

**Paper by Dr Laurie Guy, presented in Christchurch Saturday 26  
August 2006 to Anglican Pacifist Society meeting**

**EARLY CHRISTIAN PACIFISTS IN CHRISTCHURCH:  
CREATING DIVISION IN THE FIGHT FOR PEACE**

I am a Baptist and my paper today will focus on the pacifist activities of two prominent Baptists. They were both members of the Linwood Baptist Church and it was their pacifism that ironically was the immediate catalyst for a major division in that church in 1917. Prior to giving a more general background to the lead-up to this division, I will briefly note shaping influences on the lives of Charles Mackie and Thomas Nuttall.

The senior of the two, Charles Mackie (1869-1943) was a man of independent means - the son of an original Canterbury run-holder family. He seems to have had an evangelical conversion which led him to join the Oxford Terrace Baptist Church in Christchurch in 1902. Its minister then was J.J. Doke, who had achieved some national prominence in 1899 in speaking up for the badly treated Chinese community in New Zealand. Within the Baptist denomination he had publicly written against the Boer War in 1900, viewing it as a war of British aggression, driven by the commercial ambition of people like Cecil Rhodes.<sup>1</sup> On leaving New Zealand shores for ministry in South Africa in 1903, Doke established strong bonds with Mahatma Gandhi. This led to his having Gandhi in his home for several weeks when Gandhi needed to recuperate after an assault and his writing the first published biography of Gandhi. It also led to Gandhi's speaking at Doke's own funeral in 1913.

Mackie himself quickly achieved prominence in the Baptist denomination in New Zealand, serving at various times as its national missionary organiser, as a committee member of the Baptist Union, as leader of the Canterbury Baptist preachers' class, and as vice-president of the Canterbury Baptist Auxiliary.<sup>2</sup> How he imbibed pacifism is unknown but one must wonder about the influence of J.J. Doke in this regard. Through whatever influences, Mackie's pacifism must have been firmly established by 1911 because he was a key figure in the formation of the National Peace Council and remained the central figure in that important body for many years thereafter.

Turning to consider Thomas Nuttall (1892-1944), we can note the importance of his mother, Louisa Nuttall. She came to New Zealand as a young widow in straightened circumstances with two boys in 1907. She was clearly a woman unafraid of engaging in public issues and public controversy. She had some involvement in the suffragist movement (there exists, for example a photo of her with Adelia Pankhurst in 1916). She was a Women's Christian Temperance Union activist. It is unsurprising then that her son Thomas became a ringleader in pacifist resistance to pre-war compulsory military training and later faced incarceration in World War One as a conscientious objector.

A significant aspect of the background of both Mackie and Nuttall is the likely influence of a key figure who was prepared to take a public stance on issues of truth,

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<sup>1</sup> *NZ Baptist* (NZB), May 1900, 68-9.

<sup>2</sup> NZB, August 1904, 310; August 1911, 150; October 1910, 194.

justice and humanity. In Mackie's case that was J.J. Doke; in Nuttall's case that was his mother. This background helps us better understand the stances they took that eventually catalysed the Linwood Baptist crisis of 1917.

When a near-irresistible force strikes a virtually immovable object the consequences are almost inevitably shattering. The near-irresistible force was militant pacifism. The virtually immovable object it struck was patriotic militarism. When the two collided at a members meeting in the Linwood Baptist Church on 31 January 1917, the impact almost destroyed the church. My paper will examine the collision of militarism and pacifism in this congregation. It will then briefly consider whether Baptist ecclesiology, particularly congregational government, was partly to blame for the unfortunate Linwood sundering.

Support for a militaristic stance was a striking feature of New Zealand society at the beginning of the twentieth century. So nearly universal was New Zealand support for Britain in the Boer War (1899-1902) that the Westland Harbour Board could threaten its employees with dismissal if they voiced 'disloyal and unpatriotic sentiments' in relation to the war.<sup>3</sup> New Zealand sent more troops to that war in proportion to its population than did Australia or Canada.<sup>4</sup> New Zealand passed legislation for compulsory military training for youths in 1909 with almost unanimous parliamentary support (compulsion being in marked contrast to Britain on this point).<sup>5</sup> In the First World War, New Zealand introduced conscription where its neighbour Australia did not. New Zealand gave less leeway than Britain for exemption from conscription on the grounds of pacifistic beliefs.<sup>6</sup> And it treated its conscientious objectors more harshly. In one notorious incident it even forcibly shipped twelve of them 12,000 miles to Europe and on to the military front-lines. One who refused to walk the last mile to the front line was dragged over rough ground and duck walks by a cable wire tied around his chest and under his arms, leaving a gaping hole in his back and hip, 'about a foot long and nearly as wide'.<sup>7</sup> Several others were bashed, starved, tied to a pole in a type of 'crucifixion' and pushed to the edge of mental derangement.<sup>8</sup>

In New Zealand itself, men of military age who had not gone to war had white feathers (markers of cowardice) pinned to their chests.<sup>9</sup> Occasionally social coercion could be taken to the point where a man might receive an empty packet of Epsom salts with a note, 'If you can't go to the front, go to the rear.'<sup>10</sup> Most sports clubs excluded 'shirkers' (men of military age who had not gone to war) from their

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<sup>3</sup> In J. Crawford & E. Ellis, *To Fight for the Empire: An Illustrated History of New Zealand and the South African War 1899-1902* (Auckland: Reed Books, 1999), p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> J. Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000* (Auckland: Penguin, 2001), p. 79.

<sup>5</sup> P. Baker, *King and Country Call: New Zealanders, Conscription and the Great War* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1988), p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> D. Grant, *Out in the Cold: Pacifists and Conscientious Objectors in New Zealand during World War II* (Auckland: Reed Methuen, 1986), p. 117; P.S. O'Connor, 'The Awkward Ones – Dealing with Conscience, 1916-1918', *New Zealand Journal of History*, 8.2 (1974), pp. 118-36 at p. 129, 132.

<sup>7</sup> A. Baxter, *We Will Not Cease* (Christchurch: Caxton, 1968), pp. 127-28.

<sup>8</sup> Baxter, *We Will Not Cease*, pp. 105-106; Baker, *King and Country*, pp. 185-87.

<sup>9</sup> Baker, *King and Country*, p. 48.

<sup>10</sup> Baker, *King and Country*, p. 48.

membership and in at least one case a tennis club refused to compete with another team which had a 'shirker' in its midst.<sup>11</sup>

It was risky to make outspoken comments against the war. In March 1918 Unitarian minister Rev. James Chapple publicly denounced the war as a 'blasphemy', led by 'war profiteers'. He warned against the 'patriotic poison' that was taught in New Zealand schools and indicated that he discouraged his children from singing the national anthem. The consequence was an eleven-month jail term for sedition.<sup>12</sup> Such an incident shows how little diversity of expression was acceptable in New Zealand in relation to the war and how hazardous it was to challenge the status quo in this regard.

The intensity of New Zealand pro-war feeling calls for explanation. A likely primary reason for this phenomenon was the nation's intense colonial loyalty to Britain, a loyalty that was arguably stronger than that of home-located British themselves. The phenomenon of New Zealand being a 'better Britain' has been ably traced by a leading New Zealand historian, James Belich.<sup>13</sup> He argues that after the first wave of colonisation in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, New Zealand faced a significant level of identity crisis. Particularly between 1880 and 1920, this crisis was resolved by a 'recolonisation' process in which New Zealanders afresh affirmed their identity as 'better British'. In Belich's explanation, 'recolonisation . . . tightened links with Britain between the 1880s and 1900s'.<sup>14</sup> One way of strongly expressing British identity was to back Britain to the hilt in its military undertakings.

Widespread support for Britain in its military operations made it extremely difficult for an anti-war stance to be articulated in New Zealand in the early twentieth century. J. Grattan Grey, chief Hansard reporter at Parliament, was dismissed from his position because he wrote a newspaper article and two pamphlets opposing New Zealand's involvement in the Boer War.<sup>15</sup> Later, when the first public meeting to protest against compulsory military training was held in Christchurch in 1911, about 60 university students created such 'uproarious' disruption that it caused the meeting to break up 'in disorder'.<sup>16</sup> Despite this disruption, the meeting led on to the formation of the National Peace Council (NPC). When the NPC held a further meeting in August 1911, a huge crowd gathered outside, breaking windows and attempting to smash down the door. Mayhem was avoided only because the NPC followed police advice and closed the meeting twelve minutes after it started.<sup>17</sup> Three months later the NPC sought to provide literature to the public at the Christchurch Agricultural and Pastoral Show. Despite the NPC having a legal licence to maintain their stall, the A & P organisers banished them from the show on the grounds that their presence and literature were an affront to New Zealand.<sup>18</sup> Small wonder then that when World War

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<sup>11</sup> Baker, *King and Country*, p. 46.

<sup>12</sup> *NZ Herald*, 11 May 1918, p. 6 and 18 May 1918, p. 6. Chapple was charged in relation to two speeches, the second of these praising the Russian revolution, which had taken Russia out of the war. He faced charges in relation to both speeches and received two jail terms of eleven months, to be served concurrently.

<sup>13</sup> Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, especially pp. 27-118.

<sup>14</sup> Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, p. 29.

<sup>15</sup> Crawford & Ellis, *To Fight for the Empire*, p. 29.

<sup>16</sup> *The Press*, 27 May 1911, p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> *The Press*, 22 August, 1911, p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> *The Press*, 20 December, 1911, p. 2.

One did break out, the NPC took a very low profile to avoid inflaming public feeling.<sup>19</sup>

In hindsight it is regrettable that New Zealand Baptists largely reflected the views of society rather than demonstrating a clear Christian voice in both the Boer War and in World War One. At the beginning of the twentieth century New Zealand Baptists still looked markedly to British Baptists for guidance and inspiration. This is evidenced in the very extensive coverage given to British Baptist life in the covers of the *New Zealand Baptist* (something not evident in relation to the United States of America or Australia). Thus in the first few months of 1900, the *New Zealand Baptist* included articles on the following topics:

- Statistics on the ratio of Baptists to general population in London, Bristol and five other English cities<sup>20</sup>
- Lengthy report on a council meeting of the Army Temperance Association in London<sup>21</sup>
- An article entitled, 'Some Impressions of Religious Life in England'<sup>22</sup>
- A lengthy article entitled, 'How Queen Victoria Goes to Church'<sup>23</sup>
- An interview with Pastor Thomas Spurgeon on the new Metropolitan Tabernacle in London<sup>24</sup>
- An article on 'The Shetland Apostle', Sinclair Thomson<sup>25</sup>
- A brief report on the spring meeting of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland<sup>26</sup>

Articles such as these are a clear indication of the marked extent to which New Zealand Baptists still drew their sense of belonging from Britain.

As most British Baptists opposed the war with the Boers, one might have expected New Zealand Baptists to take the same stance. In this case, however, New Zealand loyalty to Britain over-rode New Zealand Baptist loyalty to their British Baptist mother church. Thus the *New Zealand Baptist* editor, in noting the anti-war British Baptist stance in 1900, described it as 'extraordinary' and 'perplexing'.<sup>27</sup> While one or two heroic souls, particularly Rev. J.J. Doke, raised voices against British aggression in regard to the outbreak of war with the Boers, the overall voice in the *New Zealand Baptist* was markedly pro-war. As S.R. Ingold, secretary of the Oxford Terrace Baptist Church, said:

[T]his war is 'our war'. It is not merely a conflict between the English and the Boers. . . . [T]he British nation is our nation; we are a living part of the Empire, and they and we – Britain and New Zealand – must rise *or fall* together.<sup>28</sup>

Imperial spectacles, rather than British Baptist spectacles, continued to be the viewing lens for New Zealand Baptists in the build-up to World War One. When Charles Mackie sought in 1913 to have the *New Zealand Baptist* publish statements from the Free Church Council of England and from the British Baptist Spring Assembly in London protesting compulsory military training, one might have expected the magazine gladly to publish such copy, given the strong links of New Zealand Baptists

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<sup>19</sup> 'Report of the Work of the National Peace Council from Its Inception to 1915': C.R.N. Mackie Papers, Canterbury Museum Library: Box 5, Folder 20, Series 41.

<sup>20</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, January 1900, p. 14.

<sup>21</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, February 1900, p. 32.

<sup>22</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, March 1900, p. 34.

<sup>23</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, April 1900, pp. 54-55.

<sup>24</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, June 1900, p. 87.

<sup>25</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, July 1900, pp. 102-103.

<sup>26</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, July 1900, p. 104.

<sup>27</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, March 1900, pp. 40-41.

<sup>28</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, April 1900, p. 61 (emphasis original).

with British Baptists. Instead the editor, in a letter to Mackie, declined to publish the material with the lame excuse that he did not have the space to do this, and then commented: 'Few of our people share your views and feelings against the Defence Act'.<sup>29</sup> Despite having 'no space', the editor did note in July 1913 that he could publish neither this material nor a letter from Thomas Nuttall's mother regarding her son's incarceration 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.'<sup>30</sup> In hindsight, the editor apparently did not then see any connection between the gospel and the militaristic build-up, which, in a little over a year, was to result in the dreadful killing of millions of young men. Mackie was in the process of being frozen out by his own denomination because of his pacifist stance.

Immediately World War One erupted, the *New Zealand Baptist* gave strong and consistent support 'to defend the Empire in its hour of peril'.<sup>31</sup> God was on the side of Britain: Germany's 'dark ages . . . barbarities'<sup>32</sup> made it a black-and-white 'war of religion against atheism'.<sup>33</sup> While the editor did uphold the Baptist principle of liberty of conscience and therefore the need to respect the conscience of conscientious objectors, this principle had limits: thus he urged Baptist conscientious objector Thomas Nuttall to be willing to undertake non-combatant duties, despite his fully pacifist stance.<sup>34</sup> Charles Mackie, writing to Dr J.H. Rushbrooke when he visited New Zealand in 1932, lamented the militaristic tone of New Zealand Baptists in 1914:

The Baptist Church in company with other churches, made no attempt to resist the war fever in 1914, rather went out of its way to encourage recruiting and support the war. In this attitude we feel that the Churches utterly failed to uphold the foundation principles of their faith.<sup>35</sup>

Given the markedly imperialistic flavour of New Zealand Baptist sentiment in the first decades of the twentieth century, it is surprising to find three New Zealand Baptists at the forefront of pacifist opposition to war in that period: we have already noted the Baptist links of Charles Mackie and Thomas Nuttall. The third figure was Christchurch pastor, Charles Cole, an ex-soldier, who became the first full-time organiser of the No-More-War Movement in New Zealand in 1929. Even more surprising is to find that in addition to those three individuals, Baptists had a significant part in the conceiving of the National Peace Council in 1911. In that year the Defence Department, seeking to enrol youths of a certain age bracket for compulsory military training, approached every Ministers' Association in New Zealand seeking their help in the enrolment process. In the case of the interdenominational Christchurch Association, this led to a letter being sent to all ministers, asking them to enrol the youths of their congregations. When this letter was read out in the Oxford Terrace Baptist Church, an unnamed member of the church rose from his seat and protested against the introduction of militarism into the church and against the churches being made a recruiting ground for the army. Subsequently this member and two others called on Charles Mackie, leader of the Canterbury

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<sup>29</sup> Letter, H.H. Driver to C.R.N. Mackie, dated 20 June 1913: C.R.N. Mackie Papers, Canterbury Museum Library: Box 38, Folder 30, Series 78.

<sup>30</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, July 1913, pp. 127-8.

<sup>31</sup> September 1914, p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, June 1915, p. 97.

<sup>33</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, October 1915, p. 203.

<sup>34</sup> *New Zealand Baptist*, February 1917, p. 17; March 1917, p. 34; April 1917, pp. 51-52.

<sup>35</sup> Letter Mackie to Rushbrooke dated 3 October 1932: C.R.N. Mackie Papers, Canterbury Museum Library: Box 29, Folder 126, Series 1373.

Baptist Lay Preachers' Association, to express their concerns. Within a few days the Baptist Lay Preachers' Association had passed a resolution opposing every form of militarism and calling for passive resistance to the government on the issue. Three days later the Association initiated the earlier-mentioned public meeting, which was disrupted by the university students and which led on to the founding of the National Peace Council.<sup>36</sup>

The irony then was that Baptists were at the forefront of pre-war pacifism, and were also strong supporters of pre-war militarism. How could Baptist congregations allow the expression of both positions when each was exclusive and was passionately held? In the case of the Linwood Baptist Church the matter proved impossible and the church divided and almost disintegrated.

The Linwood Church had been planted in Christchurch at the beginning of the twentieth century and was formally constituted as a church only in 1912. Almost immediately it faced severe testing. One of its members, Thomas Nuttall, was fined five pounds in 1913 for failing to attend compulsory military parades. As a thorough-going pacifist he refused to pay the fine and this led to his being 'marched through Lyttleton under a military guard with fixed bayonets' and incarcerated in Fort Jervis on Ripa Island for 28 days with 12 others.<sup>37</sup> The incarcerated pacifists refused to cooperate with the military in any way. This led to extended terms of incarceration, to their being locked up for 23 hours each day, either on their own or with one other, and to being reduced to half-rations of food. The 13, later to be known as the Ripa Island martyrs, responded to their treatment with a hunger-strike. The case became national news and led to the government quickly decreeing that there must be ample food, no enforced work of a military nature and no solitary confinement during the daytime. The incident also led to a parliamentary inquiry, which whitewashed the military, even though the military had clearly breached their lack of authority to impose punishment on civilians.<sup>38</sup> In the end the 13 were released, to be received back in Christchurch by a crowd of 2500 as heroes.<sup>39</sup> However, the *Press* reflected the intense distaste of wider society to the 'disloyalist conspiracy'<sup>40</sup> of the anti-military resistance:

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 worth its salt; and we hope to see the better members of the Opposition supporting the Government in this matter. 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.<sup>41</sup>

Thomas Nuttall's role in the confrontation with the military authorities was not that of a callow youth. In fact a couple of years prior to his incarceration in 1913 he had been

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<sup>36</sup> 'A Riotous Meeting', *The Press*, 27 May 1911, pp.8, 10; 'Report of the Work of the National Peace Council from Its Inception to 1915': C.R.N. Mackie Papers, Canterbury Museum Library: Box 5, Folder 20, Series 41.

<sup>37</sup> Letter C.R.N. Mackie to H.H. Driver dated 28 June 1913: C.R.N. Mackie Papers, Canterbury Museum Library: Box 8, Folder 30, Series 78.

<sup>38</sup> *The Press*, 3 July 1913, p. 2; 4 July 1913, p. 8; 5 July 1913, p. 10; 7 July 1913, p. 7; 8 July 1913, pp. 6, 8.

<sup>39</sup> Elsie Locke, *Peace People: A History of Peace Activities in New Zealand*, Christchurch: Hazard, 1992, p.46.

<sup>40</sup> *The Press*, 8 July 1913, p. 6; 9 July 1913, p. 8.

<sup>41</sup> *The Press*, 5 July 1913, p. 10.

cited in New Zealand's parliament as a leader of the 'We Won'ts'.<sup>42</sup> The 'We Won'ts' were a large grouping of Christchurch youths who had banded together to oppose compulsory military training as soon as it was implemented in 1911. While the defence forces chose not to prosecute every youth who failed to register, Nuttall was prosecuted in August 1911 'because he had posed prominently in the public eye as a resistant to the compulsory military training scheme'.<sup>43</sup> The defence authorities withdrew the charge at the start of the court hearing, probably because of sensitivities relating to this sort of prosecution. Nuttall, however, was not willing to let the matter rest with the discharge and immediately wrote to the *Lyttleton Times* newspaper with the defiant statement, 'I do not intend to let my conscience be browbeaten by the administration of this iniquitous Act.'<sup>44</sup> Two years later, in a letter to Charles Mackie while still incarcerated on Ripa Island, Nuttall asserted:

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.

Nuttall's fighting spirit meshed well with Mackie's determination. The strategically astute Mackie maximised the effects of the Ripa Island struggle by ensuring that the issue had major publicity and was raised in parliament. On 12 July 1913 Mackie filed a petition in parliament in the name of the National Peace Council to maximise publicity over the Ripa Island situation.<sup>45</sup>

The combination of Mackie and Nuttall undoubtedly fostered division in the Linwood Baptist Church. Mackie was a leading member of the Linwood Church, having been chairman of its leadership committee in 1910, and later superintendent of its Sunday School. Nuttall was a foundation member when the church was formally constituted in 1912 and became superintendent of a branch outreach church from Linwood at Bromley from 1915.<sup>46</sup> In a small congregation which had 74 members in 1916, the two were key figures. The assertive pacifism of these two men appears to have led to a near split in the church in 1913. A manuscript account of the first ten years of the church (1903-1912) refers to a crisis in 1913 over 'a growing conflict of opinion amongst the members on a political and social issue with its challenge to Christian ethics'.<sup>47</sup> The lack of explicitness prevents certain identification of the issue at stake. However, the fact that Thomas Nuttall was incarcerated on Ripa Island in 1913, and also the manuscript's description of Charles Mackie as 'a man with definite opinions',<sup>48</sup> makes it probable that the issue was over conscientious objection.

Certainly this was the issue in 1917. By this time New Zealand had military conscription. Thomas Nuttall had been summonsed to military service and his appeal against this had been declined. Already he was out of work, almost certainly because of his anti-militarist stance.<sup>49</sup> What is particularly remarkable about that stance is that

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<sup>42</sup> New Zealand Parliamentary Debates (NZPD), 1911, 155, pp. 341-42; NZPD, 1911, 156, pp. 451-53.

<sup>43</sup> NZPD, 1911, 155, p. 341.

<sup>44</sup> The letter is quoted in NZPD, 1911, 155, p. 341.

<sup>45</sup> *The Press*, 12 July 1913, p. 13.

<sup>46</sup> Linwood Baptist Church Minute Book, pp. 62, 64: New Zealand Baptist Historical Society Archives, File A54.

<sup>47</sup> C.F. Jones, 'The First Ten Years of the Linwood Baptist Church', unpublished ms, p. 4: New Zealand Baptist Historical Society Archives, File O123/6.

<sup>48</sup> Jones, 'First Ten Years', p. 8.

<sup>49</sup> Thomas states that he is out of work in a letter dated 25 July 1917 to Frank [Money].

Thomas Nuttall seems to have had medical problems which make it highly likely that he would have failed a military medical examination and thus been exempted from any further military call-up.<sup>50</sup> In not submitting to a medical examination, Nuttall showed that he was determined to act against militarism, no matter what the personal cost. While he was facing imminent arrest and incarceration for his continuing non-compliance with his call-up summons, twelve Linwood Baptist Church members called a special meeting of the church to discuss the conscience clause in the Military Service Act. 26 members attended. Two motions were considered at the meeting. The first, which conveyed the appreciation of the church to Thomas Nuttall for his work in the Bromley Mission, was carried unanimously. This first motion was probably a peace-making motion, a recognising of the contribution of Thomas Nuttall in view of anticipated controversy relating to him in regard to the second motion. The second motion, the real motion of the meeting, moved by Charles Mackie and seconded by Mrs Nuttall (Thomas's mother and a peace activist in her own right<sup>51</sup>), read as follows:

Having regard for the attitude and teaching of the Baptists respecting the claims of conscience in the life of the church viz.

That every Christian is bound by the dictates of his or her conscience absolutely in matters of conflict, we wish to express, as a church of the Baptist order, our hearty agreement with this view, and to claim for all our members complete freedom in this regard in all matters which in no wise involve the commitment of any sin in act or thought.

In view of this clear and unmistakeable position we can not but claim for each member the free right of thought and action in every walk of life. We believe that the forcing of conscience, by whatever authority, is contrary to Divine revelation and amounts to persecution of the grossest kind, and whereas one of our members is now liable under the law of this Dominion to be forced into service which is repugnant to his conscience we place on record our protest against this outrage and our unwavering conviction that all persons in similar circumstances should be immediately and unconditionally released from any obligation to military service, either combatant or non-combatant, and should be discharged from the reserve.

We direct that this resolution shall be forwarded to the Prime Minister of New Zealand.<sup>52</sup>

Vote on this resolution by secret ballot provided 12 affirmative votes, 13 negative votes and 1 informal vote. The split vote led to a split church. The Mackies resigned within a few months and thereafter had their main links with the Quakers. Thomas Nuttall left Linwood Baptist Church and rejoined its mother church (Oxford Terrace Baptist Church). Others also left, so that in 1919 the membership had declined from 69 to 35.<sup>53</sup> The strong beginnings of the young church were now in wreckage.

It may be argued that members had every right to move the divisive motion, given Baptist adherence to congregational Government. Moreover, the motion sought the reinforcement of another fundamental Baptist position, that of liberty of conscience. However, given that there were eleven young men from the church in the armed

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<sup>50</sup> According to Bronwyn Pollock (email to Laurie Guy 6 June 2003) Thomas was born with a club foot. Bronwyn (granddaughter of Thomas) was relaying information supplied by her father Ron (a son of Thomas). Burson Nuttall (another son of Thomas), has no memory of this condition but is aware of varicose veins, which were a major longstanding impairment (oral communication to Laurie Guy, 26 August 2006).

<sup>51</sup> On this see references in E. Locke, *Peace People: A History of Peace Activities in New Zealand* (Christchurch: Hazard Press, 1992) p. 37; Baker, *King and Country*, p. 227.

<sup>52</sup> Linwood Baptist Church Minute Book, pp. 81-82.

<sup>53</sup> Linwood Baptist Church Minute Book, p. 113.

services in 1917,<sup>54</sup> how could this motion do other than split the church, both because passing it would imply discredit to the sacrificial service of the members who were in the armed forces, and because the church had already undergone a near-split on a similar issue back in 1913? Passing the motion on liberty of conscience would violate the liberty of conscience of other members. It reminds one of Constantine's reproach to Alexander and Arius prior to the Council of Nicea: the initiator should not have posed the issue and the respondent should not have responded. Mackie and Nuttall, as men who had already been extensively involved in pacifist struggle, might surely have anticipated a possible church split as an outcome of the motion. Certainly from their point of view the issue was so important that it must be raised. But it was a divisive no-win matter. Should it have been raised? And should congregational leaders have allowed it to be raised in the form it took, Baptist principles or not, congregational government or not?

This case study involving individual Baptists and a local Baptist church highlights issues of identity on a much wider scale. Does liberty of conscience and congregational government allow the raising of all matters of concern, even though the outcome may be the destruction of the life of a congregation? Both commonsense and the mind of Christ may well lead to a negative answer to this question. Had the Linwood Baptist church come to that conclusion prior to its meeting in January 1917, it would probably not have split over the issue of pacifism in the emotionally-charged atmosphere of World War One.

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<sup>54</sup> W. Harris & G. Tisch, *The Linwood Harvest: Linwood Baptist Church 1912- 1987* (no place: no publisher, 1987), p. 10.