



# Making a Difference

Faith-Based Organisations  
Contributing to Social Change  
in Aotearoa

By Richard A. Davis



Centre for Theology and Public Issues  
*Te Pokapū Whakapono me Ngā Take ā-Iwi*



*Making a Difference: Faith-Based Organisations Contributing to Social Change in Aotearoa*

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# Preface

In this report Dr Richard Davis shares wisdom and insights from many of Aotearoa New Zealand's most perceptive commentators on how faith-based organisations (FBOs) can make a difference to society.

The research was conducted in 2013 for the Bishop's Action Foundation (BAF) through the Centre for Theology and Public Issues, University of Otago. In the years since then it has been used to inform and guide BAF strategy and policy through evidence-based analysis. There have been important changes in Aotearoa New Zealand and around the globe over the years 2013–2019. On the global agenda there is a new awareness of the global challenges raised by climate change and migration. At a national level, child poverty, housing, and family violence are all receiving more public attention. Jacinda Ardern became Prime Minister, following the national election of September 2017, and a new coalition government became part of the political landscape. Yet despite these important changes, there is much in the report that remains as relevant now as it did then. The question it addresses – how churches and FBOs can achieve greater impact on policy and decision-making – remains of profound importance for churches, FBOs, and for all who support their work.

The materials offered by Richard Davis are a rich resource for anyone who is interested in these questions. The launch of a new Master's degree in Faith-Based Leadership and Management at the University of Otago in February 2019 is an appropriate opportunity to circulate this study more widely. We are delighted to make it available for those working on the degree and also to a public audience. It does not provide simple answers but it will stimulate a deeper discussion on how FBO's can confront the challenges they face. On behalf of the Bishop's Action Foundation and the Centre for Theology and Public Issues we wish to thank Richard Davis for the outstanding work which has gone into this report and its revision. We also want to acknowledge the generosity of all the participants who shared their thoughts and feelings. The time and care which participants gave to the interviews puts us in their debt and we are deeply grateful.

Simon Cayley and David Tombs  
February 2019

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# Recommendations

These tentative recommendations are made on the basis of research conducted over the six-week duration of this project.

One limitation of these recommendations is that they do not take account of the existing practices and resources of the Bishop's Action Foundation (BAF) as this was outside the scope of the present project.

These recommendations are for the Foundation with the objective that it becomes a successful agency in influencing the direction of social policy in Aotearoa New Zealand.

1. Articulate the basis of the work of BAF and the value-driven touchstones of this work. Know, nurture, defend, and share this kaupapa.
2. Keep strong and close links with the Church and the grassroots of the Church in the Taranaki region. Know the people who are being helped and the helpers. Know their stories, their pain, and their joy.
3. Build respectful relationships vertically and horizontally with the community, other churches, community organisations, government, and businesses, but especially those with a similar kaupapa.
4. Know the limits of the means that your kaupapa will allow you to adopt.
5. Make a long-term commitment to the work of social change in order to develop the mana that will gain credibility with stakeholders.
6. Invest time and money in this work. Employ theologians, economists, policy analysts, and communicators with the right values, encourage them, and give them space to develop relationships and the knowledge to do this work. Train church leaders and prepare them to engage at the highest levels of political life and also with the community.
7. Develop strategies and tactics that include political action at all levels, including the influencing of public opinion through participation in social movements for change.
8. Develop the capacity to do solid research and combine this with stories from the grassroots for impact.
9. Use the media (including social media) as part of the campaigns you are involved with, ensuring communications are adapted for each audience.
10. Be bold and courageous, take risks, and be willing to risk failure in the quest for success.

## Terms of Reference

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This project explores how churches and faith-based organisations can achieve greater impact on policy and decision-making by ministers, officials, and Members of Parliament. Specifically, it seeks to ascertain the extent to which government currently takes churches seriously in public policy discourse, the distinctive contribution that a FBOs can make to the public square, the skills and capacity needed to build relationships with the policy community, and the information, data and research capacity needed to support recommendations or requests for action to government. It also explores how an FBO might become the go-to-body on specialist issues, and, importantly, addresses the question of how churches and FBOs retain theological integrity. How do they communicate a robust theological response to an issue of concern?

# Introduction

For those concerned with the church being active and influential in Aotearoa New Zealand's public life, things currently may not look so good. The following quotation would appear to summarise how many in the church feel about its current capacity to make a difference to public life:

The church at the moment is relatively ineffective. She has a wide extension and a certain pervading influence but her action is not changing history at depth nor is she meeting the challenges of our time with the energy and speed necessary to save humanity from catastrophe. Her potential is greater than that of any other institution or school of thought or way of life known to man – and yet so little happens. Ormond Burton, 1969/1970<sup>1</sup>

Burton's quote from the late sixties reminds us that the problem of the churches' social witness is a perennial concern. This report deals with the question of how FBOs can make a greater impact on government policy by learning from those who are making such an impact, and observing and studying these impacts and those who, working in government, are the targets of FBO lobbying and action. Most of the time in this report 'churches' and 'FBOs' are used synonymously. This is justified by the fact that most of the relevant literature describes the work of churches, and also that most of those interviewed for this study are working on social issues on behalf of churches. But there are sometimes differences between the experiences of FBOs and churches with these being highlighted clearly in the text.

This report is largely a stocktake of how FBOs work in this field. For this project, assessing this has been largely subjective, based on literature reviews and interviews mostly with current practitioners. It falls outside the scope of this report to assess fully the work of FBOs in this area. Such a project would take more time and resources than this study allowed. Further work at a later time could be done to gauge the success of FBOs working in this field.

This study is more about the process for making an impact rather than on the churches' position on particular issues. That said, however, one's appreciation of the distinctive contribution of the churches will mean that some positions on issues appear to be a better fit with the churches' ethos. In discussing examples below, some positions will inevitably be upheld by the interviewees.

Often we hear the church being criticised by its members for not speaking out.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes the silence of the church on pressing social issues is deafening.<sup>3</sup> The reasons for this will also be touched on as phenomena that must be understood properly if it is to be condemned. In his survey work on the churches' social engagement, church historian Laurie Guy laments the lack of courage of the church to condemn social injustice at several points.<sup>4</sup> But sometimes when the church did speak out their voice was one to be lamented – displaying an alienating wowseryism that turned many people away from the church altogether.

1 Ormond Edward Burton, *Christian Action* (Levin: O. Burton, 1970), 17.

2 An example of the current widespread concern about the lack of Christian voice in public is the recent (26 Mar 2013) blog post from Dr Philip Church from Carey College. See [http://www.laidlaw.ac.nz/\\_blog/Our\\_Blog/post/Where\\_is\\_the\\_Christian\\_Voice/](http://www.laidlaw.ac.nz/_blog/Our_Blog/post/Where_is_the_Christian_Voice/)

3 Laurie Guy, *Shaping Godzone: Public Issues and Church Voices in New Zealand, 1840-2000* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2011), 302.

4 *Ibid.*, passim.

The outline of this report follows roughly this: context, mission, strategy, and tactics.<sup>5</sup> Part One deals with the context of political decision-making in Aotearoa New Zealand. This encompasses the political and social context in which governments and FBOs operate. This is increasingly a secular and pluralist context in which Christianity is one faith among many and no longer has favoured status in the community. This is also a capitalist context, where values are often driven by money, and the needs of business and the economy. Furthermore it is a political context in which the state plays a major role in organising society and addressing social problems. Part Two deals with the unique contribution that an FBO can make into policy decisions and how it can do so with theological integrity. The unique challenges of being an FBO in the public square are addressed here. Part Three deals with the practicalities of making an impact. Here the focus is primarily on the direct influencing of government. The main conclusions of this research are summarised in the recommendations. Other minor findings will feature in the body of the text.

The key question of the Bishop's Action Foundation is stated in this way:

How might BAF achieve greater impact on decision-makers and achieve actual change, recognising that sometimes this may be through greater visibility for its work through media exposure and sometimes via closed-door meetings with key policy advisors, ministers, members of parliament, and so on.

The Foundation wishes to enhance the Anglican Church's political impact and wonders how this can be done more effectively. Below are some observations on this specific task that informs the approach taken on this research project.

### Some General Observations

The first observation is that church lobbying and influencing government is not something that is self-evidently important for churches and FBOs to do, even if they believe in the social implications of Christian faith. Minority traditions in Christianity sometimes have little or nothing to do with government (e.g. the Amish). The case for non-participation has not been discussed here but the author is aware of it.

There are two assumptions in the project question that deserve comment here. The first is that politics is what happens in Parliament. The second is that the churches' political action should be focussed there.

First, is the understanding of 'politics'. In both society and church, 'politics' has often referred to the activities of central government and attempts to influence them.<sup>6</sup> But many theologians are now proposing (or reminding us) that the church itself is a political community in its own right, and that the practices and teachings of the church have political implications.<sup>7</sup> This perspective is held by many who are sceptical about the state. Whether one shares this view or not, it has provided a useful challenge to the view that 'politics' is only about the state. The importance of this view for this report is the necessity to place government-centred politics in a wider context of political action and change.

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5 A guide to this schema is Aidan Ricketts, *The Activists' Handbook: A Step-by-Step Guide to Participatory Democracy* (London: Zed Books, 2012).

6 This is more or less Weber's definition of 'politics'. See Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," in *The Vocation Lectures*, eds. Tracy B. Strong and David Owen, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub., 2004), 32.

7 See, for example, the writings of John Howard Yoder and William Cavanaugh.



The second assumption is that influencing of Parliament is sound Christian political action. The churches in Aotearoa New Zealand have adopted many tactics over the years to express their disquiet over the direction of the country and over specific policies. These have included petitions, marches (hikoi), making submissions, organising public meetings, and many others. All these tactics are just that, the means by which the churches believe that they can make a difference in policy outcomes. These tactics may include state-directed actions such as making submissions to select committees and other lobbying efforts; at other times wider community engagement may also be undertaken.

Given the issues facing Aotearoa New Zealand in the twenty-first century, such as growing inequality and child poverty, it is only natural that the churches will wish to take action to address these and other pressing issues. Some issues require legislation to effect change. For instance, who may get legally married is defined under law, as is the “legal drinking age”. Other issues can involve a mixture of government action and work by the voluntary sector. To tackle poverty, some argue in favour of the government increasing benefits and allowances and perhaps manipulating the exchange rate in order to stimulate the economy to create jobs. But initiatives have also been taken by churches and other agencies to tackle poverty. The provision of food banks and other social services help the poor directly and work to mitigate the effects of poverty. The strategies and tactics chosen for the issue will therefore depend on the type of issue it is. Sometimes a strategy may involve more than one tactic, so, for example, lobbying Parliament and holding a rally might be done on the same issue.

Any church agency wishing to increase its political impact needs to be aware that there are special problems with churches lobbying public secular bodies, with an important one being the language used in this work. Churches may decide to use biblical or theological language in the public sphere, but when doing so they risk being ignored by those who reject Christianity or they may be misunderstood by those who translate this theological talk into secular language. This is an area of debate in democratic political philosophy – to what extent do reasons for public policies need to be expressed in secular publicly-accessible language, and does this obligation extend to the church as well? The church may be tempted to translate its message into secular language to be more effective, but does it do so at the expense of its theological credibility?

What has previous social action by the churches achieved? It is easy to believe that lobbying and other forms of political action will have an important influence on social policy and help to resolve issues. But is history on the side of this viewpoint? Has the church achieved anything in the past by lobbying? Success can be difficult to measure if one is trying to shift attitudes over the long term. As discussed below, agencies devoted to changing public policy need broad-based support and long-term campaigning to make a difference. Yet, with a change of government gains can sometimes be reversed overnight. If the BAF or another FBO wishes to have greater impact, the question raised is this: How will this be measured? The measurement of influence and its impact is a very difficult exercise, and one that can absorb much time and resources, sometimes with inconclusive results.

As stated above, attempting to influence policy is a strategy, or even a tactic, for social change, and should not be the overall aim of any church. Churches may, however, have an overall strategy or programme within which they may elect to use certain methods to influence public policy.

This assumption, that it is central government where a Christian voice needs to be heard, can be challenged on another level. The churches should not ignore local and regional government. Why favour one over another? Are there opportunities to engage local and regional government which the church is passing over? Can engaging at this level be a training ground for moving over into action at a different level of government?

Highlighting these assumptions doesn't mean the denigration of action in the parliamentary sphere. Such action needs to be seen as but one strategy or tactic among many that is open to the church. There are many ways to have influence and several where the churches can play a valuable role. These alternatives can be more easily appreciated if we understand politics in a broader sense.

## Research Methods

This research was conducted using a combination of semi-structured interviews and desk research.

Interviews with current and past practitioners within the churches proved to be very useful in order to give the research a practical and tangible local flavour. This was supplemented by interviews with current and former politicians and others in professional roles (such as academics) who have a specialist interest in the political involvement of the church. A full list of the participants is in Appendix 1, and the questionnaire used is in Appendix 2.

The interviews were supplemented by desk research into relevant literature. The cited references are listed at the end. There is a wider literature that applied to these controversial topics that could not be used in the time available for this research.

## Part One: The Aotearoa New Zealand Context

The history of Aotearoa New Zealand provides the context for mission and the ongoing work of the church and FBOs. The first part of this paper deals with the context of political decision-making in Aotearoa New Zealand. This encompasses the political and social context in which governments and FBOs operate. The emphasis here is on the development of the current context in which the church is taken much less seriously than it used to be.

Guy's work provides a key missiological tenet: "For the Christian faith to have influence, it must understand the culture, worldview and history of others."<sup>8</sup> Guy's statement, from the preface of his survey of Aotearoa New Zealand churches' voice over 160 years, may seem obvious, but it is worth repeating. It is driven not only by his missiological concerns, but by a rationale for the historical study into the churches' basis of their ongoing work in their social mission to society.

### Some History of Aotearoa New Zealand

Many of Aotearoa New Zealand's early settlers were Christians, so Aotearoa New Zealand became nominally Christian. But there has never been anything other than a secular state in Aotearoa New Zealand. So even though society was largely Christian, the state never has been. The debates over prayer in Parliament and secular education show that Aotearoa New Zealand has been wary about religion in public life since the development of the state (Bromell Interview).<sup>9</sup>

From their first encounters with Māori, Christian missionaries had concern with their welfare. The missionaries' concern for the well-being of the indigenous people had its origins in British debates about slavery and the treatment of slaves. The "Aborigines Protection Society", which grew out of the anti-slavery movement, had a seminal influence on the values that the church brought to Aotearoa New Zealand (Guy Interview).<sup>10</sup> From the outset, churches had a huge influence on how the Treaty of Waitangi, Aotearoa New Zealand's founding document, was received by Māori.

The first churches were deeply concerned with the moral condition of both settlers and Māori and set about morally reforming both groups of people. It is instructive to note the form that this took. Without a state to enforce laws in all areas of social policy the churches relied on their own organisation and moral suasion.

A key change, therefore, in the history of the social role of the church in Aotearoa New Zealand came about with the development of a functioning state. When the state emerged in the mid-nineteenth century, it brought changes in the way New Zealanders understood the process of social change. A more state-centric approach to social change was observed by André Siegfried, who, in writing of Aotearoa New Zealand's government a century ago, described part of his task as follows, "Let us try to see what could lead the New Zealanders

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8 Laurie Guy, *Shaping Godzone*, 7.

9 Allan K. Davidson, "Chaplain to the Nation or Prophet at the Gate? The Role of the Church in New Zealand Society," in *Christianity, Modernity, and Culture: New Perspectives on New Zealand History*, eds. John Stenhouse and G. A. Wood, ATF Series 15 (Hindmarsh: ATF Press, 2005), 311–331.

10 Guy, *Shaping Godzone*, 34.

to this perfect mania for appealing to the State, which has become one of the characteristics of their public life.”<sup>11</sup> With the rise of the state, the churches increasingly looked toward the state as a means by which they could influence the moral direction of society and build the Kingdom of God.

Another element in the rise and growth of the state was that it was employing an increasing number of people. This meant, and still means, that the state employs a large number of Christians as civil servants. Their potential for influencing public policy has rarely been studied. But the influence of these workers could be vast; although this depends to what extent these Christians see a strong division between their private faith and their public role.

## Twentieth-Century Turning Points

From the mid-twentieth century Aotearoa New Zealand experienced a decline in the church and an increase in secularisation. Up until about the 1960s religious ideas were part of the intellectual hegemony in Aotearoa New Zealand (Guy Interview).<sup>12</sup> From this time on, the church began to lose authority in public life (Boston Interview). This was witnessed in large debates over homosexual law reform and other issues. From the 1960s there has been a significant waning in church membership. Perhaps a third of the membership dropped out from the Presbyterian Church between the 1960s and 2010s. And with this major decline, more people also affirm that they have no religion (Guy Interview).

The 1960s also saw a widespread questioning of authority, including that of the church and its clergy. With little appeal to authority, authority has itself become undermined, or rather the focus of authority has shifted from external authorities, such as the church, to the internal authority of one’s own reason and opinion.

Globalisation and global trends have also affected Aotearoa New Zealand, and these foreign influences act much more quickly now. For instance, while Aotearoa New Zealand lagged behind on the decriminalisation of homosexuality, it was a leader on marriage equality. With global travel (with jumbo jets first landing in Aotearoa New Zealand in 1960) and the internet (1990s), we are no longer so isolated (Guy Interview).

The decline of the influence of the church continued through into the 1970s. Until then there was significant media coverage of the major churches’ annual meetings (Guy Interview). Since then church membership “began to plummet” and Aotearoa New Zealand became much more secular, with the church becoming marginalised (Barber Interview). The implications for the churches’ voice are serious. No longer can the church just say, “The Bible says...” Such appeals to scriptural authority no longer work. Previously, and as late as the 1980s, some conservative Christians, such as Peter Tait, were proudly claiming to be fundamentalist or “bible-bashers” in the homosexuality law reform debates.<sup>13</sup>

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11 André Siegfried, *Democracy in New Zealand*, trans. E. V. Burns (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1914), 52.

12 Here Guy draws on Craig Young, “Antonio Gramsci’s Theory of Hegemony and the New Zealand Religious Right: A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Master of Arts Degree in Political Science at the University of Canterbury” (University of Canterbury, 1986).

13 Guy, *Shaping Godzone*, 451. Laurie Guy, *Worlds in Collision: The Gay Debate in New Zealand, 1960-1986* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2002), 132.

A later shift in the 1980s was a move to more emphasis on economic policy in a monetarist dimension. Prior to the economic reforms in the 1980s, Aotearoa New Zealand was a more egalitarian society, with little poverty and unemployment. But it has taken a long time for the churches to adapt to these changes. The Salvation Army, in grappling with these changes found itself sharpened theologically and missionally (Roberts Interview).

This economic emphasis has remained, but without the churches really taking this change seriously.<sup>14</sup> When criticising these economic reforms, the churches' response was largely concerned with their social impact, instead (with a few exceptions) of addressing the policies head-on. Campbell Roberts said: "We have not engaged well with that economic agenda". The church has not put in the thinking resources into grappling with those sorts of issues. Rather, there has been a more service-based or pragmatic response (Roberts Interview).

It has to be recognised that Aotearoa New Zealand is a largely secular country in its culture and is officially secular in its political constitution. Despite this, Aotearoa New Zealand is commonly regarded by many Christians as a "Christian country" whose history, values, and laws have been shaped by Christian values.<sup>15</sup> Nowadays, however, theological arguments in policy development and evaluation are unlikely to carry authoritative weight. While there are many Christian politicians, policy makers, and bureaucrats working in all levels of government, they are professionally obliged to act in a neutral way and must provide secular, publicly accessible reasons for their decisions. Despite this obligation not to let their faith overtly influence their work, the church already has an influence on their work. Do Christian public servants and politicians see their faith influencing their work, or is faith just for Sunday?

Many Christians believe that the government should reflect Christian values or morals. Some of these Christians are vocal in their opposition to human rights language and what they see as the undermining of the Christian framework of life by the secular state. This position is criticised by other Christians, who see such a position as Constantinianism (the position that the state should endorse Christianity officially, or at least Christian values).<sup>16</sup> With the decline and fall of Christendom in recent centuries, Constantinianism has increasingly come under attack, with post-Constantinianism theological politics becoming increasingly popular with theologians and church activists. Post-Constantinianism has radical implications for Christian social action because no longer does the state endorse Christianity, nor can it be expected to. Some theologians suggest that churches and Christians may simply have to accept their increasingly marginalised position. Others believe that the tide can be turned, even though the ability to be heeded by those in power is now more difficult.

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14 Guy, *Shaping Godzone*, 463–466.

15 Rex J. Ahdar, *Worlds Colliding: Conservative Christians and the Law* (Aldershot: Ashgate/Dartmouth, 2001).

16 'Constantinianism' is defined by two of its antagonists as the attempt "through force of the state to make the world into the kingdom, which attempted to make the worship of God unavoidable, which attempted to make Christian connections available to all without conversion or transformation." From Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Where Resident Aliens Live: Exercises for Christian Practice* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 25.

## Religious Pluralism

Aotearoa New Zealand is an increasingly pluralistic and diverse society. There are increasing numbers of members of an increasing diversity of faiths.<sup>17</sup> But not only is diversity seen in the number of faiths; there is also diversity within faith groups. Both of these realities have important implications for the social witness of FBOs.

Aotearoa New Zealand has a history of feisty church people, such as Rutherford Waddell and J. K. Archer, who spoke from a position of black and white truth and were able to condemn evil when they saw it in uncompromising terms (Guy Interview). This confidence in a notion of truth is now questioned, if not demolished, by the uncertainties of the post-modern age with its moral relativism and erosion of objective truth. One effect of this is that the church, especially in a morally and religiously pluralistic world, is much more hesitant to condemn evil, and rarely speaks from a position of confidence in any universal truths. This causes Anglican theologian Harry Blamires to suggest that: “One of the crucial tasks in reconstituting the Christian mind will be to re-establish the status of objective truth as distinct from personal opinions.”<sup>18</sup>

Increased pluralism of religion means that Christianity carries less weight than it used to. This translates into reduced social impact of the church, and reinforces the notion that Christianity is just one religion among many. But despite the fall in numbers of those identifying as Christians, there is the possibility that with the removal of church attendance as a social convention, those left in the church, while smaller in number, can be a more cohesive voice and would display more commitment (Barber Interview).

Within Christianity, denominations do not always agree on matters with other churches. A notable example is the issue of abortion, with the Roman Catholic Church officially teaching its total opposition to abortion, while other denominations are more liberal. Another dividing issue is the opposition to war in the historical peace churches, whereas some churches are willing to justify war in some circumstances.

In addition to the diversity between denominations, Christian denominations are also becoming more pluralistic within themselves, and the ethnic makeup of the mainline churches is changing. The Catholic Church in Aotearoa New Zealand, for example, now has many Filipino members and Indian priests, while Methodist and Presbyterian churches have substantial Pacific Island groups. In these denominations anecdotal evidence suggests that there is pressure for Pacific Island or Asian language worship services, which while enabling such groups to maintain their ethnic and linguistic identities, may mean that worship services become divided and segregated. But a more important feature of pluralism for this study is moral pluralism within denominations.

This feature of the church is not new, but it does have an impact on diluting the voice of the church.<sup>19</sup> It is not true to say that there was a time when Christians were united in their moral perspectives. Church history is full of arguments over moral questions, such as slavery, civil rights, and marriage.

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17 For the 2013 Census summary on religion see <http://www.stats.govt.nz/Census/2013-census/info-about-2013-census-data/information-by-variable/religious-affiliation.aspx>

18 Harry Blamires, *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* (Vancouver: Regent College Pub., 2005), 40.

19 Guy, *Shaping Godzone*, 363–365.

Guy reports on such divisions within the churches over the Springbok Tour of 1981.<sup>20</sup> There was no unanimity within churches. This not only exposed the differences within the churches over how to approach Apartheid, but also to what degree faith had implications for the issue of sporting contacts with racist South Africa. On this topic, Guy shared an interesting reflection from Colin Brown: “Clergy not in parishes, found it easier to adopt a more controversial stand on issues like the Springbok tour rather than having to play it safe”.<sup>21</sup> The reason for this was pressure to keep quiet about certain issues in some parishes and congregations. In this environment some clergy were grateful that others spoke out with messages that they could not make themselves.<sup>22</sup> The Springbok Tour issue may have had a long-lasting influence on the church speaking out on controversial issues, as Guy comments: “If the churches were to continue to exercise a prophetic role in controversial public issues, it would be at considerable cost in terms of grass-roots support.”<sup>23</sup> Guy continues with this significant point:

The fact the church could act as a handbrake on justice activism meant that those extremely committed to the justice dimension of the Christian gospel might decide that their effectiveness would be enhanced by putting all their energies into a secular body focusing on the justice cause, and so reduce or cease their efforts within the framework of the church.<sup>24</sup>

Experience tells the observant reader that Christians support secular agencies with time and money that is sometimes the envy of FBOs. But there is an opportunity for FBOs that can channel this energy and money in ways that even their parent church cannot.

Furthermore, Guy mentioned the “white-anting” of the church by secularism, which is where the churches adopt secular ideas and habits which eat away at the church from within (Guy Interview). Liberalism, a secular ideology which favours individual freedom of thought and conscience, does not support the churches’ imposition of moral thought and action. Arguably, the splintering of denominations since the Reformation has been illustrative of this trend toward individualism. This trend is also seen within denominations, with factions disagreeing on moral issues often being a precursor to the disaffected breaking away to form new churches or denominations

Pluralism within churches hamstring churches that wish to speak into the public square. Organisations wishing to speak with authority and unity have more impact when they can claim to speak for all their members. But when it is known that churches are riven by division on morals and issues of public policy then it damages their ability to speak with authority and unity. FBOs understand this and may be tempted to not speak out at all if they cannot speak with a united voice. Guy states this point in this way: “It is hard for churches to take a stand when there are divided views not only in society but also within the churches themselves. Taking a stance risks alienating congregational support. Should churches take that risk or sit on the fence?”<sup>25</sup>

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20 Guy, *Shaping Godzone*, chapter 16.

21 Ibid., 336.

22 Ibid., 335–336.

23 Ibid., 336.

24 Ibid., 336. Waldegrave also observes this (Waldegrave Interview).

25 Guy, *Shaping Godzone*, 236.

One way around this issue is for a church to have positions on public issues agreed to at a regional or national level which can then be confidently transmitted to officials. But this requires anticipating issues and may make the church hamstrung if such a clear decision is not forthcoming. And, depending on the form of decision-making the church adopts, this may leave a sizeable vocal minority (up to 49% in cases where a simple majority is required) ready to object and claim that the church is not speaking for them. Another way around this problem is for the church to present the multi-dimensional views within its ranks and the trade-offs. Since officials will be confronted with multiple views in their deliberations, it may help them to know that other organisations are also struggling to come to a clear decision on the matter at hand.

## Secularisation

‘Secularisation’ is a highly debated concept, but for our purposes it does not simply mean the decline of religion, as has happened in Aotearoa New Zealand. Rather, it means the decline of the authority and influence of religion.<sup>26</sup> The formal secular nature of Aotearoa New Zealand was restated by the Human Rights Commission’s *Statement on Religious Diversity* (2007). Developed in response to the Cronulla Riots in 2005, this controversial statement was actively supported by Prime Minister Helen Clark and many churches.

A common answer as to why the government does not take the churches seriously is that Aotearoa New Zealand is now a much more pluralistic and secular place, having increased diversity of religion combined with less religious adherence overall. The effect of this is that there are relatively fewer Christian voters and politicians. It may also mean that churches have to rely less on theological arguments, which no longer carry much weight by themselves, and rely more on policy work done by church agencies using the specialist tools of the social sciences.

The number attending church has declined in both absolute and relative terms. The numerical decline has been at a time of overall population growth, and while some church members have migrated to other churches, the reduced numbers in churches means that there is less of a constituency in the mainline churches. With declining numbers it is no surprise that Guy thought that in the twenty-first century: “The voice of the church is less welcome ... by a lot of people in the public arena” (Guy Interview). This creates a disincentive for the church to speak out. Furthermore, with declining numbers, the church has become preoccupied with its own survival.

With greater diversity in society, churches no longer carry the weight they once did. Nowadays, David Bromell said: “The churches are seen as one interest group among many, with no privileged position or any particular claim to merit which would give them a privileged position” (Bromell Interview). Richard Randerson said that due to secularisation, the days when the church was listened to because it was the church are over. But what will be listened to, are those contributions to current debate that are “seen to be relevant and helpful” and credible, and if the church can do that it will be listened to (Randerson Interview).

Over time the universities have also become secularised. Theology has had an ambiguous place in the modern secular university for some time, with the academic study of theology in universities largely divorced from the practice of Christianity (for example, prayer would have no place in a state-funded university classroom). In general, Aotearoa New Zealand

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26 See Mark Chaves, “Secularization as Declining Religious Authority,” *Social Forces* 72, no. 3 (March 1, 1994): 749–774.



universities do not have strong theology departments which make a contribution to public life. And there is a very modest contribution from Christian academics in other disciplines. The student body is also highly secularised. Jonathan Boston once asked his public policy students: “Who thinks it is legitimate to use religious-based arguments in public policy debate?” Boston was surprised, even shocked, to find that among the class the overwhelming majority thought it was illegitimate to do so (Boston Interview). These students are likely to go on to be leaders and decision-makers in public policy later in their careers, with possible ramifications for the place of religion in Aotearoa New Zealand’s public life.

In newspapers, blogs, and magazines, one is not going to find very much content with a Christian viewpoint. Unfortunately, there is only a modest proportion of Christians who take an active interest in these matters. In the Catholic tradition, however, there is a well-developed body of Catholic Social Teaching which enables them to have a more widely shared set of views and principles that make such cultural production possible (Boston Interview). Overall, however, there has been a privatisation of religion, with religion now being a private matter (Mayman Interview), with the exception of military and civil services (such as ANZAC Day services), usually provided by the Anglican Church.

Politicians are a reflection of the secularised general population, and if the population at large does not take the churches seriously why would the politicians (Dancer Interview). Anthony Dancer summarised the meaning of secularisation when he said that the issue of the government not taking the churches seriously is not a government issue, but one of ecclesial identity in a secular society which has led to the Anglican Church’s loss of direction, and compromise with society. The Church is scared to say controversial things out of fear that it might lose what few members it has left (Dancer Interview). Other churches and FBOs have not conceded that Aotearoa New Zealand is a secular society. They are typically those conservatives who believe they have a right to impose their beliefs on others, alienating others (Bradford Interview).

For those wishing to see more religious voices in the public square, there is some hope. The secularisation thesis is no longer seen as straightforward. Viewed in global terms, religion is not dying out, and the number of people who identify as religious are increasing. This is not the case in New Aotearoa Zealand, but even so, Peter Lineham indicated that he thinks the worst is over for Aotearoa New Zealand Christianity. Aotearoa New Zealand, in his opinion, is a more religious society than it used to be in the 1980s and the 1990s (Lineham Interview). For Roberts, the influence of the churches comes and goes, and, in his opinion, there is no steady decline of influence (Roberts Interview). Immigration from Pacific Islands contributes significantly to those who identify as Christian, especially in Auckland.

## Politicians and the Public Service

This final section of Part One addresses the political context for the FBOs participating in the public square. This is, as the previous sections have outlined, a largely secular context, but where the churches operate as political actors. The section examines whether or not the government takes the churches seriously.

### Do Politicians Take the Churches Seriously?

Throughout Aotearoa New Zealand's history and up to the present day, politicians have taken the church seriously, sometimes very seriously. For example, Jack Marshall (National Party MP and Prime Minister) and Arnold Nordmeyer (Labour Party MP and Minister of Finance) overlapped as members of the Presbyterian Public Questions Committee (Guy Interview).<sup>27</sup> Political parties used to hold church services as part of their annual conferences (Lineham Interview). Another common feature of this mid-twentieth century period was that church sermons were reported in the newspapers and media attended church synods and assemblies (Guy Interview). More recently, during the Hikoi of Hope (1998), the church was taken seriously after it decided not just to pass a motion in the Synod, but actually do something political.<sup>28</sup> But overall, there is a broad consensus that while things have changed, it is not easy to locate the reasons why.

Today, one perception is that the churches, while taken seriously, are not always agreed with. Churches need to understand that being taken seriously does not always mean that their opinion will win policy debates. In other words, just because the churches are disagreed with on issues does not mean that they are ignored or not listened to. One can be taken seriously and disagreed with (Roberts Interview). The development of a more secular society with values that are often at odds with those of the Christian faith is going to mean that Christian views will not win so many arguments. For Paul Barber, politicians have been willing to engage with the churches, believing that the churches have a legitimate strong voice. And, from the outside, even though it may appear that the churches are not achieving much, that does not mean that the churches are not being taken seriously. But nowadays the church must remember that it is one of many groups or one of many voices (Barber Interview).

An impression that the churches are not being taken seriously may come from this lack of being successfully persuasive. The origins of this may come from churches believing that their policy positions should carry more weight than others by virtue of who it is that is speaking, and not the content of the positions taken. Randerson said that when he was active in a social justice role, a politician said to him that: "We may not always agree with what you say but you are someone who has to be listened to" (Randerson Interview). This, in Randerson's opinion, is the role of the church – to be heard rather than agreed with the whole time.

Some interviewees blamed Aotearoa New Zealand culture for not being receptive to Christianity: "The principal reason that government appears not to take the churches seriously in public policy discourse is because our culture has, in the process of dismissing the relevance of religion to public policy discourse, dismissed the institution that are the main propagators of that discourse" (Fleming Interview). But Greg Fleming, who described our contemporary

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27 Guy, *Shaping Godzone*, 16

28 On passing resolutions as ineffective "cheap grace" see Gregory F. Augustine Pierce, *Activism That Makes Sense: Congregations and Community Organization* (Chicago, Ill.: ACTA Publications, 1987), 13-14.

culture as “all at sea” and without foundations, nevertheless sees opportunities for those who are sure of themselves and the story they have to tell. According to Fleming, in the past Aotearoa New Zealand culture accepted the Christian story and therefore accepted what the church had to say about policy (Fleming Interview).<sup>29</sup>

To Fleming, the Christian story has been rejected and so the church is not seen as having a relevant story-telling role. The modern liberal, objective space is perceived by its adherents to be free of narrative and we are enlightened and reasonable and do not need dogma anymore. But we all speak from stories.<sup>30</sup> “I think that for the church to speak confidently, thoughtfully and courageously out of its own story, to speak to the agnostic secularism, we need to know our own story, and not second guess its own story ... and, we need people trained in this area, to regain confidence” (Fleming Interview).

Some interviewees thought the church is largely to blame for not being taken seriously. Roberts thought that the church is not relevant to the public sphere because the church has pulled out of it and the church is not relevant to the government in its day-to-day work. But in another sense, where the church is prepared to be engaged, and take seriously the agenda they are involved in, then the government is prepared to take the churches more seriously (Roberts Interview).

Roberts directly questioned the notion that the government does not take the churches seriously:

Often the church wants to start at the point of where its concerns are, and therefore if that doesn't match timing and doesn't match the public agenda, or public policy or the electorate's need, then it will be largely dismissed. But if the church, on the other hand, is open to the agenda of the government of the day, and to what's concerning them, and what is pressuring them, then they will be more inclined to engage (Roberts Interview).

In Charles Waldegrave's opinion: “Generally they [the government] don't take them [the churches] too seriously, and the churches only have themselves to blame ... because the church doesn't take public policy seriously”. For Waldegrave, this is largely because the church does not resource this discipline and church people are often not adequately informed about policy, politics, and democracy (Waldegrave Interview). There is also, according to Chris Marshall, a perceived lack of leadership in the churches: “What the Christian community lacks is articulate informed spokespersons who can speak and be listened to because of their mana”, with a possible exception in Roberts (Marshall Interview). The Christian spokespeople who do get a hearing are, according to Fleming, the loudest “Christian” voices, speaking from a reactionary framework. It is better, he said, to have a positive engagement grounded in a good understanding of what your own story is (Fleming Interview).

Another shift noted by Lineham was the move from government operating on the basis of ideology and principles, to pragmatic policies judged on the basis of their economic utility.<sup>31</sup>

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29 Here Fleming draws on the notion of worldview in N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God, Christian Origins and the Question of God v. 1* (London: SPCK, 1992), 80-190.

30 Ibid., 122.

31 Peter Lineham, “Social Policy and the Churches in the 1990s and Beyond,” in *The Future of Christianity: Historical, Sociological, Political and Theological Perspectives from New Zealand*, ed. John Stenhouse, Brett Knowles, and G. A. Wood, ATF Series 12 (Adelaide: ATF Press, 2004), 143-144.

Given this shift, the church, he argued, had to relearn its trade. Irrespective of whether Lineham locates this shift correctly, the shift is evidenced in the number of interviewees in this study who claim that while FBOs may be guided by principles, it is “evidence-based research” that currently wins policy arguments, and that this is what the church must be doing more of to make a greater impact on policy. Another shift noted by Lineham has been one toward greater community consultation, offering real opportunities for the churches to have their say on issues.<sup>32</sup>

Christians in leadership have sometimes behaved appallingly and this has damaged the “brand” of Christianity in the public space (Mayman Interview). Examples include the disgraced leader of the Christian Heritage Party, Graham Capill, and the Destiny Church’s Brian Tamaki, whose flamboyant lifestyle appears to many to be at odds with the ethos of Christianity. Sue Bradford found Destiny’s “Enough is Enough” march “fascist” and thought this action brought Christianity into disrepute (Bradford Interview). Such reactionary Christians have attracted a lot of media coverage for their real and apparent hypocrisy and aggressive politics.<sup>33</sup>

There are still Christians in public life. Former Prime Minister Bill English is Catholic, but he was reticent to use Christian language in his work (Boston Interview). Randerson related a story when English fronted up to a meeting of Bishops in Dunedin just after National were elected and encouraged the churches to stay in touch with government about what they were noticing and seeing and “reminding us [government] of the things that really matter” (Randerson Interview). David Hanna agreed that English sent receptive messages to the churches (Hanna Interview). Other politicians have misconceptions about the role of the church in public life. An example of this is that some ministers in the former National government believe that it is the churches’ role to provide welfare in place of the state (Beech Interview).

Lisa Beech lamented the fact that some Catholics, including some Catholic politicians form their own opinions on public issues without being shaped by Catholic social teaching. Beech complained that some people misunderstand the notion of conscience, which is not that you make up your mind, but that one’s conscience must be formed by the church (Beech Interview).<sup>34</sup>

The church has been listened to in defeating attempts to erode the Easter holiday weekend through Easter trading. Although this was because the churches worked in alliance with unions and other community groups who wished to defend the longest period of non-work in Aotearoa New Zealand. On this issue, Caritas was successful in offering arguments to MPs, some of whom were looking for evidence or arguments to use in parliamentary debates (Beech Interview).

Politicians, when they are being receptive, will pick and choose the voice that they want to hear (Beech Interview, Lineham Interview). Jacinda Ardern agreed that politicians will listen to the church depending on the issue on hand. She also thought that the churches, while being listened to, are not always having a persuasive effect (Ardern Interview). And sometimes, politicians can be brutally critical of the churches when they do speak out. Lineham suggested

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32 Ibid., 150–151.

33 Ann Hardy, “Destiny, the Exclusive Brethren and Mediated Politics in New Zealand,” in *Mediating Faiths: Religion and Socio-Cultural Change in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Michael Bailey and Guy Redden (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 189–201.

34 On the formation of the conscience in Catholic teaching see the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc\\_css/archive/catechism/p3s1c1a6.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s1c1a6.htm)

that the viscous attacks on the churches in 1993 following the *Social Justice Statement* gave the churches a “sharp shock of realism” (Lineham Interview).<sup>35</sup> Politicians will listen to the churches (just as they do with any lobby group), at times that suit them, and when it suits their agenda, meaning that influence is linked to how much the churches’ agenda links with that of government. Bradford followed the churches’ engagement when working on private members’ bills, such as on prostitution and the repeal of Section 59 of the *Crimes Act* (the so-called anti-smacking legislation), with churches active on both issues and on both sides of the argument (Bradford Interview). From the perspective of politicians, the influence of the church is like any other lobby group.

Such views cohere with Lineham’s view that politicians like to avoid making controversial decisions. Using the example of prohibition, he remarked that: “In New Zealand, typically politics tries to find the middle ground. On controversial issues they try to drive decision-making down to the local level, with local polls sometimes determining the issues” (Lineham Interview). He also thought that so-called moral issues are rarely key issues for swinging voters. This, he said, is the poor premise of conservative Christians. “They think that, given MMP it should be very easy to get five percent of voters to support a conservative Christian party” (Lineham Interview). The lesson from this observation is that to be a successful influencer of politicians, one cannot afford to be too extreme, and must be moderate on a range of issues. In Lineham’s opinion almost all votes in general elections are decided by financial policy, with voters asking themselves: “What does this do for me?”

In Bradford’s view, the churches compromise too much instead of holding firmly to their beliefs. In her opinion, the churches have too readily kowtowed to power. Bradford attributed this to a culture of deference and compromise in Aotearoa New Zealand which works to undermine the kaupapa of the community sector, including the churches (Bradford Interview). While compromise may be done with the intention to gain and maintain access to politicians, and while it is sometimes important to compromise, she stated that the churches should stick to its guns.

The fact that churches and FBOs provide social services, may compromise the churches in its prophetic social justice work.<sup>36</sup> The leaders of the churches’ social service agencies and the New Zealand Council of Christian Social Services (NZCCSS) have a lot of influence over church leaders when it comes to the churches making social justice announcements. Generally speaking, elected church leaders are not experts on social justice issues, and are guided by the service providers when dealing with politicians (Bradford Interview). But it should be noted that the agencies generally have an interest in issues related to delivery of social services, which is only a subset of the churches’ broad social concerns. Furthermore, social service agencies have a financial interest in partnership with government, which may work against making prophetic condemnation of unjust policies. Māori leaders are more aware of this colonisation, but Taiuiwi may not always be aware when they have been colonised by a corporatist or statist ethos.

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35 Lineham, “Social Policy and the Churches in the 1990s and Beyond.”

36 Ibid.

Bromell summarised his view that politicians no longer take the churches seriously for the following reasons (Bromell Interview):

- **Declining church attendance** – as an interest group, the church is no longer backed by the power of numbers. It should be noted that religion does not deliver votes to any one party – votes cannot be delivered by churches.<sup>37</sup>
- **The aging of church members and growing ethnic diversity** – the church has less energy for and falling unanimity about social issues. The political affiliations of church members reflect those of the general populace. This means a lack of overlapping consensus of views within the church that leads to advocacy on behalf of membership.
- **As church membership declined, the church turned inwards** – from the 1970s (biculturalism debate) and 1990s (sexuality debate), the church turned inwards and has been eating itself and not looking outwards and not engaging with any conviction.

Finally, there is the positive perspective that Christians in public service or politics may find some value in the moral and ethical arguments presented by churches; it is not just about force of numbers supporting a position but the moral or rational force of the arguments. But over time Christian politicians will be less inclined to listen to their bishops and church leaders merely because they are church leaders (Beech Interview).

#### Church Leaders' Meetings

The regular Church Leaders' meetings with the Prime Minister and cabinet ministers were mentioned several times by interviewees. There is a perception that these meetings improved when papers were prepared in advance of the meetings. Initially, some church leaders wanted to talk about "prayers before Parliament" or "swearing" (bad language) in Parliament and were not adequately prepared to talk about social policy issues (Waldegrave Interview). It is clear that greater focus is needed in these meetings. Several people agreed that more resourcing is needed for this meeting, with the aim of supporting the leaders and avoiding the situation where advisors drive the meetings. This is especially true if church leaders are rotating every year or two, in which case you need someone to be a constant presence. Also, the leaders need to be careful to keep to key messages and not sermonise. While some coaching has been given to leaders, more is probably needed (Hanna Interview).

Another perception is that there is no significant Māori input into the leaders' meeting (Dancer Interview). Without their presence the meetings might lose credibility among both Māori (inside and outside the church), and the government. Dancer wondered whether the meeting is about "Leaders meeting with leaders", and by merely having such meetings the leaders think their job is done. But this is not the best use of the opportunity for engagement (Dancer Interview). To Hanna these meetings worked best when the churches had statesmen and stateswomen with mana who were around long enough to increase their mana for these meetings (Hanna Interview).

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37 See data from the New Zealand Election Study at VUW, <http://www.nzes.org>.

Roberts expressed surprise that politicians take these meetings so seriously. Politicians (such as English), he said, are desperate for the churches to be involved, but when the churches do get involved, they **have often not done their homework**. Papers from advisors have helped, but the church leaders find it hard to engage with these documents. There is commonly a mismatch between the specialisms of the ministers and the church leaders: “I think that the conversation is often disappointing for the politicians”. Roberts also noted the naiveté of new church leaders who are often ignorant of the political process and even the people on the other side of the meeting. **These meetings are also underfunded**, depending for resourcing solely on people who already have full-time jobs. **Church leaders are also poor at reporting back to the churches about these meetings and what the churches’ input was and what came out of these meetings (Roberts Interview)**. In Randerson’s view, the Anglican and Catholic Bishops (or other recognised group) as a block, could potentially have a greater impact than the existing group (Randerson Interview).

There is another impression that these meetings are perceived by politicians to be just like a meeting with any other interest group. Bromell hoped that these meetings are perceived by politicians in this way, otherwise there could be undue influence occurring (Bromell Interview). Hanna thought that the church could increase their credibility with this meeting if they led by example in tackling some of the difficult issues facing Aotearoa New Zealand. What are the churches doing in terms of housing and poverty? If they were able to show that they are putting some money in, then government might be more receptive to funding programmes (Hanna Interview). Have these meetings changed anything? It is hard to say, but Working for Families and the Housing Warrant of Fitness are policies that came out of this process (Barber Interview).

One participant (who did not want to be named on this point) thought that the Church Leaders’ group had become too broad, with some very minor churches (some with only a single or handful of congregations) participating. Some of these churches have no research base to support their opinions going into these meetings. And sometimes the views represented by the churches were antithetical (there were divergent views, for example, on the smacking issue). This can **create disarray within the Leaders’ group and makes it difficult to have a clear and focussed voice with the politicians**. Bringing in everyone is inclusive, but it risks vagueness and a lack of clarity, and therefore reduces impact.

## Part Two: Social Christianity

This part deals with theological issues, with the focus on the distinctive contribution an FBO can make to the public square, and how it maintains its theological integrity when doing so.

### The Call to Christian Witness

In Part One we saw how many Christians in Aotearoa New Zealand have lost or privatised their faith in modernity. Yet it is clear that in the Christian tradition, **the call to Christian witness includes working publicly for justice and peace.** For example, in the Anglican *New Zealand Prayer Book's* baptism service, candidates for the sacrament are asked:<sup>38</sup>

**Bishop:** Will you seek to love your neighbour as yourself, and strive for peace and justice?

**Candidate:** I will, with God's help.

With baptism being the rite of entry into the Church, it is significant that the Anglican Church has placed striving for peace and justice at the centre of what it means to be a Christian.

**Biblical injunctions to work for justice are better known, such as Micah 6:8.**<sup>39</sup> Christian churches have taken these injunctions seriously over the years and have built many institutions and organisations that offer practical help to the poor and oppressed. It is worth remembering that many institutions of Aotearoa New Zealand's welfare state had their origins in Christian organisations. The architects of the welfare state were Christians, with Prime Minister Michael Joseph Savage calling his programme for welfare "applied Christianity."<sup>40</sup>

While all Christians are called to justice and peace, how this is understood and the priority this is given will vary from person to person. Some worry that as the churches have lost and continue to lose many liberal members and the conservatives stay on, the emphasis on this social form of Christian mission has taken a back seat to individualism (Mayman Interview). Although it should be noted that there has been a defensive sort of engagement by conservative Christians around moral issues such as civil unions, marriage, and punishment. This is an old tension in the life of Aotearoa New Zealand churches.

The debate can be cast in terms of whether Christianity relates to all of human life, or whether Christianity is merely something private, a religion which is separated from the rest of life. The former view was one held by advocates of the social gospel (such as the Presbyterian, Waddell<sup>41</sup> and the Baptist, Archer<sup>42</sup>) and more latterly advocates of Radical Orthodoxy, who deny the ontological reality of a separate secular sphere of human life. This debate is important because in a liberal secular society a common view is that religion is private and has no place in secular politics.

38 Church of the Province of New Zealand, *A New Zealand Prayer Book / He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa*. (Auckland: Collins, 1989), 390.

39 "He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" (NRSV).

40 Guy, *Shaping Godzone*, 199.

41 *Ibid.*, 193–194.

42 *Ibid.*, 204–205.



The late Jack Somerville, the former moderator of the Presbyterian Church and Convenor of the Church's Public Questions Committee wrote: "It has always seemed to me to be the mark of a confident assured church to be involved in public concerns, and a sign of danger if the emphasis shifts inward."<sup>43</sup> Such a lament can be heard these days, with some churches having closed down or truncated their outward looking public questions committees, and turning inward to discuss issues of human sexuality. This is not to say that issues of sexuality and gender in the church are not important to its life, but many church members and members of the public likely detect a lopsided emphasis here, witnessed to by the church turning away from public life to an inward focus on its own concerns.

While many Christians would agree that the churches should be doing this social justice work, the churches do not always fund and resource it well. Margaret Mayman noted that the Presbyterian Church is currently good at producing glossy booklets which combine biblical and theological views on public questions, but it is not good at the translation of these perspectives into action (Mayman Interview). Part of the problem here is the under-resourcing of 'social justice programmes' in the church. Sometimes good, progressive ideas (for example, the Living Wage campaign) win the support of the Presbyterian General Assembly, but without the means to translate these decisions into meaningful action they remain token gestures (Mayman Interview).

One explanation for this is that churches are now preoccupied with their own survival and have become consumer-driven. They ask themselves what they offer this individual, or that family, knowing that Christians are shopping around for worship places where they are welcomed, inspired, and their children's needs are met. Denominationalism has broken down, undermining the moral influence of the churches on their own members. There is, therefore, pressure on churches to be offering things to its members. People are prone, under the influence of pervasive consumerism, to ask: What does this congregation offer me? Cheap and convenient travel means that people will select churches on things other than close proximity. This has intensified the consumerist dimension, meaning that congregations are driven by market demands (Guy Interview).

In this environment, the church has become risk-averse, playing the numbers game, and as a result has become more conservative (Dancer Interview). Roberts also expressed the desire that the churches, while having the power and ability to influence, need to take more risks in order to do so (Roberts Interview).

## A Distinctive Christian Contribution

FBOs are well-placed to offer a wide range of contributions to Aotearoa New Zealand society. But there is diversity of views over what that contribution may be and how distinctive it is.

Waldegrave thought that "the church should walk humbly as citizens of the country and be a powerful force for good, and be seen to be a powerful force for good, without always waving a Christian flag". He thought that FBOs should look to what is going on, focus on the data and the impact on human lives, and respond in love. At times it will be appropriate to refer to distinctive faith matters but frequently not (Waldegrave Interview).

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43 John Spenser Somerville, *Jack in the Pulpit: An Autobiography* (Dunedin: John McIndoe, 1987), 25.

Most interviewees thought that FBOs had something unique to offer to public debate. A common view is that it is the values and beliefs and kaupapa of FBOs that provide something different, and perspectives based on this will not come from anywhere else. Bradford said that no-one else can make a contribution based on these Christian values (Bradford Interview). Ardern agreed, saying that the churches are well-known for having a values-base informing their work and opinions (Ardern Interview). Hanna specifically mentioned the values of openness, and authenticity. “By operating without playing political games and point-scoring, input from FBOs will come across as genuine, a virtue appreciated by politicians” (Hanna Interview).

Guy (in his interview) proposed that a distinctive contribution of Christianity was being in opposition to three values of modern society, which he listed as:

1. **Individualism** – autonomy of the individual divorced from community (the “me generation”)
2. **Hedonism** – pleasure first as providing meaning to life
3. **Materialism** – material assets and goods as providing meaning to life.

Another critical position was taken by Randerson, who, sharing in the tradition of the former Archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, said that the church’s primary distinctive contribution is to uphold the common good and point out where government priorities deviate from this by putting other values first (Randerson Interview).<sup>44</sup>

Most interviewees listed positive things which distinguish the churches’ social teaching. Below are ten such areas where the church makes a distinctive teaching or contribution:

#### 1) Church Traditions

The church has a 2000-year-old tradition of reflection on social, political, and economic matters. Take the example of the living wage. The notion of the ‘just price’ was developed in the fifteenth-century. This notion, which directly applies to wages too, is that the price is set on moral grounds, such as the true cost of labour and raw materials, with due consideration to the need of the labourer to provide for their families when considering the price of a commodity. Regrettably, an understanding of such traditions is being lost to the collective memory of the church. Even evangelical Christians know the Bible less and less, and there has been a breakdown in Bible classes and the formation of biblical people who are well-informed about the social implications of their faith (Guy Interview).

One interviewee, Bradford, in valuing the long-lasting tradition of the churches, suggested that the centuries of Christian theological reflection on social issues brings a depth to bear on issues lacking in others in society. She specifically mentioned the value of the notion of Jubilee in ‘international debt relief campaigns.’ She has also used the Papal Encyclical *Laborem Exercens* (1981) as a discussion starter with groups of the unemployed, finding it “very powerful” (Bradford Interview).

Despite the currency of these traditions, the church can no longer depend on Christendom as solid ground on which to stand, but needs to stand on the gospel (Dancer Interview). Others would agree, while seeing the need to make the gospel and other resources relevant through contextualisation of these traditions (Randerson Interview). Waldegrave, another priest, agreed that we need to bring out the social justice message of the gospels. We

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44 William Temple, *Christianity and Social Order* (Harmondsworth; New York: Penguin Books, 1942).

must reinforce this gospel imperative: “We’re there where the suffering is” (Waldegrave Interview). Such things help to build up individuals who are motivated to do good. But the political interest of the churches cannot be taken for granted, there are always those who believe that the church should stick to faith alone and stay out of politics.<sup>45</sup>

Despite falling Christian adherence, Caritas has found that some people can directly relate to parables and images from the Bible. Some examples Beech mentioned that still have power to motivate people, even if they have left the church, were the sower and the seed (Matthew 13:1–23), the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37), the loaves and fishes (Matthew 14:13–21), and Lazarus at the gate (Luke 16:19–31) (Beech Interview). Dancer would like to see the use of language and imagery that connects with society, just as Jesus used parables that spoke to an agrarian society (Dancer Interview). For Fleming it is the meta-narrative and story of Christianity that gives the FBOs the basis to speak with a confidence, reference points, and a ground unavailable to other groups (Fleming Interview).

In Aotearoa New Zealand there is a wide variety of theological traditions within the Christian churches. This plays out along the lines of churches, their traditions and ecclesiology. Ecclesiologically speaking it is relevant that nationally-organised churches have often been more focused on national solutions to social problems. Churches that were more nationally-organised (e.g. Presbyterian and Methodist) were more prone to wish to make society in their own image, while churches that are more congregationally or diocesan organised were less so inclined.<sup>46</sup>

Bromell suggested that Aotearoa New Zealand lacks a strong tradition of natural theology. Instead, there has been a growing “confessional” approach to theology. This manifests itself in approaches to social issues along the lines of, “We believe this and so should you...” But in secular politics such a statement becomes just one set of beliefs among many. Bromell thought that more traction can be gained by approaches which favour appeals to natural theology (based in reason and universal appeal) that anyone can engage with on reasonable grounds. He noted that the Catholic tradition maintains this approach more than the Protestant tradition. For Bromell, the confessional approach will not cut it in an increasingly pluralistic and diverse society (Bromell Interview). This appeal to natural law plays to its strengths of universalism, and that the content of the natural law is accessible to all through reason. But its appeal to the Christian churches varies from tradition to tradition, with Protestants, in general, being wary of appeals to natural law. One reason for scepticism is that the natural law has been used very conservatively in the twentieth century.<sup>47</sup>

## 2) The Understanding and Value of the Human Person

A distinctive aspect of Christianity is the understanding and value of the human person. Christianity makes a unique claim about what it means to be human – that humans are made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26–27). A further element in the theological understanding of the human person is a holistic view of the human and human flourishing.

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45 This is an ongoing theme in Aotearoa New Zealand church history. See Guy, *Shaping Godzone*.

46 Davidson, “Chaplain to the Nation or Prophet at the Gate?”, 318–319.

47 See discussion in John Coleman Bennett, *Christian Ethics and Social Policy* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1946), 116–124.

With respect to the question of what it means to be a human being, FBOs will provide answers that are quite different to non-FBOs. For example, in understanding poverty, non-FBOs will, if they see humans as merely producers or consumers (a reductionist view), tend to view poverty as simply material deprivation. FBOs, while considering material poverty to be important, will be likely to adopt a more holistic view by also considering spiritual well-being as part of the rounded view of what it means to be human (Fleming Interview, Hanna Interview).

The churches teach that the human is valuable, but also that the end of the human being is more than happiness and consuming material goods. The end of human work is also not just to secure these things, but valuable in itself as part of the creative urge that lies in the human being as created in the image of the Creator God. The churches believe that human work has a vocational aspect in which people are called to work for the common good and for the benefit of society as a whole.

The Living Wage campaign is one example where the churches have demonstrated how their unique understanding of the human person and their work differs significantly from the value of these placed by the market. The difference here, that between the market wage and the living wage, is fundamental (Mayman Interview).

A theological understanding of the human and human flourishing is part of the churches' notion of the good life which is distinct. Boston, citing a notion drawn from political philosopher John Rawls, suggested that the churches have "comprehensive doctrines" which include a notion of the human good. This includes what is considered good for individuals and for society as a whole, and involves the role of the state. Boston said: "If they [FBOs] don't have anything that could be regarded as a distinctive conception of the good then it's not clear they have anything distinctive to contribute" (Boston Interview). But there is overlap between FBOs and other communities and philosophies on the nature of truth-telling and justice. This can be seen through the influence of natural law, represented in international agreements such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The value of the human person was illustrated by Christian theologian John B. Bennett in his work *Christian Ethics and Social Policy*. In a discussion of the differences between Christianity and communism, which at the time was the major ideology confronting the churches, Bennett drew attention to the fact that "for the Christian, every individual person has a status before God which is the source of worth that no political philosophy can destroy."<sup>48</sup> For Bennett, the primary difference between Christianity and communism is that the latter is willing to see its opponents as expendable and sacrificable for a greater cause, whereas Christianity sees individuals as redeemable and having infinite worth in and of themselves.<sup>49</sup> Our contemporary battle may not be against communism, but capitalism – today's ideological challenge – has also been criticised as sacrificing some people, usually the poor, on the altar of market purity, economic growth, and the pursuit of increased trade and investment. Whether one agrees with the outline of this conflict, Christianity's contribution is in providing a check on those forces that are willing to harm or sacrifice individuals for a "greater good".

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48 Bennett, *Christian Ethics and Social Policy*, 73.

49 Ibid., 74–76.

This value of the person has implications, therefore, for the church speaking out against those forces which subordinate the person to the impersonal forces of the market or the state and their bureaucracies. An example here is the notion outlined in the *Social Justice Statement* (§11–12) regarding what the Churches saw as the direct implications of this: the protection of the human dignity by human rights to the essentials of life and employment, education, health care and security.<sup>50</sup>

### 3) The Nature of Community

A part of Christianity's understanding of the human person is locating the individual in human community. The Christian view of the human good life includes the good human community in which individuals can flourish. This new community in Christ is given several names, with the "Kingdom of God" a central motif (Guy Interview). To Barber, such a Christian vision of society maintains a "broader understanding of what it means to be a community", which includes a spiritual element. "People aren't hostile to that even if they don't share your convictions" (Barber Interview).

The church, as a community, can do things that the government cannot do – such as moving hearts and minds (Hanna Interview). With this focus on the goal of society on encouraging human flourishing, and the common good, the church can usefully live out a vision of a new community and then beckon the state down the same road (Marshall Interview).

Christians are naturally critical of communities where humans are not flourishing. By criticising such societies, the church upholds "a vision for a new reality and a hope"; a vision for "a new reality from outside that which we see ourselves locked into" (Dancer Interview). This new reality is aspirational – the church is like a family – we take care of one another and work for the common good. Randerson thought that churches needed to be sounding those kinds of notes as part of research and advocacy (Randerson Interview).

### 4) The Needs of the Poor and Marginalised

The church does not exist for the sake of its members, but has a wider mission to the poor and vulnerable. In fact, some churches teach the "preferential option for the poor"<sup>51</sup> as an important part of its ethos. The church should champion unpopular causes, being those which no vested interest groups have an interest in (such as the homeless, asylum seekers and the poor) (Marshall Interview).

Mayman emphasised that in this secular society the faith communities should make it clear that FBOs are not seeking their own interests, but are seeking the welfare of the city (Mayman Interview).<sup>52</sup> The implication here is that since so many organisations now seek their own interests through lobbying, FBOs will also be perceived to be doing this when they lobby and speak up.<sup>53</sup> When such cynicism of motives prevail, FBOs must make extra effort to show that they are promoting the common good, and the interests of the poor most of all.

50 See *Social Justice Statement 1993* in Ruth Smithies and Helen Wilson, eds. *Making Choices: Social Justice for Our Times: An Initiative of the Church Leaders in 1993*, (Wellington: Church Leaders' Social Justice Initiative, 1993).

51 A term common in twentieth-century Catholic theology since it was popularised by Peruvian liberation theologian Gustavo Gutiérrez.

52 Mayman here makes reference to Jeremiah 29:7: "But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare." (NRSV)

53 Sandra Grey and Charles Sedgwick, "The Contract State and Constrained Democracy: The Community and Voluntary Sector Under Threat," *Policy Quarterly* 9, no. 3 (August 2013): 4.

The church preaches the good news to the poor. Part of this is to let the poor know that being poor and unemployed is not their fault (Beech Interview). Such statements are important, but the churches are also doing things for the poor, and have always done things for them: “Churches are among the first to respond to people in need” (Barber Interview). This is the basis for communicating about the poor with officials and politicians.

## 5) Connection to the Grassroots

Churches and FBOs are directly connected to people in communities. Whether as parishioners in churches, or as people that the FBOs come into contact with through charitable works (e.g. food banks and advocacy), churches and FBOs get to know the stories of people in every socio-economic and ethnic group and from all over Aotearoa New Zealand. Since parishes and dioceses cover the whole of the country, the church is a large intelligence network; it knows what is going on everywhere. Furthermore, because of its large social services presence, the church sees the effects of social policy earlier than the policy-makers themselves.<sup>54</sup> This perspective provides a unique view of the impact and scope of government policies that can powerfully inform their campaigning work. Several interviewees spoke of the value this intelligence gave to their lobbying efforts.

By having such proximity to people, churches have an opportunity to gain credibility for action with the people that they work with and those they have their life amongst. When it harnesses this credibility in campaigns from a faith-based theological view of the world, it has the ability to gain influence and make itself heard in ways that make the government nervous (Roberts Interview). In its public actions, Caritas combines its understanding of Catholic social teaching with Catholic experience of the issues, whether in social service or chaplaincy. Beech shared that combining its values and grassroots experience is valuable for Caritas, and commented: “Talking just on the principles is not that great”. But being able to do this well requires good networks with the wide variety of church actions (Beech Interview).

This grassroots base increases the range of things FBOs can comment on. In his discussion on the distinctive contribution of the churches, Randerson said: “So far as data-based research is concerned, we are so in touch with people at the grassroots that we are in a position to do this well” (Randerson Interview). Because the church is in the community and doing service work there, there is little the churches cannot comment on (Bradford Interview).

This close connection between the church and the community, when facilitated by government-funded social services, can, however, come at a cost. There is a risk that the church self-censors its prophetic proclamations in order to win or keep government contracts. It is difficult to maintain an independent prophetic voice when Christian social service agencies are dependent on government contracts.<sup>55</sup> In spite of this concern, Bromell said: “They can keep telling the story to government about the impact of their policies on the people they serve”. This might include sharing data on food-bank usage and poverty measurement analysis (Bromell Interview). Another example of this compromise was when Caritas lost a lot of government aid and development funding for sticking to their guns about how aid and development is understood (Beech Interview).

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54 Ibid., 3.

55 Ibid., 7–8.

## 6) The Equality of all People

One of Christianity's most radical teachings is the equality of all human beings. Here, the classic text for Christians is Galatians 3:28 (NRSV): "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." The role of this text cannot be overestimated as it lies central to Christian campaigns for equality for women, the liberation of the lower classes, and the emancipation of slaves.

This understanding of equality, sometimes expressed as the brotherhood and sisterhood of people, has provided the church with an internationalist perspective on issues. This teaching has also been adopted into notions of the equality of all people before the law (the rule of law), and has also played a role in the development of human rights.

## 7) Non-violence

Non-violence is another key teaching of Christianity (Marshall Interview). All Christians are committed to eliminating or restricting violence, even those who are willing to concede the necessity of a 'just war' and 'just policing', in which violence must be restrained, proportional, and minimised. Other traditions, such as those represented in the peace churches can be absolutist in condemning violence. In Aotearoa New Zealand, Christian advocacy for non-violence and peace has led to opposition to wars, nuclear weapons, and other means of punishment, such as the death penalty. This position has on-going implications for the issues that FBOs take up and the means which they find acceptable in pursuing social action.

## 8) Forgiveness and Reconciliation

The church teaches forgiveness and reconciliation and will therefore take positions that favour the overcoming of division and the searching for good in people. In its reconciliation work, FBOs can sometimes try to bring peace to warring parties. This view has profound implications for how Christians have understood the role and means of criminal justice. For example, Christians have been active in the restorative justice movement, but this is not always perceived by the state as the voice of the faith community (Marshall Interview).

An example from history was the mediation of Rev. Percy Paris following the Dunedin riots in the 1930s. This act so impressed the unemployed workers of Dunedin that they elected him to be a trustee of their bank account, a demonstration of the credibility he had with those he was trying to help.<sup>56</sup> There was also the churches' intervention into the Waterfront dispute of 1951 (Mayman Interview).<sup>57</sup> Because of this ethos the churches can provide a safe place for dialogue on hard issues (Waldegrave Interview).

On this topic, Beech shared the view of a colleague that in Australia the issue of justice for indigenous peoples is cast in terms of the religious term 'reconciliation', whereas in Aotearoa New Zealand justice for Māori is often seen solely in terms of the Treaty of Waitangi, with more of a legalistic interpretation (Beech Interview).

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<sup>56</sup> Guy, *Shaping Godzone*. 216, 222.

<sup>57</sup> Somerville, *Jack in the Pulpit*, 131–133.

## 9) Religious Freedom

The church is very protective of its autonomy and the right to order its own affairs. It rejects the notion that the state governs the church, and desires to order its own business in accordance with its traditions of how it understands Jesus' mandate for the church. The church, therefore, rejects the notion that the church is just one voluntary sector organisation among many. It is not a gathering of like-minded people who form around a common interest in worshipping God and doing charitable works. Rather, the church sees itself as gathered by God to be the Body of Christ in the world. It is also understood as the family or people of God.

For these reasons, the church values its autonomy to order its own life independent of the state and resists the intrusion of the state into its own life. It will therefore support other groups, such as trade unions and Māori, in defending their autonomy against further intrusions of the state when it tries to assert absolute sovereignty over them.

## 10) Freedom of Conscience

The Christian church values the notion that its members should follow their conscience in their life. This means that Christians should be free to dissent from laws and policies if they conflict with faith, while accepting the consequences of such civil disobedience. Sometimes churches allow their conscience to permit dissent from church rules and policies.

While unity is strength, the church must find ways to learn to live with diversity within its own life. Dancer maintained that in the Anglican Church diversity is seen as a problem, and unity is seen as loyalty. In his opinion **the Anglican Church does not have a workable mechanism for allowing harmony among different perspectives** (Dancer Interview).

In wider society, the church has had an ambiguous relationship with Christians following their conscience where that has conflicted with laws. Notable examples are found in the support or condemnation churches expressed for conscientious objectors in times of war.<sup>58</sup>

## Credibility

A key, perhaps the key, factor in developing influence on government, is in gaining and maintaining credibility. This was the most prominent theme discussed by interviewees. It was widely agreed that **the church needs to gain and retain credibility to speak into the public square. Such credibility is a subjective evaluation of the church's validity and competence** (in Māori this might be called 'mana'). This section discusses how credibility can be enhanced, and finishes with threats to the credibility of the church and FBOs.

The church has credibility and is unique for several reasons. Mayman mentioned several positive things the church has going for it:

- Independence from government and the corporate world means that it does not represent a political or corporate agenda
- The numbers of church members represented, while falling, are still significant
- The diversity of the church community means that the church itself reflects the diversity of the wider community (Mayman Interview).

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58 For numerous examples see Geoffrey Troughton, ed., *Saints and Stirrers: Christianity, Conflict and Peacemaking in New Zealand, 1814-1945*, (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 2017).



It can be useful to distinguish between several forms of credibility which impact directly on the work of FBOs in the public square. These may be described as:

1. **Political credibility** – the credibility an FBO has with the political establishment, both government, opposition, and officials
2. **Public credibility** – the credibility an FBO has in the community, both with individual members of the public and community organisations
3. **Internal credibility** – the credibility an FBO has with its members and the membership of its own faith tradition

The first two of these can be referred to as external credibility. Sometimes, as discussed below, there can be a conflict between these types of credibility. This is because credibility can be increased in two ways. The churches' internal credibility can be increased by maintaining closer adherence to its traditions, while external credibility can be increased by moving closer to the state and culture, which may be at odds with the theological traditions of the church.

**Political credibility** can be gained by doing 'political' things. Hanna suggested simply getting on with social service work (without asking for permission). "Then, when things start to happen, invite the politicians along to share the good news – don't ask for anything – but don't be surprised when they back things that are working" (Hanna Interview). By doing things themselves and being involved in the difficult decisions that this entails, such as making priorities and funding decisions, the churches can gain political credibility. Politicians will not be impressed by naïve views that advocate simple policy solutions to complex problems. **The ambiguities politicians face are real, and the more experience FBOs have in them, the more political credibility they will have.** This gives strength to the view that churches have more credibility **when they are involved with social service delivery** and in making decisions about who gets what – the essence of politics.

For Randerson, credibility in public policy debates is built on, "Research, reason, and viable recommendations" (Randerson Interview). On the issues of poverty, for example, the church should document the nature and extent of poverty and **back that up with statistics and case studies.** Statistics will describe the extent, while case studies will describe the nature and impact of poverty on people. Then the church needs to be coming up with policy options or at least general directions for policy. The NZCCSS largely does this kind of policy work, with Barber saying that doing research also increases the credibility of the organisation (Barber Interview).

**Public credibility** is another way the FBO can gain political credibility. When an FBO has credibility with the public or has a presence in the public square, politicians will sit up and take notice. The public are impressed by a Christianity which expresses itself in humanitarian ways (Guy Interview). For example, the Presbyterian Rev. D. M. Martin gained credibility with the unemployed during the Great Depression by living for a time on below-subsistence wages and then writing about his experiences in the Presbyterian magazine *The Outlook*.<sup>59</sup>

It is worth noting the recent example of the Catholic Church having simultaneously varying public credibility on different issues. Beech mentioned that the Church was widely mocked for its position of opposing marriage equality, while a short time later it was lauded for its support for food in schools. This was perhaps because the Church is more in line with public opinion

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59 Guy, *Shaping Godzone*, 230.

on food poverty; it provides meals, and on this occasion was speaking from a position of credibility provided by the fact that it feeds people (Beech Interview).<sup>60</sup>

Internal credibility is gained when the positions advocated to government cohere with the church's kaupapa and are endorsed by the faith communities. Agencies doing this work should not be too separate from the faith communities. Bromell suggested that, "the most fundamental thing is being sure that the position you're advocating for is supported by a substantial majority of the church's own members", thus providing a degree of representativeness. In doing this the church has increased political credibility and integrity of witness through its internal credibility (Bromell Interview).

### Theological Integrity

As mentioned above the internal credibility (and long-term public credibility) is built on theological integrity, which may be understood as the church sticking close to its kaupapa. When the church deviates from this, the results can be damaging to its public witness. In order to maintain one's theological integrity, one first has to know what one's theology is. Dancer lamented that the Anglican Church has "lost our voice" in a tentativeness around our identity (Dancer Interview).

For all the praise that the Salvation Army gets for its social justice initiatives, Roberts confessed to his office being "very weak in the theological area". Instead, the response to social need has been pragmatic. But he recognised the need for a solid theological base to underpin work in this area. He said that in the Salvation Army, they have been driven back to theology by the market economy, which has had the impact of making things a lot worse and has drawn lines (Roberts Interview). In support of having a robust theological part of your organisation, he said that: "It's easy to be seduced into that pragmatism [of politics] – you need theology to challenge you and remind you that with victory you are still a long way away from where you [are] aiming. Heaven has not arrived with small victories." But he stated that "wrapping theology around this work quite strongly" remains difficult because theologians want to feel that they want to deal with an unsullied world sometimes. "While the pragmatist is aiming to make this or that policy a little bit better, theologians say that it is hardly worth doing. In this way, theologians are too distant from the coalface. The gap between the theologian and the politician is enormous" (Roberts Interview). One way this could be remedied is with a good dose of Christian realism, with its emphasis on the sinfulness of both individuals and groups and how sin corrupts the intentions and actions of both.

Some FBOs state their kaupapa up front. Wesley Community Action recites a creed of their core beliefs and values before key meetings (Hanna Interview). NZCCSS publicly identifies their core values as "justice and compassion" (Barber Interview). A different approach is that of the Maxim Institute, which doesn't put the transcendent first for fear of alienating people (Fleming Interview).

The theology of churches is expressed in a variety of ways. In part, theology is being represented in how the churches and FBOs come to their decisions. In the Methodist Church, for example, decisions were formerly made by a majority vote from the conference floor.

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60 Denis Browne, "New Zealand Needs to Talk About Food Poverty," *New Zealand Herald*, May 2, 2013, [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=10881169](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10881169).

Nowadays, the Church uses a more consensual approach (Hanna Interview). Care needs to be taken to present decisions and positions of the church and FBOs in ways that seek to avoid criticism from politicians that such positions are not representative of those groups.

Since colonialism, the sources of the churches' wealth and the wealth of their members have led to compromise, with a dampening effect on the prophetic nature on the churches' voice.

Because the churches depended on voluntary support from people who were the beneficiaries of the purchase or appropriation of Māori land there were no sustained prophetic Pakeha voices, with some notable early individual exceptions, about these issues in the last four decades of the century.<sup>61</sup>

This is a credibility-denting issue: from where does the church get its money? While the issue of where the church got its wealth and land from remain,<sup>62</sup> a more pertinent issue in relationship to social policy is the issue of 'funder-capture'. Its worst influence is when the kaupapa of the organisation gets diverted or perverted by the influence of funders.<sup>63</sup> One particular tension is that of social science organisations who receive government funding and their capacity to remain critical of government policies.<sup>64</sup> Even the Human Rights Commission was not immune from funding cuts when they spoke out against the government about the Government Communications Security Bureau (GCSB) Bill.<sup>65</sup>

Can an FBO be prophetic while receiving government contracts? While speaking out needs to be grounded in experience at the coalface of the work one is commenting on, one must be aware of the fact that many services and service agencies rely on government funding in order to deliver services and even to survive. A tension therefore develops that sometimes criticising the government may come at a risk of alienating the government so much that funding comes under threat (Mayman Interview).

An FBO's theological commitments may raise questions about the means it is comfortable adopting in its campaigns. Not only did Fleming suggest that advocacy or lobbying has "very limited effect", he has also become "increasingly uncomfortable with how lobbying can be done in a manner that is actually faithful to a gospel understanding of human relationships". In his view, the very tactic of lobbying reduces relationships to one of "leverage and of power." He prefers to think that you can "through conversation, advice and reason coming out of genuine relationship, influence decisions". The church should not try to use its power, or threaten to use its power, in trying to influence politicians (Fleming Interview).

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61 Davidson, "Chaplain to the Nation or Prophet at the Gate?", 318.

62 Guy, *Shaping Godzone*, 354.

63 Consider the case of the Wellington City Mission, in Grey and Sedgwick, "The Contract State and Constrained Democracy", 6.

64 John Stansfield, "Not-for-Profit Organizations," in *New Zealand Social Work: Contexts and Practice*, ed. Marie Connolly (Auckland; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 259.

65 Adam Bennett, "Human Rights Commission: GCSB Bill 'Inadequate,'" *New Zealand Herald*, July 12, 2013, [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=10897315](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10897315).

## Threats to the Credibility of the Church

There are several threats to the credibility of the churches' message that deserve special mention:

### 1) The Rise of Science

The debate between religion and science is well known. According to Guy this debate has had harmful effects on the church: "The perceived incompatibility of religion and science also eroded the credibility and authority of Christianity."<sup>66</sup> The authority of science began to erode the truth claims of religion. This not only displaced religion, but changed the way in which truth claims were judged. Without empirical 'evidence', the truth claims of religion seemed mere preferences without universal applicability.

Part of the influence of science on the church has been the relocation of truth into more scientific endeavours. The social truths discoverable by the social sciences have been adopted by the churches in order to give weight to its social policy activism. These have resulted in a professionalisation of the social ministries of the churches, where the data-crunching of the sociologist is given more weight than the value judgements of the prophet.

A problem with this is that the churches increasingly enter into policy discussions where the terms of the debate have already been set and the solutions are to be determined by data. But the church can also question these terms of debate and re-narrate the problems so that the questions can be different and the solutions can be different too.

### 2) The Declining Status of the Clergy

The church leaders of the future, those speaking publicly about social issues, forming relationships with politicians, and leading church initiatives in justice and peace, are the priests, ministers, and pastors of today. If the church is to have effective leaders in the future, care needs to be taken in the selection, training, and development of these people. Having articulate, wise leaders lends credibility to the church; having uneducated leaders with low status does not.

Without further research, it is difficult to know how much the church and FBOs can influence the status of clergy in society. But there is most likely a positive correlation between clergy having high status and the church having more credibility. Yet a causal relationship is harder to explain – do clergy have a low status because of the churches' low status or vice-versa?

At the end of the nineteenth century a church historian noted that: "The decline of the authority of the clergy is one of the characteristic features of modern society."<sup>67</sup> He largely attributed this to the expansion of learning beyond the church, leading to the rise of the laity.<sup>68</sup> No longer are clergy the guardians and purveyors of knowledge in society. With the rise of reason and science, and with increased learning outside the ranks of clergy, intellectual authority is now located elsewhere. This means that clergy, to be intellectually credible in modern society, must reach high academic standards.<sup>69</sup>

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66 Guy, *Shaping Godzone*, 19.

67 George P. Fisher, "The Decline of Clerical Authority," *The North American Review* 135, no. 313 (December 1, 1882), 564.

68 *Ibid.*, 565.

69 This is not to say that all clergy need a MTh or PhD, but some should be encouraged to get one. Recruiting older people into ordained ministry will adversely affect the likelihood that they will pursue further advanced study.

Another cultural factor has been the rise of other professions in which clergy formerly predominated. In America this trend was noticeable around the turn of the nineteenth century: “The ‘culture of professionalism’ meant that more people turned to physicians and therapists for services once reserved largely for ministers.”<sup>70</sup> It is fair to say that clergy have increasingly been side-lined from public life into a private realm where they have become professionals in private religious matters alone.

If in the past credibility was often linked to authority, with the undermining of the authority of clergy in society, credibility now rests more on their service to the local parish.<sup>71</sup> If this is where the credibility is the highest now, this is also where clergy can be most effective in social justice advocacy.

Finally, in terms of status, the pay of clergy may be a problem. Low pay may attract a lower level of candidate. And without financial rewards and a secure retirement, clergy may be less willing to spend time in further study, another way to gain status and the influence that comes with that. But more pay is not always better, for if clergy salaries rise too high both internal credibility and external credibility may be affected.<sup>72</sup>

### 3) Sexuality Debates

The homosexuality debates have lost the church credibility with many members of the public (Hanna Interview). While some conservative church members would say that the churches, in being opposed to homosexuality, are operating as a bulwark against secular humanism, others surely see the church as medieval, and out of step with modern ways of thinking. This is one contentious area where there is, for some church members, a tension between internal and external credibility.

### 4) Sex Scandals

The sexual scandals that have rocked the churches worldwide have driven many people away from the church, not only diminishing the numbers, but raising suspicions about the church and clergy. While the numbers of clergy involved have been a small percentage, suspicion has fallen on all, with the effect of diminishing the credibility of the churches in the public square. The sexual abuse scandals “have significantly undermined the authority of church leaders in society” (Bromell Interview). Sexual abuse scandals have affected the church’s credibility around the world. From the American context, Philip Jenkins wrote, “The clergy-abuse scandals demonstrated a near-collapse of public confidence in the integrity of church institutions.”<sup>73</sup> The reporting of sexual scandals in churches overseas, especially those churches that also operate in Aotearoa New Zealand, must surely affect the credibility of the churches in this country. It remains to be seen whether ground lost can be regained.

Yet it remains true that whether the sexual abuse scandal is held to be the result of some bad individuals in the church or a more systemic failure, the churches’ voice still has a place, and individuals with moral integrity can always transcend the shortcomings of the church. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, in the context of the churches’ capitulation to Nazism, would be one example from history who managed to do such a thing.

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70 E. Brooks Holifield, *God’s Ambassadors: A History of the Christian Clergy in America*. Pulpit & Pew (Grand Rapids; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2007), 178.

71 Ibid., 343.

72 Witness the scrutiny of Brian Tamaki’s pay in Jared Savage, “Cash for Preaching Lifts Tamaki’s Pay to \$1m,” *New Zealand Herald*, March 13, 2010, sec. National, [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=1&objectid=10631789](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/news/article.cfm?c_id=1&objectid=10631789).

73 Philip Jenkins, *Paedophiles and Priests: Anatomy of a Contemporary Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 162.

## 5) Hypocrisy

A common refrain against the credibility of the church in public is the apparent and real hypocrisy of the church. So, if the church wishes to have credibility in the public square it must have its own house in order. This requires that there is a coherent voice and knowledge about the whole church when statements are issued. An example of damaged credibility was an event during the Hikoi of Hope in 1998. During the Hikoi, while the church was campaigning for affordable housing, questions were raised about the church raising rents on some of its residential properties.<sup>74</sup>

## 6) Disunity

Special mention must be made of the problems and opportunities of the churches working together or separately. Christians share an imperative to unity in the Body of Christ, yet they remain divided into separate denominations. This offers both problems and opportunities for the church working in social policy.

The opportunities are that by working alone they can more easily and quickly speak out from their own position. But if that position is a minority one among the churches, other Christian voices may oppose them, or be used against them by their secular opponents.

Another opportunity is that by working together on issues (a rare thing<sup>75</sup>), the combined voice may carry more weight and more credibility. Some examples of this are the *Social Justice Statement* (1993) and the Interchurch Commission on Genetic Engineering (2000). But, even when this cooperation takes place and churches work together, it is usually done at the highest levels and may exclude or side-line minority voices within the church.

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<sup>74</sup> Guy, *Shaping Godzone*, 476–478.

<sup>75</sup> Jonathan Boston, “Christianity in the Public Square: The Churches and Social Justice,” in *Voices for Justice: Church, Law, and State in New Zealand*, eds. Jonathan Boston and Alan Cameron, Academic Monograph no. 17 (Palmerston North: Dunmore, 1994), 13.

## Part Three: Making a Difference

This part deals with how FBOs can make a greater impact on law and public policy by influencing politicians and government ministers. It should be noted that the aim is not merely to influence policy, although this can be one element of this wider vision. The focus here is on goals and strategies, and specifically, on the strategy of influencing policy makers using various tactics.

### On Goals, Strategies, and Tactics

Over many years churches and FBOs have had a profound influence on the public life of Aotearoa New Zealand. Only sometimes has this taken the form of direct influence on policy-makers and politicians. Many other ways of influencing public life have been effective. It is important, therefore, to consider the direct influencing of politicians as just one tactic that may be used as part of a larger campaign for social change.

The terms ‘goal’, ‘strategy’, and ‘tactic’ refer to different levels of a campaign as represented in this way:

**Goal:** an *end* you want to achieve

**Strategy:** an *idea* of how the goal could be achieved

**Tactic:** an *action* you take to bring your strategy to life.<sup>76</sup>

An application of this framework would be the issue of loan sharks preying on the poor:

**Goal:** To reduce the dependency of poor people on loan-sharks

**Strategy:** To offer other forms of lending to poor people

**Tactic:** To change the law and regulations so that it is easier to start credit unions for local people.

For each goal there may be many strategies, and each strategy could have many tactics. No one tactic alone will produce the desired results. Often campaigning begins with an education programme in order to generate public awareness that a problem exists.

Legislative change is often the end-point of a long education programme, which may include demonstrations, protests, and confrontations. This was the path Aotearoa New Zealand took to becoming nuclear free with the passing of the *New Zealand Nuclear Free Zone, Disarmament, and Arms Control Act 1987*. But this legislation could have only been passed and remain a part of the Aotearoa New Zealand political consensus, because it enjoys bi-partisan support. This support was generated over many years by community activists. For example, the Rev. Dr George Armstrong, an Anglican priest, played an important role in the formation of the Peace Squadrons which highlighted the issues in a dramatic way.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>76</sup> Taken from [http://www.bigducknyc.com/goals\\_strategies\\_and\\_tactics\\_what\\_your\\_nonprofit\\_can\\_learn\\_from\\_this\\_election](http://www.bigducknyc.com/goals_strategies_and_tactics_what_your_nonprofit_can_learn_from_this_election).

<sup>77</sup> Guy, *Shaping Godzone*, 278–282. George Armstrong, “The Peace Squadron Revisited,” in *Pursuing Peace in Godzone: Christianity and the Peace Tradition in New Zealand*, eds. Geoffrey Troughton with Philip Fountain (Wellington: Victoria University Press 2018), 56–72.

If an issue is not on the government's agenda, an activist who seeks change on this issue would be wise to begin to engage with, and educate the public: "The church needs to speak to the public sometimes and not just to the politicians". You have to read where the issue is at (Roberts Interview). Bradford emphasised that it is difficult to get change through Parliament alone; the movement for change ideally has activists on the ground. Her example was that of the repeal of Section 59 of the *Crimes Act*, where parliamentary action would not have occurred on this issue without a grassroots movement for change. Bradford stressed the need to do both – working with community groups with a similar kaupapa outside Parliament, and working at the parliamentary level (Bradford Interview).

Ardern agreed. She gave the example that the National Government (2008–2017) was not willing to be swayed on issues of inequality; what is needed is a public campaign to shift the issue forward (Ardern Interview). An example of this sort of thing given by Waldegrave was the Hikoī of Hope, which, as a broad-based popular movement, allowed those doing research to gain traction for their more detailed policy work. He said, "You change a policy through movements and evidence, and you've got to engage at those two levels" (Waldegrave Interview). Barber expressed similar sentiments, "Many policy changes only happen because of massive public pressure ... They [politicians] might agree with you, but in order to get things through politically they need to be able to point to the groundswell of support that's out there" (Barber Interview).

A different view was shared by Fleming, who said that change is more likely to come through acting as a trusted and respected advisor instead of through noisy protest groups, which, in his opinion, generally have limited effects (Fleming Interview). Although coming from a more conservative position, he might be reflecting the feelings that conservatives have experienced by being on the losing side of several high-profile law changes, such as civil unions and the removal of Section 59 of the *Crimes Act*.

There are times to protest, but sometimes a more conciliatory approach works best. Mayman gave the example of the Living Wage campaign, which mobilised FBOs, unions, and community groups to encourage the Wellington City Council to adopt a living wage for its employees and contractors. She thought this was much more effective than a protest against low wages outside the Council Chambers would have been. She much preferred the approach of adopting the positive message of encouraging the Council to be the best employer (promoting virtue) that they can be over a more confrontational approach (Mayman Interview).

In deciding how to engage with an issue there are many considerations to keep in mind about effectiveness, cost, time involved, and one's kaupapa. Church activists, being committed to non-violence, ought to be familiar with Gene Sharp, the doyen of non-violent political action. He famously documented 198 tactics of political change, many of which can be adopted by campaigners in FBOs for political and policy change.<sup>78</sup> Many of these tactics have been adopted by churches in Aotearoa New Zealand.<sup>79</sup>

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78 Gene Sharp, "198 Methods of Nonviolent Action" (The Albert Einstein Institution, n.d.), [http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations/org/198\\_methods.pdf](http://www.aeinstein.org/organizations/org/198_methods.pdf).

79 Guy, *Shaping Godzone*, 328.



Those who wish to see movements for change lead to legislative change can sometimes be tempted to leap to the stage of legislative change without enough movement-building. This may reflect a bias toward parliamentary action to effect social change. This bias may reflect the growing omnipotence of the state over the lives of both individuals and community sector organisations. But this approach should be seen as one strategy among others. In this vein, Guy described the reflections of Dr Gerard Wall, a prominent conservative Catholic active in the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC), MP and Speaker of the House of Representatives:

At his retirement from politics in 1987 he acknowledged that SPUC had put too much energy in the wrong direction. It had often sought to address the issue at a political level when what was needed was a far greater attempt to win the hearts and minds of New Zealanders. Because legislation needs a lot of popular support to work, failure to win the hearts and minds of New Zealanders meant failure to implement legislation.<sup>80</sup>

The foregoing description of aims, goals, strategies, and tactics, may make it sound as though everything needs to be thought out in advance. But one should not forget cases from history where responding to abuses of power or performing simple acts led to widespread results and shifts in law. Sometimes by merely acting for those around us can bring radical results. Guy records a story of a police raid on a Christchurch Chinese gambling den in 1899.<sup>81</sup> Those arrested were terribly treated by the police. Baptist Pastor Joseph Doke came to hear about the mistreatment of the prisoners and came to their aid, calling for the Chinese prisoners to be treated with human dignity. The issue generated a lot of controversy inside and outside Parliament and an inquiry was eventually launched with some justice being done. Another example is the preaching of Waddell against the practice of sweating in Dunedin.<sup>82</sup> The humanitarian concern of this activist preacher, speaking about the conditions he was directly in contact with, led to widespread change and legislation in protection of workers. Neither Doke nor Waddell could have foreseen what their preaching against injustice could have achieved. But no-nonsense humanitarianism combined with speaking out led to positive change.

Whatever strategies and tactics are adopted by FBOs in order to influence policy, it is wise to try to evaluate them at the end of the campaign. **The evaluation of the tactics used by FBOs is often not done.** Evaluation of communications and activist actions can be difficult, costly, and time-consuming. But without evaluation, how else is their success to be measured? It is worth evaluating the strategies and tactics used in campaigns and resourcing this work at the outset.

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80 Ibid., 414.

81 Guy, *Shaping Godzone*, 100–101.

82 Ibid., 193–196.

## Developing Influence with Government

The rest of this study is devoted to strategies around influencing policy makers and politicians as a legitimate strategy for social change.

To influence someone, one must understand the levers that can be pulled to effect change in that person. With politicians, the primary lever is the number of votes that they think they can win at the next election. To influence politicians then, one might appeal to the popularity or unpopularity of a policy to voters. For the church to be more effective in influencing politicians, they may choose the strategy of demonstrating the unpopularity of decisions, or that the church can influence the minds and hearts of a huge voter base (Dancer Interview). This politicians' natural concern with re-election was a factor in the voting of some MPs in largely Pacific Island electorates over marriage equality legislation in 2013.<sup>83</sup>

To some, the means open to the church are the same as any other group. In terms of the means of action, Bradford expected that the church would use the same techniques as any other lobby group. But she also mentioned some specific things the church could do, such as hold meetings, participate in protests using hymns and other forms of public liturgy, and use church "theatre" that can be taken outside (Bradford Interview). But generally speaking, the means open to each church or FBO must be within their kaupapa. It must operate within its own principles. Typically, the means chosen will be within the law, but there may be times where civil disobedience is justified.

Whatever means are adopted, FBOs need to be patient and take a long-term view – things take time to change (Barber Interview). "You have to be present in all processes, even if you don't feel listened to. Engaging with government is time-consuming and there is consultation overload (which may be a deliberate policy of government to overload the community and voluntary sector)" (Barber Interview).

There is a perception that the church underestimates and undervalues its own power and ability in the public square. Dancer said: "We don't understand the power we have. This should have been the lesson we took from the Hikoi" (Dancer Interview). Roberts agreed saying: "I don't think the church often realises its own power and its own ability. I think it undervalues that and doesn't use it well." Credibility comes, in his opinion, not only from analysis of social issues, but also from the values it holds and who it is. The distinctive contribution is in the values and theology that it brings to issues. What drives the church is the important thing (Roberts Interview).

An FBO knows it has gained influence when it becomes a go-to body on particular issues. "To become a go-to body is hard work, it takes a long time, and you have to deliver. You can't ride on past glories; you have to be current and up-to-date" (Hanna Interview). To become a go-to body on an issue is not something you can simply decide to be, according to Roberts. You need to stay around for a long time and invest in learning everything there is to know about an area. You earn your right to speak by your experience of having deep practical involvement as an organisation (Roberts Interview). In Waldegrave's opinion, the go-to bodies combine expertise and political strength (Waldegrave Interview). To be the go-to body on issues, an FBO must specialise and devote time and money to those issues it wishes to make a difference on. For Boston, to become such an organisation requires "consistency, effort and dedication and credibility" (Boston Interview).

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83 "Marriage Equality Divides Labour," *Stuff.co.nz*, August 10, 2012, sec. *Manukau Courier*, <http://www.stuff.co.nz/auckland/local-news/manukau-courier/7446318/Marriage-equality-divides-Labour>.

Churches are taken more seriously when they speak from the experience of doing work on the ground. It is this connection to the grassroots and the experience on the ground that makes some FBOs (such as the Salvation Army, Presbyterian Support, and Caritas) go-to bodies on social issues (Ardern Interview). Waldegrave has been another go-to person, as he is well-known and can be depended on for media comment (Waldegrave Interview).

Relationships with the media can make an FBO a go-to body, since once the media approach you for comment, the politicians feel they have to as well. But approaches from the media can die away if the FBO does not maintain an ongoing interest in the issue (Beech Interview).

Another possible way in which the church can become a go-to body is that its moral teaching is desired to be heard. Guy reported that the McMillan Inquiry (1930s) into abortion solicited a submission from the Presbyterian Church on the issue of abortion.<sup>84</sup>

## Skills and Capacities

What skills and capacities are needed to implement a strategy of influencing government?

The first step may be, as Hanna, a former policy manager in government, suggested, that FBOs gain more understanding of the machinery of government and the policy process (Hanna Interview). Beech said that Caritas uses this machinery in making submissions on many bills to select committees. But this is acting very late in the process, well after the agenda has been set. A lot of the energy of FBOs goes into responding to government initiatives, such as proposed legislation and policy proposals. In this work it is the government who sets the agenda and frame of reference. But the tension, according to Beech, is how to influence the political agenda without becoming a political insider and the compromises that this might entail, for example blurring the distinction between an FBO and a well-meaning government department. This is an example of the debate between the “pragmatic” and “prophetic” (Beech Interview).

An example of such pragmatism is working behind the scenes to make a government policy less bad or more humane than it might otherwise be. But, Beech asks, is it good news to the poor to find out that a policy they are experiencing as oppressive had input from FBOs to make it slightly better? An example of this tension within the Catholic Church was their opposition to private prisons, while simultaneously negotiating access to these prisons for Catholic chaplains (Beech Interview).

Waldegrave suggested that a good way to enter into the agenda-setting arena is to enter into where the debates are, such as the journals which Treasury and Ministry of Social Development officials read. In his view, the churches are simply not there, with the exception of the Family Centre Social Policy Research Unit (FCSPRU) (Waldegrave Interview).

Whichever approach is taken, there is wide recognition that this work needs to be funded; yet there is little money for this work in the churches (Waldegrave Interview). But there are great possibilities for the churches to work with its well-connected and well-educated lay people. Lay ministry is sometimes seen as getting lay people involved in the local church, rather than the church helping lay people be active in the community. Such an approach, in Randerson’s opinion, reflects a problem with the churches’ missiology, which is preoccupied with attracting people to church. Instead, Randerson thinks, we should equip people to serve their communities (Randerson Interview).<sup>85</sup>

<sup>84</sup> Guy, *Shaping Godzone*, 386.

<sup>85</sup> See on this point Richard Randerson, *Slipping the Moorings: A Memoir Weaving Faith with Justice, Ethics and Community* (Wellington: Matai House, 2015), 222–223.

If he were setting up a centre for faith-based social justice, Waldegrave would make the social sciences (economics, psychology, sociology) primary with theological strands as options for people (Waldegrave Interview). The Salvation Army employs economists, policy people, and a lawyer. For added credibility they do not like to comment on things in which they are not already working; they identify what they are working on in the community and comment on that. Also important is the skill of theological reflection. For the Salvation Army policy work is fundamentally part of the work of the church and it must be linked to the guts of the church's identity (Roberts Interview).

Barber agreed, stressing that in doing policy work it is important "not to lose connection from your faith". While it is a struggle as to how to articulate this, people appreciate this faith perspective and the fact that the work is based on three values: 1) following Jesus; 2) Christian teaching; 3) it is a good thing to do. Barber said that one must have the judgement to find the connections between faith and policy, stressing that both time and capacity are necessary to make things happen. Yet very few policy people are employed by churches to do policy work (only about ten in the whole of Aotearoa New Zealand – not many given the resources of policy-focussed groups in other sectors) (Barber Interview).<sup>86</sup>

Media skills are another set of skills necessary for the work of influence. Without a media presence and public participation in key debates on social issues FBOs will have little credibility with the public or politicians. Again the context has changed, with churches and FBOs no longer taking media coverage for granted. Media organisations probably no longer have religious issues reporters, so they are dependent on the churches and FBOs making things easy for them. This means that the churches, in order to get media coverage, must understand the media, its new cycle, and their specific needs. But the possibility exists to gain coverage if you become known as a reliable source of good timely comment (Bromell Interview). In Bromell's experience, to be in the media you need to be available, have media training, learn the rules of the game, and finally speak in sound bites, with a twist to be interesting (Bromell Interview). One of these rules is to know the value of newsworthiness for each medium and outlet.

Media of all kinds can be used to influence public opinion and spark debate; an important task to attract the attention of politicians and demonstrate the widespread interest in an issue (Ardern Interview). Social media was seen by interviewees as a significant skill set that needs to be embraced (Barber Interview). MPs also read the letters to the major papers, which means that letters will have an impact. Think visually if you want to attract television (Mayman Interview). Media training is important and should be invested in for leaders and spokespeople who are likely to front issues.

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86 Sue Bradford, "A Major Left-wing Think Tank in Aotearoa – Impossible Dream or a Call to Action? - Community Research," *Community Research*, accessed August 13, 2013, <http://www.communityresearch.org.nz/research/a-major-leftwing-think-tank-in-aotearoa-impossible-dream-or-a-call-to-action/>.

## Relationship Building

Developing good personal relationships are one of the best ways to influence decisions in successful campaigning. Given limited time, resources, and expertise it is likely that FBOs will want to form strategic partnerships, coalitions, and alliances with other groups who wish to achieve the same goals. People listen to other people that they know, like, and trust (building credibility by providing good advice), but this takes time (Fleming Interview).

It is rare for an FBO to be the only group involved or concerned with a particular issue. FBOs should consider forming coalitions or partnerships with kindred bodies while ensuring that their principles are not compromised by that association (leading to a loss of credibility and independence). It is essential then that FBOs choose their topics and their partners very carefully.

## Politicians

In the Aotearoa New Zealand political system, officials, MPs and ministers are accessible to the public and organisations (Mayman Interview). Nevertheless, they are busy people with many competing demands. One can gain access to politicians, but one should not waste their time. One can visit them, but one can also invite them to talk and present their side of issues (Mayman Interview). Ardern and Hanna agreed that politicians are much more approachable than many people realise (Ardern Interview, Hanna Interview).

Being in Wellington makes relationship building with central government easier (Mayman Interview, Bromell Interview). But Mayman, who has worked on the Living Wage campaign targeting the Wellington City Council, suggests on the basis of this experience that anyone can work with local government. While local government is often ignored by the churches, opportunities for input into the draft Council Annual Plan are a way that churches and FBOs can have a positive impact (Mayman Interview). Roberts asked where the churches' voice is on Auckland's Unitary Plan. There are crucial things going on at a local level which the church is not involved in (Roberts Interview). Bromell also suggested that regional offices of government departments are also places where FBOs can build relationships.

Once an FBO or their staff become known, it is possible that invitations from ministers will be forthcoming (Mayman Interview). Roberts shared how John Key contacted the Salvation Army when he was elected to Parliament in order to learn about the social-service sector. Roberts then spent a morning with Key (Roberts Interview).

Another example of relationship-building in the Salvation Army is their aim to meet every politician over a parliamentary term (Roberts Interview). It is valuable to know the people who are going to be around the table in high-level meetings. Roberts praised the former leadership of Cardinal Tom Williams who got to know politicians, and who had credibility and stood out. By knowing the people, you get to know what politicians and policy people are concerned about, which is a key part of the process of engagement. But sometimes the church has to speak, irrespective of what other people's agendas are (Roberts Interview).

Respectful relationships between FBOs and politicians are critical (Bradford Interview). Hanna agreed: "Think about the pastoral needs of politicians." He gave the example of Methodist MPs David Lange and Russell Marshall, who the Methodist Church did not support in a positive way, sermonising them instead (Hanna Interview). A stand-out operator in relationship building, according to Bromell is Roberts, who has consistency, personal integrity and political neutrality. Not being allied with one political party has been effective for the

Salvation Army over the long haul (Bromell Interview). Roberts also advised against a wholly negative engagement, arguing that churches should not just turn up to select committees when they have something to oppose; it is appreciated when they turn up to support good legislation (Roberts Interview).

One challenge for some churches is that their leaders change very often. In the Presbyterian Church, for example, the change of moderator every two years is seen as a weakness by some who wish to see the Church speak out more (Mayman Interview). A lack of continuity may be a problem where a leader needs time to learn how to do the job of public engagement and gain confidence in speaking to the media. Even if they wanted to get more actively involved it will take time to get up to speed on the issues and to learn how to engage with them. It will most likely take more than two years to build and cement the relationships to do this sort of work effectively. Other FBOs may not be in this position of having the time and required staff to build those relationships.

Personality makes a difference when building relationships and networking. Sometimes you just get on with or understand the people you are dealing with. Professionalism and the values of fairness and trust are also important. Some people are good networkers and they are good to have on a team. They typically are able to chat to anyone and keep people updated (Barber Interview).

Randerson reflected that if he were doing the social justice role (*Social Justice Commissioner* for the *Anglican Church*) again, he would wish to combine research and advocacy with a greater emphasis on relationship building. When criticising previous governments he left this to one side, and realised later this had created some hurt when taking a strong adversarial role. But how does one do this? “Get to know people, go to see people, maybe the quality of what you’re producing they want to see you.” If one has credible things to say and has good relationships, one can be critical of government policy without compromising the access to politicians (Randerson Interview).

Lobbyists should never ignore opposition parties. Governments in Aotearoa New Zealand rarely last more than two or three terms, so it is foolish to align oneself with one party or the current party, thinking this is a long-term strategy for influence. The opposition will be the future government and when in government they may yield to the temptation to reward their friends and punish their enemies. The churches cannot afford to be seen to be partisan or think that progress on an issue is linked to the current government, or solely dependent on the opposition parties being elected next time.

Bradford said that, “Under MMP minority parties have more influence in select committees and Parliament, so don’t ignore minority parties when lobbying. Build relationships with smaller parties and representatives from all parties on your issues. Get to know the spokespeople on your issues in all the parties soon after the election. To do even better, get alongside the key policy development people in the parties well before an election” (Bradford Interview). Furthermore, opposition parties can ask questions of ministers and one source of these questions could be the issues raised with them by FBOs. Answering these questions is one way that the ministries of the government can work for opposition parties, albeit in a small way.

## Officials

Relationships with public servants or officials are also important, but are too often neglected. When you have trusted relationships with them you are able to quietly check and provide feedback on things. When dealing with officials one needs to offer a well-thought through case that is well-represented and represents a constituency (Mayman Interview).

Bromell, a public servant, said: “Don’t treat the government as the enemy. Both politicians and public servants enter these roles to make a difference. Remember why they are there. Build relationships with the public sector – this is a longer-term vision than focussing on ministers who come and go more often. Relationship building requires being proactive and if you’re outside of Wellington a healthy travel budget is required to be able to build and maintain relationships with politicians and officials. But at that level you can build relationships with officials in the regional offices of the large government departments” (Bromell Interview).

An FBO who wishes to be an effective lobbyist or advocate must build relationships with appropriate officials. They have a huge influence over policy and process because they advise the ministers. They cannot resist numbers, so get the best data and analyse it well. In Waldegrave’s experience working with such people works better than working against them (Waldegrave Interview). The tenure of public servants often outlasts the terms of ministers and elected representatives. They are the subject-matter experts and relationships with them are worth building. Under the *State Sector Act 1988* they are required to be non-partisan, while at the same time implementing government policy, whether they personally agree with it or not.

Among officials build a network of contacts and allies who can alert you to new research and publications, and who can help you interpret them. Because FBOs can rarely pay market salaries for the expertise required to crunch data in sophisticated ways, it is important to build relationships with those public officials who can (Bromell Interview). When starting to build relationships with the view to changing policy, Hanna advised getting to know the key people such as senior private secretaries in the Beehive and understanding where they are coming from, their pressures, and try and have some healthy conversations (Hanna Interview).

It is worth remembering that many public servants are church members themselves. Formerly many prominent Christians were public servants. “There are still some, but it’s less obvious now” (Boston Interview).

## Grassroots

The activist FBO will probably find itself sitting in an intermediary position between the church’s grassroots and public policy makers. Both relationships are critical to campaigning successfully.

Beginning with the grassroots, the FBO gains its mandate from its support-base among the people of the church. Its own credibility is linked with that of the church, and it is impacted by the same sociological forces that affect the church. It will probably gain some funding from a church or churches, relying on them for access to grassroots stories. There is another important relationship here too, and that is the support that the FBO gives to interested church members and congregations in their own advocacy work as citizens. Many FBOs focus on relating upwards in order to lobby government, sometimes forgetting that they might be more effective to harness the energy of the wider faith community. The activist FBO will want to suggest ways in which ordinary church members and congregations can become part of a

movement for change. Naturally, this will depend on the issues and the stage of the campaign, but more can be done by FBOs who take these relationships seriously. Mayman mentioned the work already done by NZCCSS, Christian World Service (CWS), and Caritas, but suggested that such agencies consider how their information could be better used by congregations in their own public engagement (Mayman Interview).

Bradford lamented the loss of a wider ecumenism on the left nowadays, naming the loss of the Conference of Churches of Aotearoa New Zealand (CCANZ) and the general “loss of the ecumenical will across church groups”. She said that she: “Would do anything to help foster that.”<sup>87</sup> She also said she would like to regain a wider ecumenism, not superficial combined action, but a deeper ecumenism that develops a shared language. “The more deeply you can do it the better” (Bradford Interview).

### Resourcing and Providing Evidence-Based Policy

In liberal democracies like Aotearoa New Zealand, governments are expected to base their laws and policies on evidence and reasons that are publicly accessible. But what counts as evidence? The common view amongst interviewees was that the church can base its assessments of policies on both the impact and extent of government policy. It can do this by providing analysis of the data and also using stories from the grassroots. Effective reports sometimes mix data and stories (e.g. *Forgotten People: Men on their Own* (Salvation Army, 2006)) (Roberts Interview).

Hanna suggested that policy analysts should know the difference between data, information, and evidence (Hanna Interview). It is evidence that influences the decision-makers. In lobbying politicians, one should also pay attention to other factors that can move them. While some people are moved by hard data, others find stories more compelling. And with all politicians thinking about re-election, they can be persuaded by the result of opinion polls and levels of public support discernible through published letters to newspapers. It is astute to know what sort of evidence influences individual decision-makers; some like numbers and some like stories. For former Minister for Economic Development Steven Joyce, for example, it was a business case. Former, Prime Minister John Key was a deal-maker; he responded to deal-making opportunities. For others it might be a transformative human story (Hanna Interview). It is worth remembering that all politicians are interested in solutions, and if the church can offer some this can help build relationships and influence with them. Lastly, a petition or letters of support can also have an important influence on politicians.

Mayman suggested that on conscience issues before Parliament (such as ‘marriage equality’), stories are as equally important in debates as hard data (Mayman Interview). Policy-making cannot be based on anecdotes, but it can be informed by stories. When presenting policy options FBOs ideally do two things:

1. Provide a critique of the status quo, from information regarding the impact and extent of the present policy
2. Provide some alternative policy proposals.

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87 Lineham, “Social Policy and the Churches in the 1990s and Beyond.”



In crunching the numbers on current policies, an FBO can use government statistics such as census data or data available from ministries such as the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). To do this requires knowledge of how to access these statistics as well as how to read and interpret them. This generally requires a high level of statistical ability that either needs to be found in-house or contracted in. It may be possible to get government officials to check one's numbers and analysis before it is used in any advocacy document. Such a peer-review process is advisable in order to avoid the situation where one's data is questioned, possibly undermining the rest of the case made in the lobbying effort.<sup>88</sup>

With regard to the question about whether the officials themselves could be merely encouraged by the church to ask better questions when analysing numbers in the place of FBOs doing the work public servants could be doing, Bromell replied that this happens on the basis of working relationships between the community sector and officials and/or ministers (Bromell Interview). The reason why they do not ask the questions that FBOs would ask of the data is, according to Fleming, because they are limited to asking questions from their present understanding; so a role of FBOs is to bring a different starting point and understanding (Fleming Interview).

But to Barber, asking harder and better questions with the aim of encouraging government to do the research the church would do if it had the capacity to do so, is only possible if you know what is going on yourself, and this only becomes known by doing research yourself. "Often government staff do not get it, being removed from the impacts of the policies." A further reason for FBOs to do their own research is that researching the impact and scope of government policy requires close contact with the community, something that the government does not have. Such contact demands a level of trust and access that the government would find hard to get and maintain (Barber Interview).

When lobbying the government, the churches often say nothing new or different, but can be effective in summarising other's reports and making them digestible for politicians and the public. It is sometimes who is presenting the report that makes a difference. Often government sector reports are practically invisible or intentionally buried, but the churches can get media coverage and promote reports and information in ways government agencies cannot (Roberts Interview).

Bradford, having seen a large number of submissions in her parliamentary career, said that the most impressive submissions are those that go through bills in detail. Other submissions that detail the impact on that organisation also carry weight. Submissions that summarise other research are helpful to politicians. An emotional story that engages with the facts can make a huge impact, with the human element being very powerful. However, the overall advice was to make very clear points (Bradford Interview).

The impact of a report from an FBO depends on the quality of the data and the sophistication of the analysis. This kind of detailed work has been usually under-resourced in the churches. Ideally an FBO would work with government agencies to fact-check data and analysis before it is released. By asking officials to fact-check in advance, FBOs can ensure that the evidence base supports their case, which means they will not be shot down in officials' advice to ministers. The tension is that FBOs may think that using peer-review of officials will undermine their independence, but officials are non-political and will not undermine the advocacy case made.

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88 Waldegrave has used peer-review to good effect in his poverty measurement work (Waldegrave Interview).

Bromell commented that it is worth talking to one's specialist colleagues in the public sector. "They are not the enemy. By working with government officials, facts can be checked and ministers can be briefed by officials before the release of the reports so that they can make an informed response, instead of being put on the spot, where they are more likely to make a knee-jerk reaction" (Bromell Interview).

To have good intelligence about what your own church and faith community is doing also remains an important data source on the impact of public policy. This may require breaking down barriers to accessing this knowledge within the organisation (with the added problem of protecting the privacy of the people you are serving) (Beech Interview).

Fleming said that he finds data less and less persuasive, believing that even where data says one thing, people will sometimes head in the other direction. Fleming used the example of marriage laws, whereby he claims that the law changes have made a social statement that the context of child-rearing does not matter, even when the research says otherwise (Fleming Interview).<sup>89</sup>

### The Specificity and Language of Recommendations

When the church comes to make policy recommendations, often one of two scenarios occur. On the one hand the church sometimes speaks in generalities of peace, justice, and fairness, which can lack specificity as these principles are too vague to be of any use for the law and policy makers they are trying to influence. On the other hand, detailed proposals on complex policy matters are likely to be beyond the competence of the church.

This debate was outlined by Temple in his classic war-time book *Christianity and Social Order*.<sup>90</sup> To get around this debate he proposed the use of what came to be known as 'middle axioms'. The Scottish ecumenist J. H. Oldham defined middle axioms as laying between "purely general statements of the ethical demands of the Gospel and the decisions that have to be made in concrete situations."<sup>91</sup> Applied to social policy they have been described as laying between the very general (social justice) and the highly specific (a detailed social policy).<sup>92</sup> Temple, an advocate of the middle axiom approach, gave them credibility for a generation of Anglican social theologians. His axioms were generalities, such as this example:

Every child should find itself a member of a family housed with decency and dignity, so that it may grow up as a member of that basic community in a happy fellowship unspoilt by underfeeding or overcrowding, by dirty and drab surroundings or by mechanical monotony of environment.<sup>93</sup>

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89 Maxim Institute, "Maxim Submission to the Marriage (Definition of Marriage) Amendment Bill," *Maxim Institute*, accessed August 13, 2013, [http://www.maxim.org.nz/Blog/Maxim\\_Submission\\_to\\_the\\_Marriage\\_Definition\\_of\\_Marriage\\_A.aspx](http://www.maxim.org.nz/Blog/Maxim_Submission_to_the_Marriage_Definition_of_Marriage_A.aspx).

90 Temple, *Christianity and Social Order*.

91 Willem Adolph Visser 't Hooft and J. H. Oldham, *The Church and Its Function in Society*, Church, Community, and State v. 1 (London, 1937), 209–210.

92 For a discussion of middle axioms see Duncan B. Forrester, *Beliefs, Values, and Policies: Conviction Politics in a Secular Age*, The Hensley Henson Lectures 1987-1988 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), 16–35.

93 Temple, *Christianity and Social Order*, 73.

The merits or otherwise of middle axioms has been widely debated. Boston, for example, examined the merits of middle axioms in his discussion of the 1993 *Social Justice Statement*.<sup>94</sup> But Duncan Forrester's point that middle axioms are suited to a more Christian country should be carefully considered, especially in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand, being a more pluralist and secular society than war-time England.<sup>95</sup>

Temple further thought that the churches' role was to enunciate social principles and point out where society was deviating from them.<sup>96</sup> This criticising role is one which the church has maintained and it certainly has a place among the church's approaches to being active to the social sphere. But this also attracts the inevitable criticism that the critic must then come up with viable alternatives.<sup>97</sup> This is a demonstration of a state-centric ideology that all is solved on the level of the techniques of policy-making and that pragmatic policy-making is what is important, not the statement of principles or values.

Temple and other advocates of middle axioms were humble enough to recognise that the church had no more expertise to develop detailed prescriptions for social problems than anyone else.<sup>98</sup> The subsequent rejection of middle axioms and the acceptance of the need to be specific about policies, meant the need to adopt expertise and techniques of public policy work if the Church wanted to be taken seriously. It is worth keeping in mind, however, that nearly all policy problems are the unintended consequences of the adoption of new technology or past policies that are no longer suited to current circumstances. This means that any policy advice is likely to have further unforeseen consequences *ad infinitum*. Temple may have foreseen this problem for the policy-promoting church when he said that when the church avoids committing to specific policies it avoids being implicated in their failure.<sup>99</sup> How specific each FBO wishes to get in policy recommendations will depend on its own expertise. To promote very specific policies outside its expertise would be to risk lessening its credibility and undermining its effectiveness on other issues.

When doing policy work, Caritas presents the relevant principles of Catholic social teaching. When it does so, Beech admitted the need to spell out the direct policy implications of these principles, and to show the reasoning of this, especially for pragmatic politicians who are less interested in idealism (Beech Interview). While politicians are one audience that may require more pragmatic communications, sometimes there is a case for using more theological language. Beech gave the example of making representations on issues such as the environment. Whereas policy makers might be more interested in detailed analysis of data and policy recommendations, for the church audience, more theological language may be needed in order to demonstrate why the church is interested in these issues. Caritas' submissions usually include a doctrinal statement on where the Church is coming from (Beech Interview).

Sometimes an FBO's recommendations are picked up. A private members' bill (2012) by Rino Tirikatene attempted to turn one of Caritas' recommendations from their report *Delivering the Goods: A Survey of Child Delivery Workers into law* (Beech Interview). But this took five years to filter through to legislation, and this was done without acknowledgement of the source of the ideas in Caritas' report.

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94 Boston, "Christianity in the Public Square." 25–32.

95 Forrester, *Beliefs, Values, and Policies*, 34.

96 Temple, *Christianity and Social Order*, 35.

97 Lineham, "Social Policy and the Churches in the 1990s and Beyond."

98 Temple, *Christianity and Social Order*, 18.

99 *Ibid.*, 18–19.

FBOs must use language and categories that audiences will understand. They can use Christian doctrines, but they need to unpack them in ways that will be understood. Keeping the notions of internal and external credibility in mind, the church can adopt the practice of bilingualism. Old Testament scholar and political theologian Walter Brueggemann suggested that: “People of faith in public life must be bilingual.”<sup>100</sup> They must, he said, “Have a public language for negotiation” at the boundary between the community of faith and the world outside. This has implications for how people are trained in the church:

Now my urging is that church education must nurture people to be bilingual, to know the language to speak on the wall in the presence of the imperial negotiators, and to speak the language behind the wall in the community of faith where a different set of assumptions, a different perception of the world, and a different epistemology are at work.<sup>101</sup>

This issue of the commensurability of church traditions with the predominant tradition in secular society is a highly debatable issue, explored by philosophers and theologians.<sup>102</sup> These debates are beyond the scope of this study, but a point taken from philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre remains worth reflecting on. That is, to what degree can church language and traditions be translated into publicly accessible language without distortion?<sup>103</sup>

In Mayman’s opinion, when one is engaged in the public sphere it is easy to use human rights language, but to retain theological integrity, it is important to remain rooted in a worshipping faith community (Mayman Interview). But lack of a rigorous theological position should not be an obstacle to prevent starting to take public action on issues. What Mayman thought the church should seek is: “A language that expresses our theological values and commitments, that is intelligible to people who don’t share the story which our values and commitments come out of” (Mayman Interview). Mayman went on to suggest that there is more possibility of referencing theological language than some might think, but one has to be careful to select those things from our tradition that will resonate with the culture. She specifically mentioned Martin Luther King Jr and Dietrich Bonhoeffer as people from the Christian tradition who have resonance beyond the church.

## Specialisms and the Church

Should the politically-engaged FBO specialise in a single or a few selected issues? With limited resources and knowing it takes a lot of effort to stay on top of issues, an FBO may be tempted to specialise on a single or a few issues knowing that other agencies are focusing on other important issues. If it does specialise, it may be able to make a bigger impact. To be a specialist organisation on any issue requires building up credibility over a long period of time. For example, the Salvation Army (under Roberts) has specialised on housing over many years, partly because they know that housing has such a large impact on poverty, health, and well-being. There are other specialist church agencies that have credibility in their field. The Interchurch Bioethics Council is one. The Churches’ Broadcasting Commission is another.

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100 Walter Brueggemann, “II Kings 18–19: The Legitimacy of a Sectarian Hermeneutic,” *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 7, no. 1 (1985): 7.

101 Ibid., 8.

102 One guide to this discussion is Jonathan Chaplin, *Talking God: The Legitimacy of Religious Public Reasoning* (London: Theos, 2008), <http://www.theosthinktank.co.uk/files/files/Reports/TalkingGod1.pdf>.

103 See discussion in Alasdair C MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (London: Duckworth, 1988), 379–388.

Another example of specialisation can be found in the work of the Maxim Institute. When Maxim wanted to engage with the issue of foreign aid, they gave themselves two years in which to develop their credibility in this field; after which five out of six of their recommendations were adopted and the report's author was getting numerous speaking invitations. Based on this experience Fleming suggested that you need to recruit suitably qualified people (with the right skill-set and personality) and give them time and space to develop their expertise; in this case, say 12 months, before they start to speak from a well-developed foundation (Fleming Interview). This illustrates the point that to specialise means devotion to an issue over the long term: "You can't become a specialist unless you specialise" (Bromell Interview).

Taking a different viewpoint, Dancer was sceptical about the notion of a church or FBO specialising on issues. He made two related points against this idea. The first point is that the church should promote a holistic vision for society – this is done by "being the church" and by not being overly concerned with something else. The second related difficulty with specialising is the dubious notion that somehow society can be divided into discrete problems that can be understood and solved independently. One cannot solve housing problems by going to experts such as Roberts, or poverty by going to NZCCSS: "We need a holistic vision that allows us to understand what well-being looks like" (Dancer Interview). Dancer's concern was that issues may become discrete and divorced from other material issues (for example, housing becomes divorced from the communities in which people live) and divorced from a holistic understanding of the person.

This problem/solution framework was criticised by theologians such as Jacques Ellul who was concerned with the intrusion of "technique" into the church.<sup>104</sup> Specifically, solving problems becomes about the application of appropriate techniques which are applied to the problems for their resolution. Another difficulty with this problem/solution framework is that it can become divorced from the kaupapa of the FBO, and become a driver of the organisation, which then becomes a solution centre looking for problems to solve.

Can a holistic vision be maintained when there is a need to divide labour and specialise? Perhaps the answer is that it is more in line with the kaupapa of the church to speak about the vision than to feel itself responsible for a small part of it. In speaking of a vision for society the church reaches beyond what many see as the specialist area of the church. Lay theologian Denys Lawrence Munby explored this idea in the 1960s:

When the clergy had a fairly clear general social function in the community as leaders of social life, they were integrated in it and they married Church and world, whether or not we are happy about the terms of the marriage. Today they have no general social function; they have no great social status; their words are not much attended to.<sup>105</sup>

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104 See Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society* (New York: Knopf, 1964).

105 D. L. Munby, *The Idea of a Secular Society: And Its Significance for Christians* (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 66.

This general social function was to have a general vision of the good life together. Over the years, the church has increasingly been forced to accept, by the processes of modernity, a specialist “religious” role, by the erosion of its social authority. Sometimes it has ceded this authority to science and other disciplines. But if the church is to have a religious role in a culture of specialisms, then the clergy will inevitably become the specialists in this area, with a correspondingly diminished role of the laity to become mere consumers of this clerical role in society, as the clergy are, in turn, consumers of the laities’ specialist skills in the secular world. Munby rejected this notion of the role of the clergy:

In principle, the Church represents all men; in practice, the organized Church consists of a small group of men rather narrowly trained and highly specialized in ways remote from the life of ordinary people. The specialized Church as we know it is a denial of the reality of the Church.<sup>106</sup>

Against those forces, inside and outside the church, which would ghettoise the church into a specialist area of “religion”, the church must assert that it upholds a general vision of a better world. In playing a role in building this world it must be careful not to specialise this role into the hands of professionals and ignore the role all the laity can play in their day-to-day work to make this a reality. To do so would reinforce the problem of specialisms it is trying to resist.

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106 Ibid., 65.

## Appendix 1: Interviewees

<b>Interviewee and their position (at time of interview)</b>	<b>Interview Date</b>
Rev. Charles Waldegrave, Family Centre Social Policy Research Unit	Wed, 12 June 2013
Rev. Dr Margaret Mayman, PCANZ	Thu, 13 June 2013
Rev. Richard Randerson, Retired Anglican Bishop	Thu, 13 June 2013
Prof. Chris Marshall, VUW	Thu, 13 June 2013
David Hanna, Wesley Community Action	Thu, 13 June 2013
Dr Anthony Dancer, formerly Anglican Church	Fri, 14 June 2013
Rev. Dr David Bromell, MSD	Fri, 14 June 2013
Lisa Beech, Caritas	Mon, 17 June 2013
Paul Barber, NZCCSS	Mon, 17 June 2013
Major Campbell Roberts, Salvation Army	Tue, 18 June 2013
Dr Laurie Guy, Carey Baptist College	Tue, 18 June 2013
Prof. Peter Lineham, Massey University	Tue, 18 June 2013
Sue Bradford, activist and former Green MP	Wed, 19 June 2013
Greg Fleming, Maxim Institute	Wed, 19 June 2013
Jacinda Ardern, Labour MP (by phone)	Thu, 20 June 2013
Prof. Jonathan Boston, VUW	Fri, 21 June 2013

## Appendix 2: Questionnaire

### 'MAKING A DIFFERENCE' QUESTION SHEET FOR THE RESEARCHER

Interviewee: ..... Date: .....

#### Core questions:

1. Why does government often appear not to take the churches seriously in public policy discourse? Did government ever take the churches seriously and if so why? If so, what's changed? How can we make more use of the work that is already done by churches on policy?
2. What is the distinctive contribution that a faith-based organisation can make to the public square?
3. How does a faith-based organisation impact on policy and decision-making by ministers, officials and MPs?
4. What skills and capacity are needed to do the work of relationship-building, influencing and so on?
5. What information, data and research capacity is needed to support recommendations/statements/requests for action to government?
6. How does a faith-based organisation become the go-to body on its specialist issues? How do we form relationships with policy-makers and officials?
7. How does a faith-based organisation retain theological integrity? How do we communicate a robust theological response with the issue?



## Appendix 3: Consent Form for Participants

### 'MAKING A DIFFERENCE' CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;
3. Personal identifying information on audio tapes will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for at least five years;
4. This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning is outlined on the 'Information Sheet for Participants', though I understand that the precise nature of the questions asked will depend on the way in which the interview develops. I also understand that, in the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable, I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind;
5. The results of the project may be published and available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand). *Please delete as appropriate:*
  - I am happy for my views, as expressed in connection with this project, to be made public, provided all citations and direct quotations attributed to me are cleared with me first.
  - I request that every attempt be made to preserve my anonymity.

I agree to take part in this project.

.....  
(Signature of participant)

.....  
(Date)

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