sup>90</sup> She was also a recognized and regular commentator about issues surrounding sex and morality, and spoke and wrote 'very clearly and very delicately' about the need for sex education and the need to prevent sexual repression — progressive views for a church worker at this time.<sup>91</sup> However, Royden did not approve of sex outside of marriage, and felt that while desire should not be repressed, it should be redirected towards spiritual and intellectual pursuits (a belief that is lent poignancy by Royden's own situation). Neither a wowser nor an advocate of 'free love', she fits into a category of feminist Christianity that, her biographer argues, has often been ignored or not taken seriously.<sup>92</sup> Royden was progressive in her social views, modern in her outlook, yet aggressively and unapologetically Christian.

It should be no surprise, therefore, that this uncompromisingly Christian attitude was welcomed by the New Zealand press. Royden was an authoritative voice who was taken seriously by New Zealand's secular media and church groups alike. According to one reporter, 'She [Royden] realises that worship may be more sincere and devout when the worshippers bring their own critical minds to bear upon church doctrines and customs of the past, than when they blindly and unthinkingly accept the teachings of tradition; that Christianity consists in beneficent action and not in the monotonous and often indifferent recital of any ancient creed'.<sup>93</sup> Her message was one of a practical, modern Christianity that corresponded with the stereotypes embraced by the *Star* and *Truth*. Royden's solutions to the challenges that faced society because of the effects of the Great War, the increase in freedom for women, and new forms of entertainment and leisure, were not wowsy or dogmatic. Both an active and progressive reformer and a 'true daughter of the Church of England', Royden represented, to many, the future of Christianity in Britain and New Zealand.<sup>94</sup>

While there is no indication that they actually met, many of Royden's sentiments and experiences mirrored those of one of Christchurch's most famous women, poetess Ursula Bethell. Bethell was deeply preoccupied with religious issues both in her poetry and in her personal life.<sup>95</sup> As a member of the Anglican Church, she was an active proponent of women in ministry, and in 1935 she gave her house to the church to be used as a training institute for deaconesses.<sup>96</sup> Interested in intellectual as well as spiritual issues, her correspondence includes a number of theological discussions with friends and clerical advisers.<sup>97</sup> She started publishing poetry relatively late in life — while she was born in 1874, the 1920s saw the beginning of her poetical career, and much of her best work was produced between 1924 and 1934.<sup>98</sup> The interesting thing about this delay is its probable cause. Literary critics have suggested that involvement in an Anglican community in South London in the 1890s led her to dedicate her earlier life to religious and social rather than artistic concerns.<sup>99</sup>

Bethell's first major collection, *From a Garden in the Antipodes* (1929), was themed around her garden and gardening activities, which she loved and enjoyed. But even these took second place to religious observance:

'Sabbath'

A fine day, but one for reasoned abstention.  
Tempt me not sturdy mattock, nor you, cunning trowel,  
Nor you, keen-edged secateurs! ...

Rather, recumbent on this sunny grass-slope,  
My mind shall meditate upon divine husbandry,  
And ponder emblems, allegories, parables —  
The vine, the scattered seed, the threshing flail.<sup>100</sup>

While not necessarily endorsing strict sabbatarianism, this poem promoted sincere and direct intellectual reflection on God and religion. At its best Bethell's religious poetry, while pious, succeeded in avoiding an excessively sanctimonious tone while at the same time presenting a reflective, active and positive view of Christian life. Bethell herself hoped to avoid 'stuffy piety',

and left unpublished those poems which she felt were 'mere devotionals'.<sup>101</sup> A combination of body and soul, of physicality and spirituality, and of praxis and belief are consistent themes in her religious poetry.<sup>102</sup>

For Bethell, religious sentiments and feelings made up an important part of dealing with crises and tragedies, such as the death of her close friend and companion Effie Pollen.<sup>103</sup> She had the technical ability and the will to express her feelings through verse, and an echo of these feelings survives in her poetry; not as a shallow occasional reference to God but as an integral part of her poetic expression.

This is further underlined by a recent published collection of her letters, which are full of sincere and practical religious advice. An energetic, often chatty, correspondent, Bethell was always ready to dispense counsel to friends, such as journalist Montague (Monte) Holcroft, whom she felt needed to take Christian theology more seriously.<sup>104</sup> The image of Bethell's belief that emerges from her letters and poetry is one of sincere and earnest Christian conviction; neither wowsy nor dogmatic. A key figure in a large network of artists, clergy and other interested parties in Canterbury and beyond, Bethell was unashamedly mystical and Christian.<sup>105</sup>

Bethell and Royden had a number of things in common — their Anglican faith, unconventional and ambiguous personal relationships, interest in women's ministry in the Anglican Church, and above all a passion for intellectual engagement with Christian theology. For both women, social action, intellectual application and devout Christian worship were intertwined and inextricable from one another. Yet neither lived a particularly conventional life, and both defied some of the standard dogmas of the Anglican Church that they so revered and, in a way, loved.

While both Royden and Bethell were exceptional individuals, their ideas about how Christianity needed to be expressed through the intellect and emotion, and put to practical use through social action, were widespread in broader social and intellectual networks, as well as in public discussion in newspapers. Kieran O'Connell has analysed the life and views of Methodist socialist John Thomas Paul, who drew a strong distinction between church attendance and actual Christian action, suggesting that the latter was more important than the former.<sup>106</sup> This attitude about the way in which religion should be worked out in society was very similar to the views espoused by Bethell, Royden and a range of newspapers. All called for Christianity to be made a lived reality through the way in which the individual related to their society.

This was echoed in the personal notebooks of John Johnson, a Christchurch Quaker. A young man in the 1920s, Johnson eagerly attended a wide variety of lectures on topics ranging across theological, historical and international issues.<sup>107</sup> He saw international networks such as the Society of Friends and the World Student Christian Federation (the WSCF, of which the liberal student organization the Student Christian Movement was a part)<sup>108</sup> as playing a vital role in developing international peace among both European and non-European nations. He identified four 'types' of religion — the traditional, the rational/intellectual, the mystical and the practical — and emphasized the

latter, embracing the gospels and James's epistle as examples of how Christians should behave. All these aspects should be in balance, but Johnson felt that the modern world, and in particular the modern church, most needed a 'practical' emphasis. Religion should be the practical goal of living, and it offered the key to solving world problems, if only people would learn to integrate it into other spheres of life.

Johnson, Bethell and Royden all attempted to translate this modernist ideal of Christianity in society into action in their own lives. In doing so they embraced the ideal of Christian practice that so enthused newspaper commentators. In attempting to enact practical Christianity they were reaching for an ideal that had a powerful hold over the imaginations of New Zealand's Christians, both within and outside the formal church institutions.

This vision of a practical, applied Christianity was a ubiquitous and, in some spheres, dominant image of Christianity in 1920s New Zealand. In many respects, this idea of Christianity was more powerful and prevalent among society in general than the images of wowsers and moralists so laboured by historians (most Christian temperance advocates themselves would have seen their own activism as being under a wider rubric of practical Christianity and of the need for the church to interact with the world). While many churches were preoccupied with various moral issues and concerns about church attendance, outright rejection of Christianity seems to have been an alien concept to most New Zealanders. Instead, they saw Christianity, and the churches, as integral to society and to their lives, and their critique of Christianity was tied up with their ideals about what the relationship between religion and society should be. If, as church historians have suggested, the Great War caused the public to lose confidence in the churches, they did not lose confidence in Christianity, even though the meaning of how Christian ideas should be applied to solving the problems of modernity varied greatly between different groups. The churches may have seen themselves as being on the wane, but Christianity as a concept remained at the centre of New Zealand culture.

The future was a dangerous place. Jazz music, sexual immorality, natural disasters, war and other international catastrophes all lurked there, waiting for opportunities to ambush and disrupt modern society. To deal with these challenges, New Zealanders sought solutions that integrated modern ideas with religious ones. This was not so much a process of harking back to past Christian values as an adaptation of those values to fit modern problems. The beliefs held by Maude Royden, the editors of *Truth* and John Johnson were historically specific, and were not merely transplants from a dying age of religiosity. They were beliefs that were very much reflective of the wider culture that often questioned the form and relevance of Christianity but seldom its ultimate centrality. At the same time, they integrated this discursive enthusiasm for progressive, active belief and practice with their own forms of personal piety and devotion [Figure 4].

The fact that the various visions of the future imagined by the people in this chapter — a future where religion brought peace to the world; a future where Christian morality acted in perfect balance with modern urban life; a future where the church was a vital part of a liberal, progressive society; a future





**Figure 4:** As this photograph of the crowd attending an Easter service on Wellington's Mount Victoria illustrates, Christianity remained an important element of inter-war New Zealanders' lives. S.C. Smith collection, G-4298-1/2, ATL.

where Christianity was synonymous with social action; a future without the social evils that alcohol brought — were not realized in the long term should not blind us to their significance. These visionary ideals were shared by people within and outside the organized churches. New Zealand in the 1920s was, at heart, a Christian society, and this Christianity was not merely a backdrop or a belief that existed only within isolated cantonments of Sunday services and myopic, reactionary clerics. Instead, it was an actively contested and highly variable factor in society, in which everyone had an investment. New Zealanders had enshrined the idea of the integration of practice with belief, of the sacred intertwined with the secular, and of church suffused and suffusing society, in a discourse that was both positive and pervasive for well over a decade before Michael Joseph Savage famously labelled the policies of the first Labour government 'applied Christianity'.

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## NOTES

- 1 Isabel Peacocke, *The Guardian*, London, 1920, p.318.
- 2 *ibid.*
- 3 Stevan Eldred-Grigg, *The Pleasures of the Flesh: Sex and Drugs in Colonial New Zealand 1840–1915*, Wellington, 1984, pp.178–96, 241–50.
- 4 A.R. Grigg, 'Prohibition, the Church and Labour: A Programme for Social Reform, 1890–1914', *New Zealand Journal of History* (NZJH), 15, 2 (1981), pp.135–54.
- 5 James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000*, Auckland, 2001, p.157.
- 6 *ibid.*, pp.157–88.
- 7 The long-overdue reappraisal of the historical meaning of temperance is outside the scope of this article. However, I hope that the ideas outlined here may suggest new ways of thinking about wowsers and temperance more generally in New Zealand society. One place to start would be Kieran O'Connell's analysis of Christian masculinity, which used case studies of three Dunedin Christian men to demonstrate that caricaturing Christians as wowsers is highly unhelpful. Kieran O'Connell, "'Be strong and show thyself a man": Christian Masculinities in Southern Dunedin, 1885–1925', in John Stenhouse and Jane Thomson, eds, *Building God's Own Country: Historical Essays on Religion in New Zealand*, Dunedin, 2001, pp.169–84.
- 8 *New Zealand Truth* (hereafter *Truth*), 7 January 1922, p.2, 25 July 1922, p.1; 21 July 1923, p.4.
- 9 The Methodist annual conference heard regular reports from a 'Temperance and Public Morals Committee', which also took an interest in Bible in Schools. For example, *Methodist Church of New Zealand. Minutes of the Thirteenth Annual Conference, Held at Wellington, 1925*, Christchurch, 1925, pp.64–65.
- 10 A.R. Grigg, 'Prohibition and Women: The Preservation of an Ideal and a Myth', NZJH, 17, 2 (1983), p.144.
- 11 John Stenhouse, 'God's Own Silence: Secular Nationalism, Christianity and the Writing of New Zealand History', NZJH, 38, 1 (2004), pp.52–71.
- 12 *ibid.*, p.67.
- 13 See, for example, *Truth*, p.4; 7 January 1922, p.2; 25 July 1922, p.1; 21 July 1923 p.4.
- 14 In the 1921 census, 92.55% of those who returned an answer to the religion question identified as being either Anglican, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic or Methodist (the four largest categories). Only 0.49% identified as either Agnostic, No Religion or Freethinker. *Results of a Census of the Dominion of New Zealand Taken for the Night of the 17<sup>th</sup> April 1921. Part VII. Religions*, Wellington, 1923, p.13. While there was a slight decline in the major denominations by 1936, the overall number of New Zealanders claiming to be Christian did not significantly decline over this period, and the censuses from the 1920s remained roughly consistent in terms of the high rates of religious adherence. For a summary of the decade, see *Dominion of New Zealand. Population Census, 1936. Volume VI – Religious Professions*, Wellington, 1940, p.1.
- 15 Allan Davidson and Peter Lineham, eds, *Transplanted Christianity: Documents Illustrating Aspects of New Zealand Church History*, Auckland, 1987, pp.247–52.
- 16 *ibid.*, p.247.
- 17 *ibid.*, pp.248, 252.
- 18 Hugh Jackson, *Churches and People in Australia and New Zealand, 1860–1930*, Wellington, 1987, p.125.
- 19 Alison Clarke, "'Tinged with Christian Sentiment": Popular Religion and the Otago Colonials, 1850–1900', in John Stenhouse with G.A. Wood, ed., *Christianity, Modernity and Culture*, Adelaide, 2005, p.104.
- 20 See also Alison Clarke, 'Feasts and Fasts: Holidays, Religion and Ethnicity in Nineteenth-Century Otago', PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 2003; Clarke, "'With one accord rejoice on this glad day": Celebrating the Monarchy in Nineteenth-Century Otago', NZJH, 36, 2 (2002), pp.137–60.
- 21 Callum Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, London, 2001, p.2.
- 22 *ibid.*, pp.8–9.
- 23 *ibid.*, pp.12–13.
- 24 Chris Hilliard, 'Colonial Culture and the Province of Cultural History', NZJH, 36, 1 (2002), p.87. See also Michael Roper, 'Slipping Out of View: Subjectivity and Emotion in Gender History', *History Workshop Journal*, 59, 1 (2005), pp.57–72, especially pp.60–61.

25 *Truth*, 3 June 1922, p.5. Emphasis in original.

26 For example, 'Religion Drove me to it', *Truth*, 5 December 1925, p.9; 'Such a Good Young Man — on Sunday!', *Truth*, 6 August 1926, p.5; 'When the Vicar Called on Hamerton', *Truth*, 3 November 1927, p.5; 'Ex-Sunday School Teacher Broke Seventh Commandment', *Truth*, 15 November 1928, p.7.

27 *Truth*, 26 August 1926, p.5. This story related to the divorce proceedings brought against Trigge by his wife, Ethel Mary Trigge. He had been expelled from Methodist ministry a year earlier, as reported with equal enthusiasm, *Truth*, 7 February 1925, p.6.

28 *Truth*, 7 February 1925, p.6.

29 *ibid.*

30 Bronwyn Dalley, 'The Cultural Remains of Elsie Walker', in Bronwyn Dalley and Bronwyn Labrum, eds, *Fragments: New Zealand Cultural and Social History*, Auckland, 2000, p.154.

31 *ibid.*, p.153.

32 *Truth*, 12 November 1921, p.1.

33 'Should Bishops Marry their Maids', *Truth*, 3 May 1928, p.1.

34 *ibid.*

35 *ibid.* Cherrington was under attack from elements within the diocese of Waikato who disapproved of his high Anglican — some said ritualist — inclinations.

36 *ibid.*

37 *Truth*, 4 April 1929, p.1. See also *Truth*, 28 March 1929, p.8.

38 'Public Staggered by Canon Fielden Taylor's Arrest', *Truth*, 24 May 1928, p.1. Earlier in the decade *Truth* had written up a brief and highly favourable paragraph on Taylor in its 'Persons, Plebs and Plutes' section, *Truth*, 28 May 1921, p.1.

39 "'And their Faith Endureth." Innocence of Rev. Fielden Taylor Emphatically Proved and Palpably Weak Case Collapses', *Truth*, 26 July 1928, p.5.

40 *ibid.*

41 *Truth*, 28 April 1923, p.1.

42 *Observer*, 18 August 1923, p.4.

43 *Truth*, 16 December 1926, p.6.

44 *Observer*, 20 July 1927, p.4.

45 'Man of God — and Man of Men', *Truth*, 4 October 1928, p.6.

46 *ibid.*

47 *Observer*, 29 June 1927, p.5; 'There's Pep in His Pulpit', *Truth*, 18 October 1928, p.6.

48 *Observer*, 29 June 1927, p.5.

49 Allan Davidson, 'Scrimgeour, Colin Graham 1903–1987', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, online, 2005, available at <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/> (6 April 2006). For more on Uncle Scrim, see Les Edwards, *Scrim: Radio Rebel in Retrospect*, Auckland, 1971; C.G. Scrimgeour, John A. Lee, Tony Simpson, *The Scrim-Lee Papers: C.G. Scrimgeour and John A. Lee Remember the Crisis Years 1930–1940*, Wellington, 1976.

50 Davidson, 'Scrimgeour, Colin Graham 1903–1987'; 'There's Pep in His Pulpit', *Truth*, 18 October 1928, p.6.

51 *Truth*, 26 December 1929, p.6.

52 *Observer*, 13 July 1927, p.8.

53 *ibid.*

54 While some church newspapers were aiming for a transformed society (the Methodist organ in particular) there was much more of a focus within these on the spiritual aspects of transformation. For example, see *New Zealand Methodist Times*, 16 January 1926, p.1; 27 February 1926, p.11; 13 March 1926, pp.10–11; *Church Gazette*, 1 January 1926, p.8, 1 June 1926, pp.113–116.

55 Geering constructs this as part of a larger, somewhat spurious, argument about the nature of secularization and religious change — however, this observation is accurate. Lloyd Geering, *2100: A Faith Odyssey*, Wellington, 1995, p.17.

56 See, for example, *Auckland Star* (hereafter *Star*), 5 May 1928, p.14; 11 July 1928, p.10.

57 In the early part of the decade, this column appeared on p.18 of the *Saturday Star*. However, it was later integrated into the 'magazine section', where the page number varied.

58 *New Zealand Herald*, 1 July 1927, p.13; *Star*, 24 April 1928, p.12.

59 *Star*, 2 July 1923, p.3.

60 *Star*, 25 November 1923, p.9.

61 For example, see *Dominion*, 1 May 1928, p.8.

62 *ibid.* Cherrington's diocesan problems appeared on the same page as an account of the 'historic decisions' to accept prayer book revisions and establish a Maori Bishopric.

63 For example, Geering, pp.17–21.

64 *Observer*, 11 December 1920, p.15.

65 In 1923, following the census report on New Zealand religions, another *Star* editorial criticised the 'monstrous regiment' of the 'multiplicity of sects' that the census suggested existed in New Zealand. *Star* 22 September 1923, p.28.

66 For example, when the Anglican General Synod decided in 1922 that women could play an equal role in church meetings and synods an editorial commented that 'the dear old conservative Synod of the Anglican Church of New Zealand has succumbed to public opinion'. *Truth*, 20 May 1922, p.1.

67 *Star*, 30 July 1923, p.6; 22 September 1923, p.28.

68 *Star*, 26 September 1923, p.7.

69 *Star*, 22 September 1923, p.28.

70 *Star*, 19 October 1923, p.8; 20 October 1923, p.5.

71 *Truth*, 18 November 1926, p.6.

72 *ibid.*

73 Church groups did not ignore the 'great moral and spiritual peril' of dancing. In the 1927 Methodist Conference dancing was one of the targets for the Temperance and Public Morals Committee. They feared that 'drugged chocolates' and illicit hip-flasks were corrupting youths at dances, and asserted that 'the Church can fulfil its complete mission, and carry on its work without the introduction of dancing in any shape or form'. *Methodist Church of New Zealand. Minutes of the Annual Conference, Held at Auckland, 1927*, Christchurch, 1927, pp.66–70.

74 'Salvationist Groans for the Sins of Society — Wild Thump on the Big Drum', *Truth*, 28 August 1928, p.1.

75 Peacocke, pp.256–7.

76 For an example of a strong critique of 'the bane of scepticism', see *Auckland Weekly News*, 9 December 1920, p.14.

77 'Christianity means Conduct, not Censoriousness', *Truth*, 20 December 1924, p.4.

78 Sheila Fletcher, *Maude Royden: A Life*, Cambridge, Mass., 1989, p.1.

79 *ibid.*, pp.1–12.

80 *ibid.*, pp.277–8. The wedding was conducted by the Bishop of Rochester in a small parish church with nine people attending. As well as her unconventional romantic attachment to Shaw, Royden was crippled, having been born with both hips permanently dislocated. She could walk, but awkwardly.

81 *ibid.*, pp.278–9. Maude Royden, *A Threefold Cord*, London, 1947, pp.26–28.

82 The extension programme involved lectures aimed at educating the working classes, a cause which took up a large amount of Hudson Shaw's time and energy.

83 *Star*, 8 May 1928, p.15; another detailed account of her arrival can be found in *Evening Post*, 7 May 1928, p.10.

84 *Star*, 8 May 1928, p.15.

85 *ibid.*

86 *Lyttelton Times*, 9 May 1928, p.10.

87 *Lyttelton Times*, 15 May 1928, p.3.

88 *Lyttelton Times*, 14 May 1928, p.10. 'Many were unable to obtain admission', and even standing room was taken up for Royden's address.

89 For example, see a letter to the editor about the 'Modern Girl' in *Lyttelton Times*, 17 May 1928, p.6. The Methodist cancellation incident is reported in *Observer*, 11 January 1928, pp.4–5.

90 *Lyttelton Times*, 15 May 1928, p.10.

91 *Lyttelton Times*, 15 May 1928, p.11.

92 Fletcher, pp.1–5. Fletcher's biography remains the only major work of historical scholarship on Royden.

93 *Star*, 28 April 1928, p.4.

94 *Dominion*, 5 May 1928, magazine section, p.2.

95 Peter Whiteford, 'Introduction', in Peter Whiteford, ed., *Vibrant with Words: The Letters of Ursula Bethell*, Wellington, 2005, p.xx.

96 Valerie Laura, 'Bethell, Mary Ursula 1874–1945', *Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, online, 2006, available at <http://www.dnzb.govt.nz/> (19 April 2006).

97 For example, see Mary Ursula Bethell Papers, MS38, Box C7, Macmillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury.

98 Vincent O'Sullivan, 'Introduction', in Vincent O'Sullivan, ed., *Collected Poems, Ursula Bethell*, Auckland, 1985, p.xi.

99 *ibid.*, p.x; M.H. Holcroft, *Mary Ursula Bethell*, Wellington, 1975, p.8.

100 Reprinted in O'Sullivan, p.23.

101 Mary Ursula Bethell Papers, MB38, Box L6, Macmillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury.

102 See, for example, 'Morning', found in *ibid.*

103 Laura, 'Bethell, Mary Ursula 1874–1945'.

104 Whiteford, pp.86–90. While not exactly evangelizing Holcroft, Bethell seems to have sought to bring him closer to Christian orthodoxy: 'Some day I believe you will explore the riches of Christian theology, the tremendous doctrines of the Triune God, & the Word made Flesh, and the Spirit — but this may not be for a long while yet'. Holcroft went on to write a book about Bethell and her poetry in 1975.

105 Janet Maconie, *Landmarks of New Zealand Writing to 1945*, Wellington, 1990, pp.14–15.

106 O'Connell, p.176.

107 Dorothy Johnson Papers, MB113, 1/12, 1/15, Macmillan Brown Library, University of Canterbury. The reflections contained in these various diaries and notebooks were made in the late 1920s and early to mid-1930s.

108 Christine Berry, 'Liberal Christianity and the Student Christian Movement 1896–1996', MA Thesis, The University of Auckland, 1996.