

**BRETHREN ATTITUDES TO AUTHORITY  
AND GOVERNMENT**

**WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO PACIFISM**

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This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any higher degree or graduate diploma in any tertiary institution and to the best of my knowledge and belief it contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference has been made in the text of the thesis.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

ELISABETH KAY WILSON

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AIF	Australian Imperial Force
CCFW	Camp Christian Fellowship Work
CO	Conscientious objector
NCC	Non-Combatant Corps
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAF	Royal Air Force
RAMC	Royal Army Medical Corps
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

## INTRODUCTION

The seeds for this thesis were planted over twenty years ago, when I talked with my grandfather about his life. Discussing the First World War, he said that he would have been a conscientious objector if conscription had been introduced, on the grounds that "our citizenship was in heaven" [Philippians 3:20], and because of "the irregularity of killing people".<sup>1</sup> I was studying Australian History under Dr. Lloyd Robson at Melbourne University at the time, and marked with interest the difference between my grandfather's attitude and that of the society around him at the time.

So when this topic was suggested to me a good deal of germination had already taken place. I was already interested in Brethren history, and the theme had not been researched before - indeed many contemporary Brethren are unaware of their own history and surprised to hear that there has been a "pacifist past" at all. In fact the surprise is not confined to Brethren, and is compounded by the generalisations and guesswork in many general histories.

The original suggestion was that I study "the Brethren and pacifism". I decided to widen the topic in the (erroneous!) belief that the original topic would not have provided enough material, and because the broader topic encompassed the perennial problem of church/state relations and gave a conceptual base to the study.

Several people warned me that I might not find enough material or receive a response from the older generation, but in fact the opposite has been true. Obviously I cannot judge whether some people did not respond because they felt the topic was too controversial, but this is not the impression I get from the respondents who did write to me.

Because of the nature of the Brethren, central archives from any kind of "synod" are totally lacking. Part of the challenge of this study has been tracking down and gathering sources. I own quite a few Brethren books, but no-one's library has been safe this year! I am fortunate in having a reasonable knowledge of the Brethren network, and the acknowledgments give some indication of its breadth.

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<sup>1</sup> My grandfather, Tom Gordon, came from a Scottish Brethren family and was in fellowship with the Hopkins group until the reconciliation in 1961, in which he was involved, and then Open meetings for the rest of his life. He was always interested in current affairs and history. The notes of our conversations are in my Gordon family history exercise book.

To find out individual responses to war, I devised a questionnaire and letter<sup>2</sup> which I sent to people I knew had been involved in the war in some way. I also organised notices to go in the Brethren magazines in each Australian state, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, and received a number of replies this way. Some people passed on copies of the questionnaire to friends. There is no way I can claim that the sample is statistically valid, but I feel I have obtained a reasonably representative cross-section of views and experiences.

I have included information from the three countries named, with occasional references to other countries. The focus is on the two World Wars, although I have taken account of the whole of Brethren history with regard to Brethren writing and thinking. No women responded to the survey; I presume that as they were only asked to do non-combatant service they were less likely to formally object. For the sake of space I have not included as much detail as I would have liked about the treatment of conscientious objectors, except where it impinged on individual Brethren.

I would also have liked to have more detail on the situation in Germany, but did not have time to labour through my one source with school-girl German, nor the money for an accredited translator. I would have liked access to the English and New Zealand Brethren magazines in a fuller way, and to the Christian Brethren Archive in Manchester. It is also possible that there may be some files in the Australian Archives in Canberra that may give some statistical information, but preliminary investigation was not hopeful, so again time and money intervened.

Throughout this thesis I have considered the Brethren in their entirety, endeavouring to include the views of smaller groups among them. However it needs to be emphasised that even in one assembly there are divergent views, and it is impossible to be dogmatic about Brethren thought. One respondent wrote, "... in any assembly there are very different personalities, some strong and domineering, some content to be followers, some narrow in their outlook, others more liberal, which makes it difficult to generalise."<sup>3</sup> Alty this to the priesthood of all believers (which can easily be equated with the right of every one to express an opinion), and the autonomy of each assembly, and it is amazing that the Brethren are as identifiable as they are.

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<sup>2</sup> Appendix E.

<sup>3</sup> Nimmo questionnaire.

NOTE: in this thesis I have tried to use the words pacifism and "pacifism" in the sense given by Ceadel: *pacifism* is "the belief that all war is *always wrong* and should never be resorted to, whatever the consequences of abstaining from fighting;" and "*pacifism*" is "the assumption that war, though *sometimes necessary*, is always an irrational and inhumane way to solve disputes, and that its prevention should always be an over-riding political priority."<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless I am aware that another definition he quotes is probably the more colloquially acceptable: "[a] pacifist ... [is] one who, on account of certain principles, philosophical or religious, will, in no circumstances whatever, take part in war."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> M. Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain 1914-1945: the Defining of a Faith* (Oxford, 1980), p. 3.

<sup>5</sup> Frank Hardie in the *New Statesman* 18 Nov. 1933, p. 630, quoted by Ceadel, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

## **BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE BRETHREN: HISTORY AND PRINCIPLES**

The Brethren movement<sup>1</sup> originated in the late 1820's in the British Isles. It was both an expression of discontent with the established church (some early leaders were ordained clergymen) and with demarcations between non-conformist churches, and a statement of hope in the unity of all Christians regardless of denomination.

The independent churches that grew up, spontaneously and as they believed by the agency of the Holy Spirit,<sup>2</sup> developed links quite quickly through such outstanding leaders as John Nelson Darby, George Müller, and B. W. Newton. Through Darby's extensive itineration, churches were also established in Switzerland, and later France and Germany. A vigorous missionary outreach in the century and a half since, out of proportion to the size of the movement<sup>3</sup>, saw the establishment of churches in many overseas countries, particularly those of the British Empire, but also Russia and Eastern Europe. The first century of the Brethren movement was thus both personality- and mission-driven.

In the 1840's the movement split into two divergent streams, "one, true to its first principles, witnessing to the essential unity existing between all who owned the name of Christ, the other drifting more and more towards excommunication of those who differed in doctrine, or in discipline, resolved itself into [a sect]".<sup>4</sup> Basically the division was between those who, led by Darby, saw "Separation from Evil, as God's Principle of Unity" (the title of a tract by him in 1846), and those like Anthony Norris Groves who wrote to Darby in 1836, "As any system is in its provision narrower or wider than the

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<sup>1</sup> The Brethren movement is often referred to as a sect, e.g. D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* (London, 1989), p. 86: "an adventist sect"; and passim. However I prefer to see it as a movement with sectarian tendencies.

<sup>2</sup> E. Trotter, *Undertones of the Nineteenth Century* (London, 1905), p. 25: "Weary with the strife of sect and party, and inspired by a profound longing to conform in life and practice, to the Apostolic ideal, little companies of earnest men began to meet in the early part of the nineteenth century, in various parts of the country, unknown to each other, and under no human leadership." This book interestingly compares and contrasts the aims and influence of the Tractarians and the Brethren on later trends in the church.

<sup>3</sup> A modern missiologist has estimated the proportions of missionaries per 10,000 church members as follows: Brethren 88, Baptist 61, Pentecostal 36, Salvation Army 34, Anglican 11, Methodist 6, Presbyterian 3. M Griffiths, *Tinker, Tailor, Missionary* (InterVarsity Press, 1992). This is roughly in inverse proportion to the different groups' numbers in the community.

<sup>4</sup> Trotter, op. cit., p. 33.

truth ... I would INFINITELY RATHER BEAR *with all their evils*, than SEPARATE from THEIR GOOD" [sic]<sup>5</sup>

This is probably the place for a word about nomenclature. For much of their existence Brethren have shunned a formal title, believing this to be divisive, and an expression often used is "gathering only to the name of the Lord Jesus".<sup>6</sup> This has resulted in much confusion and in regular attempts by others to give them a label. Thus we have the "Plymouth Brethren" because of the prominence of the early congregation at Plymouth. Those who followed Darby have become known as the Exclusive Brethren, and later divisions among that group tended to be named after the chief protagonists. Others came to prefer the name Open Brethren, and in many places now, especially where a name is needed for government purposes, are known as Christian Brethren.<sup>7</sup>

However the original aversion to a name persisted, resulting in a plethora of names for meeting places and fellowships,<sup>8</sup> and such entries on census and other forms as "Christians gathered together", "Christian commonly known as Brethren", "no denomination", or most simply "Christian". There is no denominational structure as such. This has resulted in Brethren tending to be invisible or even suspect in the community, which is a problem for evangelism (in that it makes it harder for the Brethren and their message to be accepted), but it is an attempt to express the original ideal.<sup>9</sup>

This study draws on information from all streams of the Brethren movement. Even in the "open" stream there are subtle nuances between different styles of worship, strictness of discipline, etc. There are also smaller "divisions" which have persisted<sup>10</sup>, although all would see themselves as within the same movement. Ian McDowell, principal of the Brethren Emmaus Bible College for 25 years, writes "It is often difficult for outsiders to

<sup>5</sup> The whole letter is printed in full as Appendix A, pp. 287-291, in F. R. Coad, *A History of the Brethren Movement* (Exeter 1968).

<sup>6</sup> e.g. W. E. Vine's introduction to A. R. Short's *The Principles of Christians called "Open Brethren"* (Glasgow, 1913), p. ii: "Their desire was to own no title save the Name of Him whose Name is named upon His people."

<sup>7</sup> This can lead to confusion with other groups such as the Moravian Brethren, especially when consulting reference aids such as abstracts!

<sup>8</sup> e.g. Gospel Hall, Gospel Chapel, Bible Chapel, [street name] Chapel, Christian Fellowship, Christian Centre, Christian Community Centre, Bible Fellowship, Community Church, Christian Assembly, Christian Brethren Assembly, Christian Church - all names in the current "Notice of Meetings" published by *Tidings* magazine (August 1994).

<sup>9</sup> See for example F. R. Coad, *Laing* (London, 1979), p. 72: "The Brethren ideal of the Church had always deplored denominationalism, and the broader spirits among them refused to recognise their own or any other type of denominational Church as having any greater validity than any other; it is ironical that this refusal of a distinctive name ossified in some areas into a tradition blindly upheld by their more sectarian elements."

<sup>10</sup> These include "Needed Truth" or the Church of God; the Hopkins meetings, now generally reconciled with mainstream Brethren; the Glanton and Lowe/Kelly Exclusives who are more moderate than the Taylor group; and small groups like "Green Pastures".

discern the differences between the factions ... the differences are not always clear-cut, and the members themselves may be unaware of their traditions."<sup>11</sup> Up to the Second World War, and even beyond, those in the more open meetings would happily read and profit from early "Exclusive" writers such as Darby, Kelly, Lincoln, and C. H. Mackintosh. More conservative Brethren would read some of the writers from a broader position<sup>12</sup>, although "Exclusives" were unlikely to read any "Open" authors.

The "Open" fellowships gained great impetus from the 1859 revival in Europe and America.<sup>13</sup> Their openness to all who professed the name of Christ, and their emphasis on the use of individual gift, meant that new converts were readily accepted and fostered. This was also the case in rural areas of New Zealand and Australia, where the lack of an ordained minister constrained the growth of other more formal churches.

Partly because of the title problem outlined above, it is hard to estimate the proportion of Brethren in the population, but it is usually less than 1% even in countries where Brethren churches have been well-established.<sup>14</sup> It is higher in New Zealand and Northern Ireland, and discrete regions such as the South West of England and the North West coast of Tasmania. One point to note in this regard is that there are unlikely to be many nominal adherents in these figures.

Brethren churches are orthodox evangelical trinitarians in doctrine, with an emphasis on prophecy and the second coming of Christ (perhaps more so in the past). It is their church order and manner of worship that has distinguished them. Open fellowships regard each assembly as autonomous (Exclusives have a central oversight<sup>15</sup>), and there is no ordained ministry. There is a strong emphasis on the priesthood of all believers, although in most churches the audible expression of this would be restricted to males.

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<sup>11</sup> Ian McDowell, *The "Plymouth Brethren" in Australia* (unpublished summary). A. R. Short, quoted in W. M. Capper and D. Johnson, *Arthur Rendle Short: Surgeon and Christian* (London, 1955), p. 101, wrote: "There have been several major differences of opinion and this is one reason why the outsider finds the Brethren difficult to understand. Some meetings are exclusive, some are open, some are intermediate. Some have as little as possible to do with other Christians, others are more cooperative."

<sup>12</sup> For example, my grandfather, who spent most of his life in the "Hopkins" meetings, owned and annotated several of the books by "Open" authors that I am using for this study, such as *Chief Men among the Brethren*, *The Principles of Christians called "Open Brethren"*, Broadbent's *The Pilgrim Church*, etc.

<sup>13</sup> See Ian McDowell, *A Brief History of the "Brethren"* (Sydney, 1968), p. 31; F. R. Coad, *A History of the Brethren Movement* (Exeter, 1968), pp. 167-174.

<sup>14</sup> The most accurate figures I have seen are those for New Zealand in P. Lineham, *There we found Brethren* (Palmerston North, 1977), p. 163. Humphreys and Ward (*Religious Bodies in Australia*, Melbourne 1986, p. xi) give the percentage for Australia per the census as .15% in 1981. I believe that some Brethren would come under the headings Protestant (undefined) (1.51%), and Other Christian (1.72%). Ian McDowell estimates about 20,000, which would be about .18%.

<sup>15</sup> That is, leading brethren from different assemblies meeting together.

Most churches have elders and (today) usually deacons. Baptism of believers by immersion is practised, although it is not a condition of membership.<sup>16</sup>

The worship service is somewhat similar to a Quaker service, in that people wait on the leading of the Holy Spirit as to when or how they should participate. As one writer puts it, "Ministry is predicated on gift, not on education or ordination. There is, at its best, the quiet, tense, expectant waiting for the Spirit to call into operation the gift appropriate for the occasion."<sup>17</sup> Contributions may take the form of a suggested hymn, a Bible reading with or without comment, and prayer. As far as reception to communion goes, another wrote that "like the Apostolic Church, [they] welcome at the Lord's table all who are sound in the fundamental principles of the faith and godly in life."<sup>18</sup>

Given the nature of Brethren fellowships, it is difficult to generalise, but one thing that characterises them all is their constant reference to the Bible for all matters of faith and doctrine, and indeed practice, and to the New Testament for church order. Thus they would reject any traditions or rituals which have grown up since apostolic times, and see themselves as aiming at a return to New Testament simplicity.<sup>19</sup>

A corollary of this is that Brethren have tended to be judgemental of other churches who do not follow this way; at their worst, condemning them and keeping in self-righteous isolation<sup>20</sup>. However mainstream Brethren, while not usually involved in the ecumenical movement, are often very supportive of such para-church, inter-denominational (and usually evangelistic) organisations as Scripture Union, the Billy Graham Crusades, the Keswick conferences, Gideons, Prison Fellowship etc.

Despite the independence of each fellowship, there is considerable cooperation among Brethren in evangelism, and missionary support is channelled through a central source in each country. There have been large numbers of Brethren publishers, notably

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<sup>16</sup> There is no formal membership as such, although a person may be "received into fellowship" or some such term. Many assemblies would not do this until after baptism, especially in the case of children brought up in the assembly. In "Open" assemblies, a Christian who has not been baptised would still be welcome to participate in communion.

<sup>17</sup> I. S. Rennie, "Aspects of Christian Brethren Spirituality", in J. I. Packer and L. Wilkinson (eds.) *Alive to God: Studies in Spirituality presented to James Houston* (Inter Varsity Press, 1992), p.201-2.

<sup>18</sup> Short, *op. cit.*, p.77. This does not apply to the Exclusive Brethren, nor to some of the stricter meetings. My brother visited the 300-strong meeting in Peterhead, Scotland, in 1990, where the condition of reception to the Lord's table was that one was currently "in fellowship" with a Brethren meeting. Such churches would probably require a "letter of commendation".

<sup>19</sup> It should be emphasised that these remarks apply to the "Open" fellowships. Exclusive groups practise infant baptism, do not have elders, and are far more rigidly controlled, to the extent that they could almost be described as a cult as far as the "Taylor" group is concerned, which has received some attention in the media in the past 30 years.

Pickering and Inglis, Paternoster Press, and John Ritchie (UK), and Loiseaux Bros. (USA).<sup>21</sup> Connections between fellowships have been maintained by itinerant Bible teachers, magazines<sup>22</sup>, and in the past, conferences. The use of the same hymn books was another factor.<sup>23</sup> Like other such groups, the intangible links are perhaps the strongest.

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<sup>20</sup> A reasonably fair description of growing up in something of this atmosphere is Anne Arnett's *The Brethren* (London, 1970).

<sup>21</sup> A. D. Ehlert, *Brethren Writers* (Grand Rapids, 1969) lists 418, though many of these were also authors who self-published their works. Also, not all these firms published Brethren works exclusively.

<sup>22</sup> Ehlert, *op. cit.*, gives 478 names, including those from non-English speaking countries. Many of these were short-lived publications, but others lasted for decades and some have continued for more than 100 years (e.g. *Echoes of Service*). Given that even I know of a few not on the list, there have probably been closer to 500. Some of these, e.g. the *Witness*, were read overseas, and extracts from them printed in local periodicals. This allowed for some cross-fertilisation of ideas.

<sup>23</sup> As Coad (*op. cit.*, chapter 15) points out, Brethren have their own distinctive hymnology, with most of the better hymns peculiarly suited to the breaking of bread service. Hymnbooks in common use until recently were *Hymns of Light and Love* and *The Believers Hymn Book*. There is also the *Mitchley Supplement* used with Scripture Union's *Hymns of Faith*. Hymnbooks used in gospel meetings were usually Sankey's *Sacred Songs and Solos*, *Redemption Songs*, or *Alexander's Hymns No. 3*.

## BRETHREN AND THE STATE

### (i) Brethren relations with the state

Coad, the most recent general historian of the Brethren, states in his opening sentence, "It is odd that a cavil of conscience should bring matters to a head."<sup>1</sup> He is referring to the fact that pacifism was the catalyst which caused Anthony Norris Groves, one of the early leaders of the Brethren, to abandon his plans for ordination in the Church of England. Groves subsequently began meeting with other young men on a non-denominational basis in Dublin.

Although the extract from his journal relating this incident has been quoted many times, it bears repeating in this context because of the influence Groves had in the early Brethren movement. He later went as missionary to Persia and India, relying entirely on God for his support, and thus influencing many others, including Hudson Taylor,<sup>2</sup> to take this step of faith.

The relevant passage, printed in the *Memoir of the late Anthony Norris Groves* by his widow, reads: "[Hake] called on me, and asked me if I did not hold war to be unlawful. I replied, 'Yes.' He then further asked, how I could subscribe to that article which declares, 'It is lawful for Christian men to take up arms at the command of the civil magistrate.' It had, till that moment, never occurred to me. I read it; and replied, 'I never would sign it'; and thus ended my connection with the Church of England, as one about to be ordained in her communion."<sup>3</sup>

Brock believes that "Due to Groves' dynamic personality the idea of rejecting war took hold of his colleagues and became a fixed tenet of the emerging sect."<sup>4</sup> It will have been seen from the earlier description of the Brethren that "fixed tenets" were not a distinguishing factor! Nevertheless, of the formative years of the Brethren Lang writes "It was a usual thing for army and navy officers to resign their commission upon conversion among Brethren. An instance was Captain F. Lane, whose daughter ... told me that the same night her father was converted he sent in his resignation. The First

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<sup>1</sup> Coad, *op. cit.*, p.15

<sup>2</sup> the founder of the China Inland Mission.

<sup>3</sup> quoted in G. H. Lang, *Anthony Norris Groves: Saint and Pioneer* (London, 1939), p. 165; Coad, *op. cit.*, p. 22; P. Brock, "The Peace Testimony of the Early Plymouth Brethren", *Church History* 53, no. 1 (1984), p. 31

<sup>4</sup> Brock, *op. cit.*, p. 32. I have not given the detail I might on this earlier period, because Brock's comprehensive article covers the 19th century admirably.

Lord of the Admiralty ... was a personal friend, and viewed the resignation as a hint that he wished for a better post, which was offered, but to no purpose."<sup>5</sup>

The only person to write a tract giving his reasons for resigning his commission was Captain Percy Hall, R.N., who published *Discipleship! or Reasons for Resigning His Naval Rank and Pay*<sup>6</sup> in 1833. Judging from the comments in *Chief Men Among the Brethren*, which appeared in 1931, this was seen as a little eccentric, at least from the viewpoint of nearly a century later: the tract was "favoured by some and condemned by others, although none questioned his sincerity and devotedness"; Hall was described as being "of a very independent temperament".<sup>7</sup> Groves, in arguing that preaching on baptism did not make him a sectarian, wrote that "as well might our dear brother H. have been told not to publish his tract against war, lest he should be identified with the Society of Friends."<sup>8</sup>

In *Chief Men Among the Brethren*, eight<sup>9</sup> out of the one hundred men described are mentioned as having given up a commission. Given the somewhat uneven nature of the contributions, there may have been more, though the nineteenth century was a time when Britain was formally at peace and there was no conscription. On the other hand, two of the men<sup>10</sup> described were long-serving, high-ranking officers, and in this century, General Dobbie, the "Defender of Malta" was another such person.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the

<sup>5</sup> Lang, *op. cit.*, p. 166. Elsewhere Lang quotes Neatby's *History of the Plymouth Brethren*, p. 271: "The bar and the services were absolutely banned, and barristers and military and naval officers generally abandoned their careers if they joined the Brethren." G. H. Lang, *The Christian relation the state and to war* (Walsham-Le-Willows, 1937), p. 25. This seems an exaggerated view of the situation.

<sup>6</sup> British Library catalogue no. 4375.b.48 (1)

<sup>7</sup> H. Pickering (ed.), *Chief Men Among the Brethren* (London, 1931), p. 20

<sup>8</sup> Lang, *A. N. Groves*, p. 353

<sup>9</sup> John Parnell (later Lord Congleton) refused to take up the commission his father had purchased, although this was before he had joined up with "Brethren", and Brock (*op. cit.*, footnote 9, p. 33) says that this was not "from pacifist scruples, ... [but because even then he believed] his vocation lay in spreading the gospel". There is also Captain Percy Hall, R.N., J. G. Deck, Captain Hon. William H. G. Wellesley (nephew of the Duke of Wellington), Captain R. F. Kingscote, Captain J. L. Maclean. Others who gave up their army positions before coming in contact with Brethren were G. V. Wigram and Leonard Strong. Others not mentioned in *Chief Men among the Brethren* were Baron Radstock, who "used to say that when he resigned his Colonelcy of the London Volunteers, he lost his last shred of respectability in the eyes of the world." (A Miller, *Church History* vol. III, (London, n.d. [c.1928]), p. 1065), and Sir Charles Brenton, whose "father, grandfather, and his uncle, as well as his wife's father and grandfather, were all admirals" but who did not follow suit (Brock, *op. cit.*, p. 40 and footnote).

<sup>10</sup> General John S. Halliday, Major-General Sir Charles Scott (who married General Halliday's daughter).

<sup>11</sup> David Brady, the custodian of the Christian Brethren Archive at Manchester University, says in correspondence with me that "W. G. S. Dobbie was a relative of Orde Charles Wingate [of Burma fame] ... The family has, in fact, a long Brethren tradition and many of its members became leaders in military uniform. They seem to have been associated with a Brethren meeting in Woolwich (near the Arsenal?), and, judging by my reading of notes in a journal that circulated around the 1880's, *The Eleventh Hour*, it would seem that there were quite a number of military men in that assembly." (Letter 19 July 1994) Wingate's parents, Colonel and Mrs George Wingate, are mentioned in Arnott, *op. cit.*, p. 57. Professor R. M. Thomson's great-grandfather and great-uncle, both "strict Brethren", were professional soldiers. (Personal conversation, August 1994, History Department, University of Tasmania.) Roy Coad says that "... as the movement developed, a considerable number of senior military men were associated with it - as was the case later in Germany." "Into a changing future", p. 7 (Lecture 4 from *The shaping of the Brethren movement*, lectures delivered at Regent College, Vancouver, 1990).

balance would seem to have been towards resigning a commission on conversion, especially earlier on, and not taking up an army career. This is supported by an article in the *Northern Witness* in 1885, which "[sympathises] with the difficulties of those who have been converted in the Army [and have problems getting a discharge, [but] state[their] conviction of the SIN AND SHAME of a Christian deliberately choosing the Army as his profession, or volunteering to qualify himself for warfare."<sup>12</sup>

This is the more significant when one considers the "station in life" from which many early Brethren were drawn. Trotter's opinion was that many of the men attracted to the early Brethren movement were "men of brain, men of birth, and of large means, scholars, and students, who would have made their mark at any time and in any walk of life; lawyers of critical judgement, officers of promise in both services, large land-owners, with the cares and responsibilities of property"<sup>13</sup>

This assessment is born out by the biographies in *Chief Men among the Brethren*.<sup>14</sup> Over half of the men described come into these categories, despite the fact that some of the biographies do not give this sort of detail. To these could be added such people as Lady Powerscourt, at whose home several seminal conferences on prophecy were held in the 1830's. These were the people from whose class in British society magistrates,

<sup>12</sup> *Northern Witness*, Vol. 15, 1885, pp. 95-6, quoted in H. Beattie, *The Christian and War* (Glasgow, n.d.), pp. 117-9.

<sup>13</sup> Trotter, *op. cit.*, p. 26

<sup>14</sup> Some **military and naval men** have been listed above. Others (who resigned through ill-health etc): Captain T. H. Hull, Captain W. G. Rhind, R.N.

**Lawyers:** J. G. Bellett, R. C. Chapman, Gordon Forlong, H. W. Soltau, T. S. Henry, Sir Robert Anderson (Chief of the CID, Scotland Yard, 1880 - 1901). J. N. Darby had trained as a lawyer originally.

**Clergymen:** J. N. Darby, Richard Hill, J. L. Harris, J. M. Code, William Trotter (Methodist), W. H. Dorman (Congregational), F. W. Grant, William Lincoln. Several others gave up plans or studies for ordination on coming in contact with Brethren.

**"Men of birth"/land-owners:** John Parnell (Lord Congleton), Wellesley, Sir Edward Denny, Somerset Richard Maxwell (Lord Farnham), Count Guicciardini, Francis Hutchinson, the Earl of Cavan, William Talbot Crosbie, John N. Scobell, F. C. Bland, Richard J. Mahony, C. E. Stuart, the Earl of Carrick, Lord Adalbert Cecil. There was also Baron Radstock.

**Scholars/students:** Henry Craik, G. V. Wigram (who financed *The Englishman's Greek and English Concordance to the New Testament*, etc), John Eliot Howard (F.R.S.), Thomas Newberry (editor of the *Newberry Bible*), William Kelly, F. W. Baedeker (Ph. D.). Also S. P. Tregelles, who worked on the *Concordance*, and became a noted Biblical textual critic.

**MP's:** Somerset Maxwell.

**Businessmen:** J. E. Howard, John Morley, Andrew Miller, William Yapp, Henry Frowde (manager of the Oxford University Press 1874-1913).

**JP's:** J. N. Scobell.

**Doctors:** Edward Cronin, Thomas Neatby, H. H. Snell, W. T. P. Wolston, J. L. Maclean, Robert M'Killiam, A. T. Schofield, David Anderson-Berry.

Peter Embley makes a similar point, with less detailed analysis, in "The Early Development of the Plymouth Brethren", in B. R. Wilson (ed.), *Patterns of Sectarianism* (London, 1967), pp. 215-6. I had done this breakdown before I obtained his article. Our figures differ at some points but the gist is essentially the same. Another author, writing about the Quakers, says that "A sect which is administered in the leisure-time of its members tends ... to become dominated by a leisured class." E. Isichei, "Organisation and Power in the Society of Friends, 1852-59," *ibid.* p. 202.

justices of the peace, and members of Parliament were then expected to come. However, only two of those listed accepted these responsibilities, although Lord Congleton did take his seat on the cross-benches of the House of Lords "as being in a sense 'an appointment of God beyond his control'".<sup>15</sup>

That there were differing views on political involvement is shown by a European example later in the century; Teodorico Rossetti was a great influence in building up assemblies in Italy, with an interest in affairs of the state. According to a leading Brethren writer of this century, "he insisted that a Christian could not ignore his responsibilities as a citizen, although he declined personally to become a candidate for political office, arguing that his calling was to preach the gospel. He did, however, contribute to the semi-official journal *Rivista Contemporanea*, propounding economic, social and political solutions to the various problems of southern Italy."<sup>16</sup> Another Italian, Bonaventura Mazzarella, was active politically.<sup>17</sup>

There may have been one Brethren member of Parliament last century, a Joseph Brotherton who was a retired cotton manufacturer.<sup>18</sup> In this century there have been a few members of Parliament in Britain from among Brethren: Sir John Sandeman Allen, Sir John Henderson, and Sir Peter Mills, all Conservatives.<sup>19</sup> The present Minister for Transport, Brian Mawhinney, was formerly with the Brethren (now an Anglican). In recent elections in Italy Professor Domenico Maselli of Lucca was elected to the lower house and another Brethren man from Florence to the upper house.<sup>20</sup> But these cases were and are exceptions rather than the rule.

Writing before the first World War, a Brethren surgeon wrote, "The majority of Brethren seeking to follow His steps, refuse to ally themselves to any political party, and have incurred much reproach by doing so...Few, if any, Brethren speak on political platforms; a fair number use their vote, but probably the majority abstain."<sup>21</sup> As recently as 1982 an English writer said that "Brethren have a tradition of not taking part in

<sup>15</sup> H. H. Rowdon, *The Origins of the Brethren* (London, 1967), p. 306, quoting Henry Groves, *Congleton's Memoir*, p. 90

<sup>16</sup> Frederick A. Tatford, "An Italian Centenary", in *Echoes of Service* July 1984, pp. 311.

<sup>17</sup> J. D. Douglas (ed.), *New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Exeter, 1974), p. 646.

<sup>18</sup> handwritten notes from Harold Rowdon give the reference *Record* 6 September 1852. The *DNB* says Brotherton was a Bible Christian, and a "lay" pastor of a congregation in Salford when not in London attending Parliament. It is possible this congregation became aligned with Brethren at some stage.

<sup>19</sup> handwritten notes from Harold Rowdon give references *Who was Who 1929 -1940*, p. 19, and obituaries in the *Witness*, July 1935, and *Christian Graphic*, August 1935 for Sandeman Allen; *Who's Who 1986* for Mills. Roy Coad confirms the information about Henderson in a letter to me, 28 July 1994.

<sup>20</sup> Personal communication from Roy Coad, 28 July 1994.

<sup>21</sup> Short, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

politics, and many do not even vote."<sup>22</sup> Though this is generally not true now,<sup>23</sup> it was certainly so for the decades leading up to the first World War. This view of the Brethren is quite prevalent, and has been reinforced by the publicity given the Taylor Exclusives, who *en bloc* do not vote.<sup>24</sup>

In the next chapter I will consider the reasoning behind this stance. The lack of occasions for demonstrative pacifism, such as conscription and major military conflict, meant that before the First World War magistracy was much more of a live issue than pacifism. In the Crimean War period, Brock could only find information on three Brethren (Sir Charles Brenton, and Philip and Emily Gosse) who wrote against the war.<sup>25</sup>

There are two other sources of influence in Brethren thinking on the state that need to be considered. One is the experience of J N Darby, an extremely influential and "charismatic" figure whose teaching left its impress not only on the Exclusive wing but also on Open Brethren. In 1827 he had been horrified at the requirement of the Archbishop of Dublin that all converts from Roman Catholicism should take the oaths of allegiance and supremacy. He saw this as a disaster for the work of evangelism then making some headway, and as a quite unwarrantable subservience of Church to State, and circulated a protest among his fellow-clergy. The incident started him thinking on lines which eventually led to his resigning his curacy.<sup>26</sup> Thereafter he was an exponent of the separation of church and state, and given his influential position his views permeated the Brethren movement.

Another possible influence was the Society of Friends. In 1836-7, as a result of the "Beaconite" controversy<sup>27</sup>, many evangelical Friends left the Society and quite a few found a new spiritual home with Brethren. Brock states that "there is no evidence that [they] did not share the Quaker peace testimony"<sup>28</sup>, but equally there does not seem to

<sup>22</sup> P. Cousins, *The Brethren* (Exeter, 1982), p. 50

<sup>23</sup> An interesting example of political involvement came from a New Zealand questionnaire respondent, Joy Marks. She was "active politically all her adult life, and was the first woman Branch Chairman in her electorate. When Tarawera ... was a brand-new electorate, the Christian M.P. (Presbyterian) had a Brethren Electorate Chairman, and a Brethren Sec./Treas. [Marks]. It was recognised that this M.P. had the most supportive executive of any behind him..."

<sup>24</sup> see Appendix G, "Respondents and voting" for further information in this area.

<sup>25</sup> Brock, *op. cit.*, p. 41

<sup>26</sup> Coad, *op. cit.*, pp. 26 - 28; Pickering, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>27</sup> The Beaconite controversy is named after Isaac Crewdson's *A Beacon to the Society of Friends* (1835), which brought to a head the simmering disputes between more traditional Friends, with an emphasis on the "Inner Light", and an evangelical party who gave more emphasis to the authority of Scripture. See Coad, *op. cit.*, pp. 77-8, and T. C. F. Stunt, "Early Brethren and the Society of Friends", *Christian Brethren Research Fellowship Occasional Paper No. 3*, (Middlesex 1970).

<sup>28</sup> Brock, *op. cit.*, p. 40

be any evidence that they did. Stunt<sup>29</sup> showed how widespread the Quaker connections were, and suggests that in areas where Quakers were concentrated their thinking helped make some of Darby's ideas on church order acceptable, but he does not mention any pacifist influence. It would not be surprising if many kept their pacifist views<sup>30</sup>, and if so this may well have strengthened the ideas which emanated from Groves and Darby.

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<sup>29</sup> Stunt, *op. cit.*

<sup>30</sup> However Coad (*Laing*, *op. cit.*) says that despite the fact that in Carlisle "a main element of the ... leadership ... looked back to the Kendal Society of Friends" (p. 28), "the pacifist tradition was not strong [there]" (p. 67).

**(ii) Brethren writing on the state**

At the outset it should be emphasised that, for British Brethren writers and preachers, their relationship with the state was not a major concern, perhaps because nineteenth century Britain was a relatively stable society and they were able to pursue their absorption in what they saw as the more pressing spiritual issues. Even though Brethren writers generated an enormous amount of written material<sup>31</sup> in comparison to their proportion of the population, comparatively few works addressed the question.

Many books on Christian living or "church truth" do not even mention the topic, or refer to it only in a page or less. In the collection of tracts bound into thirteen volumes by Rice Hopkins, an evangelist and Bible teacher in the UK and in Australia from the 1860's until early this century, only two were on this topic. As Brock comments, "Darby was an enormously prolific writer; but unfortunately his voluminous [34 volumes] *Collected Writings* shed little light on his opinions on peace and war."<sup>32</sup> My own perusal of many Brethren bookshelves confirms this view. Much was taught on "separation", understood as separation from "the world"; but this was not often explicitly extended to teaching on the state or politics.

Given the social position of many of the authors, it is not surprising that many of the early tracts speak from the ruler's point of view rather than the ruled: "Is it fitting for heaven-born men to be worldly legislators and politicians?"<sup>33</sup>

The answer was clearly 'no'. Hall in *Discipleship* said that the "Scriptures authorised Christians to exercise authority 'in the three special relations of Father, Husband, Master...but never as kings, or magistrates, or as holding any authority in the world.'"<sup>34</sup> Hall in fact put the question in somewhat emotional terms as well: "For what is a Christian magistrate to do when a broken-hearted man pleads for his wife and starving family, acknowledges the sinfulness of his heart... and prays for pardon? Will he say, 'No, you are guilty, and I am not the minister of mercy, but the law; you must go to the hulk, or the jail, or it may be to death?' Is it grace? and is such a person a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ *in the act*?"<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> The number of publishers and magazines has been mentioned above. Ehlert (*op. cit.*) lists 1025 writers, which includes hymnwriters and editors, but as he acknowledges is not a complete list!

<sup>32</sup> Brock, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

<sup>33</sup> Rowdon, *op. cit.*, p. 304, citing J. L. Harris in the *Christian Witness*, I. 458

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p. 305, quoting Hall, *Discipleship* *op. cit.*, p. 29.

<sup>35</sup> quoted in Coad, *op. cit.*, p. 61

This argument was followed by the anonymous author of an another tract, who wrote that Christians were "most unfit to hold positions of power... They have a master to serve whose laws are quite opposed in principle to those of the world. The magistrate must execute the *world's* laws, as being the world's servant."<sup>36</sup>

This author also articulated the teaching which was at the base of much Brethren reaction to the state and its demands, especially when war came. "Who may take part in the government of a country? Natives only, not strangers...Your concern is the kingdom of God, your city the one to come, your citizenship in heaven. Refrain from the world's politics, for Jesus was no politician. Refrain, else you mar your witness to the world, that it is evil and lying under judgement. Are you not a stranger and a pilgrim? Then meddle not with that world which you have left."<sup>37</sup>

It is exactly this viewpoint which the authorities administering conscription in the twentieth century found so hard to cope with, and so it is worth examining further. It will be seen later in various forms as one of the responses made by men appealing against conscription. It is found in almost all earlier Brethren writing on this topic. For example, "...are we not...aliens in this country in which we dwell, belonging in heart and interest to another and better country...?"<sup>38</sup> And again, in the 1930's, "If a man is a *citizen* of one of the kingdoms of this world he has a duty to do what he can to keep order and to better its corporate affairs, in which case he will vote in elections; but if he is only a *subject*, living for a time under this or that government, and presently going on to his own country, he has no business with those affairs. He will do what may be in his power to help anyone, but as a foreigner his ways of so helping will be limited, and will not include interference with matters public."<sup>39</sup>

This theme of the sojourner whose citizenship was of another country resulted in not only an abrogation of political office but also abstention from voting, as we have seen. (The disenfranchisement of imprisoned conscientious objectors, for example in New Zealand, was thus somewhat ironic and redundant as a punishment in the case of Brethren!)

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<sup>36</sup> from *The Christian and Politics*, an undated (almost certainly 19th century) anonymous tract from a collection bound by Rice T. Hopkins, in the possession of Ian McDowell, Melbourne. It has no page numbers.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>38</sup> F. L. [F. Lawson], *The Believer and War* (Glasgow, n.d.), p. 5

<sup>39</sup> G. H. Lang, *The Christian Relation to the State and to War* (Walsham-le-Willows, 1937), p.15. It should be emphasised that Lang was deeply impressed and influenced by Groves, though an independent thinker himself with strongly held principles.

While there was respect by most Brethren for the individual's conscience in these matters,<sup>40</sup> the general advice in many quarters was to abstain from voting.<sup>41</sup> As late as 1947 a writer in New Zealand said that the "ballot box was a snare to the people of God."<sup>42</sup> A British book review stated that the believer should not only refrain from all active military service but also from world politics and worldly ways.<sup>43</sup> However in the decades since, the question of political involvement was canvassed many times in magazines<sup>44</sup>, and the consensus (albeit a cautious one!) would now be that Christians should use their political rights for good, as "salt and light" in the world.

Brethren belief in withdrawal from the world was also due to two other factors. One was their view of the future, based on a premillennialist interpretation of Biblical prophecy; the other was their pre-occupation with evangelism.

Darby's teaching on prophecy, evolved in the late 1820's and early 1830's, partly through the Powerscourt conferences and contact with Edward Irving, was tremendously influential both among Brethren and eventually among fundamentalists in general.<sup>45</sup> As Rennie sums it up, "...premillennialism added [to a Puritan and Bible-centered spirituality] a note of profound pessimism concerning the fortunes of Christianity in this age of the church and society"<sup>46</sup> "[Darby] laid great stress upon a seven-year tribulation, to be followed by the millennium in connection with the second advent".<sup>47</sup> This resulted in the doctrine of the "ruin of the church" (that the institutional church was irretrievably corrupt) and the apostasy of society, which made withdrawal from society the only

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<sup>40</sup> Voting could be the cause of division at times, such as that which took place in the Hopkins meetings in Melbourne in the 1930's. McKelvie questionnaire: "The Hopkins brothers, WILL & JOHN taught that voting should be left to the conscience of the individual, while preferring not to vote; whereas Mr. W. JACK totally opposed voting and in the controversy that followed, Mr. W. Jack with a following of several families, left the Hopkins brethren (in 1933) and set up a separate assembly which in course of time became linked with "GREEN PASTURES" brethren in Scotland. A small remnant of that group still exists in Melbourne." This concurs with information given me by my grandfather, who said the meeting which discussed the issue was at Port Melbourne, and that some who left eventually drifted back.

<sup>41</sup> This appeared for instance in *Treasury* magazine (New Zealand) 1899 pp. 139 and 185, 1909 p. 161, 1912 pp. 152 and 167, 1926 p. 162. E. Read, personal communication 14 Aug. 1994, "heard awful warnings against the awful danger if one voted, and the candidate for which one had voted failed to win, one had been guilty of opposing God."

<sup>42</sup> *Treasury* p. 152

<sup>43</sup> Review of G. W. Bell's booklet *Christian Citizenship*, in *Believers Magazine* July 1939, p. 179.

<sup>44</sup> e.g. *Harvester* May 1964, p. 75; September 1974, p. 235; August 1973, p. 177; *Believers Magazine* June, October, November 1962.

<sup>45</sup> The theory of dispensationalism was spread and popularised by its use in the notes of the Scofield Bible.

<sup>46</sup> Rennie, op. cit., p. 198.

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, p. 125. It is hard for anyone not brought up among Brethren (in any generation before this current one) to comprehend the fascination with prophecy and the charts of the dispensations (another legacy of Darby's), the many fine lines of interpretation, and (despite "separation from the world") the constant but cautious equation of world events with Biblical predictions. Anne Arnott writes of "the chief of the elders, an erudite learned Greek scholar, with a vast knowledge of Biblical exegesis ... [whose] mission, drawing conclusions from Biblical prophecy and world events, and Scriptural allusions to the Jews return to Palestine, [was] to remind us constantly of the possible imminent appearing of our Lord." Arnott, op. cit., p. 24.

possible act for those believers "gathered out".<sup>48</sup> Rennie's conclusion is perhaps overstated, but is nevertheless broadly true: "So the Brethren movement, numbering many cultured people, withdrew from politics, community life, and culture in general, to await the return of Christ."<sup>49</sup>

In fact, involvement in politics (with the implication that this would improve the world) was often equated with postponing the return of Christ. As Martin puts it, "They [the Brethren] entertain a lively anticipation of the Second Coming, and therefore regard secular politics and attempts at reform as misguided tinkering with a world under judgement."<sup>50</sup>

However this gives a somewhat distorted picture. During both centuries Brethren have been to the forefront in evangelism and missionary work - extending the kingdom of God, the one kingdom that mattered. This was the other motivation for withdrawing from worldly affairs: such material matters were just not important from an eternal perspective. This is typified by a remark in the biography of Dr. Baedeker; although the author believes Baedeker's work may have contributed to the advances of liberty and justice in Russia, he also says "He was far too busy with urgent spiritual concerns to give his time to political affairs. He was never a meddler."<sup>51</sup>

McDowell has written "Because of their strong 'futurist' belief in the imminent return of Christ to judge the contemporary world system and to institute His Kingdom, and in the calling of individuals as citizens of heaven rather than of earth, and in the Biblical commands not to be part of this world system, one would expect them to have little influence upon society around them."<sup>52</sup> However he goes on to point out their considerable contribution to children's welfare in particular, with George Müller, J. W. C. Fegan, and Thomas Barnado all being instrumental in setting up and running large orphanages (all still in existence in some form). There are also the Lutanda Children's Home, Silky Oaks Children's Haven, and Christian Brethren Family Care in Australia, to name a few - all "mercy motivated" undertakings.

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<sup>48</sup> Some Brethren hymns reinforced this position. The third verse of Alexander Stewart's "Lord Jesus Christ, we seek Thy face" (*The Believers Hymn Book* no. 129) starts "Shut in with Thee, far, far above The restless world that wars below..." The tune given is "Retreat".

<sup>49</sup> Rennie, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

<sup>50</sup> D. Martin, *Pacifism* (London, 1965), p. 188.

<sup>51</sup> R. S. Latimer, *Dr. Baedeker and his Apostolic Work in Russia* (London, 1908), p. 41. Interestingly Dr. Baedeker made full use of his aristocratic contacts to help in obtaining permits to visit the prisons, and indeed believed God had placed them in their position of influence for that sort of purpose.

<sup>52</sup> Ian McDowell, "The Influence of the 'Plymouth Brethren' on Victorian Society and Religion", *Evangelical Quarterly*, vol. LV, no. 4 (1983), p. 211.

He also notes the egalitarian nature of Brethren assemblies, where "social barriers between fellow members ... were explicitly refused."<sup>53</sup> This point is also made by Rowdon, who shows how several renounced their fortunes for the sake of the gospel, and that some wealthy members (e.g. Lord Congleton) deliberately lived extremely simply, including eating with their servants.<sup>54</sup> Despite the atypically obsequious remark in Sir Edward Denny's entry in *Chief Men among the Brethren* ("... one whose advantages of birth, fortune, and title raise him above the level of his fellow-believers"<sup>55</sup>), a fair reflection of Brethren attitudes would be that fellowship was on the basis of their standing in Christ, not rank or class (not the norm in such a class-conscious era). General Halliday's entry is more typical: after describing his career and accomplishments, it says "Yet with all this he was an earnest and faithful witness for the Lord Jesus Christ, exhibiting great humility of spirit, and ever ready to company with fellow-believers, regardless of social position ... by whom he was greatly beloved."<sup>56</sup>

Mention of a Brethren military general brings us back to a consideration of those in positions of power. Along with the attitude of separation, Brethren held strongly to the concept of obeying the powers that be, which are ordained of God.<sup>57</sup> (That the two mindsets existed in some tension with each other did not become evident until the First World War.) Darby wrote, "What then shall we do with governments? Why, *submit to them*, since God orders them; and when they impose tax, pay; and make supplication to God for kings, and all in authority."<sup>58</sup>

The dichotomy between separation and subjection was well expressed by J. R. Caldwell, editor of the *Witness* for many years, early this century: "When Paul touches upon the subject of human government, he does not legislate, for the Church is absolutely separate from the world's government; but he calls upon the believers to recognise and be subject to those in authority..."<sup>59</sup>

Rowdon says that "it was, of course, agreed that subjection to 'the powers that be' is mandatory; but it was held that there was no Scriptural warrant for a Christian attempting to secure privileges by political means, or administering political

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<sup>53</sup> *ibid.*, p. 213.

<sup>54</sup> Rowdon, *op. cit.*, pp. 303 - 304.

<sup>55</sup> Pickering, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>57</sup> Romans 13:1.

<sup>58</sup> quoted by Lang, *Christian Relation to State and War*, p. 30.

<sup>59</sup> J. R. Caldwell (ed.), *Full of Grace and Truth* Glasgow: Pickering and Inglis, c. 1909, p. 19 (Selections from the *Witness*). This comment was made in an answer to a question about capital punishment, in which he says he believes it has scriptural warrant.

authority."<sup>60</sup> This is reinforced by such statements as "[in the New Testament we find not a trace] ... of political energies, of taking of sides, of appeals to rulers, of attempts to raise the popular indignation against abuses ... The fact is, that Christ and the Apostles did not desire to work through political parties. They proposed to bring blessing to the world by the method of individual regeneration, not by what we now call Act of Parliament."<sup>61</sup>

Nevertheless Brethren sometimes took quite an interest in politics, albeit from an outsider's point of view. This is shown by a comment in the *Witness* as late as 1956: "Most Christians have some interest in the passing events of the news, however much they may disclaim any participation in political affairs."<sup>62</sup> As noted above, the keen interest in prophecy gave spice to their observation of world events. This was particularly the case with the issue of the Jews' return to Palestine, seen as a precursor to the Second Coming. This was preached about well before the First World War and the Balfour Declaration, but was particularly evident between the wars.<sup>63</sup>

Brethren would always be very careful to pray for those in government. As this was a Biblical command given at a time when those in power were despotic and the state opposed to Christianity, it was clearly relevant whether or not one agreed with government policy. However Brethren have tended to have conservative sympathies in general. A writer in the *Treasury* in 1926 praised the conservative New Zealand Prime Minister, Massey, as a "God-fearing man".<sup>64</sup> Several other comments over the years enjoin people to pray, both for the government and the King.<sup>65</sup> This was also evident in the war years, for example in *Australian Missionary Tidings* in April 1940: "... intercessory prayer should be constantly ascending on behalf of those in places in authority that they may be given wisdom and courage to do what is right and to rule in the fear of God."<sup>66</sup>

A typical summary can be found in Hunter Beattie's *The Christian and War*: "The believer's attitude is threefold. *First* - to obey every law that does not entail

<sup>60</sup> Rowdon, *op. cit.*, pp. 304 - 305, citing several authors.

<sup>61</sup> Rendle Short, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>62</sup> *Witness* November 1956, p. 225. This is from a regular page called "The Witness Watchtower", which commented on world events and things of topical interest.

<sup>63</sup> References to this are too numerous to mention. They recur throughout periodicals, and the topic was often raised in question times at conferences, apart from its mention in messages. My father (Amel R. Gordon) used to comment on his feeling of excitement when the Jewish state was established, having heard it predicted from Scripture so many times as he was growing up. A good example of this sort of teaching is found in W. C. Irvine's *Riches of the Gentiles* (Belgaum, c. 1935), Part IX: "Prophecy and the Second Coming", pp. 123-142.

<sup>64</sup> *Treasury* 1926, p. 32.

<sup>65</sup> *ibid.* 1930 p. 50; 1939 p. 46; 1943 p. 57

<sup>66</sup> *Australian Missionary Tidings* 1 April 1940, p. 65.

disobedience to the Word of God. ... *Second* - To render all their dues - tribute, custom, fear, honour. ... *Third* - To pray for kings and all that are in authority..."<sup>67</sup>

One author, G. F Trench, took a slightly different slant on the Christian's relation to the state, and may well be representative of a certain minority school of thought, although I have not been able to find any other examples. He believed his views to be the result of a correct interpretation of Scripture, reinforced by "the sympathy and concurrence of some whose mature spirituality and Christian separation from the world makes their approval most valuable."<sup>68</sup> Trench, writing probably before the turn of the century on *God in Government; or, The Christian's Relation to the State* (the title is significant), also recognised that "some for whose opinions I cherished deep respect ... differed ... with the conclusions I expressed."<sup>69</sup>

His emphasis was on the sovereignty of God, and he adduced examples from the Old Testament (e.g. Daniel and his companions) as well as the New. He summarised his position thus: "(1) God alone is the author of power; (2) The powers are of God's appointment; (3) The object of government is the punishment of evil-doers, and the praise of them that do well; (4) The Christian is to acknowledge the institution as one provided 'for his good'; (5) The Christian is to be in subjection, and to make rulers the subject of his prayers and thanksgivings."<sup>70</sup> It would probably be safe to say that practically all Brethren would agree with this summary, then and now.

However, because he saw God as the fountain of authority, he believed that "it is impossible ... to avoid the conclusion that godly persons are best fitted for its administration."<sup>71</sup> He quite agreed with the concept of heavenly citizenship, but thought that "on earth we all occupy a double position."<sup>72</sup> He therefore said that "so long as in the calling of God, who appoints all to their places, he [a Christian] occupies socially a position of influence and authority in relation to others, the responsibilities of rule connected therewith remain," and he adds in a footnote, " ... I speak chiefly of magistracy, [but] the passages of God's word to which I point apply equally to judgeships in all courts, to every office of government in the state, and down to the common juryman, the night-watchman, and policeman."<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Hunter Beattie, *The Christian and War* Glasgow (self-published, c. 1920), pp. 40-1.

<sup>68</sup> *ibid.*, pp. iii-iv.

<sup>69</sup> G. F. Trench, *God in Government; or, The Christian's Relation to the State* London: John F. Shaw and Co., n. d. (reprinted from the periodical *Word and Work*), p. iii.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>71</sup> *ibid.*, p. 19.

<sup>72</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.*, p. 21 and 20.

Nevertheless he also wrote that "all earthly labour and care ought to be avoided by the Christian, so far as they are not involved in the performance of duty. None should therefore 'entangle himself with the affairs of this life' unnecessarily."<sup>74</sup> He was therefore careful to maintain the principle of separation; while believing that it was not wrong to accept a position of authority if it arose in the normal circumstances of life, he would not advocate that a believer seek such a position.

He specifically excluded war from his consideration, but believed that capital punishment, dating from the days of Noah, was a "universal and constant" law.<sup>75</sup> He also stated his assumption that the laws to be administered were to be for the punishment of evil-doers; "if any individual enactment is found to contradict the laws of God, His servant needs no instruction how to act."<sup>76</sup>

Thus we can see that some writers, such as Darby, took a strong view of separation from an evil society and a ruinous church, involvement in which only delays the return of Christ, whereas others viewed human government as necessary for the administration of society and not intrinsically evil. The meeting point between eschatology and theology could therefore be contentious.

It is evident that many Brethren agreed substantially with Trench's argument, but parted company as to the believer actually holding the position of power to which they were to be subject. For many less well educated Brethren, the two strongest points that emerged somewhat simplistically from any teaching on these subjects were submission to the powers that be, and separation from the world. How they were to enact these principles created the wartime tension.

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<sup>74</sup> *ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*, p. 28.

**(iii) Brethren writing on war**

Apart from those noted above (Groves, Hall, Brenton, and the Gosses), the only other person in the nineteenth century who seems to have commented on the Christian's position in war-time was J. N Darby, in response to the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. As Brock says, Darby's letter, to French Brethren, is "cautious though unambiguous".<sup>77</sup> I have quoted it in full as Appendix A, because of its near-uniqueness, and because others than Exclusives would have read and followed it.<sup>78</sup> Its main points were that "a Christian, free to do as he will, could never be a soldier" and must bear the consequences of conscience if "forced to it"; that he should not be possessed by the idea of patriotism; that "if consistent, declares plainly that he seeks a ... better, that is to say, a heavenly country"; and that he should recognise the hand of God in these things (i.e. an external threat to the country).

It will be seen from this letter that the themes of simple pacifism, conscience, separation, and submission to authorities and the sovereignty of God are juxtaposed. These issues were the ones that continued to be brought forward, with the emphasis varying with the writer's standpoint.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the demographic profile of the Brethren was changing somewhat, with the influx of more working and lower middle class converts following the revivals. This was particularly the case in Scotland, and in the colonies. In Scotland, some groups came into being who did not originate with English Brethren, and who came into fellowship with them when they recognised they were operating on the same principles<sup>79</sup>. Many of these newer assemblies had a vigorous evangelistic concern, coupled with a strong view of separation (epitomised in the development of the "Needed Truth" wing in the 1880's and '90's<sup>80</sup>). They were often unaware of the so-called "pacifist" stance of early Brethren, and from a different social class, but their orientation also was towards separation from the world (and from the "sects"), and their preoccupation was with bringing people into the heavenly kingdom. Some of the most popular periodicals came from Scotland - the *Witness* and the *Believers Magazine* - so these sort of emphases were widely disseminated.

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<sup>77</sup> Brock, "Peace Testimony", p. 35.

<sup>78</sup> For example, it is quoted in full in Lang, *Christian Relation*, pp. 27-29. Lang was a well-known and travelled British Open Brethren teacher. The letter appears in collections of Darby's letters (there are various editions), almost obligatory in many Exclusive households, and common in not a few Open ones of an earlier era.

<sup>79</sup> see F. F. Bruce's foreword to Coad's *History*, p. 9: "In ... North-East Scotland many of these independent churches ... came into existence ... without any prior knowledge of the independent churches formed earlier in Dublin, Plymouth and Bristol."

The onset of the First World War triggered many tracts and even books written on this subject - of course broadened to the *Christian* and war. More were written before the Second World War. However it is interesting that very few of my respondents seem to have read them; at least they do not mention them as having had an influence. An exception is E. W Rogers' *The Christian Believer and Military Service* (1937), which was mentioned by two of them.

In this section I will be concentrating on the principles espoused, rather than the responses to war, although inevitably there will be some overlap with later sections of this thesis. I have not included here editorial comment, letters to the editor, or comments arising from news items.

At this point I must disagree with Brock's proposition that "At the center of Brethren nonresistance, as expounded by the movement's early leaders, lay the Law of Love ... although the need for the saints to separate as far as possible from the world was undoubtedly one of the reasons for resigning [commissions], the Brethren's peace testimony surely provided an even more important motive..."<sup>81</sup> I believe that the extracts I shall cite show that Brethren discussed almost any other topic than the sort normally thought of when the words "peace testimony" are used. They saw themselves as bearing testimony to the truth as revealed in the Bible, or to Christ Himself, or to the place of the believer in the world, but not to "peace" as would, for instance, a Quaker.

Certainly the "law of love" would be mentioned; a New Zealand document says that "the main principle of Christianity is love",<sup>82</sup> and a writer in *Tidings* said "... all Paul's victories were won on the non-resistance principle ... There is but one Kingdom that is established on the principle of love, and that requires no soldiery to enforce adherence to its laws ... The law that govern[s] them is fulfilled in one word 'love'".<sup>83</sup>

Allied to this thought, but still different from the principle of non-resistance, was the concept of positive Christian behaviour towards others. The above New Zealand document stated that "warfare is the manifestation of the hatred in the heart of man toward his enemies" and that Christians were enjoined to love their enemies. This is

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<sup>80</sup> see the article by G. Willis and B. R. Wilson, "The Churches of God: Pattern and Practice", in B. R. Wilson, *Patterns of Sectarianism* (London, 1967), pp. 244-286.

<sup>81</sup> Brock, op. cit., pp. 38-9.

<sup>82</sup> *The Christian and his Relation to War and Military Training*, 2 undated duplicated sheets sent me by Dr. Peter Lineham.

echoed in many other sources: "is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ entitled to have natural enemies?" asked an English writer.<sup>84</sup> Lang is emphatic on this point: "He must have his heart consciously full of that love of God which is toward all men equally, and which therefore makes it an outrage of the deepest instinct of his soul that he should slaughter, or in any lesser degree injure, any man. He must be in the power of the fact that he is a member of the family and the kingdom of God, which is composed of members of every earthly race and nation, and which fact therefore obliterates from his heart and conduct those very distinctions upon which the wars of men proceed."<sup>85</sup> A prominent English Bible teacher, E. W. Rogers, maintained that combatant service was "entirely contrary to the fruit of the Spirit ... EVERYONE of these nine items is lost in active warfare."<sup>86</sup>

(This exposition of the law of love is based on an interpretation of the gospels not common among Brethren dispensationalists, yet it obviously appeared on occasions. Lang's view of the kingdom is also not common, as more usually it was taught that the kingdom teaching applied to Christ's millennial reign.)

The Christian view of humanity inevitably extended to a consideration of mankind's eternal destiny. As there were considered to be only two alternatives, and only two classes of humanity, the remorselessly logical conclusion was that "if the Christian actively engages in war he may first be liable to send a fellow-member of the body of Christ violently into the presence of His Lord ... or ... to send an unbeliever ... into a hopeless eternity."<sup>87</sup> The same point is made more emotively by Lawson: he refers to "[hurrying] into a lost eternity some poor sinner for whom Christ died ... [thrusting] a bayonet into a child of God in the opposing army."<sup>88</sup> Brethren evangelistic concern made this a powerful argument in relation to the unbeliever.

The Brethren movement had grown out of a desire to have fellowship with all members of the body of Christ, so Christian unity was also an argument which had peculiar force. In an article in 1937 Parish asserted that the Christian was an 'internationalist', and that commands of Christ such as "Love your enemies" settled the issue.<sup>89</sup> This "a-patriotic" position was taken by Utting (and others): after arguing that "England, or any other

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<sup>83</sup> *Tidings* April 1916, pp. 770

<sup>84</sup> F. L[awson], *The Believer and War* (Glasgow, n.d.), p. 6.

<sup>85</sup> Lang, *Christian Relation*, p. 6

<sup>86</sup> E. W. Rogers, *The Christian Believer and Military Service* (Kilmarnock, 1937), p. 8-9. Galatians 5:22, 23 states that "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."

<sup>87</sup> *ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>88</sup> Lawson *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>89</sup> F. Parish, "The Christian and Militarism", *Harvester* May 1937, p. 103.

country [is a ] piece of the World" (and therefore something to be separate from), he goes on to say that "the Scriptures most clearly and positively teach that nationality is to be absolutely obliterated for the Christian." He remarks on the irony of the situation where "Today in England Christians are praying for the success of "our" soldiers, and for the protection of "our" country ...Doubtless many Christians in Germany, Russia, Austria, &c., are doing the same. Thus does Satan delude God's children and neutralise prayer."<sup>90</sup>

Similar points were made in both wars in periodicals. Price, writing in the *Harvester* in the Second World War said "During the last war, I remember listening to a prayer, in which God was asked to 'sweep back the enemy,' and I wondered how many similar prayers might be rising from Christians in all those nations at war. If this prayer was answered in this land, then somebody's prayer elsewhere must remain unanswered."<sup>91</sup> A writer in the *Treasury* in the First World War said "We need also to remember that "God hath made of one blood all nations under heaven", and that all are alike before Him. Many true Christians will undoubtedly be engaged in the war, and the Christians in the German Army are as dear to God as those in the British Army."<sup>92</sup> This statement, even given that it was early in the war, indicates how insulated many Brethren were from the patriotic fervour which prevailed in society at large.

The foregoing statements are the ones closest to the traditional pacifist stance of rejecting war as a means of settling disputes, but they will be seen to have a qualitative difference in that the proponents were viewing the world entirely from what they believed to be God's standpoint. Nevertheless many other concerns were to the forefront in the Brethren position on war. Many of these were perhaps encapsulated in an article by John Ritchie, an influential Scottish publisher and editor, reprinted in the *Treasury* in 1915. He stated that "Subjection to 'powers' ... is, as a principle, always right. But when they ask the Christian to do what he cannot do without disobeying God ... he puts the higher claim first."<sup>93</sup>

Ritchie was arguing against what he saw as the "fallacious arguments set forth in favour [of enlisting, although he does not give them], or ... the unwarrantable conclusion that there is no Scripture teaching on the subject, but that each is to be guided by his own

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<sup>90</sup> C. S. Utting, *The Christian, and War* (Norwich, 1916), p. 10. Beattie (*op. cit.*, p. 70) made a similar point: "Doubtless saints in Germany and Austria are also praying for victory. WHOM has God to answer? Whose petition will He refuse?"

<sup>91</sup> J. C. W. Price, "But If Not--", article from the *Harvester* reprinted in *Tidings* March 1940, pp. 44-5.

<sup>92</sup> *Treasury* vol. 16, 1914, p. 136.

<sup>93</sup> *Treasury*, 1915, p. 166.

instincts and volitions."<sup>94</sup> He went on to state that the "sword" referred to in Romans 13:4 was that of the magistrate not the soldier; that "dispensational distinctions have to be observed" (i.e. that Old Testament stories cannot be used to justify war); that the Christian had no part in national retribution, and was liable to "the danger that he may empty his rifle into the heart of his brother in Christ"; that once a Christian was in the army it was too late to "rebel if he is commanded to do what the Word of God forbids"; and that "conscience is to be enlightened and guided by the Word of God."<sup>95</sup>

The themes of separation, subjection to the powers that be and the resultant possible conflict of conscience, the problems involved with fighting and taking the oath of allegiance, the sovereignty of God, the dispensations, and constant reference to the Bible as the Word of God, definitive for decision making, are all taken into account here and are common to all the tracts or books I read.

That of separation was probably fundamental. It is what underlies the article in *Australian Missionary Tidings* in April 1916: "Their Kingdom, of course, is not of this world, consequently they [i.e. believers] are supposed to hold a 'benevolent neutrality' toward this world's combatants."<sup>96</sup> Lang wrote twenty years later that "[the believer] must be walking in a humble but practical separation from this world, its politics, its trade societies, its pleasure clubs, and so forth."<sup>97</sup> Separation was the most obvious response, given Brethren teaching over the previous century. "It is a grievous sin for a Christian to fight in the battles of the World, for he has been chosen out from the world" began a 1916 English booklet.<sup>98</sup>

Another author defined the world as "that earth-wide system, the animating principle of which is Man's will and not God's ... It is from such a world that we are called upon to separate ourselves ... Can ... a believer ... be assimilated in mind and interest with a world judged guilty of rejecting his Lord and Saviour? ... or have sympathy with the schemes, the policies, the aims and ambitions of the nations of that world? ... Is it the occupation of believers to assist in setting this world in order, either by political or military methods, - a world which is passing to its doom at the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ...?"<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 166-7. Technically it was not too late to refuse an order on conscientious grounds once someone was in the army, but the consequences were usually too serious to contemplate.

<sup>96</sup> *Tidings* April 1916, p. 770.

<sup>97</sup> Lang, *Christian Relation*, p. 6.

<sup>98</sup> Utting *op. cit.*, p. 3

<sup>99</sup> Lawson, *op. cit.*, p. 3-5

Incidentally, given this teaching, it was also considered worldly to participate in pacifist groups such as the No-Conscription Fellowship, or the Fellowship of Reconciliation. To have been involved with these would have meant working with non-Christians (in some cases) in a political way, both of which courses of action were seen as unscriptural. Beattie added further arguments when he wrote that "the Saint to-day can have nothing to do with Peace meetings, Peace associations, or such like. There will be no Peace on earth till the Prince of Peace returns to occupy His rightful throne and wield His rightful sceptre."<sup>100</sup>

Behind all this was the teaching of the Christian's citizenship being in heaven, as we have seen. A New Zealand author wrote "... we should remember that we are the citizens of a better, a heavenly, country. While it is not ours, as Christians, to volunteer to help fight the battles of the world, we should be much in prayer before God that He will overrule for His own glory..."<sup>101</sup> The New Zealand document quoted above stated: "It is not our place to involve ourselves in earthly troubles."<sup>102</sup> An English author asked rhetorically, "[A]re we not ... aliens in this country in which we dwell, belonging in heart and interest to another and better country...?"<sup>103</sup> Rogers wrote in 1937, "The Church ... belongs to no one nation, and has no specific land on earth. *Consistency with such a call requires that the members of that body take no voluntary active part in the government, politics, or conflicts of any one nation.*"<sup>104</sup> [his italics].

The conflict between this stand and the instruction to be subject to the powers that be is articulated in a leaflet drawn up by leaders of the "Church of God" or "Needed Truth" wing of the Brethren (in effect a separate sect).<sup>105</sup> In 1935 they wrote that "The Lord's disciple ... cannot become a soldier of an earthly king or government to engage in war; to do so would be a denial of his confession of faith as a messenger of the Prince of Peace ... He must pray for the king ... the ministers, and officers of state, and others; but he may not serve in the king's army, in any part thereof either combatant or non-combatant."<sup>106</sup>

<sup>100</sup> Beattie, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>101</sup> F. Bates, *Treasury* vol. 16 (1914), p. 136.

<sup>102</sup> *The Christian and his Relation to War and Military Training* *op. cit.*

<sup>103</sup> Lawson, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

<sup>104</sup> Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>105</sup> The Churches of God separated from mainstream Brethren in 1892-3 on ecclesiological grounds; "looseness of association" and the reception of Christians from other fellowships were major concerns. For the only account I know of, see G. Willis and B. R. Wilson, "The Churches of God: Pattern and Practice", in Wilson (ed.), *Patterns of Sectarianism*.

<sup>106</sup> *Reports of Conference of Representative Overseers of the Churches of God in the British Isles and Overseas* no place or publisher, this report 1935, pp. 22-3, cited in Willis and Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 281.

Most Brethren writing did face this conflict, and usually extended the verse in Acts 4:19 ("We must obey God rather than men") to cover situations other than the proclamation of the Gospel which had first occasioned it.<sup>107</sup> A. F. Jack wrote that "We must be obedient to [earthly rule] always, unless and until its commands conflict with His own commands to us."<sup>108</sup> Rogers goes further to argue that the word submission "is not intended to convey an injunction of unswerving and unquestioning obedience to everything enjoined" and says that where people choose to obey God rather than men, they must also be prepared to submit to "the consequences as enacted by the authorities."<sup>109</sup> Lang goes to some length in a section headed "The ground and limit of obedience" to show that "no ruler other than the Most High Himself may claim absolutely unlimited obedience."<sup>110</sup>

(This, by the way, is in contrast to other Protestant denominations. As Gilbert shows, in the conscription debate in Australia in 1916-17 "all the major denominational periodicals resorted to ... theological legitimation of compulsory military service."<sup>111</sup> This was definitely not the case with *Tidings*, as the extracts from it show; neither is this the case with the *Gleaner*, a small periodical circulated among "Hopkins" meetings in Victoria and Tasmania. In fact, the whole issue is not even mentioned, except obliquely, and was evidently not raised formally at conferences either, as the sermons, notes of which make up the major part of the magazine, are entirely expository or devotional.)

An article in *Tidings* magazine in April 1940 did spell out the relevant considerations for young Brethren faced with the possibility of military call-up. "The two responsibilities ... placed upon believers are, subjection to the authorities that be, and to pray for them ... In so far as [the] laws or government enactments do not conflict with the law of God, or require a believer ... to act contrary to what is required of him by God, there must be obedience. But should he be called upon to act in any way contrary to God's Word and Law, he may have to refuse." However the author does not prescribe what the divine law is on this point; it often seems as though, particularly in the Second World War, writers pulled back from the brink of directly stating their position. The matter of conscience is raised: "The question of offering oneself to the government for ... military service is one for each conscience to decide, and calls for much prayer and

<sup>107</sup> e.g. Utting, *op. cit.*, p. 31: "When Caesar forbids the Gospel, or commands Christ's servants to fight, then the answers of the Apostles ... must be acted upon."

<sup>108</sup> Jack, A. F., *The Church and War* (Glasgow, n.d. [First World War]), p. 12

<sup>109</sup> Rogers, *op. cit.*, p. 14, 12-13.

<sup>110</sup> Lang, *Christian Relation*, p. 8

<sup>111</sup> Alan D. Gilbert, "Protestants, Catholics and Loyalty: An Aspect of the Conscription Controversies, 1916-17", *Politics* vol. VI, no. 1, 1971, p. 24. Gilbert quotes from Anglican, Methodist, and Baptist periodicals.

deep exercise before God." A heavy hint is given however: "the taking of life, as has to be done in warfare, is so awful ... that it does seem inconceivable that any child of God should face such a serious responsibility ... If called upon to enlist, one may be exempted from combatant service..."<sup>112</sup>

It is interesting that a later article seems to show a shift in position. While still presenting the argument of qualified submission to the authorities, and talking about the exercise of conscience, this writer seems to have come to a somewhat "*pacifist*"<sup>113</sup> position; having stated that he believes that in the British Empire "we have rulers and laws that respect Christian principles", he goes on to say that "it is generally recognised that this war was thrust upon the British, and is being waged in the interests of what is righteous, and for liberty as opposed to dictatorship and slavery ... Many Christians, therefore, feel that if they can act righteously and help the Government, they should do so as far as in their power."<sup>114</sup> The general implication of the article is towards applying for non-combatant status, but clearly there would not be condemnation for those who chose otherwise, as it concludes " We cannot but honour those who are prepared to make a sacrifice in loyalty to their king and country ..."

The author raises another question which was involved with military service, that of taking the oath. The early inclination of Brethren was to avoid making any kind of oath; Sir Edward Denny wrote a tract on the subject, arguing that the believer should not take the oath in court.<sup>115</sup> While some later writers did not agree with him, feeling that it was acceptable to make a "solemn invocation of God to witness the truth of a formal declaration on a special occasion",<sup>116</sup> they were generally relieved that believers could take advantage of the right to affirm, and most were unhappy with the military oath. Rogers wrote that "... *voluntarily to take an oath of allegiance and to link one's self with the army in any of its branches is, surely, being "unequally yoked together with unbelievers," and voluntarily "yielding our bodies" to the service of men in life or death*" [his italics]<sup>117</sup>. Lang emphasised this too ("of all yokes the military, by reason of the dread exigencies of the situation, is of necessity the most rigid and severe"<sup>118</sup>), and it

<sup>112</sup> *Tidings* April 1940, pp. 67-8 - "The Believer and Military Service".

<sup>113</sup> M. Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain 1914-1945: The Defining of a Faith* (Oxford, 1980), p. 3, defines "pacifism" as "the assumption that war, though *sometimes necessary*, is always an irrational and inhumane way to solve disputes." It is in this sense that I use the word.

<sup>114</sup> *Tidings* September 1941, pp. 169-70 - "The Christian and War".

<sup>115</sup> E. D. [Edward Denny, 1796 - 1889], *On Swearing* n.d., n. pub. - in Rice T. Hopkins collection of tracts held by Ian McDowell.

<sup>116</sup> *Tidings* September 1942, pp. 204-5 - "The Christian and War", quoting excerpts from C. F. Hogg and J. B. Watson, *On the Sermon on the Mount*. Hogg and Watson were respected English Bible teachers. G. H. Lang agreed: see *The Christian Relation*, pp. 19 - 25.

<sup>117</sup> Rogers, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>118</sup> Lang *op. cit.*, p. 5.

is mentioned in the New Zealand document<sup>119</sup> referred to above. Beattie, dramatising a typical tribunal case, makes "Heavenlyman" say "As a Christian, I dare not surrender my personality to the arbitrary authority of men. I dare not take an oath or promise to obey every command issued ... My body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, ... I must not become man's slave."<sup>120</sup> So the issues were both adherence to the Biblical teaching on oaths ("Swear not at all..."), and the surrender of one's actions to the direction of someone other than God.

Another theme often invoked in the discussions on war was the sovereignty of God.<sup>121</sup> Brethren concern with prophecy could result in a keen interest in what they perceived as God at work in the world, and in common with other Christians they saw war as a call to repentance and possibly God's judgement on the world. Ware, writing at the time of the Great War, believed that God was allowing Satan to unleash the horrors of war, but asked "may we not concede that God has had good reason to permit this awful scourge?"<sup>122</sup>

Lang, strenuously against Christian involvement in war, said that at best it was "a species of international justice, part of the governmental rule by which God punishes godless persons and nations."<sup>123</sup> Arguing against praying for victory, Lawson wrote that "God has no interest in this war, save that His over-ruling power will, whether in time of war or in time of peace, be exercised to prevent developments which would hinder the ... coming again of the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>124</sup> At the end of the war the editor of *Tidings*, speaking of the liberation of Palestine by General Allenby, saw in this "undoubtedly the hand of God Himself."<sup>125</sup>

He went on to speculate that this might be the "possible early fulfilment of God's revealed plan." Darby, and most Brethren since, taught that there are various dispensations or periods of time in human history with regard to God's dealing with humanity.<sup>126</sup> The current one, which covers the time from the inception of the church to the coming of Christ, was frequently referred to as "this day of grace" in which men are

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<sup>119</sup> *The Christian and his Relation to War and Military Training*

<sup>120</sup> Beattie *op. cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>121</sup> Brethren by and large are not hyper-Calvinist, but hold both a fairly strong view of God's action in the world and also a belief in the free will of man to turn to Him (hence their active evangelistic efforts).

<sup>122</sup> H. Ware, *God and the War* (Glasgow, n.d.), p. 14.

<sup>123</sup> Lang, *Christian Relation*, p. 4.

<sup>124</sup> Lawson, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>125</sup> *Tidings* November 1918, p. 163.

<sup>126</sup> The dispensations as commonly taught (developed somewhat since Darby's time) are Innocence (the creation of Adam to the expulsion from Eden), Conscience (the Fall to the Flood), Human Government (from the Flood to the Tower of Babel), Promise (from Abraham to the Exodus), Law (from the giving of the law to Calvary), Grace (from the Cross to the Second Coming), and the Kingdom (Christ's reign on the earth).

able to come to God through the work of Christ. It was seen by some as a time when believers should not exercise any political authority, although they would do so when Christ set up his kingdom. Thus one author wrote of judgment under the law in the Old Testament, and then said "But no such executive has been committed to God's people now ... The Holy Spirit never gives to a believer of the present dispensation warrant to take the sword."<sup>127</sup>

Even Lang, who as we have seen was quite absolute in his opposition to a Christian fighting, limited it to this dispensation: "we do not with some say that all war is inherently and necessarily wrong, for we recognize that God has ordered wars ... We say that all this is not the present business of the associate of the Lord Jesus Christ..."<sup>128</sup> Dispensationalism also removed the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount from current day application to the future kingdom of Christ, which contrasts with the use pacifists often made of it.

What then was a Christian to do? Clearly the more radical thinkers such as Beattie and Lang (both incidentally regarded by some as somewhat "unusual and individualist and ... [tending] to be marginalised by the [Brethren] 'establishment'"<sup>129</sup>) believed that he or she should not fight, and should claim exemption from even non-combatant service. This view was also that of Fingland Jack,<sup>130</sup> who objected to involvement in the NCC: "The army is one, recruited and organised for one object, directed to only one end..."<sup>131</sup> It was further enunciated by Parish in the *Harvester*, who nevertheless recognised that "knowing the frailty of human nature, and also recognising that to follow that extreme line of thought to its logical end would make it incumbent upon us to remove at once out of reach of the civilised world, only a few staunch souls can be expected so to interpret their Lord's will."<sup>132</sup>

Lang indeed gave a possible answer for the familiar tribunal question: "[Christ's] follower may interpose his body between an attacker and the attacked, as a shield against attempted violence, and endure the pains of such passive obstruction of evil."<sup>133</sup> This was also Utting's view, adducing the example of martyrs and prisoners in other centuries who had suffered for the sake of Christ.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>127</sup> "Can a Believer Fight" n.d., n. pub., p. 2 and 4.

<sup>128</sup> Lang, *Christian Relation*, p. 4.

<sup>129</sup> comment by Roy Coad in a fax to me, 21 September 1994.

<sup>130</sup> Jack wrote *The Church and War* already cited.

<sup>131</sup> letter in the *Harvester* July 1937, p. 150.

<sup>132</sup> Parish op. cit., *Harvester* May 1937, p. 103

<sup>133</sup> Lang, *Christian Relation*, p. 13. It is reminiscent of Lytton Strachey's famous reply to the question "What would you do if a German soldier was trying to rape your sister?" ("I should try and come between them.")

<sup>134</sup> Utting op. cit., p. 18.

However Rogers took a more middle course, which was evident in many of the comments in periodicals also.<sup>135</sup> His conclusion was "Whether a Conscience clause be introduced with Conscription, as on the last occasion or not, it seems to me that the Christian would be well advised to submit to do anything that is not contrary to the revealed will of God; to take no oath (an unlikely requirement)[;] to accept no position where the possibility of bearing arms would be incurred; and ever to be on guard to limit one's own activities in any position to plain obedience of non-co-operation in taking life. To do nothing whatsoever that is in any way connected with a national war is, in the nature of things, impossible..."<sup>136</sup>

Although the clear trend in advice was to appeal for exemption from military service, and failing that to accept non-combatant status (with perhaps more leaning towards the latter course for the Second World War), there was no condemnation of those who enlisted in the literature I inspected.

All writers constantly referred to the Bible, as the only rule for life. Despite the fact that different writers, espousing different viewpoints, claimed that God had not left people wondering what to do, there were still wide variations in emphasis and interpretation. Verses of Scripture that were commonly given for consideration were Luke 6:20-36 and Matthew 5 (the Sermon on the Mount), John 17:16, Philippians 3:20, 2 Corinthians 6:21-7:1, Acts 5: 29, Matthew 22:21, 1 Peter 2:11, Romans 13:1-7, 1 Peter 2: 13-17 and Hebrews 11: 14-16.

One group of Brethren which did have a firm policy was the Exclusive Brethren. They canvassed many of the same texts and arguments, with an emphasis that "government is from God and had authority from Him"<sup>137</sup>, but were firmly against enlisting or agreeing to active service. They took advantage of any conscience clauses in relevant legislation, as a way for "every instructed believer, rightly feeling that he could not with a good conscience take life, to preserve his conscience and at the same time accord to the authorities whom God has placed over him the subjection that the will of God requires."<sup>138</sup> However if these were not available, non-compliance was enjoined: "A

<sup>135</sup> e.g. *Tidings* November 1916, p. 869; April 1940, p. 68.

<sup>136</sup> Rogers *op. cit.*, p. 15-16. The awkward phrasing may be an unconscious part of the effort to inform the conscience rather than dictate a course of action.

<sup>137</sup> *Letters of James Taylor* vol. 2 (Stow Hill, 1956), p. 174. The idea of authority seemed to sit well with the Exclusive "structure". It is more pronounced than in Open Brethren writing.

<sup>138</sup> A. J. Gardiner, *The Recovery and Maintenance of the Truth* (Kingston-on-Thames, 1951), p. 223. Some may feel this reads rather oddly. Darby was noted for his convoluted phraseology, and generations of Exclusive writers seem to have followed suit, perhaps in unconscious imitation, or as a result of the extreme introversion of their fellowships.

good many of our younger brethren in the United States and Canada are now in Service. They are generally bearing a good testimony, but some are under much pressure because of conscience. The military laws of Canada do not provide for conscientious objectors and one of our brothers ... is at present in prison."<sup>139</sup> Exclusives in general particularly used the text "Be not unequally (or diversely, as Darby's version puts it) yoked together with unbelievers" (1 Cor. 6:21).

Notwithstanding the foregoing, there was a strand of Brethren thinking which allowed for active service. This is implied by the questions that many of the writers quoted above seemed to have been answering. It hardly appeared at all in the periodicals, although the fact that the issue was discussed shows that the debate was alive. The main proponent that I have found was Major-General Sir William Dobbie, who wrote *Christianity and Military Service* in the 1930's. Brethren also used him as an example of a fine Christian soldier when it suited - for example, at the ceremony to open an Everyman's Hut in Australia.<sup>140</sup>

Dobbie argued from similar premises as his fellow-Brethren, especially in basing his points on Scripture ("the only safe course is to bring all ... to the touchstone of Scripture."<sup>141</sup>). He gave three 'facts': "(a) Nowhere in the whole of Scripture is there the slightest hint that the soldier's calling is unlawful ... (b) Throughout Scripture God envisages human rule as being ultimately based on force ...(c) The Christian life is constantly likened by the Holy Spirit to that of a soldier."<sup>142</sup> He believed that this showed that there was "no *prima facie* case for the assumption that the profession of arms is unlawful for a Christian."<sup>143</sup>

He then argues that war itself "comes from sin, and is the result of the unwillingness of the human race to subordinate itself to the Will of God ... Until [Christ comes] one must expect that wars will continue to be regrettable phenomena of human history."<sup>144</sup> He believed that the Sermon on the Mount "surely refers ... mainly to the time when the Kingdom of God will be set up on earth"<sup>145</sup>, thus attempting to maintain consistency with dispensationalist teaching.

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<sup>139</sup> *Letters of James Taylor*, p. 296. It is clear from the context of the letters that "in Service" means as non-combatants.

<sup>140</sup> *Tidings* August 1941, p. 156 - the report of the opening of the Everyman's Hut at Redbank Military Camp.

<sup>141</sup> W. G. S. Dobbie, *Christianity and Military Service* (London, 1936), p. 6.

<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 2-4.

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5. Carter (personal communication, 14 July 1994) remembers that in early 1940, his NCC company was billeted in the West End of London, and Brethren in the unit attended Sir William's assembly. "My friends had the impression that ... he was not too keen on being in fellowship with young men having non-combatant status!"

<sup>144</sup> *ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>145</sup> *ibid.*, p. 9.

As a professional soldier he had experience of the British army's "peace-keeping" role, going so far as to state that "it is quite certain that the British armed forces will never be used in a selfish war of aggression" and that "the best way to preserve peace is to be strong in righteousness".<sup>146</sup> His conclusion was that "Scripture indicates that the profession of arms is an honourable and lawful one; the use of force and material weapons is not incompatible with faith in God; that God is a God of order and that in this present dispensation He has ordained that human governments shall maintain order by force..."<sup>147</sup>

The only other document which supports this position is one issued by Tory Street Hall, Wellington, which emphasises the defensive aspect of war as a means to "put down a nation which .. has set itself up in defiance of principles of Divine Government for which governments are ordained" and as a "function of Divine judgment upon nations who oppose God." Given the principle of submission to authority, they thought that "a man may serve in a righteous defence in any capacity".<sup>148</sup> However, if he still had conscientious qualms, he could engage in non-combatant service.

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<sup>146</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 13 and 16.

<sup>147</sup> *ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>148</sup> Untitled duplicated open letter from "leading and responsible brethren from Tory Street Hall, Wellington" (New Zealand), Second World War.

#### (iv) Links with the Anabaptist tradition

Many of the themes discussed above, such as separation from the world and obedience to Christ's commands as found in the Scriptures, and the kind of pacifism that results from non-involvement in the world's conflicts, are evident in the churches which spring from the Anabaptist tradition, such as Mennonites, Moravians, and other smaller groups. It is interesting to examine whether the Brethren derived any of their ideas from these movements.

There was indeed knowledge of the Moravians among early Brethren; an account was published in *The Christian Witness* in January 1834.<sup>149</sup> Darby made contact with groups of Moravians in Switzerland and some "Brethren" assemblies developed from his work among them. It is also interesting that several of Zinzendorf's hymns appeared in Brethren hymnbooks,<sup>150</sup> and his distinctive language concerning the Lamb of God may also have had some influence.

George Müller had some contact with Pietism through his personal knowledge of the orphanages which Francke had developed at Halle, and later in the nineteenth century Frances Bevan translated a number of hymns of the German mystics and published lives of some of the Continental reformers.<sup>151</sup> Thus there was some awareness among Brethren of this legacy of spirituality.

Certainly the Brethren in Germany quite consciously see a link with these earlier movements. In the seminar room at the Wiedenest Bible School there are nine portraits, chosen from those Christian leaders who best characterise what the Bible School stands for.<sup>152</sup> The men chosen were Comenius (Bohemian Brethren), Zinzendorf and Schwenkfeld (Moravians), Menno Simons (Mennonite), George Fox (Quaker), A. N. Groves, George Müller, F. W. Baedeker, and Paschkow. However, while those who were not Brethren represent historic peace churches, it does not seem that they were chosen for this reason; for example, George Fox was chosen for his reliance on the Holy Spirit for leading.<sup>153</sup>

<sup>149</sup> Coad, *History* op. cit., p. 84.

<sup>150</sup> *The Believers Hymn Book* has "Jesus, the Lord, our righteousness" and "O come, Thou stricken Lamb of God!"

<sup>151</sup> Coad, *History* op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>152</sup> "In unserem Unterrichtsraum hängen 9 Bilder. Sie zeigen führende Persönlichkeiten aus der Geschichte der Gemeinde Gottes älterer und neuer Zeit. Aus der großen Zahl von Männern Gottes, deren Leben unter einem besonderen Segen gestanden hat, sind dieses neun nach ganz bestimmten Gesichtspunkten ausgewählt." E. Sauer, *50 Jahre Missionshaus Bibelschule* (Wiedenest, 1955), p. 62.

<sup>153</sup> "Hier muß alles unter der Leitung des Heiligen Geistes stehen. Dies war eines der besonderen Anliegen der Quäker-Bewegung, deren Bahnbrecher und Führer, **George Fox**, das vierte Bild darstellt ... Entscheidend aber ist in allem die Wirkung und Leitung des Heiligen Geistes, wie im Alltagsleben der Gläubigen so auch in den

The book that most made Brethren aware of their possible connection with earlier movements was *The Pilgrim Church* by E. H. Broadbent. Published in 1931, it "showed the kinship of the Brethren movement with other movements dating from apostolic times, and ... provided Brethrenism with an ... account of a continuous spiritual heritage, and ... a sense of continuity ..." <sup>154</sup> Broadbent's account included virtually all the separated or gathered churches, and included the Bogomils, Waldensians, Albigensians, Lollards, Hussites, Bohemian Brethren, Anabaptists, Mennonites, Huguenots, Quakers, English Nonconformists, Pietists, and Moravians (and of course the Brethren!). His purpose was to show that there have always been churches which "have endeavoured in their meetings, order, and testimony to make the Scriptures their guide and to act upon them..." <sup>155</sup> He occasionally refers in passing to their relationship with the state, but generally concentrates on their distinctive emphases as regards worship and church order. However, in his summing up, he gives three "salient points" which characterise what he would regard as "true churches": "one is that the Pilgrim Church has possessed in the Scriptures a safe and sufficient guide... A second is that [it] is separate from the World; though in it is not of it. [my italics] A third is that the Church is One." <sup>156</sup>

However, despite these connections, I have been unable to find any evidence that the Brethren consciously derived ideas on their relationship with the state, or regarding pacifism, from these sources. The writings I have studied show that they deduced these principles afresh from Scripture, and if they were aware of previous thinking on these matters, gave little hint of it. They may have derived strength from the knowledge that there had always been a "remnant" who remained true to the vision of the church as they saw it.

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Zusammenkünften der Gemeinde. Diese Wahrheit der Gesitesleitung wurde besonders von Fox unde seine Freunden im 17. Jahrhundert betont." Ibid, p. 64.

<sup>154</sup> Coad, *History*, p. 91.

<sup>155</sup> E. H. Broadbent, *The Pilgrim Church* (London, 1945 [1931]), p. vi.

<sup>156</sup> *ibid.*, p. 399-400.

## WORLD WAR I

### (i) Conscientious objection in World War I

In this chapter I wish to set out the military requirements of the governments of the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand in the Great War, in order to provide the context for Brethren response to the war.

The general atmosphere in the community is well known: the fervent patriotism of many<sup>1</sup>, the "white feathers" for those who did not enlist,<sup>2</sup> the Kitchener poster ("YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU"), the emotional recruiting rallies. I will be assuming that the reader is familiar with this background.

In Britain the early need for soldiers was met by the Regular Army, the Territorials, and the rush of enlistments. As the numbers of volunteers decreased, the government began to consider conscription, something which had hitherto been looked down upon by many Englishmen as peculiar to the Continent. The first step in this direction was the National Register, which collected details in August 1915 of every man of military age<sup>3</sup>. Pacifists recognised this as the thin end of the wedge and some refused to register. The Register was followed by the Derby Scheme, in which available men of military age were personally canvassed and invited to attest their willingness to serve when needed. Some who did attest expressed a preference for non-combatant service.

Eventually in January 1916 Asquith introduced the Military Service Bill, by which all unmarried men between the ages of eighteen and forty-one were "deemed" to be enlisted. Rae has shown in detail the manoeuvring that led to this step, and he points out that it was not just Asquith's somewhat dilatory personality nor his "laissez faire" policies that delayed the Bill, but his concern that nation and parliament come to accept the overwhelming need for conscription, thus minimising the divisiveness of such a move.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> e.g. Carter, personal communication 30 June 1994: "Patriotism was blatant and jingoistic in 1914-1918 and our assembly was affected by it, particularly in the earlier years."

<sup>2</sup> The pressure (and its possible consequences) is well illustrated by a questionnaire respondent, A. Smith: "My father had a nervous breakdown in 1917 through harassment by his workmates on the water front at Fremantle because he would not join the AIF, and spent the next 28 years of his life in Claremont Mental Hospital. 10 years after Dad, the strain was too much for Mum and she also went mental and spent 28 years there. So from the time I was 8 to 46 I was visiting that place."

<sup>3</sup> that is, between eighteen and forty.

Under the Act there was a last minute provision for conscientious objection, introduced by Quaker members of the House of Commons. Allowance was made for absolute, conditional or temporary exemption, although as it turned out absolute exemption was rarely granted.<sup>5</sup> Tribunals were established to hear the cases of men who wished to claim some form of exemption. These were usually a carry-over from those appointed under the Derby Scheme to consider applications for the postponement of call-up on the grounds of personal hardship or essential work. Operating under the aegis of the War Office, they were clearly not likely to be particularly objective in their consideration of conscientious objectors.<sup>6</sup>

The term "conscientious objector" has a range of meanings, but I have adopted the definition given by Rae: "...men whose bona fides was established by a tribunal, or who, having failed to satisfy or appear before a tribunal, still refused combatant service on conscientious grounds."<sup>7</sup> It is difficult to get accurate figures of conscientious objectors in the First World War. Rae notes the destruction of most tribunal papers, and of some other collections which would have been valuable.<sup>8</sup> Writers have slightly differing estimates, but it seems that about 16,500 men appeared before the tribunals.<sup>9</sup> This amounted to less than 0.5% of all those who enlisted either voluntarily or compulsorily.<sup>10</sup>

Of these, nearly 4000 were allocated to work of national importance under the Pelham Committee, which was formed to advise the tribunals in this area; about 3,300 went into the Non-Combatant Corps; about 3000 were exempt on various grounds; and somewhere between 5000 and 6000<sup>11</sup> (30% of all conscientious objectors)<sup>12</sup> resisted the Act and were imprisoned. These included those who were refused any exemption but still refused to serve, and those who were exempted conditionally, but refused to serve even in a non-combatant capacity. The tribunals were often far from impartial and examples abound of hectoring and humiliation, although Rae balances the picture a

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<sup>4</sup> J. Rae, *Conscience and Politics: The British Government and the conscientious objector to military service* (London, 1970), chapters 2 and 3

<sup>5</sup> It was however a more generous provision than any in the Dominions, none of which allowed for absolute exemption.

<sup>6</sup> H. M. D. Parker, *Manpower: A Study of War-time Policy and Administration* (London, 1957), p. 156: they were "for the most part composed of local magnates or tradesmen chosen from the lists provided by the political associations in the constituencies, and were attended by a uniformed representative from the War Office who was permitted to cross-examine each applicant."

<sup>7</sup> Rae, *op. cit.*, p.70.

<sup>8</sup> Rae, *op. cit.*, "Note on Sources", p. 259.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 132; J. Graham, *Conscription and Conscience* (London, 1922), p. 349 estimates 16,100; M. Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain*, p. 43 refers to "patchy records" and estimates 16,500.

<sup>10</sup> Rae, *op. cit.*, p. 71 says .33% (16,500: 4,970,902). R. Barker, *Conscience, Government and War* (London, 1982), p. 121 says .125%, based on 16,000 objectors and 6 million enlisted.

<sup>11</sup> Rae, *op. cit.*, p. 132, says 4486. Graham, *op. cit.*, p. 349, says 6261.

little. Objectors whose appeal failed and still resisted were court-martialled because they were regarded as already part of the military regime, and were often badly treated in prison. 71 men died in prison, or as a result of treatment received while in custody.<sup>13</sup>

The situation in Australia was somewhat different. At the outset of the war leaders of both political parties spoke in support of Britain. Joseph Cook (Liberal), the incumbent Prime Minister, said that "when the Empire is at war, Australia is at war", and Andrew Fisher (Labor) made the well-known statement that "Australia will stand beside our own to help and defend her [the mother country] to our last man and our last shilling."<sup>14</sup>

Under the Defence Act of 1903, and the amendment of 1909 which made military training compulsory for males between twelve and twenty-six, there was allowance for exemption from combat duties on the basis of "conscientious belief". This was the first national legislation to do so.<sup>15</sup> It did not, however, provide for absolute exemption.<sup>16</sup>

An interesting pre-war case of conscientious objection was *Krygger v Williams*, where the defendant sought to show that Section 116 of the Constitution was being infringed by his call-up, in that military service hindered the free exercise of his religion. Although his actual affiliation is not stated, he used arguments reminiscent of Brethren writers, such as "We have to do good to those who hate us... we are told that we are to be in the world but not of the world. Those who take the sword will perish by the sword Anything ... such as military training is anti-Christ, and is not following the Lord Jesus."<sup>17</sup> His barrister argued that "The word 'religion' ... is not limited to the performance of religious rites, but included acting in a manner which is dictated by religion."<sup>18</sup> However his appeal was dismissed, as the judges disagreed with this definition and noted that in any event the Act only allowed for a conscientious objection to bearing arms.<sup>19</sup> This decision gives an indication of the likely result for those who would have resisted had conscription been introduced during the war.

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<sup>12</sup> Ceadel, *Pacifism*, p. 302.

<sup>13</sup> Graham *op. cit.*, p. 322.

<sup>14</sup> As reported in the *Argus*, 3 August 1914; quoted in M. Clark (ed.), *Sources in Australian History* (London, 1957), p. 523.

<sup>15</sup> H. Smith, "Conscience, Law and the State: Australia's Approach to Conscientious Objection since 1901," *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, vol. 35 no. 1 (1989), p. 13. It appears Smith means the first such legislation in the world; he is comparing here Britain, Prussia, Russia, and the USA.

<sup>16</sup> I have not been able to find out what Brethren did under this legislation. My grandfather (T. Gordon) did not mention it to me, but my aunt (Mrs. G. Leeke) thinks that his brother was involved in some military training, and remembers seeing a badge belonging to him.

<sup>17</sup> *Commonwealth Law Reports* Vol. XV (1912), p. 367.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 368.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 369-370.

Under the Defence Act, those called up could not be forced to serve outside Australia. In order to meet the promised monthly quota of men for service overseas, the government proposed to introduce conscription for service overseas, and held two referenda on this proposal, in October 1916 and December 1917. Both were defeated, by relatively small margins, after campaigns which aroused strong feelings and much bitterness. The issue of conscientious objection was therefore not a major legal issue for Australians, although the pressure to enlist was very strong, and at one stage men had to apply for exemption from military service.<sup>20</sup>

The situation in New Zealand was considerably different. Under the Military Service Act of 1916 conscription was brought in. There was no absolute exemption, and such provisions for exemption as existed were far more stringent than those obtaining in Britain. The original ground of appeal was that "a man was on 4 August 1914 and had been continuously since, a member of a religious body whose tenets declared the bearing of arms and the performance of military service to be contrary to divine revelation, that this was also his own conscientious belief, and that he was willing to perform non-military work in New Zealand."<sup>21</sup> This was amended to include overseas service, and to include service in the Medical Corps or the Army Service Corps.<sup>22</sup>

The relevant regulations were, furthermore, interpreted very narrowly by the Military Service Boards, and they also adopted a requirement that the "religious body" involved must have something approaching a formal written constitution prohibiting military service. There was no allowance at all for "conscientious beliefs" of a non-religious kind. The response of the Prime Minister, W. F. Massey, to a deputation from the Women's Anti-Conscription League is an indication of the atmosphere in which the Bill was framed. "Asked about the claims of God on men's consciences he thumped the table and insisted 'the State must come first.'"<sup>23</sup>

These requirements clearly made it very difficult to get any kind of exemption, as the groups whose members were most likely to appeal did not have formal constitutions or fixed tenets. The Quakers and Christadelphians, and eventually the Seventh Day Adventists, managed to produce appropriate documents, although even members of

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<sup>20</sup> I have a copy of my grandfather's "Notice of Date of Hearing of Application" under the War Service Regulations 1916. He was applying for a "Certificate of Exemption from Military Service". This was in November 1916, and the hearing did not go ahead as the referendum failed.

<sup>21</sup> P. S. O'Connor, "The Awkward Ones - Dealing with Conscience, 1916-1918", *The New Zealand Journal of History* vol. 8 no. 2 (1974), pp. 119-120.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*, and see Rae, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-50. The United States and Canada had similar provisions.

<sup>23</sup> *Maoriland Worker*, 31 May 1916, cited in O'Connor, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

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these groups suffered imprisonment. Members of "mainstream" denominations were just as badly affected, because their churches did not require pacifism as a requirement of membership, and indeed the Church of England under Article 37 sanctioned the bearing of arms.

Such groups as the Brethren, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Testimony of Jesus (Cooneyites) who relied on Biblical interpretation had major difficulties; as Baker points out, "the relative autonomy of their churches and theological idiosyncrasies of many of their members made [their stand] impossible to substantiate."<sup>24</sup> Political objectors did not have any ground for appeal at all. Altogether 273 men were imprisoned, and objectors and their families suffered ostracism and scorn from the general community.

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<sup>24</sup> P. Baker, *King and Country Call: New Zealanders, Conscription, and the Great War* (Auckland, 1988), p. 173.

**(ii) Brethren responses to World War I**

The previous chapters have established that at the onset of World War I, the Brethren generally speaking respected the authorities but regarded themselves as separate from the political system. It is clear that the potential for considerable tension existed, both within the movement and with the authorities, and that the new demands of a total war could upset the careful isolation which they had hitherto maintained. One has the impression that the war took the Brethren by surprise, and forced many of them to examine their views on the state afresh. There was private agonising over decisions, and some public debate and disagreement.<sup>25</sup>

Some outsiders believed that the Brethren were non-combatants. Graham includes them as conscientious objectors with sects like the Christadelphians who "felt it consistent with their beliefs to accept work in the NCC or RAMC."<sup>26</sup> Writing in the middle of the war, Margaret Hobhouse thought the same.<sup>27</sup> Brock believed that "The high percentage of Brethren conscientious objectors in World War I in relation to the sect's numbers indicates ... that nonresistance ... had become generally accepted."<sup>28</sup> We shall see shortly that neither picture is entirely accurate.

Although Rae says that "among the predictable sources of conscientious objection only the Society of Friends possessed a tradition that would have been familiar to most tribunal members", he does point out that the Brethren would have been known to some at least.<sup>29</sup> Beattie, who strongly advocated total conscientious objection, wrote that "the 'Brethren' and 'Quakers' were mentioned by the Government in Parliament as the two bodies whose members refused to participate in war, and to whom the authorities were willing to grant exemption from military service", and that the government was surprised when many Brethren enlisted.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> A correspondent in the *Harvester*, June 1937, confirms this view. A. D. Western pleaded for help to be given to young men re 'militarism', because "the outbreak of the Great War caught many of our assemblies quite unawares, and caused numerous dissensions." W. Thompson made the same point.

<sup>26</sup> Graham, *op. cit.*, p. 348.

<sup>27</sup> Mrs H. [M.] Hobhouse, *I Appeal to Caesar* (London, 1917), p. 34: "[they] found war inconsistent with their Bibles, and held aloof from the actual slaughter, but accepted service in the Army which did not directly involve killing anyone."

<sup>28</sup> Brock, "Peace Testimony" *op. cit.*, p. 44. He does point out (footnote 41) that some Brethren bore arms in both wars.

<sup>29</sup> Rae, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

<sup>30</sup> Beattie, *op. cit.*, p. 125. I have not been able to substantiate this claim, and in any case both Quakers and Brethren were imprisoned, often because the tribunals were unwilling to grant total exemptions, or were ignorant of their ability to do so.

Rae makes it clear that despite popular conceptions, anti-conscriptionists were not only Quakers and socialists, though they have been the ablest exponents and historians of the cause. Over 1700 Christadelphians obtained exemptions, by far the largest single group, but only 750 Quakers.<sup>31</sup> It is difficult to establish how many Brethren may have; Rae lists 146 as referred to the Pelham Committee,<sup>32</sup> and says that "such figures as are available indicate that the most prolific sources [of conscientious objectors from the predictable groups] were ... the Christadelphians, the Plymouth Brethren, and the Jehovah's Witnesses."<sup>33</sup> Lang, who obtained a permit to visit men in prison, refers to "hundreds of young brethren that went through that ordeal" and says that there were "usually forty or fifty brethren from "Open" assemblies" in Dartmoor at any one time.<sup>34</sup>

However there is also evidence that in some parts of Britain Brethren found enlistment acceptable. Beattie quotes an article in the press which claimed there were 297 Brethren men and women from Glasgow "doing their bit" at the front.<sup>35</sup> R. B. Carter, listing eligible men from South Park Chapel, Essex, gives eleven names, of whom only one was a conscientious objector.<sup>36</sup> Rendle Short volunteered for medical work, being already a surgeon of some note,<sup>37</sup> and John Laing, the director of a large building firm which was undertaking work of national importance, was commissioned even though he was promptly discharged.<sup>38</sup> Presumably the gesture was made to indicate support for the war effort. Dobbie was an officer in France, mentioned in dispatches seven times and decorated.<sup>39 40</sup>

This confused picture naturally told against Brethren who registered as conscientious objectors. Beattie explicitly makes the charge that public support for the war by the editor of the *Witness*, Henry Pickering, had made it harder for him and others at tribunal

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<sup>31</sup> Rae, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p. 250-1. There may have been more, as 240 men are listed as "Denomination not stated". Brethren who took a stand as conscientious objectors were also more likely than those who did not to refuse what they saw as a denominational name. Of those who were referred to the Pelham Committee, 1716 were Christadelphians, 145 Brethren, 140 Quakers, 112 Methodist, and other groups range from 73 down to 1.

<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>34</sup> G. H. Lang, *An Ordered Life: an autobiography* London: The Paternoster Press, 1959, pp. 174 and 173 respectively. Rae *op. cit.*, p. 176, mentions Brethren with Jehovah's Witnesses as the main "apocalyptic sectarians" in the camps.

<sup>35</sup> Beattie, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

<sup>36</sup> R. B. Carter, personal communication 30 June 1994. Another man left England as a missionary in 1915, after some difficulty obtaining a passport. The rest all served in the Army or Navy, most as volunteers.

<sup>37</sup> Capper and Johnson, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-3.

<sup>38</sup> Coad, *Laing*, p. 67. Coad mentions the strong Brethren pacifist tradition, but says despite Carlisle meeting's early Quaker influence, Laing was not touched by it.

<sup>39</sup> For Dobbie's war record, see *Who was Who 1961-1970* (London, 1972), p. 196.

<sup>40</sup> Rae, *op. cit.*, p. 75 has what is probably a fair summary: "The Open Brethren were the least explicitly non-combatant and some of their members joined the armed forces. The Churches of God ... emphasised, in their memorial to the Government in 1915, the incompatibility of war with the teaching of Christ. The Exclusive Brethren particularly emphasised their unwillingness to be 'unequally yoked with unbelievers' in the army."

hearings.<sup>41</sup> It was obviously very difficult for an objector to base his appeal on the grounds that he was Brethren, and that *ipso facto* he had an objection to war.

Lang also experienced something of this attitude, finding that "few others were ready to share" in helping young men to state their objections before the tribunals. He also says that "there were leaders in assemblies who opposed this testimony to separateness from the world and even asserted in the Press that it was not the recognized attitude of the 'Brethren'."<sup>42</sup>

Beattie's conflict with Pickering was symptomatic of divisions within the Open Brethren over military service. These demands were not the sort they could ignore, like the right to vote. The disagreement became public in a newspaper article which has several remarkable implications. Beattie quotes it thus:

CHRISTIAN BRETHERN REPUDIATE BEATTIE. Mr. Charles P. Watson and Mr. Henry Pickering write us ... to say that the Hunter Beattie pamphlet (exposed in the "Post Sunday Special" of Nov. 25th) does not represent the views of the churches of Christian Brethren. The "great mass of those composing the assemblies of Brethren," they state, "repudiate the teachings of Mr. Hunter Beattie," and they enclose a list of 297 young men and women from Glasgow assemblies who are "doing their bit" at the front. This list, they explain, "represents more generally the attitude of leaders and rank and file, who seek to 'fear God, honour the King,' and 'be subject to the powers that be.'"<sup>43</sup>

Many Brethren would have been unhappy about any statement purporting to represent their views in general, or naming them as a discrete group, and mention of "leaders" and "rank and file" sits oddly with the emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. The last sentence shows how Watson and Pickering had placed themselves firmly at the "subjection" end of the separation/subjection spectrum. Conscientious objectors, on the other hand, came down at the separation end (arguing that they had no part in the state or its military machine), and those who chose non-combatant service seem to have done so either as a (perhaps confused) compromise, or because they rejected the logical end of the separation argument, but felt as Christians they could not take life.

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<sup>41</sup> Beattie, *op. cit.*, p. 135: "... the evidence of the *Witness* was held as the strongest evidence against our young brethren, and was largely responsible for their suffering."

<sup>42</sup> Lang, *Ordered Life*, p. 175.

<sup>43</sup> Beattie, *op. cit.*, p. 123. One has to presume that the paper reported them correctly.

Watson and Pickering evidently desired to minimise the controversy, by emphasising conscience; a move men such as Beattie saw as equivocation rather than reliance on what to them were the clear principles of God's word. He talks of a "conspiracy of silence" at conferences,<sup>44</sup> and quotes a Dr. Burton in 1917 as beginning his talk with "I would have liked to have spoken on a subject which concerns us all these days, but we have been instructed not to touch on any subjects that were controversial."<sup>45</sup> He quotes (scathingly) a *Witness* article after the war which appeals for unity, trusting that "all will respect that most sacred thing called 'conscience'".<sup>46</sup> The *Witness*, on the other hand, saw itself as maintaining a neutral, perhaps even statesmanlike, ground.

His tone is more sorrowful than angry when he says that "the regular magazines which professed to stand for the Faith were all in a condition of hesitancy. Of indirect and veiled teaching there was some, but not a word of plain direction..."<sup>47</sup> This fits with what I have shown earlier. There was an obvious reluctance to force a division; almost a horror of schism.<sup>48</sup> Some of the magazines did publish articles designed to give some guidance,<sup>49</sup> although one of Beattie's correspondent's expressed disappointment at correspondence in the *Witness* which evidently supported military involvement.<sup>50</sup>

In Australia *Australian Missionary Tidings* did carry a number of comments on the war, all carefully worded, but unmistakably hinting at either ignoring the recruiting drive or only accepting non-combatant service.<sup>51</sup> There was only one mention of "strifes and divisions which now trouble us",<sup>52</sup> and occasional letters from soldiers were

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<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p. 67.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*, p. 133: "The *Witness* says: We have been frequently urged during recent years to advocate certain views concerning the Christian and War. One class urging us to condemn those whom they judged were disloyal to the King and disobedient to those placed in authority by God. Another class urging us to declaim against those whom they asserted had forgotten their heavenly citizenship, whose hands were stained with the blood of their fellows, and whose true place was outside the assembly. Both sides drafted subtle, one-sided questions which could only be answered to the condemnation of those against whom they were drafted.

Now that the warring earth is in measure at rest, we trust **the warring spirit** is not to be introduced into Assembly life, and that all will respect that most sacred thing called 'conscience', whether found in the 'Conscientious objector', or in the '*conscientious fighter*'... Let Christ be the centre of unity in worship and service, and blessing will be manifest to the circumference of that circle of unity, however weak and feeble it may be."

<sup>47</sup> *ibid.*, Preface.

<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless Beattie (*op. cit.*, p. 134) cites examples of open conflict and bitter division: "One dare not pray publicly for God's saints in prison without being assailed by a torrent of abuse. One leading brother in a large assembly rose in a rage and called these saints in prison "Conscientious Cowards" - while another leading brother in another Assembly said publicly that if he had his way 'they would every one be shot'..."

<sup>49</sup> In *Australian Missionary Tidings* December 1914, p. 576, readers are referred to "the 'Witness' for October, and 'Echoes of Service,' September, part II, and October, part I, as containing much interesting information concerning events at the seat of war affecting our workers, and details of God's special care and deliverance; and also helpful articles on the present condition of things, and the right attitude of Christians."

<sup>50</sup> Beattie, *op. cit.*, p. 89: "How I wish some of our brethren could see militarism as some of us have been made to see it [i.e. in the military prison]."

<sup>51</sup> *Tidings* November 1916 p. 859 has the clearest message:

<sup>52</sup> *Tidings* May 1915, p.631.

published<sup>53</sup>, as were those from non-combatants (also called conscientious objectors).<sup>54</sup> But in the context of the times the overall impression is quite a radical one. The Hopkins Brethren magazine *The Gleaner* had only a couple of allusions to the war, one being an article on "Subjection to the Higher Powers" which ended: "The fact that the higher powers make this or that compulsory does not affect a single word of Scripture. If I have refrained from certain things because I believe it to be the mind of God ... then no ordinance of man is to be allowed to compel me to adopt a different attitude. No Act of Parliament ever framed changed a single principle of God's unerring, unchanging Word."<sup>55</sup>

References to the war tend to be in such terms as "this terrible war"<sup>56</sup>, "this sad war",<sup>57</sup> "this awful struggle".<sup>58</sup> Prayer meetings were held for world conditions and for young men affected by recruitment and call-up.<sup>59</sup> In general non-combatant service was approved, on both separatist and pacifist grounds,<sup>60</sup> and was called conscientious objection.<sup>61</sup> There was relief when the conscription referendum was defeated.<sup>62</sup>

As far as numbers go, the majority of Brethren seem to have stayed out of the war effort, or enlisted as non-combatants. This is the definite impression from *Tidings*<sup>63</sup>, and is endorsed by what personal information I have been able to gain.<sup>64</sup> Gilbert and Jordens say that the Brethren (with others) "generally accepted the stigma of wartime dissent.

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<sup>53</sup> e.g. March 1917, p. 931.

<sup>54</sup> e.g. November 1917, pp. 1059-1060.

<sup>55</sup> *Gleaner* November 1915, pp. 5-6. There is absolutely no mention of contemporary events or military service in the article.

<sup>56</sup> *Gleaner* January 1915, p. 6; *Tidings* October 1914, p. 547.

<sup>57</sup> *Tidings* February 1916, p. 744.

<sup>58</sup> *ibid.*, p. 745.

<sup>59</sup> *Tidings* November 1916, p. 869: "Realising the need of special waiting upon God in these solemn days, a week of prayer was arranged [in Brisbane], ... and on the day of the opening of the Military Court ... a meeting was held for prayer at 6.45 a.m., on behalf of the young men..." See above, chapter 2, footnote

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, p. 869: "It can be said that our young men have a conscience about taking life..."

<sup>61</sup> *Tidings* December 1916, p. 884: "Up to the time of writing only one of young men has been called upon to face his tribunal, but we are thankful to say that his case for partial exemption (non-combatant service) was considered genuine from the outset, and the magistrate granted what was asked for on conscientious grounds." Also *ibid.* p. 887: "... the eyes of the authorities are going to be upon us and our conscientious objectors."

<sup>62</sup> *Tidings* January 1917, pp. 902-3.

<sup>63</sup> *Tidings* November 1916: (Queensland) "... the young men ... are availing themselves of the exemption clauses of the Defence Act. Most, if not all, are willing to do non-combatant duty."

<sup>64</sup> Gus Brough, Tas., Ambulance Corps; Lyall Parker, Tas., Ambulance Corps. David Reeve, Tas., dispatch rider (family knowledge). Dave Wigg, Tas., non-combatant who once he was overseas was ordered by the British to bear arms, and imprisoned and sentenced to be shot when he refused. I was told that the Australian Government intervened on his behalf and that of others in the same position (family information from T. R. Gordon). Hertford Messer, Qld., Dental Corps - although even this service meant his membership of Conference Hall, Brisbane, lapsed, to be renewed after the war (John Messer, personal communication 13 Oct. 1994).

Representatives of each petitioned parliament to insist that even the exigencies of war could not shake their religious objections to bearing arms."<sup>65</sup>

In all countries the Brethren saw the war as an opportunity for evangelism, with the likely death of many soldiers giving added urgency. Letters abound in *Tidings* from missionaries who had contacts with soldiers and from workers at home who were distributing Scriptures and tracts to servicemen.<sup>66</sup> One full-time worker entered the Medical Corps so that he could get closer to the men he was trying to reach.<sup>67</sup> There was also a plea for more workers in the camps, hoping that those who had escaped conscription would be "diligent in ministering to those who are voluntarily going to the front."<sup>68</sup> A. T. Grace wrote to the editor seeking support for a tent to be used as a centre in the camps. His motive was not only evangelism, but also his feeling that increased exposure meant that "there will not be so much difficulty in the court explaining who brethren are and what is their position in the community as Christians."<sup>69</sup> The small periodical *The Pilot* was intended as an evangelistic tool, and sometimes carried direct pleas to soldiers.<sup>70</sup> A whole editorial in *Tidings* challenged readers to take the Gospel to those around them, noting that those who were grieving might be more open to its comfort.<sup>71</sup> Brethren in New Zealand shared the same burden for evangelism.<sup>72</sup> In the United Kingdom, Beattie and Lang mention contacts which led to conversion.<sup>73</sup>

Brethren in both countries were urged to contribute generously to those who were suffering as a result of the war. The separation theme came through in the comment "we may not feel free to contribute to some of the public funds", but readers were asked to remember missionaries "whose usual channels of supply are closed".<sup>74</sup> A special circular letter was sent to assemblies, suggesting special collections for "the poor Saints affected by the war, not only in Belgium but in other parts".<sup>75</sup> An indication of the world-wide links of Brethren is that the offerings were to be distributed through "Echoes

<sup>65</sup> Gilbert, Alan D. & Ann-Mari Jordens, "Traditions of Dissent", in M. McKernan & M. Browne (eds.), *Australia: Two Centuries of War and Peace* (Canberra, 1988), p. 343. I have not been able to find this petition in the Parliamentary Papers; it seems it was not ordered to be printed. The reference given is to Gilbert's MA thesis at ANU, which I could not afford to have microfilmed.

<sup>66</sup> e.g. *Tidings* April 1815, p. 625; June 1915 p. 651; September 1915 p. 687; November 1915 p. 705; February 1916 p. 744-5; August 1916 p. 831; November 1916 p. 868 and 870; November 1917 p. 1060.

<sup>67</sup> *Tidings* September 1916, p. 833. Archie Law, Victoria: "I seem to have had a continuous congregation where one needs to be instant in season and out of season."

<sup>68</sup> *Tidings* January 1917 p. 897.

<sup>69</sup> *Tidings* December 1916 p. 887.

<sup>70</sup> *The Pilot* September 1917 [p.7-8].

<sup>71</sup> *Tidings* March 1918.

<sup>72</sup> Peter Lineham, Massey University, New Zealand, has given me references to work in camps and on troopships: *Treasury* vol. 16 (1914) p. 169, 175, 190; vol. 17 (1915) p. 111, 127, 144.

<sup>73</sup> Beattie op. cit., p. 88; Lang, *Ordered Life* op. cit., p. 174.

<sup>74</sup> *Tidings* October 1914 p. 547.

<sup>75</sup> *Tidings* February 1915 pp. 598-9.

of Service" in Britain. The same suggestion was printed in *Treasury*, pointing out the needs of missionaries, "needy ones in our own assemblies and towns throughout N.Z., owing to various avenues of employment being closed," and "...cases of dire need in the Homeland ... owing to the loss of breadwinners in the war."<sup>76</sup>

As noted above, New Zealand had a rigid approach to conscription. Under this system at least 23 Brethren were imprisoned out of a total of 273,<sup>77</sup> and the general tenor of comment in *Treasury* was against army service.<sup>78</sup> Lineham however notes that "the issue was warmly debated, and many of the sons of leading brethren volunteered for the army ... in non-combatant roles. Feelings ran high among representatives of both points of view."<sup>79</sup> In view of my earlier survey of Brethren writing on war, I believe he is entirely correct when he says "their attitude to society was at stake." He contrasts the "outgoing approach ... of witness, evangelism, and involvement ... to the traditional concept which withdrew brethren from the world..."<sup>80</sup>

The differing views within one town are exemplified by the fact that on the one hand some brethren in Dunedin circulated a letter to assemblies enclosing a suggested petition to the Governor requesting that "provision be made whereby those of our communion ... will, upon appealing ... be granted exemption from military service",<sup>81</sup> and, on the other hand, Playfair Street Hall, Caversham, celebrated the peace with a thanksgiving service for which a souvenir programme was printed, including a roll of honour of "the boys who did their duty".<sup>82</sup>

Those who were conscientious objectors, both in Britain and New Zealand, suffered both psychologically and sometimes physically.<sup>83</sup> Beattie speaks of "...the sufferings of ... saints, personally known to me, at the hands of some of these Tribunals, when scorn

<sup>76</sup> *Treasury* vol. 16 (1914), p. 135-6

<sup>77</sup> P. Baker, *King and Country Call: New Zealanders, Conscription and the Great War* (Auckland, 1988), p. 243. Baker says the Testimony of Jesus (28) was the largest single group among the sects. However the total for Brethren (14), Plymouth Brethren (7), and Gospel Hall (2) is 23, and others would almost certainly have been among the "not stated" numbers. As Baker gives the numbers, Brethren were 8.42% of the total.

<sup>78</sup> see John Ritchie's article "Christians Enlisting", vol. 17 (1915), pp. 166-7, discussed above.

<sup>79</sup> Lineham, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

<sup>80</sup> *ibid.* He talks about separation from the "defilement of the world", but in view of what was written on this issue, I do not believe this is quite the right word. Separation was from the systems of the world, seeing them as temporary, and the believer's part in them non-existent. Of course when rendered down to its simplest form, there was a tendency to equate separation with "separation from evil", and evil with "the world".

<sup>81</sup> Copy of the letter, petition, and an information slip forwarded to me by E. Read, Christchurch, 15 Sept. 1994. I have not been able to ascertain whether this joint petition was ever sent. It would have gone against the grain of autonomy of assemblies, and is an indication of the depth of reaction to the stigma of imprisonment for people who saw themselves as law-abiding citizens.

<sup>82</sup> Copy sent me by Peter Lineham. Caversham is a suburb of Dunedin.

<sup>83</sup> see Graham *op. cit.* and O'Connor *op. cit.* Graham mentions a Brethren man, Bennett Wallis, who died on 29 Sept. 1917, among his "case histories" of some of the 80 who died - pp. 319-20.

and contumely was poured upon them with such vindictiveness that even the unsaved protested against the manifest injustice."<sup>84</sup> In his dramatised example of tribunal hearings, he quotes a chairman as calling "Pilgrim" "the most awful freak that ever walked the earth."<sup>85</sup>

A vivid example in New Zealand of the emotions of the times was provided to me by a niece of two objectors. Charles and Stanley Read "went bush" and then decided "you couldn't run away for years, that would be no sort of a life at all, so as a Christian you just had to go and face up to it and get imprisoned." They agreed to "come down and meet the police and the train at Koputaroa Station away from Levin [their home town] where feelings ran high." Their younger brother was continually humiliated at primary school because he had three brothers in prison. "Often [the] teacher would start the day quite deliberately to provoke him by saying "*Stand up all those who will go to war*" and each morning David would refuse to stand despite the pleading of his friend ... [Being] in a small town, he was aware of strong feelings of antagonism towards his family because of their pacifist stand. He remembered a white feather being sent to the family one day."<sup>86</sup> Both the authorities and the community tended to underestimate the determination of Brethren (and others) not to betray their consciences.

One other way in which Brethren reacted to the war was to use it in preaching and writing as a metaphor and a challenge for the Christian life. The comparison between physical war and spiritual combat was made by a "brother from Tasmania" in May 1915.<sup>87</sup> Later J. H. Todd wrote "Many today are deeply concerned as to their responsibility to their King and country ... but how many of those ... are listening to [God] to hear what he would have them do in the greater war with the forces of darkness."<sup>88</sup> Tribunal questions suggested parallel ones for Christians to think over.<sup>89</sup> The war was used as an illustration in a leading article in the *Gleaner*, ironically written to strengthen believers in their stand against "compulsion" (of whatever sort).<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Beattie, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>85</sup> *ibid.*, p. 47.

<sup>86</sup> Cheryl McGettigan, questionnaire response.

<sup>87</sup> *Tidings* May 1915 p. 631.

<sup>88</sup> *Tidings* July 1916 p. 805.

<sup>89</sup> *Tidings* November 1916 p. 859: "Questions Suggested by those submitted to Conscientious Objectors:  
 1. State precisely your reasons for not being actively engaged in missionary work, in view of the command and commission of Mark xvi.15 and Acts i.8?  
 2. If not actively engaged in missionary effort, what other branch of Christian work do you take part in?  
 3. What sacrifices have you made to help forward the Gospel message?  
 4. Is there any penalty for neglecting the Lord's commands?  
 5. What is the reward for faithful service?"

<sup>90</sup> *Gleaner* June 1915 [p.1].

## WORLD WAR I

Thus at the end of the war the Brethren, particularly in the United Kingdom and Australia, had been to some extent shocked out of their insularity, although instinctively they seemed to close ranks again and strove to bury and forget the divisions. This inevitably resulted in some lingering resentments and confusion, which blurred the hitherto reasonably sharp lines of "separation". Those who had faced the demands of the military machine had been forced to think through their position, and had been made aware that they could not ignore the changing world around them. However, like much of the rest of society, their lives in the interwar years seemed to indicate that they hoped against hope that the Great War had been an unfortunate aberration, until the events of the 1930's threatened complacency.

## WORLD WAR II

### (i) Conscientious objection in World War II

In the United Kingdom the experience of the previous war influenced the provisions of the Military Training Act 1939, which was superseded by the National Service Acts 1939-1946.<sup>1</sup> Absolute exemption was allowed, although tribunals varied in their willingness to grant it.<sup>2</sup> Conditional exemptions from combat duties were most commonly given, on the basis that the applicant would undertake work of national importance (which was in itself a problem, as many employers were unwilling to take conscientious objectors), or that the applicant would undertake non-combatant military service.<sup>3</sup>

Objectors were often recommended to the Royal Army Medical Corps, but the RAMC could only take a certain number of men, and somewhat resented their role in the matter. In March 1940 the government gave a commitment that men who enlisted for non-combatant duties would not be asked to bear arms, and in April 1940 the Non-Combatant Corps was formed.

Failed applicants had a right of appeal, and 58.8% of these took this up. 53.7% of decisions were not varied, and most men accepted this judgement. Only 3% of objectors went to prison, compared to the 30% of the Great War, although the number of objectors (60,000) was four times higher.<sup>4</sup> This gives an indication of the greater attempt at impartiality of the tribunals: they were set up under the Ministry of Labour and National Service, with a county court judge (England) or sheriff (Scotland) as chairman. There was usually an academic and often a justice of the peace included. Many members were professional men, and there was supposed to be a representative of the working man as well.<sup>5</sup>

The Australian situation was defined by the National Security Act, 1939, and Statutory Rules and Regulations (1942) Nos. 80 and 307. Compulsory service could only be

<sup>1</sup> For detailed summary of these and the various Acts in the Dominions, see R. S. W. Pollard, "Conscientious Objectors in Great Britain and the Dominions", *Journal of Comparative Legislation* no. 28 (1946), pp. 72-82.

<sup>2</sup> Barker, *op. cit.*, p.21-2. She says that the percentages of unconditional exemptions decreased as the war went on: 1939, 14%; 1940, 5%; 1941, 2%.

<sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 22-26.

<sup>4</sup> Ceadel, *op. cit.*, pp. 301-2. This was 1.5% of the five million called up - Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

<sup>5</sup> Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 117, concludes that the tribunals were "given a judicial air, an entirely non-military personnel and formal procedures which went some way towards ensuring that the applicant was given a fair hearing.

within Australia or its "overseas territories",<sup>6</sup> although later in the war a defensive zone around Australia was declared within which conscripts could be sent.

The Act allowed for exemption on the grounds of conscientious beliefs, whether or not religious in character. Regulation 80 ratified the government's policy of allowing total exemption,<sup>7</sup> whereas Regulation 307<sup>8</sup> ended unconditional exemption, requiring men to be directed to civil work under civilian control. 2791 applications for exemption (1% of the quarter million conscripts) were made, of which about a quarter were rejected. Hasluck says that "Up to February 1943 - after which no prosecutions seem to have been recorded - the total number of persons sentenced for evading service was 98".<sup>9</sup>

In New Zealand the situation was again more restricted than in the other two countries. The National Service Emergency Regulations of June 1940 established a general reserve of every person aged sixteen and over. A person could conscientiously object to serving with the armed forces, and local appeal boards, under civil control, were set up. There was no absolute exemption, and no right of appeal against a board's decision. This was in line with public opinion, which as Cookson says was "overwhelmingly hostile to conscientious objectors", and with political pragmatism, with Labour ministers trying to avoid the accusation that they were "'soft' on the issue in view of their earlier sympathies."<sup>10</sup>

803 New Zealand men<sup>11</sup> were classed as military defaulters upon the failure of their appeals and sent to prison or work camps. Around forty (or 5%) of these were Brethren.<sup>12</sup> The operation of the boards and the administration of the camps were often characterised by harshness and injustice.<sup>13</sup> There was a strong feeling in the community that conscientious objectors should share the sacrifice of servicemen, so protests, even at deaths in custody, fell on unsympathetic ears.

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However, there was ample opportunity for abuse of the system ... [Nevertheless] the Tribunals did their best to give the applicants every chance to convince them of their sincerity."

<sup>6</sup> Smith, op. cit., p. 16.

<sup>7</sup> Total exemption had been granted in practice from July 1941. Regulation No. 80 was promulgated in February 1942. Smith, op. cit., p. 17.

<sup>8</sup> July 1942 - *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> P. Hasluck, *The Government and the People* (Canberra, 1952), p. 600-1.

<sup>10</sup> J. E. Cookson, "Illiberal New Zealand: the formation of government policy on conscientious objection, 1940-1", *The New Zealand Journal of History*, vol. 17, no. 2 (1983), p. 121.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*, p. 120. McKirdy in his questionnaire response suggested that the government had only expected 250 objectors (the implication being that they were surprised by the strength of the reaction). He did not give the basis for his assertion.

<sup>12</sup> *List of war conscientious objectors in detention camps*, private photocopied list sent to me by Owen McKirdy, Hamilton, New Zealand, with Brethren names marked.

<sup>13</sup> A good account is David Grant's *Out in the Cold: Pacifists and Conscientious Objectors in New Zealand during World War II* (Auckland, 1986). For an "inside" story, see Ian Hamilton, *Till Human Voices Wake Us* (Auckland, 1984 [1953]).

## WORLD WAR II

## (ii) Brethren responses to World War II

Brethren response to World War II was in some ways a reaction to their experience in World War I. This impression has been gained from various respondents, and is perhaps best articulated by Rowdon: "[One reason the Brethren attitude to war changed may have been] the terrible time CO's had in W.W.I. Public ostracism and prison sentences were the order of the day."<sup>14</sup> This reaction did not result in wholesale enlistment, but a far higher percentage did enlist or accept non-combatant service.<sup>15</sup> Changing social patterns and the growing power and encroachment of the state into everyday lives contributed also. Nevertheless, as I will show in the following chapter, the reasons given for these decisions grew out of traditional Brethren teaching.

From several estimates it seems likely that the percentages of combatants and non-combatants in Britain and Australia were about even. For the United Kingdom, Rowdon says "anecdotal evidence suggests that it may have been c50/50".<sup>16</sup> Pontin agrees with this estimate.<sup>17</sup> It was illustrated in a family where one brother joined the NCC, but another the Royal Navy.<sup>18</sup> Carter gives details of his assembly, in which eight out of fifteen were non-combatant.<sup>19</sup> This fits with observations of Australian respondents like Glasgow, who said that "many of the young fellows I knew in the assemblies, and in the Glanton assembly to which I transferred ... asked to be given non-combatant duties when they were called up."<sup>20</sup> It is also borne out by the list in Appendix C.

It seems likely, as Baigent believes, that "hundreds of Brethren served in the NCC."<sup>21</sup> Rowdon says that "most Brethren (not quite all, I believe) had little difficulty in becoming registered as CO's... Many were drafted into the Non-Combatant Corps, some

<sup>14</sup> Rowdon, personal communication, 17 July 1994.

<sup>15</sup> Carter (personal communication 23 May 1994) also says that the death in France in World War I of George Moore, a promising assembly member planning to engage in missionary work, had lasting repercussions. "The anguish of his loved ones and the members of the assembly knew no bounds and the memories were still green in 1939." He implies that this influenced approval in his assembly towards combatant service: "All the members of the assembly were in favour of military involvement without reservation, if over thirty years of age or thereabouts." (Questionnaire).

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Pontin questionnaire.

<sup>18</sup> H. and G. Davies questionnaires. I am assured by their sister that there was no ill-feeling of any kind over these differing decisions. H. Davies also said that of friends who were in the missionary children's home with them, 3 others joined the armed services, 2 or 3 non-combatant services, and possible 1 went on the land. Priddle said that there were three Brethren in his unit in the Royal Navy, which was commented on by his commander as most unusual.

<sup>19</sup> Carter questionnaire.

<sup>20</sup> Glasgow questionnaire. Glasgow was in NSW. Rehn, questionnaire, from South Australia, also wrote "Those enlisting in the Army mostly applied to go into non-combatant units."

<sup>21</sup> Baigent questionnaire.

were required to work in the mines, others in agriculture or hospitals."<sup>22</sup> Edward Blishen classed some of these among the "odd rabble" with whom he found himself working on the land, "cussed adherents of strange varieties of Puritanism."<sup>23</sup> The only report with specific statistics that I have found is of an unpublished memorandum from the chairman of the South-Western Tribunal in England, which up to March 1942 had heard 439 Brethren out of 4056 objectors.<sup>24</sup>

In New Zealand, the proportions of non-combatants were probably higher: A. Read estimated that "the proportion of my peers who chose non-combatant service ... would have been well over 50% if those who went into CO camp were included (and even if they weren't)."<sup>25</sup> Lineham agrees; he mentions a "prayer card containing the names of one hundred volunteers and conscripts ... Many of these probably volunteered as non-combatants."<sup>26</sup> In this context the forty "defaulters" in detention camps is a significant number.

To some extent the choices to be made had been anticipated this time. The Brethren magazines carried articles, correspondence, and book reviews on the topic of military service during the late 1930's, giving both points of view.<sup>27</sup> Those who advocated conscientious objection did so on a separatist basis, sometimes conceding non-combatance as a concession to the demands of the powers that be. Those who argued that military service was acceptable emphasised obedience to the government, and the obligation of the state to restrain evil. It is noteworthy that the number of articles on these questions markedly decreased and almost disappeared after the outbreak of war, as

<sup>22</sup> Personal communication 17 July 1994.

<sup>23</sup> E. Blishen, *A Cackhanded War* (1972), p. 24, quoted in Ceadel, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

<sup>24</sup> Barker, *op. cit.*, pp. 37-8. This is an area where Brethren are strong, so the numbers would not be typical of the whole country. The numbers are the third highest after the Methodists (662) and Anglicans (531).

<sup>25</sup> A. Read, personal communication 23 Oct. 1994.

<sup>26</sup> P. J. Lineham, "The Religious Face of Patriotism", unpublished paper, p. 26.

<sup>27</sup> Some of these have been mentioned in chapter 2, pt. (iii). Items included: J. Ritchie, "A God of Deliverances", *Believers Magazine* (henceforth *BM*), Jan. 1937 (reprinted from 1915); E. W. Rogers, "What should a Christian young man do in case of war?", *BM* July 1938, a footnote to the last article recommending *The True Christian is not a Pacifist!* obtainable from the magazine; F. Parish, "The Christian and Militarism", *Harvester* May 1937; *BM* July 1938; an advertisement for Hunter Beattie's *The Christian and War*; "Should a Christian Fight?", a double article from opposing viewpoints (R. Wallis 'Yes', A. Fingland Jack 'No'), *Harvester* July 1938; Borland, "The Christian and the Civil Powers", *BM* Jan. & Feb. 1939; *ibid.*, "Our Lord's Attitude", *BM* Feb. 1939; *ibid.*, "Duty to the State", *BM* Mar. 1939; *ibid.*, "The Christian's Primal Duty", *BM* April 1939; *ibid.*, "Should Persecution Arise", *BM* May/June 1939; *ibid.*, "Conduct that commends itself", *BM* July/Aug. 1939; an advertisement for G. W. Bell's booklet *Christian Citizenship*, *BM* July 1939 (also recommended in the *Harvester* July 1939); review of F. B. Phillips, *Is War Christian?*; "Advice for Younger Brethren regarding Military Service", July 1939 (information about the provisions of the Defence Act); Note of E. A. Toll's booklet *The Christian and the Nation* Nov. 1939; an advertisement for G. T. Hobbs' *The Believer and Military Service*, *BM* May 1940; G. J. Hyde, "Should a Christian Fight?", *Harvester* June 1941; information about exemptions (e.g. missionaries, full-time workers), *Harvester* June 1940, June 1941, October 1941, June 1942. I am greatly indebted to Dr. Harold Rowdon for his generous provision of notes taken from these magazines which allow me to cite these titles.

though there was a desire to avoid controversy once people had to actually make decisions.

In Australia and New Zealand there was actually more reticence on the subject of military service than there had been in the previous war. In April 1940 *Tidings*, after a couple of earlier articles which merely exhorted believers to prayer and humility in these momentous times, came down on the side of conscience.<sup>28</sup> By September 1941 *Tidings*, still emphasising that the obligatory obedience to the government might be qualified by conscience, was moving to almost a "just war" position.<sup>29</sup>

Lineham says that *Treasury* magazine in New Zealand "gives the impression that conscientious objection was usual ... although the magazine was more cautious than it had been in the First World War, and the war hardly received a mention, other than discussions of eschatology and references to the consequences for ... missionary work."<sup>30</sup> This is also the case with *Tidings*, to a lesser extent, but it has to be borne in mind that both papers were mission-oriented.<sup>31</sup>

In this war Brethren referred far more often to conscience. Although points of view were based on Scripture, it seems that the validity of different interpretations or emphases was recognised. A call for mutual tolerance was made in the *Harvester* just after the outbreak of war, reminding readers that "feelings in the last war endangered the harmony of many assemblies."<sup>32</sup> The editor of the *Believers Magazine* (Scotland) had felt the same. In June there was a notice in bold print calling for prayer on the issue, indicating the editor's belief that "many will take advantage of the Conscience Clause in the Military Service Bill" but that "others may feel it their duty to undergo military training." Typically Brethren, he called for prayer that they might be kept from "the abounding evil" and be "faithful witnesses to the Gospel." He concluded: "Whatever may be the division of opinion over this vexing matter, let no bitterness be entertained, lest the enemy [Satan, not the Germans!] make havoc among the assemblies."<sup>33</sup>

One response to the war which strikes one as unusual for Brethren was the purchase of war bonds by an assembly. Clapton Hall (England), evidently one of the wealthier

<sup>28</sup> *Tidings* April 1940, "The Believer and Military Service", pp. 67-8, discussed in chapter 2, part (iii).

<sup>29</sup> *Tidings* September 1941, "The Christian and War", pp. 169-170, discussed in chapter 2, part (iii).

<sup>30</sup> Lineham, "Patriotism" op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>31</sup> E.g. *Tidings* Sept. 1940, pp. 166-7, published an abridged extract from the *Harvester* entitled "The War and Missionaries". The *Fortnightly Circle* which circulated among Hopkins Brethren in Victoria and Tasmania hardly mentions the war, except to call for prayer for those in war-torn countries, and for assembly members overseas. Copies in my possession.

<sup>32</sup> *Harvester* October 1939, p. 217

<sup>33</sup> *Believers Magazine*, June 1939, p. 142.

meetings, had around £20,000 invested in stocks. In 1940 and 1941 they had £12,000 in War Loan 3½% stock; in 1943 the same, plus £1000 in 3% Defence Bonds, with this situation remaining at the end of 1945.<sup>34</sup> It would be instructive to know what their attitude to military service was, and how many of their fellow-Brethren knew of these investments!

Public teaching on the issue of military involvement seems to have been rare in local assemblies.<sup>35</sup> Carter emphasises this in his own case, by saying that "the elders ... did not discuss the issue with the generation involved", and listing well-known visiting speakers who did not raise the issue either: J. B. Watson, J. M. Shaw, P. Parsons, H. St. John, G. C. D. Howley, and E. Barker.<sup>36</sup>

Clarke experienced teaching on each view,<sup>37</sup> but otherwise questionnaire responses were almost invariably along the lines of "left to the individual" (Bachelor), "a personal decision" (Clarke), "no oral ministry" (Carter), "no public ministry" (Nimmo), "no teaching" (Savage), "no united thought or guidance" (Coates), or simply "none".<sup>38</sup> Govier, McKirdy and McKelvie said that they could not remember any such teaching, as did Lewis, who said that among the Hopkins meetings active service was "generally regarded as not to be done." Some were even more emphatic: "Never once did I hear any mention in ministry re government - trade unions, voting, military service, etc".<sup>39</sup>

Blackwell's experience was probably reasonably typical: "I do not remember any specific teaching on a Christian's response to military service. The teaching was general ... to obey the law of legal authority except where it was obviously opposed to the Word of God. Each was encouraged to find the voice of God ... personally. This resulted in total support being given to each person's response to what was felt to be the call of

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<sup>34</sup> *Clapton Hall Trust Accounts 1941; Clapton Hall Trust Balance Sheets 1943 and 1945*. Copies brought to my attention and provided by David Brady, Christian Brethren Archives, Manchester. He also sent me a photocopy of part of a letter to him (23 Mar. 1987, from S. Lysons of Pendlebury Assembly, Salford, Manchester) which recounted an incident during the war. The writer had been tidying a hall after a Breaking of Bread, and found a handbag. When he and someone else opened it to look for identification, to their great surprise they found war bonds. The handbag belonged to a lady who often publicly claimed she had never paid tax or voted, and who was proud her husband was a conscientious objector.

<sup>35</sup> However many respondents remembered hearing teaching on trade unions (usually warnings) and voting.

<sup>36</sup> Carter questionnaire. Even at this distance of time and place most of these names are familiar to me, and I have books by at least two of them. Howley later became editor of the *Witness*.

<sup>37</sup> A. Clarke questionnaire.

<sup>38</sup> Glasgow (a conscientious objector and later a missionary) in his questionnaire response gave the other perspective: "I have never preached publicly against a Christian joining the army, I have never thought it was a thing that should be a "brethren" platform, nor that it was my place to tell others what to do."

<sup>39</sup> J. D. Knox questionnaire.

duty."<sup>40</sup> Carter was one of the few respondents who recognised the mind shift that was being made: "The saddest aspect was that although they laid such emphasis on the relevance of Scripture in all matters of life and conduct, there was so little enquiry as to the mind of God revealed in His Word."<sup>41</sup>

In these circumstances many who were eligible for military service sought personal advice. Some received none;<sup>42</sup> others only somewhat helpless replies. ("I don't know what I would do, I have never had to face the issue," was the response of two elders asked by Ian Powell in New Zealand.<sup>43</sup>) Some were advised by their parents<sup>44</sup>, and some were told to write in red on their call-up papers "I am a conscientious objector".<sup>45</sup> McKenzie found the lack of information a problem, particularly coming from country Victoria where access to conferences was less likely. Some like Clarke approached their elders privately and received some guidance. McKirdy said that "in private discussions with elders and friends differing views were discussed and different opinions expressed."<sup>46</sup>

Most frequently respondents mentioned meeting with their peers to discuss the issue as being the most helpful factor in crystallizing their decision. Blackwell had "in depth discussions with others who were faced with the need to decide."<sup>47</sup> Carter said that "discussion among those affected ... was extensive and we sought to help each other, whatever the ultimate decision."<sup>48</sup> He and his friends prayed together, as did Cruickshank: "A number of us had met weekly for prayer particularly concerned that when called up we might be guided by the Lord as to our future."<sup>49</sup>

A few public meetings were held to canvass the issues. In Western's letter asking for help for young men, he wrote that "with one or two exceptions our teachers are silent on this pressing issue".<sup>50</sup> However in October 1938 a meeting was held in Glasgow, attended by about 500 after every assembly in Scotland had been circulated, where the three speakers (Milne, Thompson and Moffat) came to the conclusion that, on grounds of separation, it was "against the mind of God to be associated with earthly forces in any

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<sup>40</sup> J. B. Blackwell questionnaire.

<sup>41</sup> Carter, personal communication 23 May 1994.

<sup>42</sup> Nimmo, Savage

<sup>43</sup> Powell questionnaire.

<sup>44</sup> Father mentioned: Bain, McKelvie, Blackwell; mother: Levett

<sup>45</sup> McKenzie, R. Smith

<sup>46</sup> McKirdy questionnaire.

<sup>47</sup> Blackwell questionnaire.

<sup>48</sup> Carter questionnaire.

<sup>49</sup> Cruickshank questionnaire.

<sup>50</sup> *Harvester* June 1937.

warfare which the nations might wage one with another."<sup>51</sup> Rogers' paper had been "read before a Meeting of Brethren on 19th November 1937", although I have been unable to ascertain how large that meeting was (it may have been only a group of elders).<sup>52</sup> There was also a "well attended meeting from all parts of the country" in 1939 which agreed that voluntary Air Raid Precaution work was acceptable, so long as it did not interfere with Christian service, and that those who might be faced with conscription should consider Red Cross or similar work, but that there should be "a definite refusal to use weapons for the destruction of human life."<sup>53</sup>

Another two meetings in Sussex considered the ways in which young Christians could help in wartime "without in any way committing themselves to military obligations." They put forward a positive suggestion that the possibility of setting up separate units for Christians should be explored. Another letter suggested an approach to the government to authorise the formation of "an ambulance or Red Cross unit, with definite guarantees that members of such units would not subsequently be drafted to the fighting forces". The advantages were that this would cater for those whose consciences would not permit them to take life, it would keep Brethren together for fellowship and worship, and provide them with evangelistic opportunities.<sup>54</sup> The suggestion was apparently investigated, as a later item said that a separate Brethren Ambulance Unit was impracticable because of the expense of equipment, upkeep and salaries.<sup>55</sup>

In Australia, Wilson remembers that opposing views were presented quite powerfully in question and answer meetings at Hopkins Brethren conferences, and that there were some fiery exchanges. The consensus (he felt) was that subjection to the authorities obliged people to comply with conscription, but to ask for medical or other work assisting people. The "negative view" was to apply for complete exemption. He felt the subject had been dealt with wisely and not "swept under the carpet", and said that it had

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<sup>51</sup> *Believers Magazine* Dec. 1938, p. 329. The report also mentioned that a petition was being drawn up, "asking for exemption from bearing arms for our young Brethren who have *bona fide* convictions, at the same time offering in any national emergency to do works of mercy." I have not ascertained whether this was circulated and/or presented.

<sup>52</sup> *The Christian and Military Service* op. cit.

<sup>53</sup> *Harvester* June 1939, p. 121 "From the Editor's Chair". The meeting also suggested there should be a readiness to suffer death or other punishment if the alternatives to active service were not available.

<sup>54</sup> *Harvester* Feb. 1939, p. 37. The question of a guarantee was a reflection of the traumas of World War I, when, as mentioned earlier, some conscientious objectors were commanded to bear arms under penalty of death (though none were in fact shot). *Believers Magazine* August 1939, p. 206, published a letter in August 1939 from 10 Downing Street which gave an assurance that conscientious objectors in various Army Corps and the NCC would be exempted from compulsory transfer [to active units] on mobilisation. Rowdon (personal communication, 17 July 1994) believed that there was a "copper bottomed guarantee that they would not be drafted into a combatant unit" - in fact this was not given until March 1940, just before the NCC was formed.

<sup>55</sup> *Harvester* Mar. 1940, p. 37.

also been discussed in Bible classes, where the view somewhat depended on the teacher.<sup>56</sup>

There was at least one meeting in New Zealand, "convened in Vivian Street Gospel Hall, Wellington, in [?] 1943. The purpose was to help any young conscripts make up their mind ... The 'Big Five' were there that Sunday afternoon ([Brethren] men who were in charge, or very senior in Govt. Depts.) ... There was a lively debate on whether a person should serve in the forces or not - with a number of personal opinions expressed ... Clem Tilyard [a World War I CO] quoted Scripture from Genesis to Revelation [after being asked his opinion] ... I regarded the meeting as a 'No Decision' bout, with the final direction left as a personal one before God. However, for the majority, there was a reluctance to take up arms."<sup>57</sup>

It is obvious that the majority of Brethren in the Second World War were thus taking up a pacifist position rather than a separatist one, and accepting the necessity of being involved in the war in some way because of their view of submission to the authorities. The number who applied for complete exemption was much lower than in the previous war, and very few were imprisoned except in New Zealand.<sup>58</sup>

Of the Brethren groups other than Open assemblies, those in Hopkins meetings tended to choose non-combatant service if possible. The same applied to smaller groups (such as Glanton assemblies), which in general could be classified as the more conservative assemblies. The Churches of God (Needed Truth) were against any military involvement,<sup>59</sup> and "placed under disability ... those brethren who ... joined the Armed Forces ... [they were] precluded from leading the assembly in any spiritual exercise, and named to the assembly."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> R. R. Wilson, personal conversation, October 1994.

<sup>57</sup> A. Read questionnaire.

<sup>58</sup> I have been told of two Australians, Stan Gellatly (information Esley Dunham) and Jack Hosier (information R. Glasgow). Both are now dead. Another imprisoned was Roy Jackson, from an independent fellowship in Melbourne with some Brethren links and similarities (information Dr. R. Ely and J. D. Knox). Rowdon believes very few in England went to prison. Many in all three countries were exempted on the ground of essential employment (McKenzie, McKelvie, McKirdy questionnaires), perhaps a reflection of Brethren occupations (see ch. 1). See Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 157, for New Zealand: "Fundamentalist Christians were the most numerous and included the Christian Assemblies ["Cooneyites"], Jehovah's Witnesses, Pentecostal sects, Brethren, and Seventh Day Adventists." There were also "Christian pacifists from within orthodox churches, nonreligious objectors ... and 'political' objectors." For comparison, McKirdy estimated that there were 70 Jehovah's Witnesses and 80 "Cooneyites" (personal communication 27 Sept. 1994). Grant, *op. cit.*, gives the number of "Cooneyites" as 122. Glasgow (questionnaire) said that their work camp in NSW was eventually reduced to Jehovah's Witnesses, one "Cooneyite" and Brethren of various sorts.

<sup>59</sup> Willis and Wilson, *op. cit.*, p. 281 already quoted.

<sup>60</sup> *ibid.*, p. 281.

The Exclusive Brethren in general were supposed to be non-combatant. This comes out strongly in Taylor's letters.<sup>61</sup> The Exclusive emphasis was very much on submission to the authorities, and a good example of Taylor's recommendations is in a letter of 1940: "... the army ... is but a department of the government, and essential to it ... While Christians cannot undertake combatant service, they should be careful to express readiness to offer to do any non-combatant service that the government may require." He considered that the alternative of "work of national importance" might be a "reasonable outlet from the worst evil of army associations."<sup>62</sup> Certainly in Australia and New Zealand this advice was followed. Smith (a Western Australian) says that "all EB's applied for exemption from combatant duties".<sup>63</sup> Bachelor remembered that when his Field Ambulance was moved to the AIF from the militia, all the Exclusives (and some Open Brethren) transferred out.<sup>64</sup> Carter found that Exclusives were "best at standing firm. Their centralised form of government had decreed ... the line to be adopted, so their home assemblies were not divided on the issue." He also found that they were not permitted to volunteer for specific non-combatant work in the Army (for example, bomb disposal, prisoner of war administration, Pay Corps), because "to *volunteer* [my italics] in response to such offers was to step outside the circle of the Lord's will for the individual."<sup>65</sup>

Schmidt in New Zealand gave more details: "... seeking non-combatant service was all but mandatory. There were few exceptions: one became a bomber pilot and was killed over Germany ... the rest served in hospital ships, Medical Corps or attached hygiene sections. We were taught that commissions were 'out' because a contract to use arms or direct their use was implicit. Quite a few became NCO's. Imagine our chagrin when commissioned Americans appeared at the Cairo assembly! They told us that the Pope (J[ames] T[aylor] S[enio]r.) had decided it was okay. We met many South Africans ... and their practices closely followed ours ... English Exclusives suffered a variety of usages: ... most took their chance as stretcher bearers in the front line and many became casualties ... Some were directed to rigorous labour camps in Britain ... Others served in the lower ranks of the RAF ... I occasionally found myself with about 40 Exclusives in one ambulance."<sup>66</sup>

<sup>61</sup> e.g. *Letters of James Taylor* op. cit., 22 April 1940, p. 176; 29 April 1940, p. 178-9; 30 Jan. 1941, p. 214-5; 2 Sept. 1941, p. 250; 6 Feb. 1942, p. 252-3; 10 Feb. 1942, p. 296; 20 Feb. 1942, p. 307; 21 June 1943, p. 316.

<sup>62</sup> *Letters* op. cit., p. 176-7, 22 April 1940 to Alfred Helen.

<sup>63</sup> A. Smith, questionnaire. He left the Exclusive fellowship in 1970.

<sup>64</sup> Bachelor questionnaire.

<sup>65</sup> Carter questionnaire.

<sup>66</sup> M. Schmidt, copy of letter to P. Lineham, 24 Dec. 1986. (Schmidt left the Exclusives in the 1950's.) The shift in Taylor's ideas is not reflected in his letters, but may have been a response to a particular situation. This example illustrates the fear of deviation from the accepted line of his teaching within the Exclusives.

As is obvious from the foregoing, there was a variety of options and choices facing Brethren, and given the Brethren ethos, no shortage of people to express opinions on them. The autonomy of the Open assemblies, at least in Australia, seems to have spilled over into an autonomy of the individual. Interestingly, many respondents reported little or no criticism of their decision, whatever it was, from either Christians or non-Christians, although those who were total objectors tended to attract more. Baigent was criticised by the elder of another assembly for "not being an out-and-out CO",<sup>67</sup> and Knox found more understanding from non-Christians.<sup>68</sup>

The variety of reaction within the assemblies is exemplified by Levett's experience. "Some were very supportive, but some were very hostile ... calling him a coward and saying he should be prepared to defend the Christian heritage of his country and that it was a righteous war."<sup>69</sup> Carter found that "criticism was never voiced in the hearing of those involved but an atmosphere of disapproval created. Their attitude changed dramatically when I volunteered for the Bomb Disposal Service."<sup>70</sup> In New Zealand, one conscientious objector "was allowed to continue his normal work on Army Pay ... He seemed to be respected at work for his stand, but his assembly banned him from teaching Sunday School for fear of offending patriotic parents, and [he] felt generally cold-shouldered."<sup>71</sup> This fits with Lineham's thesis that Brethren concern for evangelism (and a perception that to be ostracised was counter-productive) was starting to override the earlier principle of separation.<sup>72</sup>

There seemed to be a fear in some assemblies that the stigma of cowardice or even resistance to the law would attach to them. This attitude did not emanate from fellow-servicemen; several respondents emphasised that whatever the choice it made no difference to fellowship. McKirdy wrote that "fellow assembly people who went into the forces didn't condemn me before they went away or afterwards ... I have never criticised others for going."<sup>73</sup> Altogether any criticism, of whatever decision, seemed to have been offset by encouragement of some kind, at least in retrospect.

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<sup>67</sup> W. F. Baigent questionnaire. He had previously ministered regularly in this assembly, but was never asked again.

<sup>68</sup> Knox questionnaire.

<sup>69</sup> Letter from Jane Govier, accompanying her father's questionnaire, 23 May 1994. She continued, "... his decision was a personal one that he believed he arrived at from his understanding of the teaching of the N.T. He did not criticise people who took a different view and has always said it was the most difficult decision he had ever taken." Levett, after obtaining exemption as a conscientious objector with an order to take up work of national importance, "applied for the London Fire Brigade, who would not accept him [at first] because he was a CO. When the bombing started ... there was a great need for firefighters so [they] then accepted him."

<sup>70</sup> Carter questionnaire.

<sup>71</sup> E. Read questionnaire.

<sup>72</sup> Lineham, "Patriotism" op. cit., pp. 27-8; *There We Found Brethren* op. cit., p. 157.

<sup>73</sup> McKirdy questionnaire. He does continue, "except one who flew in bombers and went through N.Z. saying how God kept and protected him in all his flying, heard and answered his prayers, to which I added that the Christians

Although some criticism was reported from non-Christians, it does not seem to have been more than expected, and in any case Brethren were familiar with having to explain their faith and were somewhat fortified by it. Clarke and Savage mentioned some remarks by non-Christians, including sarcasm,<sup>74</sup> although others (e.g. E. Read) found that they gained respect when it was realised they were not "shirkers" simply because they were non-combatant.<sup>75</sup> Coates "faced some awkward moments. It's not pleasant to be called a coward and a dodger, but this was never from our own unit men."<sup>76</sup> Generally, consistency of life and witness was respected; McKirdy "had preached in open air meetings for some years, so they thought I was consistent."<sup>77</sup>

This is not to say that there was no ill-treatment of conscientious objectors or non-combatants. Broadly speaking, the tribunals were much more objective than in the First World War, though some respondents mentioned others having a "rough time",<sup>78</sup> and certain tribunals, notably the London one, were known to be extremely difficult to gain exemptions from.<sup>79</sup> In McKirdy's hearing in New Zealand, "the prosecutor shouted me down and wouldn't let me finish. My appeal was dismissed."<sup>80</sup> Levett, in the London Fire Brigade, was "always given the worst jobs to do ... because they knew he was a Christian and a CO, so he spent a lot of time cleaning lavatories, sorting clothes from

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below who were being bombed were also praying to the same God for protection (I didn't say 'from the bombs from their Christian brother in the plane above them!')

<sup>74</sup> I hope I have not played down the existence of criticism. Sometimes I think that respondents have done so, when they considered in retrospect the realities as against their original apprehensive expectations. Savage's is probably a balanced account: "There were, from time to time, criticism and sarcasm from unbelievers. We [there were 17 Christians in his ambulance unit] endeavoured to be a testimony to the Lord in our everyday duties and live out our faith and to a great extent our faith was respected. Our beliefs were ridiculed by the unbelievers and there were many times we were persecuted for our faith - but we learned that, those who honour God - He will honour!"

<sup>75</sup> E. Read questionnaire. Read found that his companions, who had resented his not having to carry a rifle on route marches, changed their minds when he "volunteered to trot back and get a forgotten machine gun, and explained that it was accepting being ISSUED with a rifle on the assumption that I intended to learn how to kill people I objected to, not doing the PHYSICAL work of transporting one." He also cited the case of a friend who "cheerfully volunteered to provide total care for a Jap. prisoner who owing to a severed spinal cord was totally incontinent. There'd been no rush for the first 8 hour shift, so he volunteered - and the guy clung to him so much he accepted it as full time. THAT convinced the doubters that there was such a thing as a CHRISTIAN CONSCIENCE."

<sup>76</sup> Coates questionnaire.

<sup>77</sup> McKirdy questionnaire. Also Carter's questionnaire: "During my period of service at the War Office in London, in the Branch responsible for the administration of the Pioneer Corps and the NCC, I found considerable understanding of the non-combatant position, even among regular soldiers."

<sup>78</sup> e.g. A. Smith questionnaire.

<sup>79</sup> Pope questionnaire: "The London tribunal judge in my case was notoriously severe; I think I was the only one, as far as the Worthing cases went, to be exempted (on conditions) from military service."

<sup>80</sup> McKirdy questionnaire. McKirdy's case was an interesting one. He appealed for exemption on classical 'separatist' grounds. Since 1935 he had been working for a woollen mill, which had started to make blankets etc for the army. He was charged with inconsistency by the tribunal, to which he replied that "people had to be clothed and fed wherever they were. I also tried to explain that the work I was doing was the same as ... the previous 4 years, and that there was a great difference between making clothes and blankets to protect people than making munitions and arms to destroy them ... It had never entered my mind that I was inconsistent."

bodies that had been blown up in bombing and other such chores."<sup>81</sup> Non-combatants also were sometimes singled out for unpleasant tasks; Schmidt found "the NCO's a very mixed bag, sometimes petty and resentful of Christians.. More than once the Doctor under whom I worked rescued me from boorish behaviour."<sup>82</sup>

The staff of the initial training camps for the NCC seemed, according to Carter, "selected to apply the strongest pressure to abandon non-combatant status. They did so with considerable success."<sup>83</sup> This statement aligns with that in an unpublished article quoted by Barker: "In about half the Companies pressure has been put upon men to transfer to combatant units. This has taken two forms; petty persecution and browbeating..."<sup>84</sup> Carter felt that Christians in general resisted this pressure fairly well, but that the Exclusive Brethren were the strongest.<sup>85</sup>

Real mistreatment did occur in New Zealand, and not only to Brethren of course. McKirdy tells of a Christian who suicided, and another who attempted suicide. One Brethren man died of meningitis - the camp superintendent would not accept the nurse's opinion that he was dangerously ill and should be transferred to hospital until it was too late. He died as his mother arrived from the country.<sup>86</sup> However, as Grant says, "Christian fundamentalists ... accommodated themselves ... within the detention camp system."<sup>87</sup> Brethren respect for authority, and their wish to accept their conditions as part of God's will for them, meant that they tried to work within the camps as an act of witness, just as they would have "outside".<sup>88</sup>

What kind of practical support did Brethren provide for those in some kind of army service? The measures they took give some indication of their somewhat ambivalent feelings towards war in general and the Second World War in particular.

First of all, in some places elders provided letters for those appearing before tribunals. These often took the form of a reference to the effect that the person was known to them and a member of the assembly for some time, even where the signatories did not agree

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<sup>81</sup> Govier, personal communication 23 May 1994.

<sup>82</sup> Schmidt questionnaire.

<sup>83</sup> Carter questionnaire.

<sup>84</sup> Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>85</sup> Carter questionnaire.

<sup>86</sup> McKirdy questionnaire; Grant, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

<sup>87</sup> Grant, *ibid.*

<sup>88</sup> There is an echo of this stance in the article quoted by Barker, *op. cit.*, p. 83: "the Plymouth Brethren ... will not oppose any authority at all."

with the person's stand.<sup>89</sup> Sometimes elders appeared at tribunal hearings in support of assembly appellants.<sup>90</sup> E. Read remembers a meeting of elders in Christchurch at which these sort of measures were discussed.<sup>91</sup>

On the other hand, "leading and responsible brethren" from Tory Street Hall in Wellington issued a statement in which they distanced themselves from "one putting himself forward as the representative of those known as 'Open Brethren' ... [stating] that Open Brethren ... would engage in non-combatant service, but on conscientious grounds, would refuse to take arms in war."

They disagreed with the person's right to speak on behalf of "so great a company of Christian people", and with his actual position.<sup>92</sup> They went so far as to criticise those who sought to "save themselves alive behind the bars of Objectors' Camps while others go forward and give their lives in a righteous cause."<sup>93</sup> Such statements, clearly taking up a "just war" position, could not have been more at odds with the "separation" viewpoint. They cannot have been conducive to unity after the war. In fact the lack of understanding shows how great the gulf could be even within the Brethren themselves, let alone between them and society in general.

In Britain the Editors of *Echoes of Service* could give a certificate about their status to missionaries who wished to obtain exemption from national service registration.<sup>94</sup> Carter obtained a letter from E. W. Rogers to support his tribunal application.<sup>95</sup> Lang, who had supported conscientious objectors at their tribunal hearings in the First World War, felt that the situation was better in the Second World War because of the changed

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<sup>89</sup> E.g. a letter to the New Zealand Minister for Defence on 8 Jul. 1940 in which W. R. Wilson referred to a joint letter from Open Brethren: "I signed solely as reflecting the views of those who are ready to serve their country most loyally and to the utmost of their strength, but have conscientious objections to the actual bearing of arms." National Archives AD ser. 1, 227/1/1 vol. 2. I am indebted to Peter Lineham for this reference.

<sup>90</sup> An example was Mr. Powell of Lower Hutt. E. Read, personal communication 15 Sept. 1994, says that "his reputation/honesty was such that the Magistrate would simply ask 'Is he in your opinion a youth with a strong Christian conviction?' If the answer was 'Yes' [with reasons] the appeal was granted."

<sup>91</sup> E. Read, personal communication, 15 Sept. 1994: "... how best to help those concerned ... with advice, support for any appeal they made for exemption, or for non-combatant service, e.g. supplying a supporting letter indicating that they were conscientious members of their assembly, and that the elders had confidence in their sincerity; OR appearing with them at their appeal."

<sup>92</sup> Their argument has been summarised above, in chapter 2 part (iii).

<sup>93</sup> I am indebted to Peter Lineham for this reference, and a photocopy of the (untitled) document. He also says ("Patriotism", op. cit., p. 27) that this assembly was a "noted open assembly which included prominent public servants including C. J. Drake, later Secretary of Health."

<sup>94</sup> *Harvester* June 1941, p. 81. No doubt there were similar notifications in *Echoes* itself.

<sup>95</sup> *R. H. Carter Tribunal papers*: "Letter from E. W. Rogers ... I the undersigned, have been associated with Christians commonly known as Brethren for over thirty years and am very well known throughout the British Isles as a preacher and writer. The bearer of this letter, Mr. Carter, is personally known to me, as being a member of the company of Christians meeting together at South Park Chapel, Seven Kings ... I believe his conscientious objection to Military service as defined in his statement to be perfectly sincere and genuine, and am sure that the Tribunal will grant him the desired exemption accordingly."

make-up of the tribunals, and presumably Brethren needed less of the sort of help he had given.<sup>96</sup>

Once people were in the forces there were many ways in which assemblies supported them. Prayer may seem so obvious that it hardly needs mention, but many respondents appreciated it. J. Baigent, growing up at the time, remembers "the emotional tone involved in praying for those in the forces." Atkinson said "I am sure the regular prayers of the churches of which we were members contributed to the maintenance of our christian testimony while in the armed forces."<sup>97</sup>

Bachelor mentioned the "regular letters, parcels etc from those at home", and was also given a booklet listing names and addresses of assemblies in areas where he was serving.<sup>98</sup> He found this a great aid in obtaining fellowship. Pontin was also given addresses as he moved around the Middle East; he found some of the contacts almost miraculous.<sup>99</sup> The hospitality received by many men when on leave interstate or overseas, sometimes from missionaries, made an indelible impression of the underlying unity of the church and its fellowship.

Some assemblies formed groups to support servicemen, such as the "Forces Fellowship" whose young people wrote and sent 'comfort' parcels to Pontin. The most organised example that I have found was the Hopkins Brethren "Camp Christian Fellowship Work" centred in Melbourne and coordinated by Ray Wilson. Over four years they held a fortnightly prayer meeting, sent parcels (bi-monthly), canteen vouchers, library books and letters, and donated Scripture portions and tracts for distribution (including many in other languages). Wilson edited and sent to over fifty men a fortnightly circular containing news of their fellows, extracts of letters, items for prayer, and a paragraph and/or verse of Christian encouragement.<sup>100</sup> Although "Hopkinites" favoured non-combatant service, no hint of this appears in the circulars.<sup>101</sup>

Extracts from letters in these circulars, and other comments, make it clear how much Brethren men valued fellowship when it was available. Many men mentioned as

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<sup>96</sup> Lang, *Ordered Life*, p. 173.

<sup>97</sup> Atkinson questionnaire.

<sup>98</sup> Bachelor questionnaire.

<sup>99</sup> Pontin, "A Wartime Testimony", self-published tract..

<sup>100</sup> The only set of the circulars (incomplete) is in my possession, together with an address book with the names of most of the recipients, and a card signed by many of them at the last, celebratory meeting when most of the "boys" were home (and safe). I am grateful to Ray Wilson for giving these documents to me. I have included as Appendix D copies of two circulars. About thirty people attended the prayer meetings, at every one of which a collection was taken for parcels and postage. More were involved in knitting, etc, and different assemblies also donated funds.

highlights of the war coming across other Christians (not necessarily Brethren); Nimmo may speak for them all. "In times of physical and spiritual danger Christians of all denominations regardless of their peacetime differences got together for fellowship, prayer and help from one another. Their church affiliation was never relevant."<sup>102</sup> Even Exclusive Brethren sometimes decided the exigencies of the times could overcome the barriers; Schmidt wrote, "O.B.'s did their own thing largely because we were too frightened of repercussions in N.Z. to heed their friendly advances. All the same, I value to this day the solid links I had with many."<sup>103</sup> Carter formed a lifelong friendship with an Exclusive in his unit.<sup>104</sup>

Without citing numerous similar comments, it is hard to convey the sense of longing many Brethren had for the Breaking of Bread service, and their joy when they could attend one, or meet with a few others for it, perhaps on board ship.<sup>105</sup> The Brethren "format" made this easier to arrange than a service with a set ritual needing an ordained clergyman. Many men managed to get together for Bible studies (Powell remembers them as a highlight of detention camp), often through the camp padre.<sup>106</sup>

A major outreach in New Zealand and Australia was the chain of "Everyman's Huts", which were extended to most training camps in New Zealand, and some in Australia. Financed by Brethren assemblies, and accepted by the military authorities, they had an evangelistic purpose, but made some provision for the social needs of soldiers, with writing material, books, counselling and supper available.<sup>107</sup> Lineham suggests that they had "a marked influence on the development of Brethren assemblies after the war. They introduced Brethren to other evangelical christians, and gave them a unique evangelistic opportunity, which called for imaginative programming."<sup>108</sup> Another such venture was the Welcome Rest Centre in Sydney.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Apart from the occupations of many men - e.g. ambulance, hospital, First Aid.

<sup>102</sup> Nimmo questionnaire.

<sup>103</sup> Schmidt letter to P. Lineham, 24 Dec. 1986.

<sup>104</sup> Carter questionnaire.

<sup>105</sup> A. Read questionnaire: "We broke bread in the little chapel aboard ship when there were sufficient of us off duty ... 6 or 7 Open Brethren plus one or two others." CCFW circulars: 19 Jul. 1944, C. Gale: "Not one thing in the world compensates for that blest privilege of meeting thus on the first day of the week."

<sup>106</sup> On the other hand, Glasgow (personal communication 21 April 1994) wrote that "There was never any 'interdenominational' Bible study at Newnes [the forestry camp], nor anything approaching it. Everyone was determined in his own way of thinking. And there was little time for more than private reading of the Bible." (They were paid at common soldier rates, but without food and clothing provided, and had to cook their own meals as well.)

<sup>107</sup> E. Read personal communication 15 Sept. 1994 - mentioning especially the home-made cakes! See also *Tidings* August 1941, p. 156, "Work in Military Camp, Redbank, Queensland", the report of the opening of the Everyman's Hut there.

<sup>108</sup> Lineham, "Patriotism" op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>109</sup> *Tidings* May 1944, pp. 87-8.

At the end of the war there were thanksgiving meetings in some assemblies, with the emphasis on God's sovereignty and purposes being fulfilled.<sup>110</sup> *Tidings* warned readers to "extend sympathy and fellowship to our boys when they return ... They have been facing very different conditions of life from what they were used to, and their outlook on life may have changed considerably ... It may not be easy for some to adjust."<sup>111</sup> This shows an awareness of the realities of life which is not evident, for instance, in the last issue of the CCFW circular.<sup>112</sup>

Looking back on the war, many of the respondents attributed their survival to God's protection, and believed that they had experienced special guidance at times. Perhaps the most striking example of this was Bachelor's experience in Borneo: "I was stretcher bearing for a commando unit 2 miles ahead of the front line and could not get to sleep. We were behind the Jap lines and expecting a counter attack. I realised that nothing could come my way except it was the Lord's will so I committed myself to the Lord and in a few minutes I was asleep and slept through the night."<sup>113</sup>

Others felt that they had matured (Clarke "learnt to stand on his own feet"<sup>114</sup>), and some found their career path because of skills learnt in the war. Ambrose's situation is notable in this context: after being turned down for the RAAF, he joined the medical corps, but later transferred to the RAAF - "a remarkable ... opportunity." He was then among five out of eighty-three accepted for pilot training, ending up in a "Pathfinder" squadron. Some years after the war he was therefore able to take over supervision of the New Guinea operations of the fledgling Missionary Aviation Fellowship, and continue as director for many years. "I could not see beyond the immediate situation, but we were led step by step."<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> *Tidings* Nov./Dec. 1945, (editorial) p. 204. "The various meetings for thanksgiving held when peace was announced were full of encouragement in the numbers that came together, and also for the spirit of praise manifested. How well it is for us to remember the sovereignty of God, and to recognise His wisdom and power in the direction and control of the affairs in the world."

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.* pp. 204-5.

<sup>112</sup> see Appendix D.

<sup>113</sup> Bachelor questionnaire.

<sup>114</sup> Clarke questionnaire.

<sup>115</sup> Ambrose questionnaire.

### (iii) Reasons for responses

The reasons of those Brethren who chose combatant service fall into four or five categories. They were nearly all from Open assemblies,<sup>116</sup> and apart from "submission to the powers that be", their reasons tend to be more those of society at large - the desire to restrain the aggressor and to shoulder some of the responsibility of defence. Emotional pressure was another important factor.

Atkinson provided a detailed exposition of his reasoning, based on the conviction that "God ordained the 'powers that be' and delegated to them the maintenance of justice..." He believed that taking of life was only right in this context, and based on Old Testament examples was not regarded as breaking the law. He saw passages such as the Sermon on the Mount as "instructions to the Lord's disciples as to their private and individual lives." The "just war" assumption underlying his argument emerges in his proviso that "difficulties could arise for a christian who was not convinced that his country was not engaged in war for a just cause."<sup>117</sup>

A few respondents said that their decisions were not thought out on the basis of Biblical teaching, but were a response to circumstances.<sup>118</sup> An almost fatalistic response was that of Pontin, who decided to "commit my way to the Lord and let him decide where I should go."<sup>119</sup> Atkinson also did not ask for any particular posting, feeling that "if it was the Lord's will I would be posted to a ... non-combatant unit. I was a little surprised when informed that I was allotted to the artillery battery..."<sup>120</sup>

He also said that "the fact that a number of men were enlisting about that time no doubt had some effect emotionally." Others felt this pressure, including Blackwell, who cited "the influence of national propaganda and ... older male relatives [who] were returned servicemen."<sup>121</sup>

The propaganda was evidently effective, because several men mentioned the righteousness of the Allied Cause (a fact hinted at in magazines, as we have seen), and dwelt on the need to restrain the aggressor. Atkinson enlisted as a direct response to the

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<sup>116</sup> see Appendix C.

<sup>117</sup> Atkinson questionnaire.

<sup>118</sup> e.g. Ambrose and McKenzie questionnaires. McKenzie (Hopkins Brethren) could have joined his friends in medical units but lived too far out in the country to do the requisite mid-week training session. He therefore went in the militia as a non-combatant, eventually transferring to the RAAF, partly from boredom, and partly because he estimated (correctly) that the war would have finished before he finished his training.

<sup>119</sup> Pontin, "A Wartime Testimony" op. cit.

<sup>120</sup> Atkinson questionnaire.

situation in May 1940. Blackwell wanted to "restrain an aggressor whom I considered to be acting contrary to the will of God."<sup>122</sup>

Nimmo chose service with the Red Cross because it would provide "unlimited opportunities to help others and spread the gospel. I believed the Allied Cause was a righteous one and that I should support it in order to prevent the triumph of evil."<sup>123</sup> Lewis, who was in a reserved occupation, felt that it was "imperative that the governments should put a stop to the evils [of Nazism] ... the Japanese ... brought the added fear of ... invasion and how we should protect our loved ones ... We could work to produce food and put our savings into War Savings certificates to be used in the war effort." These are clear statements in the "just war" tradition.

The desire to shoulder some of the responsibility for the country's defence was thus a factor. McKenzie saw a difference "between murder and killing a soldier to defend myself, family, property or country."<sup>124</sup> Both Davies and Pontin felt that if they refused to go to war, "someone else who may not be prepared to die must go in one's place."<sup>125</sup> On the other hand, Savage felt he could not "pull the trigger of a rifle and send a bullet that would ... usher [a person] into [a lost] eternity."<sup>126</sup> In both viewpoints the Brethren concern for "souls" is evident.

Many non-combatants also felt a strong compulsion to obey the powers that be, and their decision was evidence of the compromise between this and their desire not to take life.<sup>127</sup> This was clearly the case with Exclusive Brethren. As a conscientious objector, Glasgow reasoned that "if I had to go to gaol for my beliefs, I was obeying the law of the land in receiving the punishment for not obeying it."<sup>128</sup> The stricter Brethren groups tended to be represented in larger numbers among non-combatants and conscientious objectors (the terms overlap at times), although in New Zealand many of the conscientious objectors were from Open assemblies.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> Blackwell questionnaire.

<sup>122</sup> Blackwell questionnaire.

<sup>123</sup> Nimmo questionnaire. He came "face to face with Japanese barbarity and atrocities ... on a par with German barbarity and atrocities which I witnessed when serving in the Belsen horror camp." These provided retrospective justification for involvement in the war, though he became more than ever convinced that "there is no limit to human depravity to which the only answer is to be found in acceptance of the Gospel of Christ."

<sup>124</sup> McKenzie questionnaire.

<sup>125</sup> Davies and Pontin questionnaires.

<sup>126</sup> Savage questionnaire.

<sup>127</sup> e.g. Cruickshank, Rehn, A. Smith questionnaires.

<sup>128</sup> Glasgow questionnaire.

<sup>129</sup> See Appendix C.

However, among non-combatants the desire not to take life was uppermost. This is a shift from the primarily "separatist" arguments of the First World War. Baigent felt that he "could not conscientiously engage in killing other people",<sup>130</sup> and Buckland believed that "the Lord's teaching [was] against taking life."<sup>131</sup> Carter saw that men belonged to two categories: Christians and non-Christians, either of whom it would be invidious for a Christian to kill.<sup>132</sup> Levett said that his emphasis was on "[not] killing another person, but I was willing to serve my country."<sup>133</sup>

Powell, who spent most of the war in a detention camp in New Zealand,<sup>134</sup> presented classical pacifist arguments. He thought that "war did not seem to resolve anything, everyone seemed to lose ... It seemed to use force was the wrong way to resolve arguments. It was very hard to reconcile 'loving your enemy' while bombing him and his family in saturation bombing of cities. The idea of taking life seemed totally foreign to anything I had been taught regarding love and respect for life."<sup>135</sup>

Coates also reacted against the Army ethos of hating the enemy and not seeing them as people. His whole character, deeply imbued with the Brethren view of people and the world, revolted against the glorification of war and justification of otherwise murderous acts. "I'm not a maudlin old fool but think of these people as we are people..."<sup>136</sup>

The other major motivation for non-combatants, and even more so for conscientious objectors, was separation. This was not so strong as in the First World War, and tended to become tangled with other reasons in non-combatants. The following line of argument is not too much of a parody: a Christian should be separate from the world;

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<sup>130</sup> W. Baigent questionnaire.

<sup>131</sup> Buckland questionnaire.

<sup>132</sup> Carter, Tribunal papers op. cit.: "As a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, I find it impossible to join any force, the purpose of which is the destruction of human life, because of the following:-

The men that I should be called upon to kill, would belong to either of the following categories:

(1) Those with whom I rejoice in a common Salvation, members of the same Spiritual Body of Christ, cleansed by the same precious blood, and having with them a common hope of future glory. I should thus be using violence against those whom God has chosen from before the foundation of the world, to be the glory of the Bridegroom, His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

(2) Those who are still dead in trespasses and sins, and to whom God, through His Son, is offering full and free salvation on the ground of the blood of Christ. If I permitted myself to be instrumental in taking the lives of such, I know that I should be morally responsible for depriving these men, who may not have previously heard the Gospel, from ever having an opportunity of accepting Christ as their Saviour. They would thus die in their sins, banished from His presence eternally."

<sup>133</sup> Levett questionnaire.

<sup>134</sup> His appeal against service was dismissed even though he was in a reserved occupation.

<sup>135</sup> Powell questionnaire. He was warned by 1914-18 objectors to have "nothing to do with the military machine", but that the consequences could be serious.

<sup>136</sup> Coates questionnaire. "I was amazed at a meeting called at Conference Hall Camberwell after the war and I expected the leaders would talk to us about our experiences as believers - but it was pretty warlike. One fellow (no names) told with great zeal and I think pleasure how their machine gunners had left Japanese soldiers cut to pieces on the barbed wire."

however he is to be subject to the powers that be. The government wants me in the army, but Jesus taught us to love our enemies. However my country is in danger from an evil source, therefore non-combatant service is some kind of compromise that satisfies both my conscience and the government.

Non-combatants thus felt that in not being personally responsible for taking life, they were taking a middle line. They still felt it was an act of separation; Bain and A. Smith quoted John 18:36.<sup>137</sup> Those who had to go to court to justify their stance felt that this underlined the distance they felt between themselves and their society.

Separation tended to be the key issue for total conscientious objectors. Glasgow also cited John 18:36, and Philippians 3:20,<sup>138</sup> as part of his rationale for not voting, and the majority of non-combatants/conscientious objectors did not vote (at least at that time) either. In reply to a question about non-combatant service, Glasgow argued in court that "the army was one unity and the medical corps was a necessary part of that machine."<sup>139</sup> McKirdy "took the stand that I belonged to Christ and He said that His kingdom was not of this world ... I should obey the authorities when it came to honesty, traffic rules, hygiene, living in the community ... but when it came to politics I belonged to another kingdom..." He has become more emphatic about this since: "Today, as a Christian, I would not involve myself with any part of the war machine which protected world leaders, put millions in their bank accounts, while millions of ordinary people suffered."<sup>140</sup>

Many of the arguments put forward will be familiar from earlier chapters of this thesis, which is not surprising. What is surprising is that virtually no-one remembered any printed source for these ideas.<sup>141</sup> Most felt that (possibly with some guidance) they had, as befitted Brethren, found the basis for their action in Scripture.

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<sup>137</sup> "Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."

<sup>138</sup> "For our conversation [=citizenship] is in heaven, from whence also we look for our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

<sup>139</sup> Glasgow personal communication 21 Apr. 1994.

<sup>140</sup> McKirdy questionnaire. Jackson, from a Brethren-look independent fellowship, argued for total exemption (and went to gaol in Melbourne for refusing to undergo a medical examination). "I am a Christian and as such regard the authority of Christ as supreme. Therefore, while in the world I am not of it, but am a pilgrim and stranger and so can take no part in National Service." (Notes attached to his court summons. Photocopy obtained kindly by Dr. R. Ely.)

<sup>141</sup> Carter had found E. W. Rogers' *The Christian and Military Service* helpful, and Knox and Jackson read Hunter Beattie's *The Christian and War* (in fact my copy was very kindly lent me by Roy Jackson).

**(iv) The situation in Germany - a note**

We have seen earlier that British Brethren were aware that there was a strong Brethren movement in Germany, and some links had been continued through Baedeker, Lang, and other itinerant ministers of the word.

Brethren in Germany were generally conservative politically and separatist in their thinking. Jördy wrote that "The rights of citizenship for the children of God was for them in heaven",<sup>142</sup> and said that in the *Botschafter* from 1853 to 1939 none of the many Biblical texts analysed included Romans 13: 1-7. He also summarised the Brethren position during the reign of the Kaisers as standing "on the side of 'their' government, with whose political business they did not otherwise concern themselves. Without formulating it as party politics, or even practising it, the Christian had to be ... patriotic to the nation, to the monarchy, and conservative."<sup>143</sup> Nevertheless to all outward observance, Brethren were apparently quite separate from and uninterested in politics. But army service was evidently not unknown, and according to Coad, "a considerable number of senior military men were associated with [the Brethren movement]."<sup>144</sup>

However, under the Nazi regime, autonomous, little known groups like the Brethren were faced with major problems. Conway in his study *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches* states that despite official claims that the state did not hinder the religious activities of churches, "the facts are otherwise. It was against the weakest and least popular of the religious groups - ... the free sects - whose interest and participation in German political affairs had never been more than peripheral, that the Nazis, believing them to be most easily dispensable, directed their earliest and most relentless attacks."<sup>145</sup> In a list of sects prohibited by the Gestapo up to December 1938 are the "Open Brethren" (Gestapo Liegnitz 12 April 1937), and the "Darbyists - 2nd group, infant baptism" on 21 March 1938.<sup>146</sup>

These may have been local proscriptions, as Jördy gives details of Brethren activity during the war. On the other hand, these activities were carried out as part of the "Bund

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<sup>142</sup> G. Jördy, *Der Brüderbewegung in Deutschland* Teil 3 (Wuppertal, 1986), p. 17. I am indebted to my sister Anne Gordon for her translation of parts of this book. She emphasises that they are approximate translations from very erudite and scholarly German.

<sup>143</sup> *ibid.*, p. 32.

<sup>144</sup> Coad, Regent College lectures 1990 op. cit., Lecture 4, p. 7.

<sup>145</sup> J. S. Conway, *The Nazi Persecution of the Churches* (London, 1968), pp. 195-6. Lang, *Ordered Life*, says that "In 1937 the Nazi rulers had suppressed the meetings of the Exclusive Brethren and had intimated that they would suppress the Open Brethren unless the two sections agreed to combine and form such an Association as the police authorities would sanction."

<sup>146</sup> *ibid.* p. 370.

Evangelische-Freikirchlicher Gemeinde", a "federation" of Open and Exclusive Brethren and Baptist churches which was agreed to under some pressure at a conference in Elberfeld in 1938. The theme of the conference was "The *ecclesia* of God in the New Testament" and the emphasis was on the unity of the church.<sup>147</sup> Perhaps this was a subconscious way of making such a formal union more palatable to people formerly committed to independent, autonomous churches, but Jördy also lists what he sees as the motivations behind the decision: the external political pressures, the national enthusiasm for unity, the duty to form a single community in order to have a stronger witness, and the attitude of other groups and of leading personalities.<sup>148</sup>

Jördy acknowledges that at the time they were still debating whether this situation had come about as a punishment or as the will of God, and that they did not realise that the government's intention was to get rid of Christianity altogether. It took some time before it dawned on them that forbidding Christians to gather together (the proscriptions?) was only the beginning.<sup>149</sup> Their isolation from political affairs had led to a dangerous naivety in which they were ignorant of the true character of the government (which was not of course a failing unique to the Brethren).

A more formal union seems to have taken place at Verbert in 1941.<sup>150</sup> There was still some concern, about such matters as the Lord's Supper and the participation of women, and after the war there was heart-searching as to whether they had acted rightly. However, as I understand it, most Open Brethren stayed in the "federation", as did the majority of Exclusives, but most Baptists left. The "federated" group run the Wiedenest Conference Centre, Bible School and Mission House, a focal point of German Brethren activity.

The new association did not go unnoticed outside Germany, and Lang visited there in 1938 "to form an opinion as to how far the Exclusives had changed ... with intelligence and conviction, or was it only under State pressure and threat?" He was satisfied that "their change was one of mind and heart", but he remained "opposed to the organised union which was formed to satisfy the police ... [God's] word sanctions no visible association of Christians other than the local church in each separate place."<sup>151</sup> But Lang was ever an idealist, and no-one not faced with the agonising decision can judge them.

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<sup>147</sup> Jördy, *op. cit.*, pp. 213 ff.

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.* p. 219.

<sup>149</sup> *ibid.* p. 197.

<sup>150</sup> *ibid.* p. 234.

<sup>151</sup> Lang, *Ordered Life*, pp. 237-8.

## THE POST WAR PERIOD

This brief overview of the decades since the Second World War is only a cursory glance. Brethren attitudes have undergone many changes in these years and are still the subject of consideration and in some cases anguish and disagreement. It would be fair to say that the view of separation so familiar to earlier generations is much less taught, and that dispensational theology is less widely known. Also, the new charismatic movement has added another dimension to many assemblies, but a cause of dissension to others, thus widening the range of variables in churches called Brethren.

After the Second World War many countries continued some form of national service. This was the case in Britain; Carter's observation was that "applications for non-combatant status from young men in assemblies practically faded away,"<sup>1</sup> although he was unsure what interpretation should be drawn from this. Baigent's experience was that, after making "a careful study of the Scriptures", he "registered as CO. Inevitably I suppose I was influenced by my father's stand and by that of ... the leading elder [who had also been a conscientious objector in World War II]. When I went before the tribunal I was accompanied by the aforesaid elder who encouraged me. I made it clear that my objection was to being trained to kill people, not to serving my country, and that I was willing to go in the Non-Combatant Corps." This is again the pacifist rather than the separatist argument.

Baigent discovered that "all exclusive Brethren (London party [i.e. Taylor Exclusives]) were expected to go into the NCC, as did some Open Brethren, Pentecostals, etc." Martin, writing in the 1960's, believed that "a large proportion [of Brethren] take the path of conscientious objection", although he also pointed out that many Open Brethren will accept service without conditions.<sup>2</sup>

One unusual post-war case was that of George Patterson. He was not a conscientious objector, having worked all through the war in munitions production, but he felt called by God to be a missionary in Tibet, and argued that he had already served his country and that God's call was paramount. Although his appeal was ignored, he left the country without hindrance in the end. He was a thorough-going separatist as to politics: "the powers-that-be are ordained of God; [it was] dishonouring to God when those that used His Name, and consequently admitted the possibilities of knowing God's mind and will, were divided amongst [parties]. For that reason I had never voted for any party. The

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<sup>1</sup> Carter, personal communication 8 Aug. 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Martin, *Pacifism*, pp. 190-1.

Christian could not touch politics in its present state."<sup>3</sup> By the late 1940's this was becoming a rarer viewpoint among Brethren.

In the USA it was evidently common for Brethren to be conscientious objectors, particularly in the stricter meetings.<sup>4</sup> Jim Elliot, whose journals were published after he was killed in Ecuador as a missionary in 1956, was quite clearly in the separatist tradition when he wrote in 1950 "since the Church and the believer do not constitute a nation (other than a holy one, with no boundaries, or organised heads) war of any sort, in defense against evil or in aggression for good, is not allowable [for Christians]."<sup>5</sup> In high school days he had made his position clear when in a public-speaking club he had refused to give a political speech during a presidential campaign. "He believed that the Church of Christ ... has abandoned national and political ties."<sup>6</sup>

He was in line for the military draft and quite matter-of-factly listed his options for 1950 as some form of foreign service, work with college students, post-graduate study or "Prison or CO camp - following the simple pilgrims' path of meekness and nonresistance."<sup>7</sup> He had sent in his conscientious objector registration in October 1948.<sup>8</sup>

In Australia there was National Service during the 1950's, but as far as I can tell from conversations with some who were eligible, very little thought was given to avoiding it, "because there wasn't a war on." All were surprised that they came within the ambit of this study. Fleming had no qualms about doing his training, and indeed chose not to defer his time of service "in order to put my Christian faith to the test in an unsympathetic environment."<sup>9</sup>

It was a different matter when National Service was reintroduced at the time of the Vietnam war, in that there was a possibility of being asked to undertake combat service, and that had been the motivation for the scheme. However I have had difficulty in obtaining information for this period. Perhaps it is too recent and too close emotionally for objective discussion. I have been told of a few Brethren who were conscientious objectors, but whose friends have been unable to persuade them to respond to my

<sup>3</sup> G. N. Patterson, *God's Fool* (London, 1965), p. 244. He wrote earlier (p. 44) that "democracy ... [is the] inevitable corollary of the glorification of the human being ... Christian autocracy was the only acceptable form of government for the Christian, and this would not be set up until Christ Himself returned."

<sup>4</sup> Professor R. D. Linder, personal communication, 26 October 1994: "... most of the Brethren I know from the part of America where I live are COs or at least reluctant to accept anything but a non-combatant status in wartime."

<sup>5</sup> E. Elliott (ed.), *The Journals of Jim Elliot* (New Jersey, 1978), p. 277 - 21 Sept. 1950.

<sup>6</sup> E. Elliott, *Shadow of the Almighty* (London, 1958), p. 33.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.* p. 101 - 25 Nov. 1949.

<sup>8</sup> Elliott, *Shadow of the Almighty*, p. 70. There is no further mention of the draft, so presumably he was exempted. On p. 33 Elliott writes that "he was never forced, by a draft call, to take a stand as a conscientious objector."

questionnaire. However, my observation of my contemporaries in the Brethren is that virtually none were draft resisters, and none that I knew personally insisted on being non-combatants. In fact, non-registration for the draft (the ultimate rebellion for my generation) was almost unthinkable. I personally know two men who served in Vietnam.

That is not to say that some sort of conscientious objection did not exist. French, a non-combatant Baptist with Brethren family ties,<sup>10</sup> knew two or three non-combatants from among Brethren in his time in the army. Freudigmann's first appeal as a conscientious objector was over-ruled; his second as a non-combatant was accepted, although once in the army pressure was put on him to take up weapons. His reasoning resulted from his reconciliation of obedience to the powers-that-be with the command to love one's enemies. He decided that "God wanted me to obey the government to the extent that they did not ask me to do anything that was against God's law."<sup>11</sup> This was a classic Second World War compromise position, but not at all typical in the Vietnam era.

Not many Brethren took part in the Vietnam moratorium marches. Opposition to the war was seen as radical, and associated with left-wing politics.<sup>12</sup> By this stage the majority of Australian Brethren would have seen themselves as respectable, law-abiding citizens, and those who voted were firmly conservative.<sup>13</sup> They would have been astonished at the tenor of many of the items in *Tidings* fifty years earlier, and uncomfortable with the thought that they were "strangers and pilgrims".<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Fleming questionnaire.

<sup>10</sup> see B. French. *War and/or Peace (Living as responsible Christian citizens in our society, nation and world)* (photocopied booklet) for his own experience, and a thoughtful exposition of his position.

<sup>11</sup> Freudigmann questionnaire.

<sup>12</sup> It is interesting that Australia, at the persistent instigation of Senator Michael Tate (Labour), has recently changed the law so that conscientious objection to particular wars on political grounds is recognised.

<sup>13</sup> i.e. they voted Liberal.

<sup>14</sup> The assembly at Union Street, Kew, Melbourne, had these words on a plaque on the wall, reminding them that they were "strangers to the world ... pilgrims and homeward bound." Coates questionnaire.

## CONCLUSIONS

I believe this study has shown that, despite the variations within the Brethren movement, it is possible to identify patterns of behaviour in relation to the state. At all times they based their attitude on the Bible, and a respect for authority in the form of the "powers that be" has been common to all streams of Brethren. There was also a strong emphasis on the need for separation from the world, both as "strangers and pilgrims" and as those who wished to be separate from evil. Until the period between the two world wars this resulted in minimal involvement in the political process.

This study has shown that these two basic themes co-existed within the movement, until the demands of modern war exposed the tensions between the two. Another strong characteristic, that of evangelism, was also present, and further complicated the picture; because of their desire to see people "saved", Brethren did not wish to withdraw entirely from society. Indeed Brethren are very hard to "label": none of Wilson's categories fit them neatly.<sup>1</sup> While I believe he is correct to classify Exclusive Brethren as *introversionist*, mainstream Brethren are really a combination of *introversionist* and *conversionist*. The pressures of war brought the differences between those who inclined to one or other response into the open.

This was in spite of the fact that they had an exceptionally well-developed theology of the church and its place in the world, and the framework of dispensationalism as a structure for their thought. It seems as though their preoccupation with ecclesiastical concerns ("church truth") and the believer's personal mode of life, combined with the relative stability of society before the First World War, blinded them to wider considerations of social change.

While my investigations show that accurate statistics of Brethren participation in the world wars are impossible to establish, what figures I have been able to find, and the opinions of respondents, make it possible for me to make some general observations. Early Brethren had a tradition of non-involvement in war. In the First World War, many

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson, B R, *Religion in Secular Society* (Watts, 1966), p. 224: "Sectarian movements ... [may be distinguished] ... in terms of their broad response to the wider society ... In western society four principal responses can be recognised, which we might conveniently label as *conversionist*; *revolutionist*; *introversionist*; and *manipulationist*."

## CONCLUSIONS

Brethren were conscientious objectors (or in Australia, non-participants) - in some areas of Britain, and New Zealand, probably most Brethren came into this category. On the other hand there is evidence of enlistment, reluctant or otherwise, in some places. In the Second World War, the commonest choice appears to have been non-combatance - probably 50 to 60% made this choice. Since then, the issue has not been a live one, with lack of resistance to Vietnam conscription denoting changes within the Brethren and increasing respectability.

I have shown that the Brethren reaction to war does not fit within the pacifist tradition as colloquially understood, nor for instance with a Quaker definition, "based ultimately on the conception of 'that of God in every man'".<sup>2</sup> It was not in the true tradition of non-resistance either. Some responses, especially in the Second World War, were what Ceadel calls "exemptionism" (a refusal to fight or kill, but not an insistence that others should do the same).<sup>3</sup> He points out that it is sometimes hard to distinguish this from pacifism, "since it is itself a matter of conscience and normally related to a self-denying sectarian life-style".<sup>4</sup>

Other responses were what the British Brethren theologian Summerton calls a "vocational" reconciliation of the tendency to non-violence in the teaching of Jesus with the Biblical acceptance of the need for government (involving some coercion and punishment) in a fallen world. The essence of this sort of response, which I have tended to call "separatist", was to "recognise war as a legitimate instrument of state, but to deny that the Christian may participate in it."<sup>5</sup> It is easily recognisable in Brethren conscientious objectors. Those who chose to fight based their views on the "just war" argument, or as Summerton puts it, the "Augustinian" resolution of the Biblical dichotomy.

It is always difficult to stand out against the norms of society. Macdonald's study of conscientious objectors in Melbourne in 1939-1945 goes so far as to call it deviancy, and identifies the key questions as "how the deviant conceives the world around him, what motivates him to reject societal mainstreams, and how ... he overcome[s] the pressures of non-conformity."<sup>6</sup> It is clear that the Brethren had a definite conception of the world around them as being under God's judgement; that they were motivated to

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<sup>2</sup> G. Nuttall, *Christian Pacifism on History* (Oxford, 1958), p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> M. Ceadel, *Thinking About Peace and War* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 139-140.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 140.

<sup>5</sup> N. Summerton, "The just war: a sympathetic critique", in O. R. Barclay (ed.), *Pacifism and War* (Leicester, 1984), p. 196.

<sup>6</sup> I. M. Macdonald, "Deviancy [sic]: The experience of the Conscientious Objector in Melbourne, 1939-45", *La Trobe Historical Studies*, vol. 4 (August 1974), p. 13.

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reject "societal mainstreams", when they did, by the thought that they were "aliens" in their country and world; and that their strong family and church links and Biblically-based teaching enabled them to withstand the "pressures of non-conformity".

Ian Hamilton, an imprisoned non-Christian conscientious objector in New Zealand, may have the last word. Although he is speaking of pacifists in general, his words apply to the Brethren as well: "The actual quarrel ... is between himself and his own herd. Sooner or later ... he'll have to recognise the fact, ... and come to grips with the problem and find a direction out of the conflict between himself and the herd<sup>7</sup> ... it seems that the belief in something outside yourself, outside the world of perception, is a necessity before you can enter into any sort of balanced relationship with [your] world."<sup>8</sup> This thesis has tried to throw some light on the Brethren quest for that balanced relationship.

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<sup>7</sup> I. Hamilton, *Till Human Voices Wake Us* (Auckland, 1984 [1953]), p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 216.

**DARBY'S LETTER OF 1870**

Darby's letter about the Christian's position in war-time, December 1870. Taken from Peter Brock, "The Peace Testimony of the Early Plymouth Brethren", *Church History* vol. 53, no. 1, 1984, p. 35, and G. H. Lang, *The Christian Relation to the State and to War* (Walsham-le-Willows, 1937), p. 27-9. Brock gives the reference as *Letters of J.N.D.* (3 Vols.), Kingston-on-Thames: Stow Hill Bible and Tract Depot, n.d., vol. 2, pp. 110-111; Lang gives simply *Letters* vol. II, p. 130.

*"It is clear to me that a Christian, free to do as he will, could never be a soldier, unless he were at the very bottom of the scale, and ignorant of the Christian position. It is another thing when one is forced to it. In such a case the question is this: is the conscience so strongly implicated on the negative side of the question, that one could not be a soldier without violating that which is the rule for conscience - the word of God? In that case we bear the consequence, we must be faithful.*

*What pains me is the manner in which the idea of one's country has taken possession of the hearts of some brethren. I quite understand that the sentiment of patriotism may be strong in the heart of a man. I do not think that the heart is capable of affection towards the whole world. At bottom, human affection must have a centre, which is "I". I can say "My country", and it is not that of a stranger. I say "My children," "My friend," and it is not a purely selfish "I". One would sacrifice one's life - everything (not oneself, or one's honour) for one's country, one's friend. I cannot say "My world"; there is no appropriation. We appropriate something to ourselves that it may not be ourselves. But God delivers us from the "I"; He makes of God, and of God in Christ, the centre of all; and the Christian, if consistent, declares plainly that he seeks a country - a better, that is to say, a heavenly country. He withdraws into the shade in this world, as outside the vortex which surges there, to engulf and carry everything away. The Lord is a sanctuary.*

*That a Christian should hesitate whether he ought to obey or not, I understand: I respect his conscience; but that he should allow himself to be carried away by what is called patriotism-that is not what is of heaven. 'My kingdom,' said Jesus, 'is not of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight.' It is the spirit of this world under an honourable and attractive form, but wars come from 'lusts that war in your members.'*

*As a man, I would have fought obstinately for my country, and would never have given way, God knows; but as a Christian I believe and feel myself to be outside all; these things move me no more. The hand of God is in them; I recognise it; He has ordered all beforehand. I bow my head before that will. If England were to be invaded tomorrow, I should trust in Him. It would be a chastisement upon this people who have never seen war, but I would bend before His will.*

*Many Christians are labouring in the scene of the war; large sums of money have been sent to them. All this does not attract me. God be praised that so many poor creatures have been relieved; but I would rather see the brethren penetrating the lanes of the city, and seeking the poor where they are found every day. There is far more self-*

APPENDIX A

*abnegation, more hidden service, in such work. We are not of this world, but we are the representatives of Christ in the midst of the world. May God graciously keep His own."*

## BRETHREN ATTITUDES TO TRADE UNIONS

Although trade unions are not part of the machinery of government, Brethren attitudes towards them were based on similar principles to those which underlay their relationships with the state. In general, they tried to avoid membership. The main Scriptural warrant for this was 1 Corinthians 6:21: "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers."

This verse was one central to the argument of a British tract entitled *Can a Christian be a Trade Unionist and still remain faithful to his Lord?* He says, "The vast majority of Trade Unionists are unbelievers. Their actions prove this. They do not first consult God, or seek to know His will. Their own benefit is the one consideration. How their strikes may affect the general public does not appear to be their concern. All this is entirely opposed to the teaching of Christ; therefore how can one who professes to be a Christian support it?"<sup>1</sup>

The author goes on to argue that the "closed shop" is a foreshadowing of the mark of the Beast in Revelation and that employer/employee relations are not the same as the master/servant ones that are delineated in the Epistles, which bear the hallmark of subjection. In answer to the argument that people who do not join a union still receive benefits fought for by the union, he suggests that the amount of the subscription be "contributed to a philanthropic object." This arrangement was in fact quite often agreed to, as several of my respondents attest.

As recently as 1976, there was a three-part article in the *Believers Magazine* entitled "The Case against Union Membership", written in the light of the 1974 Labour Relations Act in the United Kingdom, which argued from the same verse, as well as the principle of separation and the duty to submit to employers.<sup>2</sup> However the majority of Brethren would not now take this stand. Many of my respondents would not join a trade union early in their working life, but moderated their stance later.

A problem that had to be faced was compulsory membership. Lineham says that in New Zealand, despite earlier opposition to union membership, "when the first Labour Government made membership of unions compulsory for employees most brethren preferred to obey the 'powers that be'".<sup>3</sup>

However he also analysed the 1921 census returns, showing that Brethren in New Zealand were more strongly represented in rural areas, that they were less likely to be in domestic service or in factories than most New Zealanders, and that there was a higher percentage than the average population involved in small business. He remarks on the fact that "only the Jews had a higher proportion of members who were employers of labour. Only the Lutherans and those professing no religion were proportionately more numerous among the self-employed."<sup>4</sup> It is not possible to do such an analysis in

<sup>1</sup> Russell Elliott, *Can a Christian be a Trade Unionist and still remain faithful to his Lord?* Kendall: R. Elliott, n.d. ["after the war" - probably late 1940's], p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Believers Magazine* August, September, October, 1976

<sup>3</sup> Lineham, op. cit., p. 160, citing the *Treasury* no. 38 (1936), pp. 189-190.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 161

Australia, but my feeling is that the results would be similar. Thus Brethren tended to be less liable to union membership, and more resistant to the demands of union officials.

Large-scale employers such as R. A. Laidlaw in Auckland and J. W. Laing in the United Kingdom tended to work around the union problem by a mixture of example (of hard work) and benevolence (help when a need was perceived). I can find no reference in Laing's biography to his relations with trade union officials, although there is constant reference to his personal relations with hundreds if not thousands of his workers.<sup>5</sup>

Exclusive Brethren have had a consistent policy of not joining unions. Lineham says that "In the early nineteen-sixties the Exclusive Brethren tried *en masse* to seek exemption from compulsory unionism".<sup>6</sup> This was in line with James Taylor's quite definite teaching, shown in the following statements from his letters:

"I am quite concerned ... that the view that 'we cannot join up' to a trade union is not generally accepted ... I believe that a brother, when required to join a trade union, should explain his reason as before God for not doing so, quoting Scripture. It is not unlikely that if this were courageously done by all, with respect and humility, those in authority would take notice of it, and under God a change might come about. Every true Christian sympathises with the working man and wishes him to obtain a fair recompense for his labour, but trade unionism in principle requires that he should join it whatever his conscience, or else starve ... Does the Government of New Zealand really understand that it is legalising the anti-Christian principle?" (25 September 1936)<sup>7</sup>

"... it is clear that a conscience governed by the teaching of Scripture is essential to a Christian, and such a conscience will not submit to trades unionism. That a Christian cannot employ his brother because the latter is not a trades union member is utterly out of accord with truth and fairness. It is a denial of the liberty with which Christ has set us free, and is a negation of the love that is to mark Christians between themselves, and that would do good to all; and nationally it is against the fundamental principles of British law." (2 September 1941)<sup>8</sup>

The same point is made, more strongly and at greater length, on 4 and 6 February 1942. He says that in the USA the matter of employing union labour has not been enforced, after their protests, and that the unions were considering the matter. He also says that

"There is a strong link with conscience as to unionism and conscience as to Combatant Service ... I believe God will make a way for us through suffering [he cites an instance of a young Irish brother being promoted to avoid union claims] ... I believe this matter of refusing unionism, even at the cost of suffering, is a public testimony in these days to our loyalty to God, to Christ, and to the brethren. As has been said, no trade unionist can have a harp of God, Revelation 15:2."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Coad, *Laing* op. cit.

<sup>6</sup> Lineham, *History* op. cit., p. 160.

<sup>7</sup> *Letters of James Taylor* vol. II op. cit., pp. 46-7.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, p. 237.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 253-4. Revelation 15:2 reads: "And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God."

This is a clear reference to trade unionism being a forerunner of the rule of the anti-Christ, and the belief that they were making a stand for righteousness in the face of evil, as well as other considerations, was no doubt a strengthening one. Gardiner summed up the situation as follows, from the Exclusive perspective: "Against this aggressive spirit of unionism ... the Lord has raised up a standard in many individual believers who have refused to belong to unions, preferring to suffer rather than to surrender what is due to God, and their action has forced on the attention of Governments, municipal authorities, employers of labour, trade union officials, and the public generally that fact that God has paramount rights, and supports those who stand for them. The path ... often entails suffering and loss circumstantially..."<sup>10</sup> In fact many Exclusives have lost their livelihoods over this issue.

The Needed Truth wing, or Churches of God, were also against union membership. They made a general indictment of any organisation "which makes the word of man binding, and controls the action of its members apart from the Word of God."<sup>11</sup> Later (1936) they distinguished between trades unions and professional associations, and still later (1947) they reaffirmed this, but added that changing conditions meant that "brethren could decide ... how they responded."<sup>12</sup>

The following list of respondents shows their attitude to trade unions. It is interesting to compare it with the table of war-time service (Appendix C).

Active member: Blackwell

Member: J. Baigent (eventually)  
Cruickshank  
Freudigmann  
Knox (later resigned, paid dues to charity)  
McCallum  
D. McKelvie (later resigned)  
Pope (eventually - a professional association)  
Savage  
Read (promoted so did not need to be a member)

Never needed to join:

W. Baigent  
Lewis (joined professional association)  
Nimmo

Never joined: Bachelor

Buckland  
Coates  
Glasgow

<sup>10</sup> Gardiner, op. cit., p. 225. I have quoted extensively from Exclusive authors because their works are not easy to obtain, given the closed nature of their association.

<sup>11</sup> *Summary of Minutes of Conferences of Representative Overseers of the Churches of God in the British Isles and Overseas*, p. 23, cited in Willis and Wilson, "The Churches of God", op. cit., p. 277.

<sup>12</sup> Willis and Wilson op. cit., p. 277.

APPENDIX B

Levett

R. & W. Hogarth

M. McKelvie

A. McKelvie

Pontin

A. Smith

most Hopkins Brethren Glanton, Green Pastures, Needed Truth

all Exclusives

## LIST OF RESPONDENTS, INFORMANTS, ETC

I have listed all the names about whom I have some information. Those that are shaded are respondents to my questionnaire. Asterisks denote personal communication, with or without questionnaire. # means I have detailed information from a relative. Query marks denote uncertainty about the information; after a surname they denote uncertainty as to the person's combatant status. The term "conscientious objector" was also used by some non-combatants, so there is some overlap between these sections, although as far as possible "conscientious objectors" are those who went to court or a tribunal. In Australia, most non-combatants listed had responded to the call-up but requested non-combatant service - i.e. did not go to court. I have not tried to differentiate between those who enlisted voluntarily and those who responded to the call-up, as in many cases I did not know this. Some assemblies frowned on those who enlisted voluntarily.

COUNTRY	NAME	AFFILIATION	WARTIME SITUATION
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### WORLD WAR I

Australia	Bolton	Open	?
Australia	Brough	Open	Ambulance Corps
U.K.	R. H. Carter#	Open	Army Service Corps
U.K.	Dobbie	Open	Army
Australia	Drayton	Hopkins	objector
Australia	T. R. Gordon*	Hopkins	exempt
U.K.	Levett	Open	C. O.
Australia	A. McKelvie#	Hopkins	enlisted - died influenza
Australia	C. McKelvie#	Hopkins	objector
Australia	Messer#	Open	Dental Corps
Australia	Parker	Open	Ambulance Corps
Australia	C. Read#	Open	C.O. - imprisoned
New Zealand	S. Read#	Open	C.O. - imprisoned
New Zealand	Read	Open	C.O. - imprisoned
New Zealand	Reeve	Open	dispatch rider
Australia	Wigg#	Exclusive	non-combatant

### WORLD WAR II

#### Conscientious

#### Objectors

U.K	W. Baigent	Open	Police Reserve
.	Levett	Open	London Fire Brigade
.	Pope	Open	Farming and forestry
.	Rowdon*? [1 Vic. Hall]	Open	?
Australia	Cavill	Open	Allied Works Council
	Gellatly	Open	imprisoned
	Glasgow	Glanton	manpower - forestry

## APPENDIX C

COUNTRY	NAME	AFFILIATION	WARTIME SITUATION
	Hosier	Glanton	imprisoned
	Jackson*	independent	imprisoned
	Knox	independent	?
	A. McKelvie	Hopkins	non-combatant>reserved
	Tucker	Exclusive	manpower
New Zealand	Bowen	Open	reserved
	McKirdy*	Open	detention camp
	Powell	Open	detention camp
<u>Non-combatants</u>			
U.K.	Carter**	Open	NCC - bomb disposal etc
	Clarke	Open	Pay Corps etc
	G. Davies	NCC	NCC
	Frost	Exclusive	NCC
	Skelly	Open	NCC
	[South Park Chapel	Open	2 medical corps 1 pay corps 4 NCC]
Australia	Bachelor	Open	Field Ambulance
	Buckland	Exclusive	Field Ambulance
	H. Coates	Open	Field Ambulance
	L. Coates	Open	Field Ambulance
	R. Coates	Open	medical orderly
	Cruickshank	Open	medical stores
	Cutler	Hopkins	Aust. Gen. Hosp.
	A. Davey?	Hopkins	R.A.E.
	J. Davey?	Hopkins	
	Davies	Hopkins	Railway construction
	D. Elliott	Open	artillery>?YMCA
	[Sydney	Glanton	1 reserved occupation 1 medical corps]
	Gale	Hopkins	hospital
	Garroway	Hopkins	Supply
	Gehan	Hopkins	Works
	A. R. Gordon#	Hopkins	exempt>reserved occupation
	Grey (Miss)	Hopkins	Purchasing
	Griffiths	Hopkins	Army Supplies
	J. Hampton	Hopkins	?Supply
	H. Hampton	Hopkins	
	Hayman	Hopkins	Army Supplies
	Hollyock	Hopkins	RAAF
	Holt	Hopkins	Transport/signals
	Jack	Hopkins	Medical Corps
	Lewis	Hopkins	reserved occupation

## APPENDIX C

COUNTRY	NAME	AFFILIATION	WARTIME SITUATION
	J. McKelvie	Hopkins	Field Ambulance
	Messer*	Open	First Aid
	Murdoch	Hopkins	YMCA
	Nicholls	Open	exempt
	Nimmo	Hopkins	Red Cross
	Outhred?	Hopkins	RAAF
	Pianta	Hopkins	?engineers
	Price	Hopkins	RAAF
	Prolongeau	Hopkins	Field Ambulance
	Quilliam	Hopkins	?
	A. Redford	Hopkins	Field Ambulance
	K. Redford	Hopkins	medical corps
	R. Redford	Hopkins	Field Ambulance
	Rehn	Open	Army Supplies
	Savage	Open	Field Ambulance
	B. Scott	Hopkins	Supply
	Sinclair?	Hopkins	RAAF
	Sparks?	Hopkins	Signals
	Stevens?	Hopkins	Transport
	A. Smith	Exclusive	Field Ambulance
	R. Smith	Hopkins	Field Ambulance
	R. S. Smith	Hopkins	Supply
	J. Thomson	Open	?
	Weeks*	Open	medical
	Wilson*	Hopkins	exempt
	Wilson-Hay (Sr.)	Hopkins	Hospital
	Winn	Open	YMCA
	Wright	Open	Field Ambulance
New Zealand	[Bowen br-in-law	Open	YMCA]
	A. Read	Open	medical (navy)
	E. Read*	Open	air force
	Schmidt	Exclusive	Field Ambulance
<u>Combatants</u>			
U.K.	H. Davies	Open	RAN
	Govier	Open	
	Pontin	Baptist/Open	BEF, MEF, BAOR
	Priddle [+ 2]	Open	RAN
	[South Park	Open	3 Territorial
	Chapel		4 Tanks, Inf., RAF, Marines
	Victoria Hall	Open	10]
Australia	R. Ambrose	Open	
	V. Ambrose	Open	medical>RAAF
	Ashton	Open	

## APPENDIX C

COUNTRY	NAME	AFFILIATION	WARTIME SITUATION
	A. Atkinson	Open	
	E. Atkinson	Open	artillery
	M. Atkinson	Open	
	Baird	Hopkins	RAN
	Barnard	Hopkins	RAAF
	Belot	Open	RAF (killed)
	Blackwell	Open	Supply>AIF
	Brewer	Hopkins	RAAF
	Bumstead	Hopkins	RAAF (killed)
	Buxton	Open	
	Coleman	Hopkins	?Engineers
	Connell	Hopkins	Infantry
	G. Davies	Hopkins	AA
	I Elliott	Open	
	Garrett?	Hopkins	RAAF
	A. Hopkins	Hopkins	AIF
	D. Hopkins	Hopkins	RAAF
	F. Hutchison	Open	Engineers
	R. Hutchison	Open	RAAF (died overseas)
	McCallum	Open	RAAF
	McKenzie	Hopkins	militia>RAAF
	E. Scott	Hopkins	RAAF
	D. Thomson	Open	(POW)
	H. Thomson	Open	?
	M. Thomson	Open	?
New Zealand	Bates	Open	Air Force
	[Manawaru Ass <sup>y</sup>	Open	1 Tank Corps]
<b>POST WAR</b>	<b>PERIOD</b>		
U.K.	J. Baigent	Open	NCC
U.S.A.	Elliot	Open	(objector)
Australia	Eyles	Open	objector - Vietnam
	Fleming	Open	National Service
	Freudigmann	Open	N. S. - non-combatant
	Kruck	Open	CMF>Everymans
	Morse	Open	National Service
	Murfet	Open	National Service

**EXAMPLES OF CAMP CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP WORK  
CIRCULARS**

## APPENDIX D

APPENDIX D

## APPENDIX D

## SAMPLE LETTER AND QUESTIONNAIRE

*Elisabeth Wilson*

*356 Davey Street*

*SOUTH HOBART*

*Tasmania 7004*

I am undertaking a Master of Humanities course at the University of Tasmania in the history of Christianity, and am planning to write my thesis on the topic ***Brethren attitudes to authority and government, with particular reference to pacifism.***

I am particularly interested in any written material, anecdotal evidence, or personal experiences of war service (including decisions to be a conscientious objector or to undertake non-combatant duties) or of non-participation in elections (including former generations). This includes memories of fathers or grandfathers who served (or did not) in World War I, or of memories of sermons or Bible studies on the above topics.

I am enclosing a copy of my questionnaire, and I would also be most grateful for any suggestions you could make, or anyone with whom you can put me in touch.

I would appreciate hearing from you as soon as possible, as the thesis is due at the end of November. I believe it is important that the Brethren contribution to Christian thought and activity in these areas should not be lost.

**Elisabeth Wilson, 356 Davey Street, South Hobart 7004** (a member of Murray Street Chapel in Hobart) is researching *Brethren attitudes to authority and government, with particular reference to pacifism*, for a Masters degree. If you can help with anecdotes or personal experience of war-time choices, or of decisions about voting, she would be very grateful if you could write to her. Written material is very useful too and will be photocopied (with permission) and returned promptly.

BRETHREN ATTITUDES TO GOVERNMENT AND AUTHORITY, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO PACIFISM

**QUESTIONNAIRE**

Thank you for agreeing to help me with my research into this topic. Please answer the following questions as fully as you can. I am interested in anything you can recall which influenced you, even though you may feel it was trivial. I have not left spaces between the questions, as people have different amounts of material to contribute. I hope you will not mind using your own paper for your answers.

Everyone's story is valuable and I deeply appreciate the time you are giving to record "your small corner" of history and Christian experience. As my thesis will be around 20,000 words, I cannot offer you a copy, but please indicate if you would like to receive a summary of my conclusions:  YES  NO

Please attach this sheet to your response.

NAME.....

UNIT IN WHICH YOU SERVED, IF ANY.....

THEATRE OF WAR, IF ANY.....

Assembly groups with whom you have been in fellowship (e.g. "open", "Hopkins", "exclusive" meetings etc) .....

1. What public teaching, if any, do you remember receiving on the Christian's response to government - e.g. trade unions, voting, military service, etc?
2. What kind of personal advice, if any, on these matters did you receive from elders, teachers or friends?
3. What were **your** reasons for your decision about war service? e.g. Biblical, practical, emotional, etc.
4. Did you receive any comments/criticism/opposition/encouragement from
  - other Christians
  - non-Christians

APPENDIX E

5. Please relate any incidents that stand out in your memory in war service or at home.

6. If you have taken a particular stand on such matters as voting or membership of a trade union, please outline your reasons.

*Thank you again for your time. It is a privilege to share your views, memories and experiences. Please feel free to add anything you think may be relevant.*

*Elisabeth Wilson  
356 Davey Street  
South Hobart, Tasmania 7004*

**OTHER BOOKS OR TRACTS ON THIS TOPIC, WHICH I HAVE  
BEEN UNABLE TO CONSULT**

**This is by no means an exhaustive list. The following titles were in a selection sent me from the catalogue of the Christian Brethren Archive at Manchester University. Unfortunately I could not afford to have them all photocopied!**

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Phillips, F. B., *Is War Christian?* Victory Press, c. 1939 (reviews *Believers' Magazine* May 1939, *Harvester* April 1939)

*The True Christian is not a Pacifist!* c. 1938 (recommended in a footnote in *Believers' Magazine* July 1938 and obtainable from their office)

Toll, A. E., *The Christian and the nation: a Scriptural examination of the believer's position and responsibility in the world* c. 1939 (advertisement in *Believers' Magazine*, November 1939) Chapters on attitude to war, military, national and compulsory service, with contrary views examined.

Vereher [Vereker], A. J., *The Christian and National Service* London, c. 1939 (reference in *Harvester* July 1939)

## RESPONDENTS AND VOTING

ALWAYS VOTED: Carter (and assembly)  
Freudigmann  
McCallum  
McDowell (publicly advocated it)  
Rehn  
Savage

CHANGED TO VOTING:  
W. & J. Baigent  
Bowen  
T. Gordon  
Lewis  
Nimmo  
Pontin  
Pope

NEVER VOTED: Bain parents  
Buckland  
Coates  
Glasgow  
(J. Lawson)#  
Levett  
(Moresi family)#  
Powell  
A. Smith  
(Mrs. Yolland)#  
Conference Hall, Brisbane  
many earlier Hopkins Brethren  
Green Pastures

# known to me

Comments:

A. Smith (Exclusive): "I really believe that most Christians don't understand their Heavenly calling and citizenship. The Lord Jesus said 'Ye are not of this world as I am not of this world.' Morally a Christian renounces their allegiance to this world, the world which cast out their Saviour and we belong to another world of which Christ is the Centre and Sun. You may say that voting is compulsory. There is a conscience clause as in military service. I am 85 and have never voted in my life and have never been fined for not doing so. Scripture says 'the powers that be are ordained of God' so whatever party comes into power is His ordering. Ours is to be subject to it."

J. Messer: "My parents [who attended Conference Hall, Brisbane] refused to vote and were given the words to write on their 'please explain': *As a Christian saved by grace of God I cannot conscientiously engage in political activity. No man that warreth*

*entangleth himself with the affairs of this life that he may please Him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."*

Pontin: "While more recently I would have been prepared to vote in ... elections, I have not done so because there was no candidate whom I thought would truly represent the Christian attitude to today's issues. I do, however, write to the elected representative in issues on which I feel strongly."

Lewis: "After the war ... it became apparent that there was a moral obligation to use the democratic privilege of recording a vote in favour of the political view which appeared to be closest to Biblical principles of justice and not allow the tyranny of oppression to gain ascendancy by default."

Nimmo: "Since leaving the Brethren assemblies I vote at elections for a candidate, regardless of party affiliations, if I believe him to be a Christian or a man of high principles and integrity. If no such man appears to be standing, I cast a blank."

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*Fortnightly Circle* [a duplicated circular, edited and sent out by R F Wilson to friends, and later assemblies, within the 'Hopkins' group of meetings] Melbourne, 1937 - 1961

*The Gleaner* [a small privately published magazine, edited by H Yolland, financed by Will Hopkins] Melbourne, my copies 1915-17

*Harvester* Exeter, UK, 1901 - 1980's

*The Pilot* Ballarat/Melbourne 1917 - c. 1935

*Treasury* Palmerston North, N Z: G P H Ltd, 1898 -

*Witness* [UK Brethren monthly journal] Glasgow, 1870 - 1980's

#### Manuscript sources:

Copies of Tribunal papers relating to Robert Carter (UK, World War II), Thomas Gordon (Ballarat, World War I), and Roy Jackson (Melbourne, World War II). Private photocopies.

Questionnaires and letters received from ex-servicemen, ex-conscientious objectors, and others (see Appendix C).

#### Other documentary sources:

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