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THE NEW CHRISTIAN CONSERVATISM
AN ANALYSIS OF A SOCIAL MOVEMENT 1970-1997

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses the social and political mobilisation of groups of conservative Christians in the period 1970 to 1997, via a theory of cultural articulation. Previous ways of accounting for moments of conservative Christian activism, such as the secularisation thesis, are critiqued for their inability to account for the periodic resurgence of such activism in New Zealand, particularly in the period since 1988. Alternatively, cultural articulation theory forces an analysis of the multi-dimensional determinants of mobilisation, by taking advantage of the subjective, structural, dramaturgical, and institutional approaches to cultural analysis, and by placing a focus on how a social movement interacts with changes in the social/cultural/political environment. By tracing several key moments in New Zealand's recent history, the mobilisation of conservative Christians is therefore explained in terms of the opportunities these moments gave for the formation, development, and continuing articulation of a conservative Christian ideology. This "exploration" revealed a critical moment around 1988 when, although many factors were predictive of a busy period of activism, the mobilising ideology of Christian Conservatism became hindered by a lingering tradition of church-state separation. The solution for conservative Christians, in the form of a New Christian Conservatism, was the result of an ideological innovation which re-mobilised the movement, by claiming that all spaces were political and hence contestable. This re-narration of their core ideology was matched with a greater flexibility, and professionalism, in the movement's articulations with its environment in the 1990s. Two examples of the New Christian Conservatism are highlighted as evidence of the movement's potential with this new ideology, as the identity of conservative Christians was re-moulded to suit the political culture in the 1990s. The New Christian Conservatism is finally posited as a movement that challenges the prevailing legitimacy of political pluralism in New Zealand, and which has the potential, if properly organised, to gain entry into the formal political sphere under MMP. However, this can only be achieved if the movement overcomes the fundamental problems of accommodation and compromise, issues which have prevented the movement from expanding in influence to date.

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The New Christian Conservatism
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Introduction

Since the turn of the decade, New Zealand's cultural and political terrain has witnessed an increase in diversity and pluralism in many areas of social life. The Human Rights Act in 1993 diminished the grounds on which discrimination is permitted, and the country held its first MMP election in 1996, extending the opportunities for political representation. Yet at the same time, other voices appeared to be calling for a return to more conservative mores. Among the most vocal were those people - "conservative Christians"- who contested the value of diversity, and claimed instead that society required healing: "Each of us has to go out with a little bit of salt, and rub that little bit of salt until it starts to have its cleansing effect. Let's work together" (Jamieson, 1992).¹ While some observers dismissed these protests as a "backlash against galloping liberalism" (Gustafson, quoted in Heeringa, 1995), the evidence was mounting to suggest something more resolute.

In 1993, the retired Police Commissioner, John Jamieson, established an organisation whose aim was to provide "principle-based leadership in our nation".² In May 1995, ex-National Party MP Graeme Lee announced the formation of the Christian Democrats, a party which one political commentator described as having "surprising strength".³ And almost a year later, the Christian Democrats entered into a coalition with the Christian Heritage Party, and began campaigning under the banner "The Christian Coalition: the new force in New Zealand politics". While history testified to the defeat of the Christian Coalition, the political manifestation of conservative Christian concerns signalled that a new force had emerged in the 1990s. This thesis seeks to discover the origins and nature of this force: firstly, why

¹ The concept of a conservative Christian social movement is explored from Chapter One onwards, since the changing nature of conservative Christianity itself is one of the themes this thesis wishes to highlight.

² Strategic Leadership Network. (1994) *Vital Issues*, August.

³ Orsman, B. (1995) "Surprising strength in Christian party", *New Zealand Herald*, 13 May.

were conservative Christians mobilising via such pressure groups; and secondly, how did this mobilisation occur?

In doing so, this thesis takes a radically different approach to those usually employed. To date, most accounts of conservative Christian activism in New Zealand have focussed on, and are derived from, the specific isolated moments when such activity occurred.⁴ Consequently, the broader characteristics of the social, cultural and political environments surrounding mobilisation have often been ignored, and therefore precluded accounts which acknowledge the potential interconnectedness of these moments. Alternatively, other accounts seem devoted to ignoring the specificity of certain occasions entirely in their search for theoretical consistency. In proposing explanations for the current state of mobilisation, much of this thesis adopts a broad framework in the form of Robert Wuthnow's theory of cultural articulation (Wuthnow and Lawson, 1994). It is felt that through the use of this approach, which allows for more specialised analyses whilst remaining broad-ranging and eclectic in essence, better accounts of specific periods are generated.

The structure of the argument presented reflects this theoretical approach. Previous ways of accounting for conservative Christian activism are outlined in Chapter One, with an emphasis on secularisation theory, social movement theories, and relevant New Zealand literature. The shortcomings of each approach are highlighted throughout this discussion, and the usefulness of a theory of cultural articulation suggested at the end. The second chapter examines cultural articulation theory in more detail, referring explicitly to its appropriateness with regard to religious social movements. By focussing on the relationship between a social movement and its social and political environments, it will be argued that this approach identifies, in a convincing way, the multi-faceted determinants which account for conservative Christian activism.

⁴ An in-depth summary of the relevant literature is given in Chapter One.

The final four chapters utilise cultural articulation theory to develop new explanations for periods of conservative Christian activism. Chapter Three argues that it was only in the late 1960s to early 1970s that a distinctive ideology of “Christian Conservatism” was constituted. Subsequent moments of mobilisation in the 1970s are used to illustrate how people involved in the movement, as cultural actors, sought to articulate their beliefs within a field of competing ideologies. Chapter Four traces the movements’ periodic resurgence into social and political visibility through the 1980s. The different factors accounting for each period of mobilisation are emphasised, in order to build a picture of a movement interacting with its environment in many dimensions. Chapter Five examines how the crisis in Christian Conservatism in the late 1980s prompted several strategic re-evaluations within the movement. The result, in the form of a “New Christian Conservatism”, is the focus of the rest of the discussion. Finally, Chapter Six briefly analyses two recent examples of the New Christian Conservatism, in the form of the New Zealand Education Development Foundation and the Christian Coalition.

The approach adopted throughout is purposefully broad, in order to highlight the importance of externalities not normally considered in typical accounts. However, more specific reference will at times be made to the leaders and organisations involved in the movement. Woven into the discussion at various points are also further comments on the theoretical approach. This is considered to be necessary, since the importance of various aspects of the movement are highlighted at different stages in the thesis, and these issues may require a more in-depth discussion at the time. Similarly, the qualitative data collected (see below) is introduced into the discussion when a point needs to be illustrated. When this occurs, the research participant’s name is given, followed by the organisation he or she represents.⁵

⁵ After the first time a research participant is mentioned, he or she will be referred to by their name only (e.g. “Bruce Logan, New Zealand Education Development Foundation”, and thereafter “Bruce Logan”).

I. Notes on the Research Methodology

In attempting to explain the political mobilisation of conservative Christians via a theory of cultural articulation, this thesis relies on two main sources of data - qualitative interviews and documentary evidence. Two criteria influenced this decision. Firstly, the research project itself was limited in funding and therefore a choice was made to conduct in-depth qualitative interviews rather than collect larger-scale quantitative data, which would have been more costly. Since the main aim of the thesis was to gain a better understanding of the conservative Christian social movement, priority was placed on the people who might be able to best articulate the reasons for mobilisation - the leaders of the movement themselves. Although this does leave open the possibility that differences in meanings and motivation may exist between the "rank and file" membership of the movement and the "elite", this was seen as an unavoidable consequence of the scope of the research. Secondly, various social movement literature (explored in Chapter Two) suggested that an important aspect confronting many social movements was the communication demands both externally (to potential members) and internally (to motivate members into action). A collection and analysis of documentary material designed for each purpose appeared to be a logical solution to this issue. The methods involved in both these types of research are described in more detail below.

The in-depth interviews with key movement figures were conducted in order to elicit their personal meanings which they used to explain their participation in the movement. Participants were selected on the basis of their role in key organisations, which had themselves been identified through informal discussions with individuals both associated with, and outside of, the movement. Eleven interviews lasting between twenty five and ninety minutes were finally carried out in mid-1996, with one person declining to be interviewed. The focus of the interviews fell on the research participants' personal perceptions of problems facing New Zealand society, the motivations behind movement participation, and

the strategies with which mobilisation was being and had been carried out.⁶ The interviews followed a semi-structured format, were tape recorded, and were conducted and transcribed by myself. Procedures as outlined in the Massey University Human Ethics Committee guidelines concerning informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality were followed, and Ethics Committee approval obtained. Although the option was made available to them, none of the participants requested that their responses published in this thesis be kept confidential. The researcher did not consider this to be unusual, given the already public nature of their position at the time.

Most of the material that constituted the documentary evidence, such as group newsletters, monographs, and publicity pamphlets, was obtained on request from the participants involved in the interviews. Other data was obtained anonymously, such as documents held at the National Library, newspaper clippings, or through attendance at public meetings such as the launch of the Christian Coalition political party. The amount of documentary evidence available differed for each of the movement organisations identified, most groups producing one or two key resources while certain organisations were prolific publishers. During the course of the research, more attention was placed on material from the organisations which appeared to be crucial in shaping the more recent developments in the movement. In these cases, as much material was gathered and analysed as possible, in order to gain a better idea of the subtle changes that seemed to be occurring in the movement at the time.

As a final aspect of the methodology, it must be pointed out the researcher himself has no training in theology, nor a commitment to any religious denomination. This, and the researcher's training in sociology and political economy, were offered as a personal history to the participants. The researcher therefore acknowledges that the selection of research topics, the methodology, the accounts given by

⁶ It needs to be pointed out that during the course of the research, several issues revealed themselves to be highly important, but which were not covered in some of the earlier interviews. Unfortunately, this meant that certain topics that were discussed with participants do not feature

participants, the documentary evidence collected, as well as the analysis of this data, will inevitably be shaped by these factors.

highly in this thesis, as I have tried to limit this discussion to the issues I felt to be the most important at the time of writing.

Chapter One

A Discussion of the Literature To Date

I. Introduction

The political activism of conservative Christians is a recent phenomenon in New Zealand.¹ In terms of theoretical analysis, the mobilisation around the Homosexual Law Reform Bill and the formation of the Coalition of Concerned Citizens has provided (and still provides) the central political episode from which interpretations of the goals, strategies, and motivating forces of conservative Christian activism are derived. While perhaps sufficient for the 1980s, much has changed since then and there has been little or no examination of the period from 1993 to the present. It is this and other shortfalls which this study will address, aiming to both highlight new developments in conservative Christian activism, and also to provide a more useful theoretical approach for explaining and understanding it than previously offered.

The usual explanation for conservative Christian activism in New Zealand is that it was a response to a growing secularisation of the country's cultural and political spheres. A "wave of permissiveness" washed over New Zealand in the late 1960s and early 1970s, followed shortly by a perception that the decision-making institutions in the early 1980s were no longer in God's hands.² The secularisation thesis therefore claims that broad changes in social conditions were primarily responsible for the formation of the "movement".³

¹ See Ryan (1986); Jesson, Ryan and Spoonley (1988); Hill and Zwaga (1987).

² The notable exception to this analysis is Evans (1992), who asserts that considerable restructuring in the church between "liberals" and "conservatives" during the 1970s was an equally significant factor. This observation is developed below.

³ The use of "movement" to describe the phenomenon is argued later.

Yet this explanation is inadequate in accounting for the apparent failure of conservative Christians to keep the movement alive after 1987, at a time when the cultural and political climate grew arguably even more threatening to them. Also problematic is the notion of “secularisation” itself, with debate centring firstly on whether New Zealand is experiencing a decline or merely a change in religious expression, and secondly, questioning the claim that a “Golden Age” in religious adherence ever in fact existed to decline from. Furthermore, the secularisation thesis reduces conservative political activism to a reactionary phenomenon supporting “old” values, and therefore removes it from the conceptual framework of the “new social movement” literature.

This is not to say that the approach is not useful. On the contrary, responses to changes in the socio-cultural environment are a significant aspect of the alternative theory offered. But the reservation is that it limits our understanding. If secularisation theory fails to explain why the movement disappeared when theoretically it ought to have prospered, if evidence suggests that really there never has been a period of substantial “unsecularity” in New Zealand, and if the approach ignores the possibility that it *might* be an expression of new values, generated out of an increasingly plural society and until recently unseen in New Zealand, then it suggests that there *are* other important factors that might explain the movement better. By placing the conservative Christian movement solely within secularisation theory, analysts are guilty of accepting the rhetoric of the movement, and of missing vital aspects of the social, cultural, political, theological and organisational environment in which the movement operates.

A more helpful approach would be to combine the notion of broad changes in these environmental conditions (of which secularisation may be one aspect) with an examination of the internal dynamics and strategies which the movement employs. Similar to the analysis of Ryan (1986), where the discursive practices of equivalence and difference generate motivating ideas, by looking at how the movement *interacts* with environmental conditions, as well as with members of the

movement itself, a more enlightened picture may emerge which explains the trajectories of the movement, its internal dynamics and lifespan. To ignore this aspect is alternatively a failure to listen to their rhetoric *enough*, and therefore of demeaning the role which discourse plays in a movement such as this.

In reviewing the literature, I have tried to separate the material into sections consistent with the two approaches identified above. Having said this, there is a degree of overlap as well as oversimplification, but I feel this must be accepted in order to highlight the central themes of the two approaches. The first part outlines the traditional approach of secularisation /modernisation theory, and how authors claim it has affected both the influence of the Christian church in society and the state of the church itself. Also in this section are two approaches commonly identified with the analysis of conservative Christian activism and derived from modernisation theory - status defence and relative deprivation theory. The second part examines the literature focussing on the movements themselves - how they are organised, and the interaction between the movement and its environment. Highlighted in this approach to social movements (and particularly conservative Christian activism) is resource mobilisation theory.

These first two sections deal necessarily with overseas literature, particularly from American authors. The standard defence for this stance is that there is a much greater diversity and depth of research evident overseas, in addition to the observation that changes in church-state relations as well as within the Christian church occurred earlier than in New Zealand and, in many instances, tended to be precursors for change here. The literature that has been generated in New Zealand is reviewed in the third section, where it can be compared to the usual perspectives employed elsewhere.

II. Secularisation Theory

The proponents of secularisation theory (Luckmann, 1967; Wilson, 1966; Bellah, 1970; Berger, 1969; Hunter, 1983 et al.) maintain that modernisation and religious

pluralism have induced a process “whereby religious thinking, practices and institutions lose social significance” (Wilson, 1966). Specifically, the model asserts that the social significance of religion diminishes in response to three trends in the modern world - social differentiation, societalisation, and rationalisation (Wallis and Bruce, 1992). These features are worth elaborating.

(a) Secularisation and modernisation

“Social differentiation” refers to the way in which institutions that traditionally performed multiple tasks are gradually replaced by a variety of other agents specialising in particular functions. Religion is seen as one such institution, and is therefore similar to the family in modern society as both are becoming increasingly marginalised (Hill, 1973). This “religious disengagement” from society (I. Thompson, 1986) due to state and commercial substitution (e.g. welfare provision, education) breaks the relationship which links organised, institutionalised religion to citizen’s well-being, and simultaneously the idealised causal connection between the two. The concept of differentiation can be extended to include occupational and life choices, where the modernisation process (particularly capitalism) throws up a host of new “options” at the same time as creating new divisions. In this environment, the possibility of a single overarching morality satisfactorily integrating the concerns of each class becomes less and less likely (MacIntyre, 1967). Instead, new moral orders are produced which establish themselves in accord with these diverse “social fragments” (Berger, 1969). Implicit in this notion, therefore, is a gradual encroachment into the churches’ spheres of influence, prompting increased competition between different conceptions over how the church should respond.

“Societalisation”, as argued by Wilson (1982), is the process whereby life is organised less around small communities than by large, impersonal bureaucracies (ie. societally). Assuming that religion draws its strength from the community, and is in part a celebration of local life (cf. Durkheim), the move away from this locus means that the church is shed of some of its functions. As Hill (1983:254) observes

(quoting Xenophanes): "If the ox could paint a picture, his god would look like an ox." In this accurate portrayal of early sociologist's interpretation of religion, changes in religion's form and power can be explained by a reflection on the world within which its followers inhabit. The removal of a single moral community and an increasing emphasis on individualism in modern societies therefore results in religion becoming a more subjective, private experience - a matter of "preference" rather than public necessity (Wallis and Bruce, 1992:13). Societalisation then, like social differentiation, removes institutionalised religion's place in the public realm and monopoly in the private, and encourages both new and rival religious alternatives to articulate around new meanings.

The third aspect central to secularisation theory is rationalisation, developed principally by Weber (1967) and Berger (1969). While the first two features dealt with changes in the structure of society, rationalisation involves changes in the way people think ("rationally") and therefore act ("scientifically"). Weber and Berger argue that Judeo-Christianity in fact encouraged this type of inquiry by postulating a "transcendent" God, somehow "at one remove" from this world (Wallis and Bruce, 1992:14). This allowed the world to be seen as the realm of the secular and therefore able to be explored and explained in a way that was compatible with their faith. With the subsequent growth of technology, the areas over which religion had previously provided the most plausible explanations diminished, displacing moral considerations in many areas (e.g. "Evolution" as opposed to "Creation Science"). Reliance on faith was seen as a casualty of this.

The significance of this model is that we are better placed to ask questions such as (i) to what extent has religion actually changed (been secularised) in western societies?; and (ii) whether or not such changes within the church have created spaces conducive to conservative Christian activism? The question of whether society itself has been secularised is at this stage problematic. Empirical evidence clearly illustrates a statistical decline in "mainstream" religious affiliation, and a diminishing presence of that type of religious rhetoric (or "civil religion") in

society.⁴ This would seem to support the secularisation thesis that religion - of the character and form as many knew it - would be increasingly marginalised. What the thesis also predicted, however, was that this type of “mainstream” religion would change and adapt to the modernisation process. The secularisation debate then moves to the issue of religious pluralism to answer these questions, to discover whether the new “religions” are a sign of weakness or vitality, and the implications of this for mobilisation.

(b) Secularisation and pluralism

Most authors agree that modernisation processes have resulted in a change in the traditional monolithic nature of religion in the West. No longer a hegemonic institution within society or even within the market for the “supernatural”, orthodox religion competed against alternative “universes of meaning” (e.g. “science” or “Marxism”; see I.Thompson, 1986:28) as well as becoming pluralistic itself.⁵ Religious pluralism has not always, however, been automatically associated with a decline in religiosity, with some authors pointing out that there has merely been a transformation in the way religion, or faith, is expressed.⁶ These debates are now discussed, with implications for the study of Christian activism being a major focus.

In one camp are those who see religious pluralism as a definite sign of weakness in both traditional religions and religion in general. While many authors express variations on this position, three authors illustrate the major threads. Wilson (1966) argues that the growing presence of sects is evidence that the only way religion in its traditional form can be practiced is to remove oneself from secular society entirely - a withdrawal into insulated enclaves protecting the adherents from the

⁴ Various conservative Christians have used the term “a naked public square” in reference to their perception of an excessive church - state separation in the United States. See Neuhaus’ (1984) publication, *The Naked Public Square: Religion and Democracy in America*.

⁵ See Stark-Bainbridge theory, which is discussed below.

⁶ The term “religiosity” is itself a hotly-debated notion. See Bruce (1992).

intrusions of modernity. Through a potentially more threatening project, Hunter (1983) views the climate of pluralism as continually undermining the credibility of religion, and that the many alternatives in worship exposes religion's human origins; by promoting choice rather than fate, one "universalises heresy". Thus the notion that moral authority can be derived from a variety of sources leads people to reject the notion of a supreme force at all - pluralism becomes not merely a matter of interpretation but, in fact, a questioning of faith's very assumptions. In a related and still relevant piece of work, Herberg (1955) disapprovingly highlights the increasing secularity of traditional religion itself. However, he claims that while this does indicate a reduction in traditional religion's influence, the "watered down" church can still play a significant role in other areas.

Herberg's "cultural transition" model explains how, in situations where identity or status are displaced during periods of major cultural transitions (as in periods of modernisation or restructuring), these "secular" churches can provide a negotiating role between old and new values. Churches may then serve as a forum to reflect on a new climate, assess the phenomenon with reference to their faith, and either help members to adapt or reinforce resistance. Whether religious pluralism in this environment can still fulfil a cohesive function (ie. bring order to the perceived chaos), or whether it fails to engender security in the midst of anomie, is crucial in determining responses. Consequently, when broad societal changes occur which disturb traditional social patterns, the new heterodox religious climate may actually incite reactions of increased orthodoxy. Brown (1988) supports this view and claims that while industrialisation and urbanisation might, in the long-run, lead to adaptation and secularisation, periods of revival and religious reattachment can be expected as a short-term reaction against these trends.

This literature can then provide accounts of why sects of orthodox, fundamentalist Christians might regenerate a sense of identity in the face of an increasingly secular church and plural society. An intrusive secular state and a liberalising traditional church result in a withdrawal by unyielding conservative members into tightly-knit communities, in an effort to reproduce their own moral codes and shelter

themselves from further secular intrusion. It is within these enclaves that militant anti-modern discourses are often developed. Alternatively, as Bruce (1987) argues, for many of these orthodox sects, there comes a time when they can no longer withdraw into isolation (the information/communication age has made this increasingly impossible), and a decision is made to engage secular society in order to reform it. Moral crusades are the manifest outcome.

Another group of authors view religious pluralism as evidence of transformation and vitality. Principle amongst these are Berger (1969) and Luckmann (1967) who argue that secularisation is evident only if one uses a narrow definition of traditional, institutional religion. Pluralism in religion and in other “universes of meaning” (Luckmann, 1967) emphasises a greater flexibility and allows widespread adherence in one form or another (Martin, 1978; Iannaccone, 1992; Finke and Stark, 1992). Berger writes: “...the religious institutions become marketing agencies and the religious traditions become consumer commodities” (Berger, 1969). Thus Marty (1969) calls this pluralistic environment the “modern schism”, where a period of “controlled” secularity is experienced as the public function of traditional religion gave way to an increased attention to faith’s private concerns and other roles (see also Parsons, 1970; Greeley, 1973; Glock and Bellah, 1976). Stark and Bainbridge (1980) focus on this last point and give a convincing account of why, due to a relatively constant level of demand for “supernatural compensators”, secularisation is self-limiting. According to them, there is only secularisation inasmuch as a decline in an old “traditional” religion. While dogged religious traditions (such as Catholicism perhaps) gradually lose adherents, they are replaced by new (but still “religious”) forms of worship, which have adapted to the new environment and its related demands (ie: mainstream → sectarian splinters → cults etc...). A “genealogy” of religious worship is therefore continually regenerated, with variations evolving out of moments of crisis.

These authors alternatively illustrate how a supply-side explanation of pluralism can account for variations of religious adherence, enabling people to consume a faith which satisfies their psychological needs (Hofstadter, 1962) or reaffirms their

class interests (cf. Marx, 1972). Bruce (1992) reminds us, however, that just as the presence of religious secularisation and diversity may bring a liberalising influence, the reverse is also true. He speaks of the irony in the United States that largeness and openness can create strong, narrow subcultures: “Jerry Falwell’s followers can actually believe that they are a ‘moral majority’ because, except when they switch into apocalyptic thinking and suppose that the USA consists largely of coke-crazed, homosexual secular humanists, they are able to select the lenses through which they will view the USA” (Bruce, 1992:191).⁷

The potential for the formation of a politically-motivated religious movement is therefore facilitated by the opportunities presented in this relatively open religious marketplace. This is supported by Hofstadter’s work which explains how those who were insecure with the secularising and liberalising trends in modern society (ie. not just the conservative remnants from the mainline churches, but also those who were of a “militant type of mind”) were able to establish communities and agendas resistant to such changes. These spaces were only possible in pluralistic environments where there was no hegemonic religious presence, and this was increasingly true not only for the United States but also for many other Western nations from the 1960s onwards.

The literature then leads us to the main sociological theories derived from the secularisation debate, as well as the other main theoretical approach in social movement literature used to account for conservative Christian activism: that of resource mobilisation theory. Central to the first three approaches (status defence, culture defence, and relative deprivation theory) is the theme that changes in cultural and social conditions (as a result of modernisation) create spaces for movements to occupy. Alternatively, resource mobilisation theory addresses features of Christian social movements that the first set of approaches cannot account for.

⁷ The role that movement leaders play in “lens selection” is an important element of the discourse theory developed in Chapter Two. This extract in fact highlights the importance of such considerations when accounting for conservative Christian movements.

III. Conservative Christian Activism in Social Movement Literature

(a) Status defence, culture defence and relative deprivation theory

Gusfield's (1963) status defence theory built on Hofstadter's (1955) work and was later applied by Zurcher and Kirkpatrick (1976), Crawford (1980), Lorentzen (1980), and Shupe and Stacey (1983) in accounting for Christian fundamentalist activism. The theory proposes that as modernisation reshuffled traditional values and lifestyles, and attributed a lesser status to them, the devalued groups engaged in symbolic crusades to defend their social standing. This action supposedly differs from other forms of class-based instrumental behaviour, and the goals of groups engaged in status activism centre around the *symbolic* meaning it has for participants (Gusfield, 1963). As Crawford writes: "...status resentment frequently results in the appearance of right-wing backlash groups that attempt to re-establish, through formal political processes, the social support that the group's values once commanded" (Crawford, 1980:149). Such "social support" (e.g. official acceptance/endorsement) is therefore regarded as an end in itself for status crusaders.

However, critics such as Bruce (1987) argue that the evidence fails to demonstrate that protesters shared a common social status, or that explanations based on common inconsistencies in status are contradictory. Others, such as Moen (1988), point out that the defensive emphasis in the theory fails to account for the moral, non-symbolic and offensive dimensions of the politically-active Christian Right. He warns that by not broadening the theory to accommodate these dimensions, one risks misunderstanding a much more complex movement (Moen, 1988:436).

Wallis' (1977) adaptation of status defence to a theory of cultural defence was an attempt to shift the emphasis onto cultural devaluations. Bruce (1987) connects this notion to his observations on regionalism, where a potential "new Christian right" movement was created by firstly, the invasion of the cultural peripheries by the political centre, and secondly, the moral content of that centre (Bruce,

1987:182). It was thus a way of life under threat which was, and is, the significant factor rather than the status of that lifestyle. Clarke's (1987) analysis of an anti-abortion campaign further posited that it was an erosion of culture rather than issues of social stratification that mobilised constituents. Simpson (1983) similarly argued for a broadening of the status model, in this case to include those groups who were also seeking to enhance their status from an under-valued position, and therefore enable accounts to avoid knee-jerk "backlash" explanations and focus more on the "legitimacy" aspect of political contestations. These explanations were attempts to bring the instrumental dimension of social movements back into consideration, although acknowledging that such action could be motivated by cultural, in addition to class, concerns. By taking culture and instrumentality more seriously, it was also a recognition of the way in which issues of power lay at the foundation of social movement mobilisation. Although perhaps more appealing than Gusfield's account, however, the theory of cultural defence still does not answer the objections Moen and others raise. It remains an approach which highlights social movements' reactionary rather than visionary elements, and in this sense cannot account for some of the more dynamic qualities illustrated.

Finally, relative deprivation theory as developed by Schwartz (1970), Glock (1973) and Stark and Bainbridge (1980) concerns the dislocation experienced by people in periods of rapid social change, and the channelling of this discontent into a social movement. Factors such as economic distress, downward social mobility, loneliness and anomie are identified as potential sources for a religious movement. Religion thus offers the deprived a source of non-material, "other worldly" rewards. As with the two earlier approaches, relative deprivation theory is criticised for ignoring the importance of other social phenomena - for being too psychological as opposed to sociological (Wuthnow, 1988a), as well as not being supported empirically (Hine, 1974; Wilson, 1982). These criticisms claim that while religious activism may be one outcome of deprivation, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that it is a necessary one. They also ignore the context in which recruitment occurs, in terms of the institutional variables impacting on mobilisation.

As stated above, the more these approaches had to account for a greater variety of religious social movements, and the more these theories had to be revised, it became apparent that they were unsuited for the types of movements emerging. Central to these problems were an inability to account for movements which demonstrated a clear instrumentality to their actions - the rationale behind mobilisation had to incorporate outcomes that would have tangible effects on the political position (and hence power) of movement participants. Also apparent was the effort being placed on strategies for realising these goals. Accounting for religious movements then became dominated by a new approach in social movement theory, that of "resource mobilisation". Literature from this perspective will now be addressed.

(b) Resource mobilisation theory

Resource mobilisation (RM) theory was an approach which from the mid-1970s to late 1980s gradually replaced explanations based on non-institutional, irrational and spontaneous outbursts that characterised earlier social movement theory (e.g. Smelser 1962). The literature accounting for social movements tended to alter its focus as movement forms changed over time, and this new theoretical development acknowledged the highly organised structure social movements had begun to exhibit. Collective action was no longer simply the outcome of strong value commitments boiling over due to pathologic conditions, but involved rational actors engaging in conventional, calculated protest action. As Fireman and Gamson (1979:9) stated, the key question asked of a social movement changed from "Why do these people want social change so badly and believe that it is possible?" to "How can these people organise, pool resources and wield them effectively?"⁸

Originally developed by Olson (1965) in *The Logic of Collective Action*, resource mobilisation theory views individual actors as members of a collective, which, as an expression of their interests, promotes a "collective good". Olson was specifically

⁸ For variations on collective action theory, see Arendt (1951) and Kornhauser (1959).

interested in explaining the formation of economic pressure-group organisations, where resources could be pooled for the furthering of such a sectional interest/collective good. Behaviour is essentially derived from economic theory and is thus rational, self-interested and welfare maximising in that sense. However, Olson did not intend to limit the theory to only money or material interests, and maintained that it could be applied “whenever there are rational individuals interested in a common goal” (Olson, 1965:159).

Oberschall (1973) then built on this economic concept of rational individuals and focussed on the process of converting these individual demands and resources by leaders into group mobilisation - that is, the importance of an organisation. For the mere presence of solidarity and grievances, even if buoyed by specific structural strain, is not considered to be a sufficient condition to generate collective action. Common latent interests and dissatisfaction are assumed within the model (Oberschall extends Olson’s vision of fragmented individuals in a market to include some forms of collective associations e.g. community, ethnic, religious), yet alone they can amount to only “short term, localised, ephemeral outbursts” (Oberschall, 1973:119). Instead, a strong organisational base and the continuity of leadership to secure this base is viewed as essential for sustained action.

After Oberschall, several authors (for example, McCarthy and Zald, 1973; Jenkins, 1983; McAdam, 1982) developed the organisation-oriented approach and applied its instrumental rationality to the formation and activities of movement organisations themselves. By creating a framework which included both micro-level analysis (cost-benefit rationality of (potential) movement adherents) and considerations of the wider macro environment (resources), resource mobilisation theory allowed for a strategic dualism where the group is an actor in two senses (McCarthy and Zald, 1973). As Cohen (1985) states, the standpoint of analysis approximates firstly the point of view of a movement organiser concerned with the imperatives of mobilisation, and secondly a more general observer’s overview of the political environment and opportunities within it. Successful collective action

depended upon the interaction between these levels, between a three-part framework consisting of resources, organisation, and opportunity structures.

Researchers interested in religious movements welcomed resource mobilisation theory as a useful tool in explaining the success of American religious groups during that period. Liebman (1983) suggested that the Moral Majority exhibited many if not all of the features conducive to mobilisation - extensive internal organisation, control over valued resources, access to pre-existing networks. The entrepreneurial model whereby movement leaders employed innovative methods to generate funds and organise protest action was well suited to the United States religious "revival" during the 1980s, with the advent of direct mail marketing, televangelism, and charismatic figures such as Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson. Indeed, the prevalence of such large-scale organising involving huge amounts of money and the mobilising appeal of the leadership at the time made it appear as if the theory had been developed solely to explain the religious right movement.

However, criticisms of the approach for studying religious movements grew, particularly given the questions resource mobilisation theory could not explain. Melucci (1985:821) assessed the problem as having become too concerned with asking the "how" questions while not paying enough attention to those concerned with "why". Movements and movement adherents could not be treated the same as special interest groups, he claimed, as the goals of the participants were not always reducible to instrumental rationality. Suggestions that a fear of the Lord provided a selective incentive to produce rallies of 200,000 at the "Washington for Jesus" rally in 1980 were a little too thin. Consequently, theorists looked towards other frameworks such as the New Social Movements literature for structural determination (Klandermans, 1986). Yet resource mobilisation theory also proved inadequate for many other researchers who felt that it even failed to satisfactorily answer the "how" issues. Authors such as Buechler (1993) state that while factors such as grievances and ideology may be included into an extended, elaborated RM framework, other challenges such as collective identity, the diversity of movements, and issues concerning cultural construction pose more serious

problems. These cases, he claims, are serious because they involve factors outside the conceptual schemata. The “fictive” rational actor assumed in RM theory comes under pressure when compared with the discourses associated with feminism and identity politics which assert ontological experiences at odds with RM’s themes of being “independent and isolated”. Similar criticisms concerning RM’s tendency to decontextualise people from their surroundings are highlighted when considering the impact of culture on mobilisation. When movements are explained away through reference to other processes, simply because they fit the framework, Buechler claims that resource mobilisation “may obscure more than it reveals about that action” (Buechler, 1993:231).

Perhaps more importantly, however, resource mobilisation theory directed students to the importance of social movement organisations themselves, a micro-mobilisation context which acts as a *third* analytical level for bridging the micro-macro theoretical division.⁹ Important work such as Snow et al’s (1986) typology of “frame alignment” processes, for example, are attempts at strengthening attention to this analytical level, giving us a conceptual link between previously disparate arenas and incorporating features outside of RM’s assumptions such as discourse and culture. The central features of resource mobilisation theory - resources, organisation, and opportunities - are also useful in that they provide missing parts to other theorists equations, and are still important contributions in their specialty domains. This is especially true given the nature of conservative religious movements themselves, which at times have been characterised by their ability to organise large numbers of people seemingly at will. The discursive nature of Christian religion makes it a necessarily social event, and the fact that a certain level of prior organisation of groups of people exists suggests that any theoretical account of their political expression as a social movement must be able to address this feature. Resource mobilisation theory’s use in this respect is apparent, as commentators seeking to explain such movements have demonstrated (Iannaccone, 1990).

⁹ The term “micro mobilisation” context is attributed to McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1988).

IV. New Zealand Literature

In what is perhaps still the most complete overview of conservative Christian activism in New Zealand, John Evans (1992:69) writes: "By the end of the 1980s a new feature in New Zealand church-state relations had emerged. It has variously been called the Moral Right, the Authoritarian Right, Populist Moralism, the New Religious Right, or ... the term which is used here, the New Christian Right."¹⁰ He goes on to say, quoting Ryan: "The usual analysis is that in the late 1960s and early 1970s there was a "crisis in morality" and society was undergoing a process of 'secularisation' and established religions were losing their role as a major social legitimator...the moral right rose in response to this crisis" (Evans, 1992:69). While Evans himself goes on to highlight other considerations, secularisation remains the principle explanation amongst most other commentators for this political phenomenon in New Zealand. It is then within this framework that we must begin.

Almost all authors agree that religion in New Zealand is undergoing a steady process of secularisation. As Geering (1983:176) observes, "New Zealand as a nation is increasingly disengaging itself from the religious structures of the past". These sentiments are echoed by Veitch (1983), Hill (1983; 1985; 1987), and Hill and Zwaga (1990) to name a few. Alan Webster, in a review essay introducing "The Religious Factor in New Zealand Society" remarks on the "marked concurrence" (Webster, 1989:16) of this view, even amongst those tracing a rise in Pentecostal churches such as Brown (1985). Yet how did these authors see secularisation in New Zealand as laying the foundations for conservative Christian activism?

Generally, they didn't. For most writers during the 1980s, their chief concern seemed to be in predicting changes that would have to occur to the nature and

¹⁰ These terms are found in Evans (1992), and are attributed, in order, to (1) Jesson, Ryan and Spoonley, 1988; (2) Spoonley, 1987; (3) Ryan, 1986; (4) Pierard, 1983; (5) a host of mainly American authors including Jorstad, 1981; Liebman and Wuthnow, 1983; Neuhaus, 1984; and Bruce, 1988.

structure of religion in New Zealand. For Geering (1983:164), religion must "assume fresh forms" if it is to achieve "this - worldliness" and relevancy in the monistic secular age. Hill (1983:254) saw traditional religion's problem as one of "resonance" and "plausibility" - that beliefs must have meaning for individuals within a given social environment. As these conditions change, so must religion. Discussions about religiously-based activism were therefore made in the context of religious pluralism, that it was an off-shoot from the dominant tendency of religious secularisation and likely in the long run to be overtaken, and absorbed, by it. The few references that were made to such activism (aside from bursts of nostalgia) were included in scenarios which the authors did not consider likely. These will be briefly covered.

Geering (1983:179) approaches the issue by making the claim that in the "Secular Age", the religious person is intellectually freer, more autonomous and thus less willing to submit to an external religious authority. People want faith that is first-hand, not second-hand. Therefore, he suggests, there is a new responsibility for people themselves to explore and discover a faith that "fits". The only alternative he envisages is to abdicate this choice and cling to the authority structures of "old-time religion", evidence of which he sees in the conservative core of mainline denominations as well as some smaller sects. This reaction to secularisation, however, is still viewed as an essentially private affair, a decision which has more to do with hiccups along a personal quest for meaning rather than direct opposition to societal developments.

More satisfactory for this project is a qualifier added by Geering and one which he pays little attention to. After arguing for the inevitability of secularisation in New Zealand, he lists three factors which might alter or reverse this trend (Geering, 1985:220). Firstly, the rise of a strong reactionary movement, which responds to a perceived climate of moral vacuity and anomie by seeking to restore a single overarching moral system. Secondly, the rapid development of a new religion which manages to capture the allegiance of select influential people. And thirdly, the growth of militant secularism (defined here as anti-religious). Geering made

these predictions at a significant moment in this country's history yet they sadly seem to have been forgotten by most commentators since then. These observations could have provided a platform for a greater appreciation towards (non-religious) environmental and institutional considerations, and a step up from the blinkered reliance on religious secularisation.

Other authors have provided arguments similar to overseas accounts concerning modernisation, with Moore (1990) echoing Steve Bruce in seeing the rationalisation and bureaucratic intrusion of contemporary society as encouraging religious reaction. The imposition of individualism may then lead to a reassertion of religion which, even when it itself has diversified, expresses the common notion of a search for alternative meaning (Moore, 1990:52). Veitch (1983), on the other hand, laments that diversity in religion has removed its teeth. By catering to the non-controversial and egalitarian nature of New Zealanders, he claims that the new secular churches are politically conservative rather than providing a new profound vision. Therefore, whilst providing the "cement" or unifying quality, religion has lost its "ferment", or change-promoting function. By remaining defenders of the status-quo, Veitch maintains that churches will "die" alongside the particular socio-political circumstance to which it is married, and will be unable to mobilise successfully in the long-run.

With the exception of Geering then, conservative Christian activism has been treated largely as a side-show involving disaffected traditionalists, temporarily resistant to liberalising tendencies but ultimately doomed to life on the margins. However, what was emerging as academics soaked up foreign explanations and applied them to New Zealand was a growing realisation that the special religious, social and political landscape here caused peculiarities in church-state and church-society trajectories. It was true that the three trends of social differentiation, societalisation and rationalisation were considerable factors in creating the potential for new forms of church activism, but equally importantly, they all seemed to occur over a relatively short period of time, with a significant spell obvious during the mid-eighties. Coupled with this was the identification of two

other factors - a restructuring within the Christian church itself and the changing nature of New Zealanders' value systems. These last two factors will now be addressed.

Evans' (1992) chief contribution to the debate was in identifying a significant restructuring of the church from the early 1970s. Sparked by a number of events such as the performances "Oh Calcutta" and "Hair", and the appearance of abortion and women's rights issues in Parliament, a strictly morally conservative Christian movement was born. This heralded a realignment amongst Christians from along denominational lines to a division between conservatives and liberals. The response, Evans maintains, was initially one of outrage against permissiveness. It crystallised quicker than expected due to the quiescence on the part of the liberal church, which itself had embraced social liberalism relatively rapidly. With the boundaries drawn so early, the conservative elements of the mainline churches (as well as the recently formed conservative Pentecostal sects) were not to be seen as merely evidence of short-term reactionary beliefs, but soon developed into a more substantial movement which offered theocratic solutions. When the conservatives realised in the early 1980s that permissive "secularism" in society had now infiltrated the government sector, they had already developed a commitment to re-Christianise society - all that was required was to articulate their concerns to the wider public and oppose the liberal minority.

The period from the 1986 Homosexual Law Reform Bill, the formation of the Coalition of Concerned Citizens, to the 1987 general election generated some in-depth accounts of the articulatory efforts of this conservative element. Ryan's (1986) analysis of the "moral right" in terms of populist moralism described their attempts at dividing the world into two parts - one "good" and the other "evil". The moral right "cemented" their discourse together where "different subjects are constructed into polar opposites through discourse and the two poles are interpellated as contradictory and antagonistic" (Ryan, 1986:110). In this particular case, the ideals of the family, of Christian values, and of nationalism induced by

reflection on the supposed Godly basis of New Zealand's history were used to incite people against the liberal, "permissive" forces attacking those ideals.

As Hill and Zwaga (1987) point out though, the failure of the "New Christian Right" in New Zealand was due to the inability of these symbols to resonate with people's actual values and fears: "The claim of the NCR to be articulating broadly based public values in the homosexuality debate resulted in yet another instance of deepseated conflict over core values rather than in a ritual reaffirmation of consensus" (Hill and Zwaga, 1987:34). They identify the fact that there is no sense of "civil religion" in New Zealand of particular significance, and this then explained why similar tactics employed by the NCR in the United States were out of place when transplanted here.

The problem with leaving an analysis of New Zealand's moral right there is that it assumes that the symbols used to generate consensus and mobilisation around the homosexual law reform were representative of the limits of the moral right's concerns. Evans comments that the failure of the Coalition of Concerned Citizens to carry its momentum through the 1987 election was due to the electorate's primary concern being economics, not morals - "the conclusion was that the Coalition's visibility outweighed its real influence" (Evans, 1992:87). With the point already having been made that the discourse developed by the moral right two years earlier, which although unsuccessful was largely responsible for its massive mobilisation, it seems odd that the failure of the movement is explained away so easily. Why could it not be that there was still a significant grassroots concern over a declining Christian nation, but that the leaders of the movement failed on this occasion to capture the public's sympathy? Evans does state with respect to mobilising its constituency that "Hadden's "Resource Mobilisation theory" seems to be borne out by the New Zealand experience" (Evans, 1992:90). My impression, though, is that he is referring to the fact that there was not a suitable constituency to mobilise, rather than the absence of an effective mobilising campaign.

The social and political milieu has also changed dramatically over the last decade, and has played its part in illustrating the interplay of the liberal and conservative churches with society in their efforts to achieve some degree of public resonance. The formation of the Christian Heritage Party in 1989 was seen to be a new feature in church-state relations (Evans, 1992), and perhaps would have gained more importance if observers had predicted its presence in the 1993 and 1996 elections. The 1990s, however, seemed to be characterised by moments of liberal church involvement, primarily in opposition to government policy. Even then, it seemed to act the role of commentator rather than motivator - "most Christian denominations have seen their mission in terms of evangelism and the provision of educational and social services; their focus has been more on individual salvation rather than social transformation and political reform" (Boston, 1994:11). Notable instances were reactions to National's benefit cuts in 1991 - alternatively a "political disgrace" (Pelly, 1991) and a "moral disgrace" (Randerson, 1992). The 1993 "Social Justice Initiative" clearly demonstrated the liberal church's position with regards to peoples well-being - "the church leaders advance an essentially positive view of the state. Minimalist prescriptions were stoutly rejected" (Boston, 1994:18). The free-market approach which placed well-being at the mercy of economic forces (and perhaps spiritual commitment) alone was explicitly denounced (Smithies and Wilson, 1993). This visibility, and the fact that this position was diametrically opposed to their more conservative counterparts (especially in the United States), indicated the problems the latter were having in establishing an effective discourse.

What has emerged out of Evans' work is that there is a peculiar feature of New Zealand's religious landscape - a hard nosed conservative element - that is a consequence of secularisation but not a residual one, and that rather than being merely reactionary has armed itself with a relatively coherent project to engage secular New Zealand. Our economic and political milieu is also significant, for while the liberal church has effectively adapted itself to the acceptable terms of reference, the conservative Christians have, based on the literature, failed in this respect. The picture that then emerges is a phenomenon of three distinct elements: of a permanent core of ultra-conservative Christians; of spaces created by events

(changes) in the political, cultural, economic and social environments; and of groups of ideological actors competing with each through discourse for control of those spaces - of whom the conservative Christians are one. The usefulness of cultural articulation theory in capturing these dimensions is briefly suggested next.

V. The Utility of a Theory of Cultural Articulation

A theory of cultural articulation provides us with a further element in an understanding of the formation and dynamics of conservative Christian activism. Authors who have used the secularisation thesis to explain this phenomenon have attributed ultimate causality to social structural determinants. That is, changes in broad conditions (modernisation) are responsible for such movements. But to say that individual consciousness is primarily formed by these changes seems too generous - surely the leaders who generate ideologies and encourage members into action are equally significant factors. Secularisation theory is then revealed to be too determinant, ignoring internal dynamics and the importance of ideas themselves.

Resource Mobilisation theory, on the other hand, is not determinant enough. Here, movement creation and lifespan is attributed to the capture of resources - a “have resources, will travel” correlation. This approach does take into account some factors which secularisation theory ignores - such as the mobilisation of constituencies through communication and organisation. Yet it disregards the very question of why, apart from the sensational rhetoric of its leaders, people are motivated to participate. In other words, spaces must have been created to occupy in the first place - there must be a reason to get on the bus.

Cultural articulation theory therefore offers two additional elements. Firstly, the matching of an ideology to spaces in the social environment for resources. And secondly, a level of disarticulation with this social environment as well - an ideological flexibility - so as not to become too dependent on these conditions for the movement’s survival (something the Coalition of Concerned Citizens

presumably failed to achieve). It is this approach, claims Wuthnow and Lawson (1994), that will allow for arguments such as that proposed by Marsden (1980) on American fundamentalism. Conservative Christian mobilisation has a variety of causes, Marsden claims, from cultural conditions and displacement, ethnic diversity, migration, and alienation to internal factors as well, such as theological disputes and leadership. Fundamentalism often generated a life of its own in this way. It is by using this framework that a better understanding is generated, and this will hopefully lead to a fuller appreciation of the social phenomenon before us. The next chapter examines the theory of cultural articulation in more detail, and looks at how this approach is useful in the context of conservative Christian social movements.

Chapter Two

The Theory of Cultural Articulation

The theory of cultural articulation seeks to address the theoretical problems which have continued to confront those interested in assessing the nature and significance of religious social movements. As the previous chapter has illustrated, there are at least two major approaches to this phenomenon with many different variations. Each in their own right emphasises a particular feature of religious movements that is considered important for an understanding of how they arise, how they grow, and what forms they are likely to evolve into. For someone interested in applying this knowledge to a particular case, however, they are faced with the task of choosing from a host of analytical approaches that are useful individually but which have seldom been used in conjunction with each other. This is not because there are serious disputes between scholars of religious movements, but because few have seriously attempted to develop an 'overview' approach which makes it easier to combine their individual strengths. In other words, the task is difficult because the approaches speak different languages, not because their stories are incongruous.

The approaches that the theory of cultural articulation draws together vary from those highlighting subjective aspects (relative deprivation theory) to institutional aspects (resource mobilisation theory) to approaches concentrating on the dramaturgic, or discursive, features of religious movements. In attempting to combine these diverse approaches in any systematic way, questions of internal coherence inevitably surface. This may in fact be the principal reason why such a project has not been attempted before - that it is an error to assimilate different methodological traditions and that they are more valuable given a specific problematic. What Wuthnow and Lawson (1994) suggest, however, is not a complete synthesis of such innately different traditions or that we now have a seamless framework to engage empirical events. Rather, I believe that they

encourage the development of each analytical tradition to further our understanding in those territories.¹ What appears to concern Wuthnow is the rigid application of any one approach as an understanding of all social movements, and in particular, religious social movements. Instead, the strengths and benefits of each approach should be made available for students who are unsure at the outset which tradition is most useful, or who do not want to discount other factors outside those stressed by a certain model. As he explains:

What is of (equal) value to the study of religion is the possibility of developing concepts capable of bridging its various sub-specialisations ... it is often possible to conceptualise the characteristics of religious movements, religious beliefs, and religious organisations in more compatible terms. A rigorous orthodoxy of deductive generalisations is neither the likely nor the desirable outcome of such conceptual integration. But conceptual integration is essential for greater communication in the future about the significance of empirical work. (Wuthnow, 1988a:500)

This returns us to the problem raised at the beginning of Chapter One, that the strengths of a given approach (for instance secularisation theory) may be useful in some circumstances, but in other situations, an appreciation of different traditions and factors may be required. The theory of cultural articulation is therefore an attempt to organise (in Wuthnow's words, "explore") these analytical possibilities in a way that leaves their individual purity intact, while at the same time providing some sort of loose framework where their position is expressive of their field of greatest utility.

I. Levels of Analysis

As mentioned above, cultural articulation theory is a loose framework within which distinct analytical approaches are placed. The four traditions identified below are used as representations of the levels of analysis from which these approaches are derived. These levels have, of course, largely determined the types of relationships

¹ By "territories", I mean the different approaches to the study of culture - what Wuthnow (1987) calls the "subjective, the structural, the dramaturgic, and institutional" levels of analysis (These approaches are explained in more depth below).

and hence variables studied empirically. A brief examination of these traditions will provide an introduction to the main body of theory. As such, they appear more as general themes which surface to greater or lesser degrees during the framework. Based on an examination of the works of Peter Berger, Mary Douglas, Michel Foucault and Jurgen Habermas concerning culture and ideology, Wuthnow calls these traditions the subjective, structural, dramaturgic, and institutional approaches to cultural analysis.²

The subjective tradition is concerned with beliefs, values and anxieties. It examines culture from the perspective of the individual - how the person makes sense of the world and therefore the problem of meaning which is attached to events. Approaches that focus on feelings of cognition, deprivation and alienation are typical of this tradition - a "public opinion" method of describing culture. Challenges to a culture and social movement genesis are subsequently explained in terms of shifts in subjective states. The structural tradition, on the other hand, changes the level of analysis from beliefs and values on their own to the way in which these attitudes are organised into a discourse. Culture then becomes a "thing", an object of investigation itself, consisting of boundaries, categories and elements. The relationships between these elements and the symbolic boundaries that distinguish one cultural discourse from another are of central concern, focusing as the name suggests on how cultures are structured.

A third approach, the dramaturgical tradition, is similar to the structural tradition's attention to culture as an entity, yet examines the *interaction* between cultural and *social* structure (social relations). It focuses on the expressive/symbolic dimension of culture - culture as an ideology - and therefore how ideology dramatises aspects of social relations (moral order) using symbols and rituals. The notion of 'resonance' - that an ideology must be closely associated with certain social arrangements or moral obligations - is deemed important for a movement's

² See pp.10-17 and chapter two in Robert Wuthnow. (1987) *Meaning and Moral Order: Explorations in Cultural Analysis* for a detailed explanation of the theory's origins. Also present in R. Wuthnow, J.D. Hunter, A. Bergesen and E. Kurzweil. (1984) *Cultural Analysis*.

longevity by those promoting this tradition.³ Finally, the institutional tradition builds on the last two but adds the importance of actors in communicating ideology. Since ideas do not simply spread by themselves, this tradition highlights the significance of leaders and organisations in disseminating ideas. Actors access social resources which are then put to use transmitting ideological messages - "recruitment". The actor's relations with the state are then of obvious interest, the latter being one of the most widespread distributors of cultural messages in a society.

By weaving these four traditions into a loose framework of cultural articulation, it recognises the analytical strengths of each tradition while balancing out their prospective weaknesses. Consequently, we can broaden the variables under analysis so we are not restricted to looking at just organisational networks, or rhetoric, or subjective feelings, in explaining social movements. At the same time, it allows for assessments that one such approach, or some combination, provides the best answers. However, to say that there is one such approach that is universally preferable for the study of religious social movements, is to risk the mistake of favouring an approach simply because a certain empirical feature is in vogue. The next section presents Wuthnow's ideas for incorporating these different traditions into an account of a religious social movement.

II. Cultural Articulation Theory - The Production, Selection, and Institutionalisation of Ideology

Fundamental to cultural articulation theory is the relationship between an ideology and its environment. The recent debates over the appropriateness of secularisation theory have cast into doubt the belief that secularisation is an inevitable trend, propelled by an inevitable and unilinear process of modernisation. The proliferation of new religious movements and changes to traditional churches has shown that religion can be resilient to such forces. At the same time, many authors have

³ Wuthnow cites Durkheim as the earliest proponent of the dramaturgical tradition.

illustrated how damaging modernisation has been for some Christian churches. This leads to the conclusion that there are multiple factors at work in the broader environment, both helpful and harmful, and that some ideologies or religious traditions adapt better to these environmental conditions than others.

Wuthnow, focusing on religious movements, therefore begins with the proposition that there seems to be a correlation between different religious forms and different types of environment. Certain environments, or changes to those environments, appear more conducive in sustaining or encouraging particular ideologies over others. Moreover, since the possibilities for religious expression are next to endless, yet only certain variations flourish at any one time, there must be a process of ideological selection at work. Here, ideologies succeed or fail according to their resonance with the immediate environment. Finally, the fact that some ideologies do appear to be relatively stable in the face of environmental change indicates that a process of institutionalisation has occurred. Here the ideology manages to develop relationships through the state or through discourse that effectively shelter it from further environmental disturbances. These three “moments” of production, selection and institutionalisation encompass the dialectic relationship between an ideology and its environment. The discussion now turns to these features.⁴

(a) The social production of ideologies

Religious ideologies, claims Wuthnow, are of a distinctly *social* nature. That is, they communicate modes or customs which outline how people should relate to one another - a set of moral obligations that defines the relationships both between individuals and groups of individuals. They are a means used to make sense of the

⁴ Wuthnow (1987) suggests that comparisons can be drawn between this process and that faced by population ecologists when seeking to explain the introduction and survival of different species. While he denies any closer parallel, Wuthnow draws the comparison in as much as they both seek to identify the broad features of the environment that impact on the ideology's (species') dynamics. What the following section presents is not only the broad themes Wuthnow draws out of this dialectical relationship, but also a way of navigating the actual, dependent factors that link the ideology to its environment through suggesting some useful theoretical approaches.

world, and provide a sense of certainty when entering into moral, physical and economic transactions:

The very heart of the world that humans create is socially constructed *meaning*.... In concert with others, these meanings become objectified in the artefacts of culture - ideologies, belief systems, moral codes, institutions, and so on. In turn, these meanings become reabsorbed into consciousness as subjectively plausible definitions of reality, morally sanctioned codes of personal and collective behaviour, rules of social discourse and general recipes for daily living. Culture, then, is at base an all-embracing socially constructed world of subjectively and inter-subjectively experienced meanings. (Wuthnow, 1984:25, discussing Berger).

Also, this Durkheimian (1965) notion of ‘social cement’ - Wuthnow’s ‘moral order’- not only governs the interactions and exchanges between people but consequently has something to say over the distribution of resources resulting from these exchanges. That is, by advocating particular notions of equity, justice and fairness, they also serve to legitimise certain resource (power, wealth) outcomes.

Many different ideologies (e.g. Catholicism, Buddhism) have provided the main character of a moral order throughout history. The social environment encourages particular ideologies and similarly, ideologies legitimise the current ordering and distribution of social resources.⁵ Ideological crises occur therefore when a society experiences a change in this social environment. While alterations in resources may not lead to ideological dilemmas per se (they may actually, for example, reinforce current social arrangements), it is when these changes cause a degree of uncertainty in the *moral order* that ideological variation is prompted. Wuthnow (1987:154-155) cites Scott’s (1976) research on peasant societies, as providing evidence of a “moral economy” guiding obligations between peasants and landlords. While environmental disturbances, such as a subsistence crisis, would not necessarily lead to new moral patterns, if these disturbances were so severe that reciprocal obligations were no longer possible, a certain degree of ideological

⁵ Parallels can be drawn here with Lipietz’s (1994) “Modes of Regulation” in post-Fordism theory, and concepts of hegemony from Laclau and Mouffe (1985).

reconstruction may occur (awareness of peasant solidarity and power, consciousness etc... might arise).

The production stage of cultural articulation theory is therefore concerned with the ideological variation induced by uncertainties in the moral order resulting from changes in social resources. Moments of opportunity - niches - are created whereby ideologies arise, competing to provide a revised or alternative set of meanings through ideological innovation. Wuthnow's approach is especially useful because the determinants raised in various accounts of social movements - social differentiation, pluralism, the experience of relative deprivation etc - can now be viewed as aspects of the broader socio-cultural environment. Disruptions in moral obligations resulting from such processes become the notable facet, rather than any one feature itself. To provide a clearer picture of some of these features and how they might elicit different ideological responses, the next section briefly discusses those most relevant to this project.

Wuthnow and Lawson (1994:25) suggest that important aspects of the social environment facilitating American fundamentalism include demographic, economic, educational, spatial, cultural, political, and religious factors. The prevailing process in modern society, that of modernisation, has had significant impact on these factors. Some arguments reviewed in the last chapter on secularisation similarly highlighted the way modernisation is supposed to have affected mainstream Christian religion for the worse, with regard to the distinct but interrelated processes of social differentiation, societalisation and rationalisation. Cultural articulation theorists, however, might side with those who view modernisation and the accompanying religious pluralism as an environmental strength - the fact that modern society is constantly changing and not static provides fundamentalism with a continuous supply of niches to occupy. In an effort to organise these environmental aspects mentioned by Wuthnow and Lawson, I have adopted Williams' (1994) summary where he separates the social environment into "political-economic contexts" and "cultural-religious contexts".

Political contexts have had a central role in accounting for fundamentalist mobilisation. The intervention into peoples' lives by the state, and the development of the distinction between public and private spheres has traditionally frustrated conservatives more than others, as they perceive a loss of influence and moral authority with each step. Not only does the state exclude religion from the public realm, but continually seeks to widen what that public realm entails. Consequently, these actions by the state serve as a focus around which fundamentalist ideologies can articulate for support. This is also true for other political actors besides the state. The presence of rival interest groups who place alternate claims on the state increases the possibility of antagonism between these interests. Pluralist political systems which tolerate and promote such diversity provide sites where fundamentalists (religious or otherwise) are intensely active, at the same time rejecting this difference and asserting the righteousness of their one totalising position. Heterogeneity is therefore another important environmental feature for conservative/fundamentalist ideological production.

The fact that conservative/fundamentalist political activity has been an increasing characteristic in modern states signals their challenge to the nature of such states. By increasing the amount of regulatory legislation, due as much to the demands of liberal economic as well as social agendas, the state finds itself having to appease a greater number of groups in society. Disturbances in the economic position of actors and the experience of status loss can provide equally fertile ground for fundamentalists. Thus relative instability in political/economic systems - transitional stages or periods of contention - can present fundamentalists with options to either use their ideology in support of the status quo or to oppose it. Finally, to return to the idea that it is not just the experience of status loss or deprivation that lead to social movements, ideological production or rejuvenation can also occur amongst those who experience a positive change in their political or economic position. Environmental changes that increase the social resources available to a section of the community may therefore lead to support for, or even the conception of, a social movement, based on how those changes are interpreted (for example, Diamond (1989) explains how the membership and monetary wealth enjoyed by

American evangelical and fundamentalist communities during the mid-eighties was interpreted as a sign for “pre-millennialists” that the second-coming is near, increasing efforts to spread the movement’s influence).

The cultural/religious context, on the other hand, isolates the conditions peculiar to their own system of beliefs which may give rise to a social movement. Alterations within a particular culture or religion itself - if these changes are relatively autonomous from broader economic\political developments - may give rise to opportunities for splinter groups, or entirely new forms to emerge. Thus Williams suggests that the development of a Christian fundamentalist movement in the United States from 1912 could be interpreted as a response, first and foremost, to the accommodation by the church to modernisation, rather than a particular concern with the modernisation of society in general.⁶ Again, as was pointed out in Chapter One, some authors presuppose a relatively constant level of spiritual demand, and when generations grow out of a particular brand of belief, opportunities for innovation appear.

(b) Ideologies and selective processes

Once an ideology has been established, movement leaders engage in a process of mapping an ideology onto its social and political environments. This implies that the ideas, imagery and vision which the ideology produces must resonate with its target audience - their own beliefs, experiences, and meanings attached to those experiences. And since ideas do not make a social movement on their own, these attempts at connecting with a population must also involve securing resources for the movement’s organisations as actors and sellers in the ideological marketplace. Therefore, three important features arise, all to some extent interrelated, inside this dimension of ideological selection. The first concerns member recruitment - how effective ideological appeals are in generating support. The second relates to how an ideology can successfully engender commitment and mobilise its constituents into action. The third feature has less to do with the organisational level of analysis

⁶ Of course, the former was always dependent upon the latter.

and is more focussed on how an ideology itself is structured. Here the ideology (e.g. a variant of fundamentalism) is examined with respect to the parts that make up the whole - what matters or issues does it concern itself with and how do they relate to one another? These three features are discussed next.

(i) Recruitment

The process of recruitment to an ideological position favoured by recent researchers places a stronger emphasis on networks and moral communities than earlier theorists. Both the "Mass Society" theorists and rational choice proponents (e.g. Oberschall, 1973) claimed that social movement participation was triggered by isolated individuals involved alternatively in (i) a state of personal anomie and thus susceptible to demagogues' appeals; and (ii) a choice between a variety of social movements based on calculations of costs/benefits (e.g. free-rider considerations and the presence of selective incentives). These accounts, which Williams (1994:788) suggests as having either not enough or too much discretion, have given way to more sociological descriptions dealing with issues of identity neighbourhoods and how these networks are accessed. As authors have criticised these previous explanations for taking the nature of grievances or ideas for granted in social movement formation, Snow and Benford (1988) point out that the construction of meanings surrounding these events is one of the more important roles which social movements fulfil. They claim that just like the media and the state, social movements as ideologies are similarly involved in what Hall (1982) calls the "politics of signification".

Of all the sites where signification, or what Klandermans (1988) calls "consensus formation", takes place, the social network has become recognised as the most influential.⁷ With regard to recruitment, he goes on to say:

⁷ "Social networks", the term used in this discussion, have been identified by different terms and as being of varying forms according to different authors (Melucci (1985) for example, named them "intermediary relational systems", where identity sets could be engaged, then redefined or created anew). They refer to groups as diverse as families, friends, peers, workmates, unions, social classes, interest groups, and communities.

As a rule, the set of individuals interacting in one's social networks - especially in one's friendship networks - is relatively homogeneous and composed of people not too different from oneself. Processes of social comparison produce collective definitions of a situation. Consequently, within these networks, consensus is formed and maintained. Consensus mobilisation (e.g. attempts by an actor to spread its views and beliefs) has to take this social reality into account. Messages issued by an actor are not only filtered through the cognitive frames of individual receivers but also processed by reality testing intercourse in the social networks and subcultures to which the receivers belong. So, consensus mobilisation must target not only the beliefs and attitudes of individuals, but the collective definitions sustained in social networks (Klandermans, 1988:175).

That this intermediary dimension is crucial for social movement recruitment has been emphasised for some time now. McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1988:709) referred to this as the "micro-mobilisation context" which held latent potential for collective action. With these social networks in mind, Snow et al (1986) developed a framework which still provides an influential guide to the tasks facing modern social movements for generating recruitment. Called "frame alignment", they described a process whereby social movement organisations (SMOs) attempt to "link" their ideological systems with those of their target audience, "such that some set of individual interests, values, and beliefs and SMO activities, goals, and ideology are congruent and complementary" (Snow et al, 1986:464). Depending on the initial degree of similarity between the frames of meaning (that of the movement ideology and the ideology of its target audience), one of four alignment processes takes place.⁸

⁸ The four frame alignment processes are summarised in Snow and Benford (1988:214-215): "(1) frame bridging, which involves the linkage of two or more ideologically congruent but structurally unconnected frames regarding a particular issue or problem; (2) frame amplification, which refers to the clarification or invigoration of an interpretive frame that bears on a particular issue, problem or set of events; (3) frame extension, which involves the expansion of the boundaries of a movement's primary framework so as to encompass interests or points of view that are incidental to its primary objectives but of considerable salience to potential adherents; and (4) frame transformation, which refers to the redefinition of activities, events and biographies that are already meaningful from the standpoint of some primary framework, such that they are now seen by the participants to be quite something else."

As mentioned earlier, the strategy which a SMO employs must contain a message that appeals to the meanings, experiences, identity and culture of the population targeted. And it is especially within groups that the exposure to new ideas, and the opportunities to discuss them (accept or reject them), occur. Here ideologies must compete with existing discourses, and if successful, gain access to a pre-established network of resources to further disseminate their ideas. Before moving on to discuss how such networks are mobilised, however, some examples of possible obstacles are highlighted from the wider social movement literature.

Snow and Benford (1988:207) mention three “phenomenological constraints” to the task of successful ideological framing. Firstly, “empirical credibility” refers to whether the ideological claims are able to be supported by evidence. They point to Schell’s (1982) findings concerning doomsday framing around nuclear war. Largely successful against their pro-nuclear opponents, the claims of anti-nuclear activists were backed up and their appeals more vivid due to the spread of information and research on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Secondly, “experiential commensurability” is suggested as being one of the “most important determinants of cross-cultural variations in the mobilising potency of peace movement framing efforts” (Snow and Benford, 1988:209). It concerns the “interpretative screen” through which competing claims and evidence are filtered, namely the personal experience of recruitment targets. For example, they state that peace movements are far more active in Western Europe and Japan than in the United States, and that this can be explained by the fact that the latter has not experienced warfare within its borders as recently as the other two, and that the presence of nuclear weaponry is not as apparent. Framing attempts in the latter nation, no matter how innovative, are therefore always at a disadvantage. Lastly, differences in social movement success can also depend on the degree of “narrative fidelity” (Snow and Benford, 1988; attributed to Fisher, 1984) between an ideological package and a community’s cultural heritage. If an appeal bears a similar relation to entrenched beliefs, customs etc, then consensus mobilisation is aided by the resonance attained. In an example illustrating the failure of a movement to equate Congress’ outlawing of the closed shop with slave-labour Bolshevism, they cite Geertz

(1973) as claiming that in this case, the imagery of Bolshevism with Siberian prison camps in national folklaw was too harsh for the intended comparison. Consequently, the issue had to be framed in another way.

(ii) Participant mobilisation

Once some relationship with a constituency has been established, SMOs must then compete with rival social movements in order for their ideology to be selected. This invariably involves activating a desire within consensus networks to participate in the movement. Correspondingly, a commitment is reaffirmed, resources are generated, and movement exposure increased. Therefore, similar to its position with regard to recruitment, the SMO is engaged in a dynamic process whereby both constituency and SMO ideologies may go through changes. Just as it is a social movement's goal to alter and manipulate the world-view of its public, this may consequently entail a degree of frame re-orientation for itself. Accommodation is, therefore, often a key framing task for movement ideologies which seek to expand the boundaries of its appeal.⁹

In their attempts to mobilise commitment, Snow and Benford claim that social movements inevitably tell a story about a social, moral, or political problem (sometimes, according to Williams, movements can even "create" the problems it intends to solve).¹⁰ Whether the story is simple or elaborate, movements generally include in their ideologies what Snow and Benford (1988) term "diagnostic frames" (what the problem is - say secular humanism), "prognostic frames" (what should be done about it - re-Christianise society), and "motivational frames" (who should do it, why it must be done - Christian people, to save our nation).¹¹ These

⁹ Such boundary expansion is termed "frame extension" by Snow et al. (1986:472) in their discussion of the four key frame alignment processes.

¹⁰ Williams (1994:790) explains that while Christian fundamentalists did not create either secularism or modern culture, they have created "secular modern culture" through their own imagery. Similar arguments have been developed by Ryan (1986) in the New Zealand context.

¹¹ Snow and Benford (1988:199-204). The three elements are supposedly drawn from Wilson (1973).

three elements articulate ideas in a complementary fashion with the aim of establishing not only ideological congruency and resonance but also a rationale for transforming this sympathy into action.

The importance of the third element - motivational framing - arises from criticisms of the earlier literature. Grievances, no matter how well communicated, do not on their own trigger social movement action. Recent commentaries highlight how the presence of "injustice frames" overcome non-participation through the use of emotive, compelling rhetoric. These frames not only turn private troubles into public issues (Snow et al, 1986:474) but also give social movement adherents a personal sense of responsibility for correcting the problem. As Williams suggests, religion has a fertile field when searching for motivational arguments: "For religious people the stakes are high - often nothing less than God's will and their immortal souls are at issue" (Williams, 1994:792). That the successful mobilisation of many social movements hinges on the issue of legitimation is therefore a point that deserves greater attention. While the theories elaborated so far have highlighted their importance as parts of the mobilising equation, it is apparently not enough for movements to have wide networks, access to resources (media), and credible information at their fingertips if these elements are not supported by an effective call to arms. It is here, perhaps, that Christian religion does enjoy an advantage with regard to ready-made evangelistic imperatives, where often a church-goers' identity is simultaneously entwined with a broader plan of action. Some special features of religious fundamentalism are examined next, as the discussion turns to the issue of ideological structure in the context of selective processes.

(iii) Structural determinants for ideological selection

While issues such as recruitment and mobilisation deal principally with the cultural environment as a subject of interaction (ie. the dynamic quality), the structural aspects of an ideology focus on the way in which a movement's discourse is "put together". Rather than looking at the efforts of a social movement to *match* its

frame to those of potential adherents, the *content* of its base ideology are the focus of attention. And like the processes of frame alignment, the structure of an ideology may determine how suited it is to a particular environment and its prospects for survival.

Wuthnow (1987:66) cites Mary Douglas's work on symbolic boundaries as the basis for the structural approach to understanding ideology. Briefly, he suggests that this approach assumes some "moral order" which governs people's social interaction (cf. Durkheim). Thus, people know what actions are appropriate, which are not, and various reasons why this is so. Furthermore, this moral order is expressed in the form of boundaries - symbols that demonstrate the distinctions between right and wrong. These symbolic elements act as a sort of unwritten (and, sometimes, written) charter, identifying what the ideology encompasses. Along with the mechanisms that keep these boundaries (ie. the logic relating the boundaries to each other), they serve as a "blueprint" for the ideology. As he states:

...religious systems do not permit the symbolism of which they are comprised to take on any shape the social environment may suggest. This is not because of some inherent rationality in the minds of individuals that must be obeyed. It is rather a result of the arrangements, the structure, that defines the character of religious symbolism itself. This symbolism creates categories of reality and defines the connections among these categories. While these are by no means static, they exert their own force over social events because they define the very contexts in which thought takes place. It is, after all, impossible to think of religious groups involving themselves in politics without the categories "religion" and "politics" themselves affecting the kinds of thoughts that seem conceivable or meaningful (Wuthnow, 1983:184).

The structural dimension of an ideology is therefore important for determining the boundaries of concern where legitimate articulation can take place. Not only that, these boundaries serve an important function in distinguishing the ideology from rival discourses, and hence in signalling to target audiences potentially new ways of constructing systems of meaning.

Wuthnow gives two examples to illustrate the usefulness of this approach. Firstly, he lists Williams' (1980:65) six issues (elements) which are representative of "folk piety's" beliefs and practices: food, health and sickness, major transitions in the life cycle, death and the dead, predictions of the future, and problems of evil and misfortune.¹² While many secularisation theorists suggest that this form of religion predominated in pre-modern societies, Wuthnow claims that folk piety can still be a viable ideology even in modern, plural societies. Examining the content of its boundaries and the relationships between them, he says that the elements consist of things which most people experience at some point in their life (if not repeatedly). As they can also be times of personal insecurity ("marginality" in Berger's (1969) words), and are also things which modern Western society can be notoriously silent about, Wuthnow (1987) claims that folk piety can occupy a niche in the environment and fulfil those needs. Furthermore, the relationship between the elements is relatively loose (disconnected), such that a disturbance in one element need not affect the legitimacy or appeal of the others. Put formally, he states, folk-piety can be described as a "symbol system comprising a relatively large number of elements, but with a low number of definite relations between the pairs of elements" (Wuthnow, 1987:188-191).

Like folk piety, Wuthnow argues, conservative Christianity or fundamentalism appears to be resilient in the face of change. In contrast to the former, however, fundamentalism consists of only a few core tenets - biblical inerrancy, the resurrection etc... - which are strongly connected together. These strong relationships between the ideology's elements makes him consider it less stable than folk piety, since a disturbance in one element may affect the whole belief system. Yet the small number of key elements open to disturbance has resulted in it surviving in a rapidly changing environment - urbanisation and industrialisation have had very little effect. According to Wuthnow, the danger for fundamentalism lies in intellectual processes such as rationalisation, which both adds to the number of interrelated elements open to dispute at the same time as challenging the bonds

¹² Wuthnow (1987:187-188) describes "folk piety" as a form of religion that draws heavily on indigenous folklaw (such as popular superstition, astrology) for its symbolism.

that tie the elements together. It is therefore slightly ironic when he suggests that moral crusades may weaken fundamentalism by claiming a closer relationship between religious beliefs and social attitudes, a position that has been difficult to defend in the West.

Revisiting the ideological production stage discussed previously, certain environmental conditions, such as cultural pluralism, were suggested as being conducive to the formation of a conservative religious movement. In that instance, the theory was that cultural and political heterogeneity, by virtue of the spaces made available through notions of diversity, and the presence of continual competition between political and moral positions, allowed Christian conservatism opportunities for articulation. Alternatively, the structural approach in the ideological selection stage suggests that in order to survive in the long term, relatively homogeneous enclaves are needed to protect fundamentalist ideological systems from disturbances. This then poses a potential selection dilemma for the leaders of a conservative Christian movement. The theoretical perspectives dealing with frame alignment imply an alteration of the parent frame so as to concur with the target audience, and hence some articulation *between* homo- and heterogeneous environments. For ideological selection to be successful without antagonising their membership, the SMOs involved with engaging the public must build bridges to other territories that do not threaten their core elements. If this fails, schism is likely to occur with those taking a hard line forming other sects. If successful, the movement is then faced with a further project: managing the ideology so as to secure its existence. It is this issue which is the focus of the next section.

(c) Ideological institutionalisation

After an ideology has been successfully aligned with a particular environment and gained support, institutionalisation implies a state where further changes in this environment have little or no effect on the movement. Social movement organisations must ensure that a steady supply of resources are available, and

foster relationships with groups in that environment to make this possible. In this endeavour, two important areas are highlighted to illustrate how this can be achieved.

As with the process of selection, where symbolic elements can determine an ideology's resonance with various social niches, the structure of an ideology can also affect how it survives in the face of disturbances to these niches. While Wuthnow (1987) stops short of predicting a correlation between particular environments and certain individual ideologies, he maintains that there may be some generic theme or trait that improves a movement's chances. Thus some periods may favour an ideological structure that contains certain essential *elements* (e.g. self-help). Others may be conducive to structural *connections* that rely on scientific arguments to justify their claims. What this approach effectively enables a researcher to do is shift the level of analysis away from the movement itself to questions surrounding the movement *form*. Also, in the short term, a policy to set an ideological structure in stone may be pursued (e.g. stubbornness in the midst of flux), while over the longer term, a policy of identifying social niches and accommodating these elements within its structure (frame extension) may provide insurance against unforeseen (or, for that matter, predicted) events.

Secondly, the type of relationship with the state is often crucial for social movement longevity. Not only is it a feature of the social environment with which the movement must interact, but it also has a powerful hand in shaping that environment. For example, the legislation which the state produces defines the boundaries - the environments - within which movements can legitimately compete. These domains, such as the constant shifts of public and private boundaries, have had a significant effect on how conservative religious movements carry out their business (as well as providing a source of mobilisation itself). Influence in state decision-making regarding such legislation has therefore often been a desirable social movement goal.

More directly, the state often actively promotes or sponsors a number of ideological packages to different degrees through mechanisms as the legislature (for example, legislation governing the type of economic system in a country, laws concerning conservation, government sponsorship of the arts etc). Again, it has often been the experience of religious conservatives that the state has been increasingly politically hostile to their agenda (such as the requirement for all secondary teachers to be officially registered, and hence trained in secular institutions), at least in the West. Nevertheless, it seems to be a feature of recent history that such movements have increased their efforts at engaging the political centre in an attempt to raise their (usually public) legitimacy. Where much of the earlier literature pointed to a retreat from public life, now the focus seems to be on how religious conservatives seek to enlarge their domains. By examining how a social movement seeks to institutionalise itself, through interaction with agencies like the state and alterations to its ideological structure, a better picture of its lifecycle may be developed. Questions such as why certain movements fade away after having been established are then able to be tackled.

III. Summary

As mentioned in this chapter's introductory statement, the theory of cultural articulation seeks to provide some harmony between a variety of theoretical approaches. To borrow a term coined by Snow and Benford (1988:213), I think it provides some "conceptual scaffolding" for drawing together compatible methods. However, rather than attempting to link them together as pieces of the scaffold, they instead form the features placed inside it. It is not an attempt to remould them individually, or even to combine them into a tight framework (and hence infer more similarity than there is), but to highlight their strengths in the larger search for an understanding of social movements.

Within this loose approach, Wuthnow (1987) emphasised three moments of exploration - the production, selection, and institutionalisation of an ideology or culture. Together, they represent a "spiral of mobilisation" (Klandermans,

1988:173) that accounts for the emergence, trajectory, and longevity of a social movement. In the production stage, broad changes in socio-cultural environmental conditions expose niches for movements to occupy, fostered by the dislocated groups left in the wake of these changes. In the selection stage, movements compete for access to these resource niches, offering alternatives in the reconstruction of identity and the meanings surrounding the events. Here the movement articulates, or aligns itself, with the cultural frames of the social niches exposed. A process of change on the part of both the movement's ideology and the participant's worldview is now enacted, as movements seek to alter the public's frames of meaning, at the same time as accommodating differences within the field. Finally, the institutionalisation stage analyses how a movement protects itself from further disturbances in the environment. The degree to which a movement is able to innovate to survive such changes is dealt with here, as well as the extent to which it has itself become part of the status quo.

What I have attempted to do in this chapter is also to identify some of the more useful theoretical perspectives which flesh out these stages in Wuthnow's approach. Some may argue that it constitutes theoretical overload, and that alterations ought to be made to the existing literature if it falls short, or that a wholly new theory of social movements be developed to address this problem. However, it would seem a futile exercise to fuse different levels of analysis together if all that we are left with is a muddle of "ifs" and "buts" with no clear way of navigating through problems. The theory of cultural articulation is simply an effort to be more precise in our dealings with social movements, to be prepared to accept that a certain explanation is better than another. It should also be pointed out that, while open to the possibility of applying this approach to all social movements, Wuthnow believed it to be especially appropriate for studying religious movements. Clearly, the range of approaches adopted towards religious movements suggests that they are invariably reliant on many different dimensions (ie. resources, ideology, organisation), and it is cultural articulation theory's ability to acknowledge these dimensions that make it a worthwhile choice.

Chapter Three

The Formation of Christian Conservatism in New Zealand

To understand the activism of Christian Conservatives in the 1990s, their history of social and political engagement must first be considered. Questions surrounding who or what is a Christian Conservative, their motivations for becoming political, and their strategies for doing so, require a further analysis of the assumptions made by other commentators if they are to be of any use. It is my contention that the analysis to date has left questions unresolved, and that the answers to some of these questions, identified in Chapter One, are flawed to varying degrees. The alternative theory of cultural articulation has been offered as a way of overcoming these inadequacies, and of uncovering the features of Christian Conservative activism that linger into the nineties.

This chapter begins with a critique of the standard explanation for Christian political activism, the secularisation thesis. Here the notion of a “Golden Age” in New Zealand religion is contested, and therefore its use as a justification (and explanation) for conservative Christian mobilisation is rendered problematic. An impression of the pluralism in religious expression should remain, however, as providing the environment - and constraints - from which conservative Christianity would eventually emerge. The second part of the chapter explains how cultural articulation theory can be used to identify the moment when Christian Conservatism as an ideology was first formed (produced) and ideology selected (successful articulation). Here, changes in the broader social environment and their role in facilitating movement formation are examined. In particular, the paradigmatic crisis of the early 1970s, together with a growing polarisation within the churches themselves, are examined in light of the niches they provided for the articulation of a conservative Christian politics. The argument by the end of the chapter is that there is a small core of ideological carriers, who (re)established their own identity system in response to a crisis in a favourable moral order, and

successfully articulated their moral code through a process of ideological innovation and frame adjustment. The effect was to generate considerably more resources within a situation of competing movements, and to be attributed the status of a much more significant movement than was warranted.

I. Debating the Secularisation Thesis: Reflections on New Zealand's Christian Heritage

One of the first questions raised in Chapter One involved the appropriateness of the secularisation thesis for the New Zealand context. Just how satisfactory is the explanation - that conservative Christians mobilised in response to modernisation and its effects on Neuhaus' (1984) religious "public square" - when history has shown that the movement actually faltered during a "naked" period of substantially greater opportunity in 1988. Isn't this exactly the circumstance when momentum should have been gained? In light of the theory of cultural articulation expressed in Chapter Two, one could possibly argue that the secularisation thesis is in fact a good one, but that other factors (e.g. leadership, resources) combined to cancel it out. This would read something like: "the decline of the Christian nation was the necessary condition for mobilisation, but not a sufficient one". Alternatively, one could challenge the assumptions that form the basis for secularisation theory itself. In this case, attention ought to be directed to the simple claim that New Zealand was a significantly (as opposed to a nominally) Christian nation to begin with - was this in fact a position which could form the basis of a "decline theory" in the first place? Doing this would be a substantially more systematic way of working through the theory and hence towards more appropriate explanations, and one that many commentators fail to satisfactorily pursue. This section is therefore concerned with highlighting the disputes around this claim.

The majority of authors who promote the image of New Zealand with a strong Christian tradition penned their ideas a long time ago. Siegfried is perhaps the most cited in his evaluation of New Zealand having "No tradition...so strong...as the religious one... (It has left) a stubborn mark that generations will not wipe out"

(Siegfried, 1914:310-322). Hill (1994) refers to McLeod (1968:160) and Mol (1972:365) as others who accept this assessment. Such claims appear to be sourced in evidence of church involvement at the community level, none more so than the efforts of waves of missionaries that descended upon the country from the early 1800s. Certainly the early church did assert itself both socially and politically. Authors such as Barber point to the “social service” activities of parishes expanding into the “backblocks”, as well as the occasional drift into “moral” issues such as censorship and gambling (Barber, 1985:20-27). Breward, like Barber, sees Christianity as having had a long-term influence on our values, based on such early involvement: “...there are some distinctive features of New Zealand religion, which are interwoven with social class and structure and the historical dynamics of a colonial and provincial society... these are the clues to forces which need analysis” (Breward, 1985:138-148). Both authors therefore point to an undeniable presence of Christianity, and to the “sizeable and consequential” effects it had (Barber, 1985:20).

The problems associated with making sense of such evidence, however, are highlighted by Davidson and Lineham, when “at one and the same time it is very likely that some parts of the church are flourishing while other parts are languishing” (Davidson and Lineham, 1995:352). The success of the church that early observers identified seems to originate in what Owens (1983) calls the “transition” role the missionaries fulfilled, and is similar (if not identical) to Herberg’s (1955) theory of “cultural transition”. Herberg’s theory explains how a church would help a community negotiate between two periods of change, but the theory is equally applicable to the situation facing Maori and settlers in New Zealand when they would have had to come to terms with each other’s social systems. Unfortunately, Owens remarks, religion’s increased exposure was largely of a sort of “blanket Christianity”, and the degree of actual religious transplanting was most often minimal (Owens, 1983:17).¹

¹ He refers to “Blanket Christianity” as a process whereby Maori “conformed to missionary expectations in order to promote access to missionary trade goods”, and concluded that the evangelical results were often minimal if not disastrous for some Maori. The original term is

Aside from these few accounts of Christianity “flourishing” then, much “languishing” is described by the rest of the authors. Brown, reviewing Davidson and Lineham’s documentation of several “moral campaigns” between 1880-1920, declared them all a failure in their set purpose (Brown, 1990). He claims that the churches were often divided in their stance towards issues, and this weakness was augmented by strong opposition from other (supposedly secular) sources. Likewise Webster, surveying the literature on New Zealand’s early religious history, decides that:

lawlessness is thought to have increased in reaction to the many moral crusades. And there can be little doubt that the Churches found themselves caricatured and lampooned as killjoys, morally judgemental, wowzers, and out of sympathy with the working classes, not to mention the exploiters (Webster, 1989:10).

Even Barber, who was among those keen to see the church’s influence in a positive light, described the Presbyterian crusaders as enjoying little governmental privilege:

Their “Kingdom of God” was far too austere and too much a replica of a Calvinist prayer meeting to gain much support from legislators who preferred to leave room in the Ark for the occasional racehorse (Barber, 1983:155).

Geering suggests that this low public profile from an early stage in New Zealand’s history can be explained by the fact that it was denominationalism, not “Christianity”, that was being introduced by the settlers (Geering, 1983; 1985; 1995). Europe, at the time of migration, was entering what he terms the “Secular Age” (Geering, 1983), where the “Church” was becoming increasingly segmented, and the settlers reflected this by bringing with them a diverse range of religious traditions from Anglicanism, Presbyterianism, and Catholicism to Methodism and Lutheranism. Thus sectarianism, rather than religious homogeneity, was dominant from the very beginning. The tone of the resulting interactions between rival

quoted as coming from Yate, W. (1835) *An Account of New Zealand*, 2nd edition, London, pp.222-223.

denominations and the state in nineteenth century New Zealand can be illustrated by the 1877 Education Act, and is often-quoted by commentators as a defining moment. In light of the lively sectarian disputes, this determined that education in New Zealand would be “free, secular and compulsory” (Geering, 1995:10). Therefore, just thirty-seven years after the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, Geering (1995:11) concludes that religion “was becoming privatised and was losing its public face”.

Denominational rivalry had therefore resulted in a situation where the settler state set an early precedent in remaining religiously neutral, with the practical ramifications being a compartmentalisation of religion away from the legislating body. Reduced to almost interest-group status, the church’s relationship with the state could not have been described as authoritative in any sense. And while it is harder to gain an accurate impression of the churches’ influence on settlers directly, both the data gathered and their interpretations are equally unimpressive. As Stenhouse notes: “Most settlers came here to get on in life, not to worship God” (Stenhouse, 1993:36). He then quotes 23 percent as the proportion of Europeans attending church by 1874, and it never rose above 30 percent that century (Stenhouse, 1993:36). Jackson analyses such data and remarks that these levels represented a “churchgoing ... (that was) mediocre by the standards of the British at home” (Jackson, 1983:51). Lineham’s history of the Bible Society records that even at the turn of the century, there was sufficient concern about the nation’s non-Christian morality that they saw themselves as the “guardians of the old ‘puritan’ culture of New Zealand” (Lineham, 1996:185). Just when in history the Society placed this culture is unclear as Lineham writes: “the New Zealand community experienced the alienation from religion which characterised the poor in British society” (Lineham, 1996:70) and that ““want of belief in the genuineness and authenticity of the Bible’ was a widespread problem” (Canton, cited in Lineham, 1996:70).²

² Quotation given as Canton, W. (1904-1910) *History of the British and Foreign Bible Society*, London, Vol. 4, p.48, and referred to the population around Dunedin.

It is not claimed that these few examples lead to the unassailable conclusion that early New Zealand was devoid of religion. Certainly there was a significant number of adherents in various churches and a degree of influence. But the examples are illustrative of a literature that suggests that Christianity, of a unified tradition, definitely did not exist as an *officially sanctioned* morality. Pluralism in its various manifestations had as much to do with that as the special character of the settlers and their lifestyle as Jackson claims.³ In fact, it would be more appropriate to speak of the “religions” of early New Zealand as opposed to “religion”, as this gives a better impression of the struggles between denominations for the right to claim “official religious” status over the dominion. As the 1877 Education Act demonstrates, none of them succeeded.

Therefore, to speak of a “Golden Age” where extensive religiosity was evident at both personal and political level is to speak of a situation that existed only in imported memories of Victoriana and poor sociology. Religion in many forms was present, but it never enjoyed a position of social or political hegemony. Indeed, as Hill (1994) points out, the way in which religion is consistently left out of historical and sociological literature is a testimony to its profile in New Zealand’s past. Whatever peculiar national character has then emerged in New Zealand, it is not one grounded in a singular ecclesiastical doctrine. We never were a devoutly Christian country.

This reflection on our religious history is important for our understanding of recent developments, especially with regard to the secularisation scenario. If New Zealand never experienced a period of substantial Christian religiosity at the founding of

³ Jackson (1983:54-55) follows the presentation of data with an interesting analysis of why religiosity was lower in New Zealand than in England. Briefly, he gives five main reasons, which include: (i) class-based explanations, where the majority of migrants were lower class and therefore associated with lower religiosity; (ii) migrants from different parts of Britain reproduced their lower rates of church attendance in New Zealand; (iii) relative lack of socio-political antagonism in New Zealand removed a strong source of religious adherence; (iv) resettlement simply broke previous routines and patterns of attendance; (v) geographical mobility in New Zealand prevented pressures of conformity which had encouraged attendance in tight communities.

our nation, then this renders problematic both the “decline” allegations of crusaders and the accompanying academic sympathies. Accepting that attempts at religious reform today are an understandable reaction to some lost status or waning “Age of Faith” is, itself, unacceptable. If there is evidence of such mourning, then it is for something that looks like religion, but is not. It is argued here that Christians have not been mobilised because their country is losing its Christian roots. It is against this backdrop that the rest of the analysis proceeds.

II. Episodes Facilitating the Formation of a Conservative Christian Social Movement

In employing the theory of cultural articulation, the genesis of a social movement can be identified by examining changes in the social environment. Periods of change create moments when the existing moral structure or system of understanding is open to negotiation, and this provides an opportunity for alternate meaning structures to compete for acceptance. The secularisation thesis describes such a process whereby the significance of religion as a moral paradigm is gradually replaced by other meaning systems such as science and liberal philosophy. It has just been argued, however, that this explanation is not suitable for the New Zealand context, which has never shown a strong commitment to Christianity in the first place. What this section hopes to present are several episodes which are dissimilar in many respects, but which combine to create spaces which a conservative Christian movement could exploit. In other words, the production of the conservative Christian movement is a result of several disturbances occurring in the same period.

(a) The 1960s and 1970s: challenges to the social democratic order and organic crisis

Early indications of a conservative Christian activism occurred during a period of “organic crisis”, when New Zealand was exiting an era of broad political consensus (Spoonley et al, 1988:26). Up until 1970, a commitment to Social Democratic

Keynesian principles by the major political parties had delivered a society which nurtured the values of “full employment, the Keynesian state, the welfare state, the mixed economy, some public ownership, state education and equal opportunity” (Maharey, 1987:75, cited in Spoonley et al, 1988:27). Not only were these goals fostered by the social democratic consensus, but patterns of legitimate interaction with the state were also bound within them - a “corporatist” model involving state, capital and unions. As a consequence of domestic security through the 1960s, there was also a belief that consensus had been achieved with regard to ethnicity, gender, and sexual relations, a view supported by the relative absence of civil unrest:

...overall, there was a widespread consensus that New Zealand society was a just one, and that any disagreements could be worked out through the social democratic parliamentary process (Spoonley et al, 1988:27).

The pervading image of society was thus of homogeneity, with rising prosperity tending to absorb isolated grievances. To a large extent, Sinclair’s description of our prevailing religion being “simple materialism” indicated the limits of concern that troubled most New Zealanders (Sinclair, 1973:288).

An array of social movement literature explains how, in the West in general, the social democratic state then bred conditions favourable to movement formation. During the 1960s, the general prosperity heralded the rise of the “new middle class” (Eder, 1993), a class armed with burgeoning cultural and intellectual resources (Bagguley, 1992). Disillusioned with the consequences of rampant capitalism (Inglehart, 1977), but armed with the economic resources generated out of it (McCarthy and Zald, 1973), the middle-class was instrumental in promoting a set of “new values”. Listed amongst these “post-materialist” values are a “desire for community, self-actualisation, and personal, as opposed to occupational, satisfaction” (McAdam et al, 1988:701). As the state attempted to appease these new interests which were being excluded in the social-democratic process (Lipietz, 1994), it was caught in a “legitimation crisis” whereby appeasement produced a continual procession of interests to claim favours which the state could never hope to satisfy (Habermas, 1981). Furthermore, the resulting regulation of previously

private areas of life instigated responses by those wanting to regain control in those areas - in the form of New Social Movements (Melucci, 1980).

From 1970, New Zealand similarly began to experience some of these New Social Movements. The self-actualisation trends of the 1960s had largely omitted women, but as more women entered paid work, many started to confront the differences in opportunities presented to them in the workplace, home and leisure arenas. This was the start of a new wave of feminism, as women attempted to gain better access, autonomy and control over services directly relating to themselves. Probably the most visible movement in the 1970s, it manifested itself in several areas. Abortion statistics gradually rose as increasingly liberal interpretations were made allowing greater access (Stone, cited in Evans, 1992:73). The Remuera Abortion clinic opened in 1974, followed by attempts to alter accessibility more formally through the Hospitals Amendment Bill. The Royal Commission into Contraception, Sterilisation and Abortion was established in 1975. In the area of sex education, pressure on the state over time led to the publication of the Ross Report in 1972 and the privately-produced *Little Red School Book*, as well as the Johnson Report in 1977. The circulation of the Working Women's Charter in 1975 following the Parliamentary Select Committee on Women's Rights finally confirmed the arrival and influence of the feminist movement and the state's need to address their issues.

Other events during the 1970s exemplified the broader challenges that were being made to the social and moral consensus. Nga Tamatoa was set up in 1970 with the purpose of addressing unresolved Maori grievances, and was the beginning of a wider disenchantment with Pakeha political and economic control. The 1975 Land March and Bastion Point occupation the following year signalled just how deep the disputes were. Conservation, anti-apartheid, and peace issues also gained support (Spoonley, 1988:89). Again in 1975, The Crimes Amendment Bill to decriminalise sexual acts between men was introduced, and, although defeated, contested the prevailing orthodoxy concerning sexuality and the state's role in enforcing a particular morality.

These examples, coupled with the feminist movement, were symptomatic of a growing tension within the logic of the “Consensus Society”. Whereas New Zealand society before 1970 was characterised by a class compromise, where conflict was situated mainly around the “wage struggle” (Neilson, 1993:110), New Zealand after 1970 exhibited signs of a paradigmatic crisis. The “politics of difference” that was associated with feminism and other emerging New Social Movements reflected the logic of the challenging paradigm, at the same time as being diametrically opposed to its rival:

The politics of difference is both an expression of the increasing complexity and diversity of advanced capitalist societies, but also a reaction against the rigidity and standardisation of Fordism (Neilson, 1996:6).

This criticism by the New Social Movements was aimed at the cultural homogenisation of the old order (Marcuse, cited in Neilson, 1996:5), and the exclusion of interests outside its three-tiered model. It is then within this space, created by a climate of paradigmatic insurgency, that the genesis of conservative Christian activism must be understood, being one of the actors competing for control of that space.

As Wuthnow (1987) explains, changes to the economic, political, social, or cultural environments may lead to a crisis in the moral order, if such changes challenge the current social arrangements. New meanings and obligations beg reconstruction. Similarly, the presence of rival moral codes may themselves directly undermine the prevailing structure of resources. The market failures of Keynesianism and the visibility of the New Social Movements therefore posed a two-sided threat to conservative Christians. On the one hand, changes to the economic structure of society, such as the end of full-employment and the growth in welfare provision, brought pressure on the viability of sustaining the traditional nuclear family, and the sexual division of labour which it entailed. This social unit was important to conservative Christians, as evidenced by the public expressions of protest that were

to come.⁴ Men were no longer able to fulfil their role in providing economic security with any certainty, and women (young and old) were gradually being given the opportunity to become self-sufficient through state support, particularly unmarried women with children. The advent of the teenager as consumer was also significant, by removing one source of parental control (financial), and through exposing them to new (in this case, often viewed as subversive) moral codes. On the other hand, the new individualism and respect for difference promoted by the New Social Movements opposed both the norms and values at the heart of the old patriarchal system itself. The logic of the conservative paradigm that had governed the nation's *public* morality was challenged.

The crisis in the moral structure of society impacted on conservative Christians so severely because the prevailing paradigm had been consonant with their own way of life. Of course, it could be suggested that this consonance was a result of a long period of articulation by conservative Christians themselves. In this case, "congruency" would denote a successful framing of their own ideology around the values and norms (norms as including the structure of the economy as well) generated by the majority of society, rather than it occurring "by chance" (nor, as it has been argued here, through Christian hegemony).⁵ Specifically, the power relations existing within the conservative Christian home and broadcast to the wider society - such as those of men over women; of parents over children; and (through status) of married home-makers over single (or more generally) working women - were placed under threat. More generally, the growing acceptance of pluralism, being the manifestation of difference in politics, reduced the conservative Christian's theology to merely one reality amongst the many, and removed the authority and reverence attributed to it (even if this was partially self-appointed in

⁴ The primacy of the traditional nuclear family in conservative Christian discourse is well-documented in Ryan, 1986.

⁵ It is my view that while Protestant Christianity has indeed influenced the development of capitalism and therefore the shape of Western economies, it does not necessarily follow that the morality or "weltanschauung" of New Zealanders can be reduced to the effects of religion, or that the economy does not have motives that exist independently of religious norms and values. The peculiarities of New Zealand society (e.g. the situations facing settlers) mean that many of our values have evolved differently. However, there is no room to argue this here.

the first place). The conservative Christian was then faced with two options with regards to regaining favourable paradigmatic conditions: (i) an articulation of a new “regime of accumulation” or economic proscription, through which the nuclear family as an ideal social and economic unit is at least not undermined, and at best encouraged; (ii) a reassertion of conservative Christian cultural values and norms in a way that would capture the imagination of both the public and public policy makers. With a right-wing economic response to Keynesianism not forthcoming in New Zealand until the early 1980s however (Jesson, 1988:30-55), conservative Christians were left with advancing a value-laden agenda. Conservative Christians then required an ideological ally to compete with the New Social Movements along these lines and within the space created by the paradigmatic crisis. At first, this agent was sought in the Church.

(b) Christian church realignment and the formation of the Christian Conservatives

What conservative Christians might have hoped for was a response to the perceived “moral decay” by the various church bodies. However, a number of developments at the time made this problematic. As Evans has well-documented, there had been considerable controversy within many denominations over theological interpretations, and the churches’ position on many specific issues (Evans, 1992). The Lloyd Geering heresy trial in 1967 had divided the Presbyterian church between liberals and conservatives, and had similar effects within the other denominations as debate spread. When liberal members of each denomination became politically involved in support of the New Social Movements (e.g. ethnic determination), and yet were silent on matters of personal “morality” (such as homosexuality), conservatives were faced with another dilemma. They had criticised the overtly political and controversial stances of the liberals, but were unhappy with the churches’ acquiescence on those political issues that conservatives themselves were concerned with. To become political and fulfil this shortfall would be to behave in a way they had just been critical of others for doing (Evans, 1992:71-72).

The Christian pluralism that had characterised New Zealand religion since the settlers - pluralism between denominations - was now equally significant within the denominations themselves. The liberal wing of each church, just as much as the New Social Movements themselves, was seen as an obstacle to furthering the conservative Christian moral ideology. As Robyn Langton from Women for Life, and Lindsay Armishaw from the Strategic Leadership Network demonstrate, disillusion was rife:

The church has focused on the wrong things. In the fifties the churches stood up and were more vocal about what was happening in a positive way ... (but then) they stood quiet on what was happening to the family. I remember the no-fault divorce law when that came in, and I think they then became more socially liberal rather than responsible upholders of what I feel Christian values are all about (Robyn Langton).

And:

We have abdicated responsibility. In the past, when it came to social issues, political issues, and community issues, by and large it has been mostly the liberal persuasion - liberal churchpeople - that have got involved. The more evangelical, fundamental, committed Christians, Bible-believing Christians, for whatever reason, whatever baggage they've inherited, they have abandoned responsibility for being the salt and light in the nation, as they're required to be according to the Bible they all love (Lindsay Armishaw).

These first two comments illustrate this frustration but also point to the definition of what it was to be a "conservative Christian" as opposed to merely "a Christian". The debates from the late sixties had led conservative leaders to identify the essence of their Christianity that really mattered to them - a duty to be "salt and light", armed with a rigid notion of "truth", and consequently a guide to which issues were "moral" and which were not. In this capacity, these definitions acted as symbolic markers, boundaries that distinguished their own ideology from that of liberal Christianity, which itself was assuming the status of a rival order. Bruce Logan from the New Zealand Education Development Foundation states:

A lot of Christians are pietistic, they perceive the Christian faith as something to do with just your private life, its got nothing to do with public policy...that's one of the reasons why the church became

marginalised, because pietism took over in the church, and it marginalised itself to a large extent by shifting away from public expression and the shaping of public policy (Bruce Logan).

This third comment reflects a belief about the “proper” issues - since the church *was* engaging in politics, but not in the areas demanded - but also alludes to the process of “religious disengagement”. In this case, however, it was not the complexity of modern society that was diminishing religion’s role in these areas, but liberal Christianity redefining what the “real” issues were.

The outcome was what Evans called a “religious realignment”, with divisions being reconstructed along a conservative/liberal axis as opposed to between denominations (Evans, 1992:70). In this respect, it mirrored the United States experience, where Wuthnow had described a similar process (Wuthnow, 1988b), except that in New Zealand, there was not the subsequent aligning of the conservative element with the market liberals, at least early on. With disputes continuing within denominations, conservative Christians could therefore not guarantee the churches’ support on any given issue. This proved to be the catalyst for conservative Christians to take their ideology outside the churches - to become “Christian Conservatives” - and create a carrier movement of their own to contest the disrupted moral field.

(c) Christian Conservatives and the hijack of the conservative right

There were a few early examples of Christian Conservative activism. The most significant of these were the 1972 “Jesus Marches”, a response to a variety of “moral indecencies” such as “illegitimacy, drunkenness, challenges to established authority, and increases in sexual permissiveness, crime, and drug addiction” (Executive Committee’s *Statement of Purpose*, cited in Evans, 1992:75). Symbolic markers were therefore being drawn. Unlike previous examples of church involvement in socio-moral affairs, this public expression of Christian sentiment and the solution offered was decidedly more radical, though, more importantly, quite different: “Jesus is God’s answer to the great moral and social problems of

society, and the great need of our country is for a return to God through Him, and for a spiritual awakening throughout our land” (Shaw, cited in Evans, 1992:76). The formation of a variety of pressure groups, such as the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) in 1970, and Women for Life in 1974, gave Christian Conservatives the opportunity to develop their own identity (or “fine-tune” their moral code), and give independent, differentiated responses to political issues. The establishment of the Association of Pentecostal Churches in 1975 effectively combined those churches that had remained morally conservative from the outset, and provided further evidence of a cross-denominational *conservative* ideological consolidation (Evans, 1992).

This schism within the Christian church is an important step towards reframing conservative Christian politics. What emerged from the space created by the theological disputes was not simply a temporary outburst of conservative frustration, gradually losing momentum and eventually being absorbed back into the mainline churches. Instead, the distinctions between liberal and conservative Christians hardened as the two developed quite separate identities, and, as the last paragraph attested, quite different ideologies. The activism of specifically conservative Christians also occurred at a time when conservative-style churches were on the increase, itself perhaps a sign of broader innovation in the spiritual as well as the political sphere.⁶ From 1970 onwards then, conservative Christians, *as “Christian Conservatives”*, must be seen as a political force in their own right, with a distinct logic underpinning their motivations. Doing this enables commentators to gain a clearer picture about what portion of wider “moral” activism is essentially Christian Conservative, and hence trace their rhetoric aimed towards securing its ideology’s existence. The discussion that follows highlights one such attempt, in this case tapping into a general discontent within the Right.

⁶ There is certainly a correlation between the growth in conservative Christian churches and conservative Christian political activity. In which direction the causal relationship operates, or whether there is in fact a casual link, is unclear.

The Right were amongst other actors competing in the same field, yet with similar concerns over the restructuring of the old moral order and the effects on resource configurations. Other groups were forming throughout the 1970s, ones that were not exclusively Christian. The Society for the Promotion of Community Standards (SPCS), the Family Rights Association, the Integrity Centre, and Council of Moral Education all had some degree of secular inspiration. These examples provided evidence that, although liberal moral codes were gaining support, New Zealand in the seventies still possessed deep niches of (secular) conservatism:

There were social and political features of the welfare state, even in its more progressive stage, that were traditional, conservative, even reactionary. New Zealand went where Britain went. A woman's place was in the home. Children were supposed to know their place. Anyone of non-British origin was a 'hori', 'wop', 'nigger', 'wog', Catholics were 'tikes', there was a widespread phobia about the 'yellow peril'... farming and small businesses... tended to be family-based enterprises that fostered patriarchal, authoritarian and commercial attitudes (Jesson, 1988:32).

For many secular New Zealanders, this consensus society was one of contentment, and certainly privilege, and from which there was no desire to change.

What the crisis in traditional family structures together with shifting moral codes had created was an air of uncertainty and "the noticeable spread of anxiety and self-doubt" (Jesson, 1988:2). Old-time conservatism and its promises of a return to the old sets of gender, sexual, and ethnic relations appealed to those secular New Zealanders who were insecure with the challenges to their collective identity. Moreover, these challenges were seen to have long-lasting effects. Bruce Logan recalls:

New Zealand was a fairly monocultural society, and all the schools did was express what everyone thought they believed anyway, so there was no argument about what was right and what was wrong... (Then) there was the loss of confidence in the Western world, in its own vision of things, and a general loss of belief in truth, and we've moved into the primacy of the word "culture". So culture becomes a true statement in itself, one culture became as good as another - we grew up with this pluralistic notion. Then schools were left with

their pants down really, because what on earth were they going to teach? (Bruce Logan)

Christian Conservatives saw an opportunity in this identity crisis, as part of the broader conservative reaction against difference. In Europe and the United States, the political spaces that the New Social Movements had opened up, such as in gender relations, were being seized by the Right, and were being cast back into the “private” sphere where control could be regained (David, 1986:136). Christian Conservatives were able to play the role of moralists in this reaction, and were thus drawn into (or drew the secular Right into) the myth of the lost “Golden Tradition”.

This mutual co-option must be understood as a means of accessing more resources by a particular ideological movement (Christian Conservatism), engaged in competition with other movements (New Social Movements) for control of a political space. According to the theory of cultural articulation outlined earlier, part of the selective process which a movement must endure after conception (during the theological disputes) involves attempts at frame alignment. And like the New Social Movements, who were conceptually linked through common discourses surrounding difference, Christian Conservatives attempted to coalesce and align with sympathetic constituencies. This was necessary simply because church attendance in general, even allowing for a growing proportion of conservatives, did not constitute a sizeable constituency for Christian Conservatives in the seventies. Their usual channels of communication with the media and the state had also been monopolised by their liberal rivals, and finances and networks available to them were minimal. In the institutional context of mediating conditions, the Christian Conservative movement was resource scarce.

Established right-wing groups who campaigned against biculturalism and communism were similarly handicapped. Their ideological alignments with the broader conservative New Zealand were often cemented by a single element which commanded a small place in the wider debate (e.g. “race”). While the Christian Conservatives’ framing problems with the liberal church mainly surrounded the

nature of the issues under protest, the groups comprising the conservative Right had established constituencies around particular issues but lacked a broader rationale linking them to one another. By establishing a common Right discourse, that was connected by notions of cultural homogeneity (frame bridging), the various actors on the Right could establish a moral code which was loose enough to accommodate the different elements (and disturbances to those elements) and was thereby able to expand the relationships it had with its conservative niches.

The importance of the Christian Conservative movement to the Right's discourse was substantial.⁷ The discourse as a system was bound together by the notion of "cultural homogeneity", an appealing theme to many conservative New Zealanders, and gave the conservative Right a more coherent cognitive framework. Also, the addition of elements such as the family (frame extension) defined and dramatised the conflicts in a way that resonated with most conservatives, including the occasional liberal. The many symbolic markers that shaped the Christian Conservative ideology even gave the Right a certain sense of colour, or at least a clear impression of what they stood for (compared to the New Social Movement's barely resonant theme of "difference"). By seizing the "family" as symbolic of the Right (even though theirs was a particular *conception* of the family), and denying it to the New Social Movements, the right also possessed a powerfully emotive ideal against which groups such as feminists could always be cast as "attacking". What the loose Right discourse achieved was a roughly "unified" rejection of the politics of difference, with the Christian Conservatives providing the logic of the framework (inasmuch as their ideology proposed a view of how elements were "naturally" related).

⁷ Here I differ from Vodanovich (1985) who suggests that conservative Christians did not constitute a movement until the early 1980s. My position is that while a social movement may require extensive networks, internal co-ordination, and the ability to activate large, visible, mobilisation (amongst other things) to be successful, it is the primacy of ideas, articulated into a moral code that resonates with some group's reality or system of meaning, and with at least one identifiable carrier (communicator), that qualify it as a social movement. Certainly this was occurring before the 1980s. Maybe it is the term "social" that tempts people to envisage something grand, a remnant from the Mass Society theorists whose units of analysis were of that scale. This seems outdated since the advent of the New Social Movements, where "political" activity is equally as likely to be in the home as in the workplace, and be manifested in a same-sex partnership as much as within a union.

III. Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to explain specifically the formation of a conservative Christian social movement in New Zealand. What I believe cultural articulation theory rather uniquely offers is the ability to take into account the advantages of the different approaches employed in accounting for such activism so far, as well as providing broader interpretative parameters. This is done by placing the approaches into a framework which treats conservative Christian activism as an ideology, one which is produced in moments of ambiguous moral commitment, and which survives by a process of constant articulation with its environment in order to secure resources. This process of the movement relating to environmental conditions is in fact common to all the above approaches, and so little is forfeited. And the insights of earlier approaches have shaped much of the revised account. The organic crisis of the early seventies together with the growth of New Social Movements were significant features of the social environment context which created uncertainty and hence spaces in the moral order. The emergence of a conservative Christian voice as a result of theological disputes provided another feature. The analysis of discourse which characterised Ryan's account during the 1980s, provides perhaps the best example of how important the creation (and manipulation) of ideas is, for resonating with a particular cultural environment through framing techniques.

This chapter has also identified what we mean when we speak of a conservative Christian social movement. As it has already been pointed out, commentators have referred to it variously as the "moral right" (Spoonley et al, 1988), "populist moralism" (Ryan, 1986), or "New Christian Right" (Evans, 1992), each term highlighting certain aspects of its manifestation at different times in its history. Yet each of these labels is limited by the interpretative framework in which conservative Christian activism is analysed. For Spoonley et al, such activism appeared as part of a wider reaction by the Right to an "organic crisis" during the 1970s, but by placing it so firmly within the Right, the uniqueness of the "Christian" element was lost - they became right-wing conservatives who just

happened to be Christian. For Ryan, a similar oversight is made in not clearly distinguishing the core religious conservatives from the rest of the “moral” and “right” movements. However, this point does appear implicitly in her work. Finally, Evans makes an important contribution by highlighting the theological (and hence ideological) beginnings of the movement, but then assumes that its manifestation in the 1980s is a “new” variety because of the different emphasis or concerns that the movement vocalises.⁸

A revised account of conservative Christian activism, to reiterate, posits it as an ideological movement. Wuthnow’s application of cultural articulation theory to conservative Christianity emphasises the dynamic quality of such a movement; that as a movement primarily about ideas, and the social consequences of ideas, it must form relationships within the particular socio-cultural environment, that in turn resonate with the circumstances and meanings of groups within it. This in turn perpetuates the ideology. Consequently, the movement should not be seen as

⁸ In the footnotes, where Evans (1992:94) justifies the use of the term “New Christian Right”, he makes two points which I feel are misleading. First of all, the term “Right” gives the impression, as I have just mentioned, of a movement whose fundamental philosophy is limited to a Right perspective. This might lead to an assumption that the ideology is bounded within such a frame of reference, and that it has a clear rationale which is philosophically consistent. What I would argue instead (following Wuthnow), is that the Christian Conservative ideology, while based on Scripture, is open to a wider interpretation than is usually recognised. Outside of a small number of unchanging “fundamentals”, breadth is given for the inclusion within the ideology of a variety of elements. As Ammerman (1988) has illustrated in the Southern United States, there is a remarkable flexibility about the Christian fundamentalist ideology that allows for a certain degree of “issue” innovation, the purpose being the ability to “resonate” with the particular socio-cultural environment (and changes in it) and increase the chances of mobilisation. Therefore, the term “Right” is too simplified, and while it boxes the movement conveniently for some of its opponents, it also results in an underestimation of the ideology’s (and hence movement’s) potential. My own suggestion of the label “Conservative” is preferable, because while it still catches the general tone of the movement, it seems less hysterical and more broadly appealing, which is what in essence it is capable of becoming. Secondly, the label “New” is appropriate, but not for the reasons Evans outlines. If my interpretation is correct, he uses this term because of the new issues the movement appears to have concerned itself with since the mid-eighties. The problem I have with this is similar to the first point, that is, it focuses too much on the issues themselves rather than the *style* from which these issues have been selected. My own use of the term “New” (developed below) is meant to highlight a new awareness, or operational policy, within the Christian Conservative social movement, of the benefits of this *process* of issue selection. Finally, with regards to Evans’ introduction of the label “Christian”, this is supported, as it identifies the particular theological foundation of the movement, and is better than the term “moral” or even “religious” (the inappropriateness of the label “religious” is discussed below, and arises from the irony of a movement which rejects the secular monopoly in public policy, yet wishes to replace it with its own specific *type* of religious monopoly - conservative Christianity).

merely reactionary and defensive. This would ignore the regular addition of symbolic elements (issues) to the ideology as proffered solutions to moral disturbances, as well as the proactive claims that the movement makes. But to focus too closely on the issues that concern conservative Christians, and then claim that changes in these issues indicate a new type of Christian politics, is to miss the point as well. Outside a few “fundamentals”, the elements that are added and discarded from the Christian Conservative ideology reflect the changing nature of the social environment and the opportunities and constraints presented. Hence the problematic notion that the Christian Conservative movement must be placed within the Right - it could conceivably bridge across the philosophical divide and frame itself around issues promoted by the Left, if that would in turn secure more resources.⁹ The success and struggles that the Christian Conservative movement has experienced since its conception (production) and early mobilisation in the 1970s can similarly be explained by examining the manner in which it has articulated with its socio-cultural environment through the 1980s and 1990s. It is this relationship which the rest of the discussion will trace.

⁹ Examples of this are given in Chapter Six, when discussing the Christian Coalition.

Chapter Four

The Ideological Conflicts of Christian Conservatism during the 1980s

Having introduced the notion of Christian Conservatism as an ideology, and arguing that it was first produced in spaces created by a combination of social/structural and theological crises in the 1960s and 1970s, this chapter explores the movement's articulations between 1980 and 1990. Firstly, the idea of Christian Conservatism as an ideology is developed in more detail. The bulk of the discussion then examines Christian Conservatism in terms of the ideological process of selection - how the movement sought to capture adherents and ideological power. This is illustrated by reference to two examples - the period surrounding the Homosexual Law Reform debates, and the 1987 election. Attention here will be placed on the relatively unstable social environment that characterised New Zealand during this period, as well as the strengths and weaknesses the movement demonstrated in confronting it. The chapter ends by highlighting gradual changes to the diagnostic frame of Christian Conservatism, and the source of the ideological transformation that would lead the movement into the 1990s.

I. Christian Conservatism as Ideology

As suggested in Chapter One, one of the problems with previous research into conservative religious movements in New Zealand was that it paid too much attention to its subjects' own rhetoric. Expressions of discontent, or more specifically the *content* of that discontent, were taken as legitimate indications of the problems affecting a particular social group. The secularisation theme, it has been argued, is one notable bugbear that has been accepted unquestioningly by many commentators, and has subsequently been responsible for a very limited understanding of the many issues involved. For example, some commentators have identified an issue, such as "permissiveness", as something early Christian

Conservatives were opposed to. The issue was then held as symptomatic of the rationale behind mobilisation: groups of conservative New Zealanders were angry *because of* permissiveness. Yet questions centring on “permissiveness” itself (such as what does the term “permissiveness” actually describe? why was this term chosen? by whom was it chosen?) are left unanswered, and an historically situated cultural paradigm is reduced to vague ascription for posterity: “so, the ‘seventies were *permissive*?”

What Chapter Three sought to demonstrate was the importance of viewing an issue such as this in its environmental context. In this case, the value of the term “permissiveness” for understanding the movement rests not necessarily in the *truth* of the statement, but rather in the role it plays in establishing a resonance with target groups in the redefinition of the nature of the moral order, at a particular time in history. Issues then become “elements” of a moral code and manipulated by movement actors, ascribed with meanings that will dramatise something about the (changing) structure of resources in society, and generate support for the movement’s goals. Hence issues (elements) are not necessarily constitutive of the essence of a social movement’s concerns, and should merely indicate the spaces within the social environment which have been identified as conducive to frame alignment efforts. The issues may *matter* to the movement, but perhaps only for mobilising reasons.

This leads to a position where the “public” philosophy of a social movement is approached as an ideology, with the movement functioning as an ideological carrier. A social movement transmits ideas towards social groups, ideas portraying a picture of utopian society, and the moral principles and obligations required to realise this. Central to an ideology is thus a conception of how a society ought to be organised.¹ During periods when one specific ideology is dominant in a society

¹ Of course an ideology does not always (or even normally) propose ways of organising society simply for the attainment of a end-ideal. Marx (1972), for instance, argued that the acceptance of capitalist ideology by workers was an example of “false-consciousness”, whereby the workers’ identity within the moral framework served to further the interests of elites, and such ideological domination was intricately linked to the justification of (exploitative) social structures rather than

(ie. the ideology determines much of society's pervading moral framework), carriers have sought to "embed" the ideology in the social structure and the routines of day-to-day life - to give it a "material existence" that will serve to reinforce the logic of the ideology simply through practising it (Marx, 1972).² For rival ideologies competing for selection, the substantive elements through which the pervading ideology cements its discourse are often targeted for articulation, in an effort to create new meanings around these issues. To continue the example given above, choice in matters of sexual expression may therefore be framed as "sexual freedom" in one ideology, "sexual permissiveness" in another. Thus if what is meant by "society" can be seen to have been "constructed" by a pervading ideology through its own discourse, competing discourses are similarly engaged in a process of "seizing" ideological elements and reconstructing them in accordance with their core ideological projects.³

ideas per se. The purpose at this point is not to enter into such debates over *why* ideologies are transmitted, but rather *how* they are.

² The interconnectedness of ideology and social structure has a long history of debate. Gramsci (1971) developed Marx's notion of "embeddedness" into the concept of hegemony, describing ideology as a cultural and political form of class dominance. Hegemony, however, implies that ideologies are selected only if they support the position of economic elites and political leadership. Gramsci (1971:341) affirms the necessity of ideology to be derived from social structure (ie. the causative direction is: material structure → ideology) by distinguishing between "organic" (embedded) and "arbitrary" ideologies, with the latter struggling due to its failure to be realised in social structure. On the other hand, theorists such as Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argue that ideology cannot be reduced to material structure, and that it is, in fact, the ideological practice of discourse that creates political identities in the first place. Processes of articulation may alter the way people conceptualise the social structure, and furthermore, political changes that occur as a result of this articulation do not have to occur by relating to a rising elite (ie. ideology (discourse) → formation of social structural (class/gender) identities). However, Laclau and Mouffe do concede that for discourses to be effective agents of social change, they must articulate around material relations: "(articulation) cannot consist of purely linguistic phenomena; but must instead pierce the entire material density of the multifarious institutions, rituals and practices through which a discursive formation is structured" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985:109). Wuthnow seems to take a stance somewhere in the middle, where he argues that social structure is important since changes in this are responsible for eliciting fresh ideological alternatives, but also that "issues" ("symbols") dramatising the structure of society are deliberately created by cultural discourse itself: "...wordmongers themselves depend on the rules of symbolic use of which culture consists, if only to violate them" (Wuthnow, 1992:2). He therefore leaves the question of causality open, instead emphasising that it is ideological-structural *interaction* that matters.

³ In Thompson's discussion of various approaches to the study of ideology, he mentions Seliger's (1976) use of the terms "fundamental ideology" and "operative ideology" to distinguish between (i) an ideology's "final goals and grand vistas"; and (ii) the "principles which actually underlie policies and are invoked to justify them" (J. Thompson, 1984:79-81). While going on to critique

In this way, Wuthnow views “society” as a “public culture”, consisting not of an “implicit consensus”, but *created* through symbolic construction by competing ideologies (Wuthnow, 1992:10).⁴ Culture is treated as being something more than substantive issues, concerned less with what it “looks like” than what it achieves and how it achieves this. The importance of culture being examined in this way, in a more *sociological* sense, is implicit in his advocacy of a theory of cultural articulation. He retains the sociological approach of there being a relationship between culture (ideology) and social structure, but sees no reason to commit to one necessarily dominating the other. At the same time, Wuthnow highlights the dynamism behind such relationships - the changing form of both ideology and social structure - and therefore the importance of actors in producing the changes themselves, subject to the availability of social resources.⁵ It is suggested that this type of approach is also useful for interpreting the social and political activism of

Seliger’s essential reduction of ideology as reflecting the conflicts of institutional politics, Thompson retains this contribution, since it highlights the “bifurcation” of political argument often used by ideological movements. The demands of presenting both a broad moral vision, and practical steps towards achieving this vision, often conflict, and Seliger’s separation of the two explains the tendency of ideologies to be in a constant state of change (in order to achieve some degree of internal coherence. And yet, this attention to coherence is merely a matter of political expediency, the overriding concern still being the realisation of the “fundamental ideology”). This flexibility is an important feature of ideological movements, and one that further emphasises the pragmatism with which some issues are chosen (as well as the tensions that they may create).

⁴ The use of the term “societal paradigm” may cause confusion here as it tends (in my mind) to imply some consensus, or overarching cognitive monopoly which is totally dominant. The growth in social and political pluralism has made this state of affairs largely redundant, as opposed to the context of the 1960s and 1970s as described in Chapter Three. And while pluralism *may* constitute a paradigm in itself, for me, the term still insinuates something other than what I want to project. Wuthnow’s “public culture” seems to suggest something more diverse (and with more spaces providing opportunities for articulation, which is really what I am getting at).

⁵ By emphasising the distinction between “cultural sociology” and other approaches (e.g. historical, philosophical, anthropological), Wuthnow is trying to re-emphasise the *niche* that sociology occupies, which is that there is a relationship between culture and social structure (even though there is no agreement within the discipline as to the nature of this relationship). While pointing this out, Wuthnow also (ironically) proposes that this sociological project be better informed by borrowing from the other approaches to culture. That is, he suggests that sociologists ought to assert their unique perspective, but in a way that incorporates material from, say, anthropology and cognitive psychology. (Relating this to cultural articulation theory, it is possible to identify the primarily sociological proposal that social movements can be explained by reference to the broader social environment, as well as the particular attention placed on issues concerning meanings and resources, informed by frame alignment, structural, and organisational models of interaction) (Wuthnow, 1992:3-7).

Christian Conservatism in New Zealand. It is argued here that it is a movement disseminating a specific ideology, which is articulated around elements that are chosen for their effectiveness in frame alignment projects, in order to reconstruct society in a way that reflects the movement's core (fundamental) beliefs. The importance of the "physical" manifestations of the movement itself are likewise stressed, as the leaders and organisations are the actors charged with disseminating the culture of Christian Conservatism, and whose effectiveness may depend on other issues such as organisation and communicative/discursive style.

Returning to the particular ideology of Christian Conservatism in New Zealand, the discussion now traces the process of ideological competition from 1980 to 1990. Characteristics of the broader socio-political environment are provided in order to highlight some of the mediating features that impacted on the movement's lifecycle during this period. A significant aspect of this period was the way in which social liberals began to dominate the production of cultural products (public policy, social movements), and it is with reference to this trend that the discussion proceeds.

II. Post -1984 and New Zealand's Cultural Revolution: The Capture of Social and Political Spaces by Social Liberals

Throughout much of the 1980s, New Zealand was characterised by substantial political upheavals. As emerging cultural forces, social liberalism and libertarianism competed against a residual social conservatism that had fuelled Christian Conservatism in its early years. Liberalism's rapid rise to political hegemony is briefly detailed first, followed by an examination of two crucial moments when Christian Conservatism articulated with spaces created in the socio-political environment. These two moments - the Homosexual Law Reform debates in 1985-86, and the 1987 election - will be used to illustrate the way in which Christian Conservatives attempted to frame their culture over this residual conservatism. In doing this, explanations for their success (and visibility) and failure (and disappearance) are suggested.

(a) The production of libertarian hegemony

From the time the Fourth Labour Government took office in 1984, New Zealand experienced a dramatic shift in its public policy management. The Labour Party had been elected in dramatic circumstances, with many commentators identifying a dissatisfaction with the previous National Government rather than Labour initiatives as the significant factor.⁶ Without any substantial commitment to their constituents, the incoming government then proceeded to implement policies that were radically at odds with the party's traditional philosophy. In policy terms, this involved a rejection of Keynesian economics (itself the cause of conflict within sectors of the business community since the late 1970s) for market liberalism, and consequently an assertion at the social level of the merits of laissez-faire individualism. The radical way in which the subsequent reforms were enacted by Labour has prompted commentators to depict the changes in revolutionary terms (Sharp, 1994; Kelsey, 1994), with some employing the concept of hegemony to describe the transformation by the "libertarian right" (Jesson, 1988:30-55).

The use of the term "hegemony" in relation to the libertarian right is an accurate way of describing what was in many ways a cultural revolution. The public service, as well as many politicians (of all political persuasions), implemented laissez-faire policies with an enthusiasm buoyed by influential business leaders such as Roger Douglas and Bob Jones. Reforms in the economic structure of New Zealand, but particularly the logic behind them, were met with general acceptance by the public, due to factors such as the theory's impenetrable language, the removal of the issue of morality from the changes (economics as the means to the politically-determined end), and the fact that, economically, the business sector was flourishing (Jesson, 1988:30-55). Capture of the economic sphere by the free-market right was then absolute. What was also occurring was a steady growth in the articulation of

⁶ In fact, explanations for the Labour victory in 1984 have often been reduced to the complete absence of any policy detail, and few policy themes. It was thus seen by some as a victory by default more than anything else.

libertarian culture. The peculiar manifestation of laissez-faire economics in New Zealand meant that the philosophy of freedom in the marketplace extended to freedom in people's personal lives. An evident increase in consumer-oriented values from the mid-eighties (Gold and Webster, 1990:1-10,47-69) was complemented by the libertarian right's emphasis on individualism. Gradually, this culture of individualism amongst government policy-makers would be expressed in more rights-affirming legislation.

What was unique about the libertarian right in New Zealand was that it was not immediately accompanied by the moral authoritarianism seen in similar developments overseas. New Zealand's Christian Conservatives, familiar with Reagan and Thatcher's regimes, may have expected this economic lurch to the Right to be accompanied by a formal articulation of moral conservatism. Its form did approximate the expansion of the "New Right" in Britain and the United States half a decade earlier, with think tanks (the Business Roundtable, Centre for Independent Studies) networking with business and public service elites (mainly in Treasury) to communicate and nurture their ideology. In contrast to its Northern Hemisphere counterparts, however, the New Zealand species arguably had a higher degree of internal consistency.⁷ This, of course, may have been a function of the way it was introduced. While the New Right overseas had to compete electorally and hence appeal to a broader constituency, the snap election of 1984 could be characterised by an absence of such "politics" and compromises. Two moments - the Homosexual Law Reform Bill, and the 1987 election - highlighted the subsequent constraints placed on the Christian Conservative movement, as features of the political environment grew hostile to their agenda. These will be examined next.

⁷ Most, if not all, accounts of the New Right (as an international - read British and American - phenomenon) highlight the philosophical tensions between the different elements that compose the whole - free-market economics, moral conservatism, and religious conservatism (see Levitas, 1986 and Peele, 1984, for an analysis of the New Right during this period). The "monolithic" appearance of the New Right is therefore criticised in such accounts, yet in New Zealand, the general exclusion of social conservatism from the (formal) ideological agenda does give it more coherence as a body of thought.

**(b) Christian Conservative articulation around the Homosexual Law Reform
(1): niche seizure**

The introduction of the Homosexual Law Reform (HLR) Bill in 1985 remains the trigger for the most visible example of Christian Conservative mobilisation in New Zealand history to date. The decriminalisation of sexual activity between consenting adults was seen as a threat to the traditional nuclear family unit, the central element in the Christian Conservative ideology that affirmed both their theology and the broader (fundamental) notion of homogeneity. The petition against the Bill which gathered over 830,000 signatures is significant, for while it still represents probably the largest public protest against a legislative initiative, it was also the most blatant rejection of popular pressure by the legislature itself. As the history surrounding the Bill has been well documented, what I will provide here is a brief account of factors important within a cultural articulation framework.⁸

The success Christian Conservatives enjoyed in the form of the petition was due to their effectiveness within the institutional context of the social environment.⁹ The Christian Conservative ideology had already been produced in the early 1970s and had successfully framed itself with carriers such as SPUC, WFL, SPCS, and NZOME, and continued quietly since then. The HLR Bill presented Christian Conservatives with the opportunity to recreate a new set of meanings around an issue that, for many secular New Zealanders, symbolised a tension between the dwindling consensus society and rampant liberalism. Success, they believed, would herald an important step towards gaining hegemony. A higher level of sophistication to aid in selection was evident as the petition grew, as a major lobby group emerged called the Coalition of Concerned Citizens (CCC). Led by Barry

⁸ Numerous descriptive accounts abound (a good start is Corbett, 1989). Ryan (1986; 1988) provides the most vigorous theoretical analysis, a mainly structural approach based on notions of hegemony, articulation, and discourses of equivalence.

⁹ The “institutional context” in cultural articulation theory refers, again, to “mediating” features (e.g. leadership, networks) which turn the potential constraints and opportunities of the broader “environmental conditions” into resources (see Wuthnow and Lawson, 1994:27-34). It is important to distinguish this from the institutionalisation process, being a strategy a selected ideology must enact in order to protect itself from disturbances in the moral order.

Reed, the group quickly established authority within the movement through the recruitment of leaders and patrons such as Keith Hay, Sir Peter Tait, Norman Jones, Graeme Lee and John Massam (Gordon, 1985).¹⁰ With the CCC coordinating the petition with the already-active Salvation Army, the movement had the opportunity to access a wide audience.

It was at the level of micro-mobilisation and recruitment that the movement had its most obvious success. Christian Conservatives were able to tap into previously constituted neighbourhoods of meaning, in the form of the churches where group consensus had already been established around the issue of homosexuality. In those churches with large numbers of conservatives, and particularly within the growing number of fundamentalist churches, the movement could achieve a high degree of “narrative fidelity”, and the framing efforts required to create a mobilising potential were often minimal. The individual churches also presented access to wider networks through the Church, social networks associated with the churches, and community groups with which the churches were involved. This high degree of organisation and networking meant that the formation of consensus, or ideological selection, had the benefit of occurring in groups, and in the end, ensured a higher degree of mobilisation and level of resources than one-on-one framing.

The Christian Conservative movement also enjoyed some success at providing “empirical credibility” to improve framing success. The fervent networking was already providing various movement carriers with a wealth of informational resources, bestowing authority onto their arguments. The volume of information being disseminated was augmented by the visit of several American figures. Lou Sheldon, Jack Swan, and Bob Weiner arrived during the Law Reform debates, and began citing a variety of studies and case stories aimed at reinforcing anti-

¹⁰ Keith Hay was then ex-mayor of Mt Roskill and an Auckland Regional Authority member, Sir Peter Tait a former mayor of Napier, Norman Jones and Graeme Lee were sitting MPs, and John Massam was then editor of the Christian newspaper *Challenge Weekly*. Barry Reed had started his own church (Gordon, 1985:121-125).

homosexual beliefs.¹¹ The result was a perception of validity for the arguments presented by Christian Conservatives, the “threat” became tangible, and led to a higher level of mobilisation.

Apart from the institutional features above, which essentially increased the opportunities for ideological articulation, the movement’s success in mobilising these networks can be attributed to its ideological structure. Ryan’s analysis of this period explains how the “moral right” articulated around the notion of “family” to activate popular sympathy (Ryan, 1986).¹² By creating “chains of equivalence”, otherwise different elements were articulated into a position of likeness by virtue of their common polar opposition to a single antagonism.¹³ Thus, by aligning various issues such as abortion, feminism, homosexuality, and sex education, through their constructed antagonism to the traditional nuclear family, the world was divided into two opposing camps - the immoral (anti-family) and the moral (pro-family). Ryan states that this ideological structure was especially effective for mobilisation, since it simplified political spaces in an increasingly complex world. The appeal of this was enhanced by the fundamental antagonism being around the “family”, a powerful symbol in many people’s life (Ryan, 1986:108-111).

In similar ways to the hegemonic crisis of the early 1970s, the Christian Conservative ideology was important as it provided much of the logic behind this broader “moral right” code. Being based in a fundamentalist interpretation of

¹¹ Lou Sheldon was (and still is) the founder and director of a United States group called the Traditional Values Coalition, which focuses on opposing equal rights legislation for homosexuals. Jack Swan ran a private organisation with the same goals, and Bob Weiner is described as a “Christian motivationist” (Gordon, 1985:136,138,141).

¹² My problem with the usage of the word “right”, such as in Ryan’s term “moral right”, have been discussed in Chapter Three (footnote 8). “Populist moralism”, employed by Ryan to describe the moral right’s articulatory techniques, highlights the way issues are “popularised” by, amongst other things, constructing elements of its ideology into alignment with those of other ideologies seen as complementary (given a particular antagonism). The effect is to give the semblance of congruence and unity of goals.

¹³ Of course, this “common polar opposition” is, in itself, constructed through discourse. Something becomes opposed to an antagonism only through a meaning system interpreting it that way. See Laclau and Mouffe (1985:105-148) for a fuller explanation.

Christianity, their discourse was one already heavy with polarities (Ammerman, 1988). Their world was one divided between believers and non-believers, between good and evil (Wuthnow and Lawson, 1994:40). It also involved the simplification of spaces, preventing multiple meanings through discursive techniques such as “redundancy” (Witten, 1992:25-30).¹⁴ For fundamentalists, the “enemy” in their diagnostic frame was secular humanism, and provided the motivation for movement participation. This was easily translated into the more secular environment simply by reframing secular humanism with free-ranging liberalism, the threat being not against God but certainty and a constructed “moral consensus”. Such an appeal matched the concerns amongst many secular New Zealanders, who were caught in the middle of vast social-structural changes. And again the appeal was aimed at a reaffirmation of a moral “norm” and national homogeneity.

(c) Christian Conservative articulation around the Homosexual Law Reform (2): political failure

The failure of the petition to stop the passage of the Bill can be explained by the dominance of competing and constraining features of the broader cultural and political environment. While articulating well with sectors of the community, and aided by a strong organisational base, Christian Conservatives still had to compete against supporters of the Bill. Liberal Christians mobilised into groups such as Christian Action, although not to the extent of their conservative counterparts (Evans, 1992:103note99). Gay lobby groups were also active in challenging some of the Coalition’s claims (Evans, 1992:104note112). The support received suggests that much of the country was receptive to the politics of difference, a point reinforced by the controversial nature of the issue at hand. While this support did not seem to match the public antipathy, it accorded with the growing ideological libertarianism of Parliament. Christian Conservatives had

¹⁴ Witten states that redundancy “constitutes a ‘surplus of communication’ regarding the same information, augmenting the probability that its message will be transmitted unambiguously. The goal of redundant communication is thus to reduce interpretative ‘space’ - the possibility of gaps appearing in the text that might enable a plural reading” (Witten, 1992:25).

underestimated the extent to which liberal ideas had established themselves within the community and the Beehive, and over-estimated the effectiveness of appeals to religion.

Politically speaking, New Zealand had also become a relatively unresponsive regime. Business elites and libertarian thinkers had secured their place in the executive and maintained dominance through a combination of their innovative ideas and the absence of strong opposition. Patterns of intermediation between the government and interest groups were also informalised from 1984, dismantling the corporatist model and replacing it with a free-market style of pluralism (Mulgan, 1989:122-124). However, professional lobby groups such as the Business Roundtable and the Centre for Independent Studies (NZ), whose recommendations supported both liberal economics and libertarian philosophy (Jesson, 1988:48-52), soon appeared to command a disproportionate influence (Vowles, 1992:361). The pace of the reforms being implemented also proceeded rapidly, many large-scale initiatives being passed with minimal debate. This political environment, which could be characterised as “moderately repressive, output-strong” by employing Kitschelt’s (1988:62-66) typology of political opportunity structures, often has the effect that social movements operating under those conditions will typically demonstrate challenges to the structure of political access, as well as occasional confrontations (Kitschelt, 1988:66-72). This is an accurate description of what was to follow.

The failure of the mobilisation around the HLR to stop the passage of the Bill was also the beginning of a strategic reconceptualisation within the Christian Conservative movement. Still convinced that New Zealand was an essentially morally conservative country, many Christian Conservative leaders perceived the state to have been captured by secular liberals. As Max Shierlaw from the Coalition of Concerned Citizens sees it:

There’s an underlying philosophy in a lot of the civil service, they’ve almost got their own agenda. The State Sector Act has given an open invitation to public servants to make the rules (Max Shierlaw).

Moreover, the high legislative productivity of the state was perceived to be effecting a great degree of value change amongst society in general, away from normative consensus towards an ever-increasing acceptance of pluralism. Christian Conservatives came to the conclusion that causal priority lay with the state, and that in order to establish cultural dominance, public policy had to be placed under control.¹⁵

Almost all of the key figures in the present (New) Christian Conservative movement illustrate a firm belief that a shift in state philosophy was responsible for the promotion of liberal values, and an antagonism towards the politics of homogeneity. The increase in a commitment to liberalism was seen to occur across all government departments, from the justice system to the education and health sectors. Colleen Beyer from Family Life International states:

(Liberal values are being taught) through TV, through the media, through the Family Planning Association in particular...through the government, the Ministry of Health, women's groups. It's a major move and its been systematic, a strategic move throughout the last century towards a new world order, to move away from the tradition of the Christian ethic to a one world ethic that is based on a secular world view that doesn't include God (Colleen Beyer).

Colleen's comment is an example of how the ideological threat to Christian Conservatives has not only been identified, but also personified. The antagonisms between contrasting chains of equivalences, that Ryan highlighted during the HLR, were being cast in a "character" of their own. There was still a constructed opposition in terms of the effects various actors had on the family, but the actors were also beginning to be perceived as having a greater purpose about their work.

¹⁵ This attitude of political unresponsiveness is supported by Gold and Webster's 1989 study of "New Zealand Values Today". Gold, commenting on the findings of this survey, suggests that there were some "very real and marked differences between the political values and attitudes of the New Zealand public and the guiding priorities, beliefs and actions of their rulers" (Gold, 1992:38). Two-thirds of the sample, he states, agreed with the view that "public officials don't care much about what people like me think" (Gold, 1992:36). The general theme behind Gold's chapter centres on the problematic notion that "political culture" (being the citizenry's basic values and beliefs) shapes public policy in New Zealand.

“Liberalism” became an agent through which a “one world order” would be established, and this was constructed as being a deliberate attempt to remove God from politics, and therefore society. While much of a discourse of equivalence is used to frame up events for potential movement recruits, the symbolism behind “one world order” rhetoric was directed at how members themselves internalise and make sense of the issues at hand.¹⁶ The outcome of “making sense” of the issues increasingly involved the infiltration of politics.

(d) The 1987 election and the failure of Christian Conservatives to institutionalise their ideology

The 1987 election and the second instance of mass Christian Conservative mobilisation indicated the importance Christian Conservatives placed on the formal political sphere as opposed to public articulation. The periodical published by the CCC, the *Coalition Courier*, printed a list of preferred candidates with respect to “moral” issues. Coalition members such as Rob Wheeler stood for the National Party.¹⁷ The *Courier* itself indirectly supported the National Party as a whole, reminding subscribers that Labour had “already opened the sluice gates for moral pollution”, and another term could see the nation “wallowing in the mire of permissiveness” (Simmons, cited in Evans, 1992:104note115). By ousting Labour from office, Christian Conservatives felt that the political system would be more willing to hear their concerns, and more likely to implement these in policy.

¹⁶ Evans cites a passage in the *Coalition Courier* that exemplifies this increasing personification of the social milieu: “We must understand that this battle (against secular humanism) is being fought not only on a human plane. It is a battle in the spiritual realm ‘against the principalities, against the powers, against the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places’” (Evans, 1992:105note120). Not only was it being personified, but also placed directly into a biblical context. This was to occur more often into the 1990s.

¹⁷ Rob Wheeler preached about the significance of the upcoming election for Christian Conservatives: “A Satanic revival has touched New Zealand! Our nation has been converted to secular humanism, which is anti-Bible and anti-Christian! Satan has been at work at all levels, right up to the government...When we can send Christians into Parliament...we can effect a change in our nation that will touch the heart of every man and every woman. We need to be in every level of society” (Stratford, 1986:124).

When Labour won the election with a higher majority, the Coalition of Concerned Citizens effectively disbanded. The group had widened the issues it was publicly “concerned” with, and included subjects such as loyalty to the Queen and flag, opposition to the Bill of Rights, the promotion of private enterprise, and the threat of communism (Evans, 1992:86). In this sense, it was a similar framing scenario to the early 1970s, when the Christian Conservative discourse reflected a constituency made up of the various right-wing issues groups that had appeared through the eighties (Spoonley et al, 1988). Yet to understand why the CCC lost momentum when the social and political climate was providing arguably more fuel for the “moral entrepreneurs”, and when it enjoyed a wealth of organisational resources such as networks and leadership, one must return to the issue of culture. Did the Christian Conservative movement, as embodied in the CCC, present a culture that resonated with a significant proportion of the electorate?

The answer is both yes and no. On the one hand, the fundamental ideology of Christian Conservatism had matured. While it is again important to separate the visible, substantive issues used in framing exercises from the core, or fundamental, ideology of the movement, the amalgamation of Christian Conservatism with right-wing groups within the CCC had exposed the former to the conspiracy-mindedness of the latter. This was especially true with regard to anti-communist groups - the “one world order” scenario presented by modern Christian Conservative activists mirrors the “secret totalitarian, world-wide conspiracy” arguments utilised by the League of Rights (Spoonley et al, 1988:95). The reason once more is that this anti-communist discourse complemented an emerging theme within Christian Conservative circles (and especially amongst Pentecostal churches) to explain the world not just in the simplified terms of dualisms, but in terms of a religious project that placed these dualisms in a context lined with a call for mobilisation.¹⁸ The idea of an “army of conspirators”, which could explain the perceived misrepresentation of the government and value-confusion of the people, appealed to Christian Conservatives. It both confirmed that an outside influence was deliberately

¹⁸ The theme of a religiously-based frame of mobilisation is elaborated below.

infiltrating “their” spaces, at the same time as legitimising action against the constructed antagonists. In this way the movement made an ideological step from simple diagnosis, to prognosis, absorbing an alien ideological element into its core belief system and providing a more satisfactory moral code for its core constituents.¹⁹

On the other hand, and of greater significance, their discourse had lost the attention it had commanded with the general public in 1985-86. As some commentators have suggested, the support the petition enjoyed had probably more to do with general community hostility towards the idea of homosexuality than with a commitment to Conservative Christianity (Evans, 1992:89). By 1987, although casual rhetoric might have indicated otherwise, the National Party were concerned with other matters.²⁰ The issue had also lost much of its symbolic power, as the passage of the HLR Bill had not changed the lives of most heterosexuals. “Communism” and “feminism” were also losing their cultural resonance, as the uncertainty that characterised the early years of the Fourth Labour Government (and had made it easier to exploit these alien phenomenon) gave way to an optimistic consumerism, buoyed by the growth in the business sector. The niches that such ideas appealed to thus grew smaller, in part because of this loss in uncertainty about the social order but also because the issues used to symbolise this uncertainty had become less alien (feminism looked less threatening as notions of equality and personal freedom gained wider acceptance). In terms of a structural analysis of its ideology, Christian Conservatism had failed to innovate. Elements such as communism, homosexuality, and (admittedly to a lesser extent) feminism did not dramatise, or represent, something that many people were worried about, and the constructions that held the discourse together (or wove these elements into a great conspiracy)

¹⁹ The use of “satisfactory” may be assuming too much. However, since prognosis involves the identification of important issues and the ascription of meaning to them, the proposal of a course of action aimed at ameliorating these concerns would seem to be logically appealing step.

²⁰ Stratford described a National Party branch meeting where Sir Robert Muldoon spoke out against homosexuals, the Labour Party as communists, communists in general, and feminists (Stratford, 1986:135). Despite this, the Labour Party was economically-speaking possibly more right-wing than National itself, and women held several senior Party positions at the time.

grew less plausible as the image of the traditional nuclear family became tainted by those who exposed its myths.²¹ As Christian Conservatism grew less popular in both political and public arenas, the CCC withdrew from visibility, and the movement returned to its enclaves.

III. Imported Theology and the Christian Heritage Party

While the movement seemed to disappear with the failure of the CCC, it would be wrong to assume that Christian Conservatism had run out of ideas. In fact, quite the opposite was occurring. The identification over the last three years that the government was to be the target for mobilisation was now widely accepted by the leaders of the movement. This was a position hardened by the HLR but also reinforced by other events. The Ministry of Women's Affairs had been set up in 1985, and the 1985 Education Amendment Act (which required parental consultation in the provision of sex education) confirmed the perceived influence the government held in promoting "secular humanism". Annetta Moran had led a "Say No" campaign with Women for Life in 1987, and despite claiming some success (Vandenberg, 1988:40-41), their purpose was to still to provide some challenge to the "monopoly" on sex education in New Zealand that the government-approved Family Planning was perceived to enjoy (Vandenberg, 1988:41). Earlier, a National Party MP, Graeme Lee, had been instrumental in allocating \$25,000 of lottery committee grants to NZOME (McLoughlin, 1992:95), a group comprised of a small number of Christian educators, and which

²¹ The second point in this sentence may need some further explanation. Ideological elements are constructed as being related to one another (ie. the idea that communism and feminism are part of a world-wide secular humanist plot). Ryan (1986) suggested that Christian Conservatives achieve this through creating a system of equivalences, where elements are related by virtue of their common (equivalent) difference to a fundamental antagonism, which in their case is the traditional nuclear family. What I am suggesting here is that this system of relatedness broke down, in part due to the de-mythologising of this narrow view of the family (e.g. unequal power relations, abuse), and its replacement by a broader vision of what "family" could be. Since feminism was not perceived to be in antagonism with this new conception of the family, its position in the "chain of equivalence" broke. This consequently made it harder to equate what always had been different issues. (Unless, of course, they were both perceived as democratising projects, in which case they could possibly be constructed into antagonism with an unequal power-distribution of normative consensus. Although this may have in fact been what they were doing, this modernist conceptualisation seemed to be absent until the 1990s).

subsequently published a “values education” programme in response to the 1985 Act.²² Thus smaller Christian Conservative groups and individuals were still attempting to provide alternatives to “secular humanism”, but conceded that their effectiveness was limited without access to government.

One group of Christian Conservatives responded with their own solution. Bill van Rij, a CCC organiser and member of the Reformed Church of New Zealand, had heard of the Christian Heritage Party in Canada and visited them after the CCC disbanded in 1987. In 1989, a formal political party called the Christian Heritage Party of New Zealand (CHP) was formed, with van Rij the president and the Reverend Graham Capill party leader. While earlier Christian Conservative political activism had aimed at influencing political decisions through public pressure, this was the first expression of a Christian Conservative core ideological project aimed at contesting the leadership, and control, of the political arena. As discussed above, it was a project that had been gradually taking shape over the last five or six years, nourished by a discourse that had absorbed the narratives of similar anti-humanist frames. The Christian Heritage Party of New Zealand took advantage of this developing ideological tone and combined it with a well-established theological tradition, that of the Reformed Church. Not content to merely lobby through existing channels (the CCC had failed, and the National Party increasingly appeared to be patronising), the goal of the Christian Heritage Party was explicit - to “elect candidates of high moral integrity; establish Christian morality in our civil government; and establish legislation which reflects Christian principles” (Christian Heritage Party publication, cited in Evans, 1992:104note118).

²² Produced by the New Zealand Organisation for Moral Education, and written by David Elliot-Hogg and Stewart Christie, *Values Education: a Programme For Schools* claims to be “a philosophy scheme, not a religious programme” (Elliot-Hogg and Christie, 1985:4). However, a perusal of the index reveals 16 references to “spiritual dimension”, 8 references to “God”, and just 3 references to “sex”, the same number given to “fornication” (and occurring in the same modules). Also, a sixth of the introduction is devoted to quotations from Christian author C.S. Lewis (“By starving the sensibility of our pupils we make them easier prey to the propagandist when he comes”), and includes module questions that encourage discussion on topics such as “Secularism and humanism have a negative effect on society”(p.92).

The CHP was a new type of Christian Conservative expression, not simply because of the vehicle it chose to employ, but particularly because of these changes occurring at the level of fundamental ideology. The same year as the CHP was formed, the Reformed Church had held a committee on debates surrounding the issue of "Theonomy", a term used to describe the application of Old Testament principles to all areas of life (Reformed Churches of New Zealand, 1989:4.1). Support for Theonomist interpretations of the Christian evangelical project had begun to develop a following in the United States, expressed in institutions such as the Chalcedon Foundation, the Institute for Christian Economics, and Geneva Ministries, but limited to the informal political sphere. Its appearance in New Zealand, however, suggests how receptive conservative Christians had become to this type of theology, which included a Biblical mandate that rejected being confined to evangelism. In its technical sense, theonomy implied that "the Old Testament law offers us a model for socio-political reconstruction in our day, and that this law is to be enforced by the civil magistrate where and how the stipulations of God so designate" (Reformed Churches of New Zealand, 1989:4.2). The "reconstruction" of society entailed political coercion, and therefore the need to capture this sphere (ie. establish a theocracy). A comparison of the leadership and membership of the two organisations leaves the impression that the CHP had indeed become the political wing of the Reformed Church, and that the Christian Conservative movement sought to pursue its ideological goals in a way that had not been seen before.

IV. Summary

Whereas the previous chapter examined how the ideology of Christian Conservatism was created in the space provided by changes to the moral order around 1970, this chapter has explored how the ideology was managed during the 1980s. Specifically, two challenges to the moral order - in the form of the Homosexual Law Reform, and the 1987 election - created further spaces for the articulation of a conservative Christian politics, and these two moments illustrated how the movement was developing as a cultural phenomenon.

The first moment was seized effectively by the Christian Conservative movement, exploiting the issue of homosexuality in order to promote its own ideology. This issue, which caused a moment of uncertainty in the growing consensus around liberalism, provided the movement with the opportunity to articulate a position in opposition to homosexuality, and hence capture a niche as the “alternative”. While this period demonstrated the power of some of the Christian Conservative ideological symbols, such as “the family”, it also revealed a new feature of the social environment, in the form of an unresponsive state.

The second key moment in the 1980s reinforced the problem Christian Conservatism had in relation to an unsympathetic state. Yet the failure of the Coalition of Concerned Citizens to mobilise a victory in the 1987 elections also signified an emerging dilemma for the ideology of Christian Conservatism and the movement in general. Firstly, the focussed nature of the ideology at that time prevented it from encompassing a broad range of issues, or more importantly, prevented it from articulating a position around issues that were topical and which held interest. The movement was therefore unable to mobilise a constituency large enough to compete effectively. Secondly, the reluctance of many previously loyal constituents to compete at this formal level of politics revealed a potentially more serious concern for the movement. As long as a tradition of church - state separation existed in the Christian Conservative discourse, mobilisation in this arena would always be hampered. Many sympathetic observers were unwilling to participate as a result of this tradition, and this limited Christian Conservatism’s potential.

Yet the chapter ended by briefly looking at the source of the inspiration behind the movement’s revival in the 1990s. Seemingly minor stirrings among some of the more hard-line Christian Conservatives were evidence of a new way of conceptualising the Christian Conservative’s role in society. These changes, in the nature of the ideology itself, intimated a new legitimacy for Christian Conservatives as political actors. The next chapter investigates how the movement addressed its

problematic relationship with its constituency, by enacting an ideological transformation, as well as bringing a fresh approach to political engagement.

Chapter Five

The New Christian Conservatism

To recap on Chapters Three and Four, a visible difference in Christian political engagement emerged around 1970 as liberals and conservatives schismed in the face of theological disputes and a growing challenge to the politics of homogeneity. A Christian Conservative identity formed in the late 1970s as a consequence of this disturbance, and movement actors developed the ideology by aligning it with other conservative discourses in an effort to extend the movement's constituency.

In the 1980s, the movement was characterised by further articulations around the politics of homogeneity, as it competed with a democratising, pluralistic movement for control of political spaces. Some success at consensus mobilisation with a significant proportion of the public was achieved during the Homosexual Law Reform. Yet this period was otherwise marked by Christian Conservatism's failure to penetrate the state apparatus, or to institutionalise itself with its new constituents after the Law Reform debates. By the end of the 1980s, changes in the movement's fundamental ideology needed to occur in order to ensure a steady level of mobilisation, and to legitimise formal political (as opposed to merely popular) engagement.

This chapter will describe and analyse the movement in the 1990s, as it came to terms with an increasingly pluralistic culture. The approach adopted by this movement differed markedly from previous manifestations. Ideological innovations, and an increasing sophistication in its organisational strength and articulation strategies, were features of this notably different movement. As New Christian Conservatives, key figures created spaces for articulation, and mobilised constituents into political action, through a re-narration of the movement's discourse. These re-narrations recast the traditional roles of Christianity and the

state. In particular, by claiming that the discourses employed by the state for its own legitimation were themselves of an inherently religious nature, New Christian Conservatives sought to sanction their own political involvement.

Section One outlines the inspiration behind the ideological innovation of New Christian Conservatism. Emphasis will be placed on the subtle changes occurring in the meanings and obligations attached to being a conservative Christian, and the implications of this for the political mobilisation of the movement. The second section highlights the movement's organisational developments, being key elements in the dissemination of New Christian Conservatism and its ability to compete with rival ideologies. The final section describes and analyses the cultural and political framing of New Christian Conservatism, providing a backdrop to the last Chapter which explores recent examples of New Christian Conservative activism.

I. Theological Innovations and Changes to the Fundamental Ideology of Christian Conservatism

I have been arguing that conservative Christian activism can be understood by placing it within the epistemological framework of cultural sociology. Hence, questions concerning "why" the movement was produced have been approached by examining changes in the broad structure of society, and how these changes threaten an established culture, or open spaces for competing cultures to articulate around. "How" questions can be dealt with through reference to the dramaturgic and structural levels of analysis, examining how the ideology interacts with its environment. The process of niche articulation (the framing of one culture onto another), as well as the institutional (micro-structural) variables through which this is accomplished, are features of such explanations.

With this in mind, it is possible that accounts for the change in the strategies of conservative Christian activism during the nineties, from informal articulation to

the identification and engagement of the formal political sphere, may therefore have been reduced to the structure of political opportunities.¹

Yet such a reduction ignores a peculiar feature of conservative Christianity itself, in that the religion had developed an explicit tradition of church-state separation, and one that was certainly transplanted to New Zealand and affirmed early in our history. To challenge this tradition would require more than a simple re-evaluation of the opportunities available for evangelism. This shift in the conceptualisation of the proper role between church and state had to occur at the more fundamental level of ideology, in the way conservative Christianity was self-conceived as a cultural actor. It was this function that the Dutch Reformed Church had begun to provide in 1989 with the discussion of theonomy. This not only legitimised state engagement, but more importantly recreated the broader theological meanings surrounding the Christian Conservative's role in society.

(a) Reconstructionism and the Reformed Churches of New Zealand

The introduction of the theonomy of the Reformed Church and the subsequent launch of the Christian Heritage Party belonged to a Christian theological tradition recognised variously as “post-millennialism”, “Christian reconstructionism”, “Kingdom Now”, or “dominion theology”.² Inspired by Calvinist rather than strict Protestant doctrine, reconstructionist beliefs held that the “Second Coming” of

¹ By “reduced to the structure of political opportunities”, I mean that one explanation might view Christian Conservatives as having identified an aspect of the social environment that had been monopolised by a liberal ideology (formal political influence), and that Christian Conservatives simply altered their operational strategies to penetrate this sphere. Elements of secularisation theory might be utilised - as society became rationalised, societalised, and socially differentiated, religion was forced out of the formal public sphere, only to reaffirm itself when certain crisis points were reached. On the face of it, this might seem to be a plausible thesis. However, this explanation is problematic, as the following discussion points out.

² “Post-millennialism” and “dominion theology” are usually mentioned by North American commentators who contrast them to the more popular theological vein (in the United States) of “pre-millennialism”, and can be found in many accounts of United States religious political activity from the mid-eighties (e.g. Diamond, 1989; Ammerman, 1991; Harding, 1994) (see below for a further explanation of these traditions). “Christian reconstructionism” usually refers to the way in which such traditions are applied to economic theory, justifying the free market as the only system compatible with “God’s Word” (a brief overview is given in Iannaccone, 1993).

Christ would occur only after “God’s Kingdom” had been established in society - once society had been *reconstructed* according to Biblical Law.³ The perceived capture of society by a secular-humanist state has meant that Christian principles were not being taught, nor upheld by the law. Reconstructionists therefore propose to “take dominion” over the state, by a process of weakening and de-legitimising the state on the one hand, and working with the grass-roots support to encourage mobilisation (Ammerman, 1991:53).⁴ Reconstructionism had developed into a small but growing part of the Christian Right in the United States, through writers such as Rousas Rushdooney, Gary North, David Barton, and Dennis Peacocke. Using the Bible as a “blueprint” both for government policy as well as personal morality, such leaders have become important proponents of the challenge to the public/private compartmentalisation of religious doctrine in America, maintaining that any attempt to uphold this separation is an attempt to “usurp God’s rightful place of lordship” (Ammerman, 1991:51). Their writing also (therefore) implies a rejection of any distinction between secular and religious “truth” - the former being an “imposter”, to be undermined and “conquered” in the theocratic imperative. Consequently, reconstructionist writing seems to have been divided between the earlier literature expounding the reconstructionist “position” to its supporters (e.g. in relation to economics, such as North’s “Institute for Christian Economics”), and more recent (and popularised) articulations on how to achieve their goals (such as Barton’s “WallBuilders, Inc.” communications organisation).

³ Influential American Christian reconstructionist Dennis Peacocke, in his book *Winning the Battle for the Minds of Men*, explains that the duty of modern Christians is to “[o]ccupy (in victory) until Christ comes” (Peacocke, 1987:xiv). A recurrent theme, that the separation of church and state is false, is vividly described in chapter four: “The highest form of deception is to get your enemy to destroy himself with ideas you have planted so subtly that he believes they are his own. The current debate over the separation of church and state is perhaps our most dangerous example of such deception. It is an argument framed by the world’s political system, erroneously reinforced by the worldly religious philosophers, and, of course, undergirded by the invisible spirits of Satan” (Peacocke, 1987:45).

⁴ Ammerman cites a passage in North’s publication *Theology of Christian Resistance*, where he states that the reconstructionist strategy “seeks to remove the political and institutional barriers to God’s law in order to impose God’s law...In most instances, this must be a ‘bottom-up’ program” (North, 1983:63). She also goes on to describe typical strategies encouraged by North, such as supporting any political program that limits the power of the secular state and its bureaucracy (e.g. reducing taxation), as well as those policies that “embody Christian morality” (Ammerman, 1991:53).

The transferral of theonomy into New Zealand has occurred with few alterations. In the Christian Heritage Party's 1996 manifesto, it is stated that: "The Christian Heritage Party believes that the principles set out in the Bible present a secure framework for our society and a code of practice for the wise government of our nation" (Christian Heritage Party, 1996:2). This stance is further elaborated under "Party Principles", by stating: "We believe that any legislative decision or referendum to be held must not contravene Biblical principles", and that their theological view is one of Biblical inerrancy (Christian Heritage Party, 1996:25).⁵ Their controversial endorsement of capital punishment (the issue's longevity suggestive of a core principle as opposed to a mere popular stance) is also consistent with the Reformed Church's theonomy report, which resolves that the state's "sphere of authority is that of justice. It must punish social violations of God's law. It's ultimate exercise of that authority is the use of capital punishment" (Reformed Churches of New Zealand, 1989:4.11). Rushdooney's view of income redistribution being nothing more than "institutionalised theft" (Iannaccone, 1993:348) seems to be reflected in their advocacy of a flat tax rate and the lowering of income support (Christian Heritage Party, 1996:6-7). In fact it is in this realm of economic policy where the most astonishing principles stand out. Their seemingly allergic attitude towards government revenue and spending (in certain "immoral" places), coupled with their enthusiasm for the private sector, places them further to the right, economically-speaking, than the National Party, which had been rejected by fellow Christian Conservative Graeme Lee by 1995. While light on particulars, the principles contained in their economic policy smacks of a

⁵ The distinction between Biblical 'inerrancy' and "literalism" are important. The former claims that the Bible represents the true "Word of God", while allowing some space for the exact interpretation of these principles. Literalism, on the other hand, claims that the Bible is both inerrant, and must be understood *literally* as it is written, verbatim. In the Report of the Study Committee on Theonomy, the Reformed Church mentioned that their dilemma was not "whether or not the civil magistrate should apply God's law, but to what extent God's law applies in its detail" (Report of the Study Committee on Theonomy, Acts of the 19th Synod of the Reformed Churches of New Zealand, 1989:4.10). The committee's conclusions seemed to favour what they labelled as "Bahnsen's Views on Church and State", which argued that the civil magistrate "ought to enforce the Old Testament law of God *in its exhaustive detail*" (italics added). Such a position would suggest a literal view of the Bible, rather than one of mere inerrancy. It is uncertain why this has not been transplanted into the Christian Heritage Party's manifesto, as most of their other material reflects this literal belief.

deep distrust of the secular state and its influence on shaping the moral and religious climate.⁶ Rushdooney's remark that: "The battle for the free market is but one facet of a battle against idolatry" (Iannaccone, 1993:349), parallels the overall tone of the Christian Heritage Party's policy, both in its goal to rid New Zealand of state-practised "blasphemy" at the same time as recreating the state's "legitimate" functions to suit.

Outside the manifesto, and directed at their core constituents rather than the secular public, the party illustrated both the theological rationale for such policies as well as providing the mandate to pursue them. When list candidate Renton MacLauchlan's "position speech" at a Strategic Leadership Network seminar before the 1996 election relayed how "justice, ultimately and inevitably and always, is a theological issue", he was rejecting what he saw as the secular state's illegitimate dominion:

Where is justice grounded? Where does ultimate authority lie? God rules and has told us the rules, for *individuals and nations*. It is here that true legitimacy is grounded...Jesus confirmed emphatically the continuity unless otherwise stated of Biblical Law in minute detail, in our present time, which of course includes the sanctions (MacLauchlan, 1996, my italics).

⁶ A scroll through the guiding principles of the 1996 manifesto reveals several broad statements about restricting fiscal policy: "Our long term aim is for lower taxes and a tax system that is equitable and easy to administer. To achieve this...government spending (should be) controlled". This would be enabled by "encouraging the gradual transfer for health, education and superannuation to the private sector". In effect, it would simultaneously limit the power of the secular state as well as increasing the power of religious organisations. In terms of inventing a new role for fiscal policy, the proposed tax policy ought to "allow married couples to divide their combined income between them for tax purposes", "increase the tax rebate for donations to charitable organisations", and "introduce a voucher system to enable parents to purchase public or private education for their children" (Christian Heritage Party, 1996:6-7). Such an economic position goes beyond the relatively inarticulate support earlier Christian Conservatives exhibited towards free-market policies, and considering many Christian Conservatives had felt that the "Rogernomics" of the 1980s had contributed to an increase in liberal social ideas, this earlier expression was probably an articulation against "communism" than a coherent project. Also, unlike other examples of Christian economic commentary of the early 1990s, any mention of the state's role in providing "social justice" was conspicuously absent (compare it, for example, to Smithies and Wilson, 1993; and Boston, 1994). In this sense, the Christian Heritage Party shared more similarities to the United States' Religious Right of the 1980s.

The reconstructionist's duty in the present hostile environment was clarified later by Graham Capill, as he appealed to Scripture and Calvinist predestination for a call towards mobilisation:

When Mordecai and his fellow Jews were living in desperate times, and Haman was intent upon wiping out God's people, he reminded Queen Esther, didn't he, 'who knows whether you have not attained royalty for a time such as this?'...we are living in desperate times, are we not? Intolerance against Christian beliefs and practices is unprecedented.... And so I want to conclude by asking, who knows whether God hasn't raised us up, for a time such as this? (Graham Capill, 1996, speech at the launch of the Christian Coalition in Auckland).

The introduction of theonomy had a significant influence on the decision of a section of the Christian Conservative community to enter into the formal arena of politics in 1989. Theonomy represented a potentially different ideological code for Christian Conservatism. But what of the subsequent mobilisation of many more Christian Conservatives later in the next decade? Some parallels with this initial innovation are now drawn.

(b) Post-millennialists under the bed: late-at-night literature

The influence of theonomy on the wider Christian Conservative community can be illustrated with reference to the United States context. Christian reconstructionists in the United States still represent a small proportion of that country's overall religious population. The dominant theological perspective amongst the Christian Right remains evangelical fundamentalism, with a pre-millennial orientation. This is the way they "read current history and the daily news" (Harding, 1994:58).⁷ The

⁷ Some points need to be made here. Iannaccone remarks that the apparently esoteric distinctions between Christian religious affiliations are extremely important for understanding why the "New Christian Right" are becoming increasingly political. Reasons for the neglect of these distinctions vary from social-scientist and media "umbrella" labelling of a movement that is in itself diverse (e.g. Bruce, 1988), to researcher's problems overcoming the stigma attached to some terms (e.g. "fundamentalist") when interviewing respondents (not to mention the researcher's ignorance about such distinctions e.g. literalism vs inerrancy). Likewise, demographic data on different church denominations is unhelpful, since even examining "evangelical fundamentalist-type" churches does not discriminate between a variety of sub-identities within the congregation. He advises that we accept Reichley's conclusion that "there is...no reliable statistical tool for distinguishing within evangelical ranks between fundamentalists and nonfundamentalists"

more prevalent pre-millennialism can be contrasted with the reconstructionist's post-millennial theonomy:

They (pre-millennialists) are futurist in that they divide the end of history into two distinct periods: the present, or the Last Days, in which Biblical prophecies are *not* being fulfilled, and the future, the Great Tribulation, in which they *are* fulfilled. The prevailing futurist scheme amongst born-again Christians, called 'dispensationalism', specifically denies all true Christians any role in the final fulfilment of Biblical prophecies by 'rapturing' them off the earth for the Tribulation - they cannot, by definition, directly enact Bible prophecies in the way, say, David Koresh could. Still, they too *enact* their apocalypics. Their End Time stories are formative and constitutive, and thus are 'political' in the sense of creating a particular *lived* reality (Harding, 1994:58).

The messages of dispensationalism, in contrast to those of theonomy, could therefore be characterised as the politics of inevitability versus that of immediacy. The practical significance of this distinction is great. As long as dispensationalist Conservative Christians perceive the world to be hurtling towards Armageddon, and yet are pre-destined to have no role in its reformation, political action becomes considerably more futile. As the 1980s wore on, many dispensationalist preachers such as Falwell, LaHaye, and Lindsey realised that such a discourse limited the power of their fundamentalist "truth" by marginalising themselves from political involvement. While reluctant to associate too closely with reconstructionists, since their often militant rhetoric and unwillingness to compromise undermined the broader appeal of the New Christian Right, such leaders recognised the value of post-millennial discourse in mobilising Christians and creating political spaces. By reframing their own dispensationalist discourse, and claiming that Christians would still be judged on how they had *prepared* society for the Second Coming, Christian Right leaders were able to animate more than "band-aid" evangelism, and enacted a shift of emphasis to "mobilisation, not liberation" (Diamond, 1989:83-110).

(Iannaccone, 1993:361note7). Iannaccone's point that such distinctions do matter in the United States (his main interest being with Christian economics) is something that I also want to emphasise for the New Zealand situation.

Furthermore, by moulding this mandate into a theological issue, this “new” dispensationalism was effective in persuading uneasy Christian Conservatives of the “unpolitical” nature of their project, and hence in “blocking critical thought about how *all* religious discourses...are political and efficacious” (Harding, 1994:59). The steady rise within the New Christian Right’s ranks of the Coalition on Revival, Peacocke’s reconstructionist organisation, attests to this development. It was an uneasy but important ideological stitching that enabled the New Christian Right’s leaders to energise sympathisers into a new decade of mobilisation. As a New Christian Right leader remarked: “Though we hide their books under the bed, we read them just the same” (Iannaccone, 1993:349).

II. New Christian Conservatism in New Zealand

The new ideological wave of Christian Conservatism in New Zealand emerged at a time when the movement in the United States had reached some maturity. A plethora of American Conservative Christian think tanks and grass roots organisations had acted as the vehicle for much of their ideological/theological transformation, and had been refining the art of ideological articulation and mobilisation for some time. These actors, and the new dispensational discourses communicated by them, were adopted by key figures in New Zealand as models upon which to establish a new culture of Christian conservatism.

The principal cultural actors behind the new dispensationalism surfaced in the early 1990s with the formation of the New Zealand Education Development Foundation (NZEDF) in 1991 and the Strategic Leadership Network (SLN) in 1993. The director of NZEDF, Bruce Logan, describes the motivation for his involvement:

My aim is specifically to get Christians to understand the nature of the cultural war, and to get them to understand that they have something of significance to say, and if they don’t say it, if they don’t understand it, then they are going to be further marginalised...The new advent of the demise of Christendom is in some ways a very good thing. While the blending of Christian faith and classical thought gave rise to ... Western culture, there was an inherent weakness in it, that is, the idea that the state and the church

did not really sort out their roles properly. Now Christendom as a religious political structure has gone, and in that sense it's good, because it paves the way open for people to understand really what the Christian faith is (Bruce Logan).

Central to Bruce Logan's objectives is re-evaluating the role that conservative Christians perceive their faith as commanding. Similarly, Lindsay Armishaw, the director of the SLN, emphasises both the need to rediscover the "Christian identity", and to reconstitute the obligations that accompany it:

In the past, when it comes to social issues, political issues, community issues, by and large it has been mostly the liberal persuasion that have got involved. The more evangelical, fundamental, committed Christians, Bible-believing Christians, for whatever reason, whatever baggage they've inherited, they have abdicated responsibility for being the salt and light in the nation, as they're required to be according to the Bible they all love. But we've inherited baggage that I believe is false, that we shouldn't be involved (Lindsay Armishaw).

These comments are indicative of the central problem faced by New Christian Conservatives at the time. The "marginalisation" that Bruce Logan speaks of originates from two sources. Firstly, (secular) Western culture is to blame. But also significant is the current ideology ascribed to by conservative Christians, the "false baggage" in Lindsay's words. Recasting the agency of conservative Christians within their established metanarrative became a prime objective. Yet one of the defining features of attempts to reshape the core ideology is also a re-narration of the ideology itself (Harding, 1994:71).⁸ If Christian Conservatism were to survive, fundamental changes to the essence of the ideology - and the ideological code itself - had to be enacted. Bruce Logan and Lindsay Armishaw, as central cultural actors, saw their role as facilitating this process of change, to make the old Christian Conservative movement "understand" the nature of their "requirements"

⁸ One of the difficulties with translating accounts of Christian political activism from a United States context is the lack of similar research in New Zealand. Without accounts of the discursive or theological trends occurring in New Zealand churches, such as the prevalence of premillennial preaching, it is hard to compare or even identify changes. Therefore, when "orthodox premillennialism" is used to describe the "established Christian Conservative ideology", this is an assumption based around a sampling of documentary evidence published by Christian Conservatives, in addition to a variety of media accounts. It is consequently not an observation made by someone trained in theology.

as “committed Christians”. Having been enlightened, support would supposedly be generated for the new movement.

(a) The organisational dimension to the New Christian Conservatism

At this point, reference needs to be made to the resources available to the emerging movement to communicate the New Christian Conservative ideology. The social movement began with the creation of the SLN and the NZEDF, yet it did not gain the appearance of one, or gain momentum, until several organisational developments were made. This aspect of ideological selection is what Wuthnow (1987) refers to as the institutional level of analysis, and emphasises the actors and resources involved in disseminating the movement’s ideas. This level of analysis, embodied in resource mobilisation approaches to social movements, involves a “sufficiently complex” array of variables within the micro-mobilisation context, “from budgets to leadership styles, from publishing practices and attendance records to communication networks and personnel policies” (Wuthnow, 1987: 347). Since there is not the space to detail all such elements involved in the organisational dimension of New Christian Conservatism, emphasis here will be placed on the networks accessed and created by the key figures in the movement, with some examples of the documentary material produced by these networks.

(i) E-mailing Jesus: a social movement in an information age

The first notable feature of New Christian Conservatism is the degree of contact with overseas organisations. Figures such as Lou Sheldon had been invited to New Zealand in the 1980s for his experience in campaigning for conservative religious causes. However, advances in technology by the early 1990s made it increasingly easier to form close relationships with foreign organisations who shared similar goals. Bruce Logan recounts the importance of these connections:

Yeah there are hundreds of organisations overseas, well not hundreds, but there are many organisations overseas that I’m in constant contact with, in Britain and in England, some of them

Christian and some of them not...the sharing is pretty one-sided because they're so much bigger than we are ... Now in America of course there are hundreds of them, from every angle you come from... whatever you want, information on any particular aspect or any particular point of view, there is an organisation in the United States who will supply it (Bruce Logan).

Bruce goes on to list the organisations included in the NZEDF's international network. They include the Institute of Economic Affairs and Christian Action Research and Education (CARE) in England, and the Rutherford Institute, The Family Research Institute, and Focus on the Family in the United States amongst others. Similarly, Lindsay Armishaw states:

... the good news is there's always somebody somewhere that's done a lot better, a lot more, than any of us. And so we network around the world with the giants, like Focus on the Family, and CARE foundation, see what they've done. We model after them, we incorporate some of their material. We don't strive to be original, just to be effective - big difference...we don't limit ourselves geographically (Lindsay Armishaw).

The ability that this type of international networking gives to organisations like the SLN and NZEDF to communicate ideas is further illustrated in the example of a pamphlet produced during a debate on euthanasia:

When the euthanasia debate was rearing its head last year, I had all this stuff come across my desk...and I picked up this mickey mouse production...and its not defensive and full of scripture, and I said this is good! And I found out who he was, and this is an example of something we can do and probably do quite well...within forty-eight hours I'd found out that (x) was in London, we spoke to his father, got his permission to reset it, retype it, re-format it, and print 24,000 which went out real quick. So that's the kind of thing we do, we don't have to sit around and write about euthanasia. Somebody ten times better than me or us has done it already. It's wonderful...its teamwork (Lindsay Armishaw).

(ii) Developing and accessing core networks

The second feature of the new movement is the coordination and communication key figures brought to the entrenched conservative Christian population. This was essential if the new discourse was to establish itself and form a base level of

support with which to articulate outside its current parameters. The re-narrations of the established Christian Conservative discourse to politicise the movement, attempted via symbols already present but under-exploited (e.g. "salt and light") were therefore firstly intended to create consensus amongst this core audience. What was then required was a structure of communication with which to disseminate these symbols.

The potential audience for this initial objective is hard to estimate. In terms of religious affiliation, the Reformed Church lists total membership of just over 3000 (Reformed Churches of New Zealand, 1996:60). The Christian Heritage Party itself polled 2.2 percent in 1993. These figures are hardly substantial. Even when one considers the various figures bandied about over the numbers of fundamentalist-style Christians in New Zealand, this usually only hovers around 5 percent, with 3 percent probably a better indication of those whose theology includes an articulate anti-"secular state" discourse.⁹ The pluralist tradition of New Zealand religion, and its increasing diversity in recent years, has made such estimations difficult for researchers.

⁹ The first figure is derived from Lineham, who constructed a figure of between 4-5 percent of the total population which he described as being "evangelical", based mainly on census data up to 1986 (Lineham, 1993:110-111). The 1989 New Zealand Study of Values also estimated the "evangelical" population as being around 5 percent (Webster and Perry, 1989:47). Of course, the term "evangelical" does not necessarily denote a conservative fundamentalist, since liberals may also be evangelical, but at least Lineham's figure was based on the more fundamentalist-style churches. The latter figure is based on church-reported levels of attendance, and, taking the above 5 percent figure, distinguishes between those churches categorised as "Baptist" (2 percent) and "Pentecostal" (2 percent), with the remaining 1 percent made up from the 4 percent regular-attending mainline Protestants (Withy, 1993:123). The 2 percent Pentecostal figure is subtracted, since up until now these churches seem to be more focussed on providing personal salvation than concerning themselves with reforming the outside world. However, their strong growth compared to the other churches (an increase of 30 - 58,000 (98 percent) from 1980-1992), coupled with their high "religious practice" (Pentecostals accounted for half as many regular attenders as mainline Protestants, despite being only 3 percent as large as the latter), and the dispensational style of this worship (Cohen, 1995:114-124), makes them potential pickings for the "new dispensationalism". The overall level of religious affiliation appears to be in decline in New Zealand, with the latest figures from the 1996 Census revealing a reduction in official membership in almost all denominations numbering over 10,000 members. The only exception to this trend, however, are the Pentecostals just mentioned above, who have grown from 25,368 to 39,228 members from 1991 to 1996 (or 0.76 percent to 1.14 percent of the total population) (Statistics New Zealand, 1997).

The solution to reaching these people was through the established networks of conservative Christians. In this regard, the New Christian Conservatism held an advantage over other social movements. Whereas many emerging ideologies have few potential networks to access, or if they do, face strong competition for access to them, the New Christian Conservatism enjoyed a substantial network of “identity neighbourhoods”. These came in the form of a number of small organisations, which were explicitly Christian, and tended to involve those who were either fundamentalist or conservative-oriented.

Some of these organisations had large membership bases and had been active during the 1980s. Groups such as Women For Life and the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child had continued to act as special interest groups and were particularly receptive to a re-politicising agenda. In addition to these, new organisations had formed to address particular issues. Family Life International was set up in 1992 to address “issues from conception to natural death” (Colleen Beyer, personal communication). The Traditional Values Coalition and the Human Relationships Foundation formed in 1995. The first two organisations were modelled on established overseas groups, although any financial or administrative connection is denied. The latter group originated in New Zealand, but makes extensive use of overseas literature.¹⁰

The Strategic Leadership Network saw in these groups the potential for collective action. Formed initially by the retired Police Commissioner John Jamieson, the group, as its name suggests, aimed to promote “principle-based leadership in our nation” (Strategic Leadership Network, 1996). This entailed providing a degree of organisational coordination to the other, often disparate, actors. As Lindsay Armishaw relates:

...my observation in the last two years, looking at all the groups that are on the playing field, even though they're far more authoritative

¹⁰ One of their first publications, *A Reason For Hope: Christian Perspectives on Homosexuality and Healing*, contains over twenty-five articles, the majority of which are attributed to overseas authors.

and informed than I am on their issues, they're still fragmented in the big picture. And so we try and encourage them and unify a voice, not by an organisation or bureaucratic structure, but by networking and cooperating for greater impact (Lindsay Armishaw).

Underlying this, however, was always an objective to provide an intellectual mobilisation towards the new type of Christian conservatism - the "big picture". Convincing the established conservative leadership of their new political mandate became even more essential since the Privacy Act made access to mailing lists problematic. Seminars aimed at organisation's leadership, largely by invitation only, therefore replaced the public rallies common during previous periods of mobilisation as a means of securing commitment.

The Strategic Leadership Network have been particularly prolific in this department. In their promotional pamphlets, they claim to have initiated the invitation for conservative American evangelist Dr Billy Graham to visit New Zealand, and successfully arranged visits from President Chiluba of Zambia and Chief Buthelezi of South Africa. Meetings were also held in conjunction with other visiting speakers such as Jim Daley from Focus on the Family USA and Dennis Peacocke.

It is in these features of the organisational strategy where evidence of the source of ideological re-narrations is most conspicuous. Focus on the Family and Dennis Peacocke are both prominent actors in the field of new dispensationalism in the United States, the latter more so through the use of his reconstructionist literature. Fifteen thousand copies of President Chiluba's promotional video were claimed to have been distributed following his visit, which told the story of how the newly elected president "declared himself and his country subject to God's rule" (Christian Vision, no date). The themes echoed by these men are of a new vision of church and state combined, a position which has until now been outside the discourse of New Zealand Christian Conservatives. This demonstrates that the injection of new leadership into Christian Conservatism in the early nineties washed away much of the compartmentalised mindset of their predecessors. Evans' citing of Coalition of Concerned Citizens catch-cries such as "be like Joshua and stand

before the nation” (Evans, 1992:86) can be compared to the emerging discourse that urged Christians to arise and stand *as* the nation, and assume their legitimate place alongside other sectional interests. This discourse, although somewhat covert, was gradually being disseminated through the newly established networks.

(iii) Integrating physical and ideological mobilisation

The resource lists and periodicals made available through the SLN and the NZEDF provide substantial evidence of the efforts being made in this direction. NZEDF’s bi-monthly periodical *Cutting Edge: Christian Insight and Opinion to Educate and Inform*, regularly features articles critically debating the separation of the church and the state.¹¹ In an audio cassette of American reconstructionist David Barton, the *Eight Principles for Reformation*, the speaker implores the listener:

The eight principles all start with attitude - if you don’t change the way you think, you won’t change the way you act. We have to first change our attitudes so we can reform...to come back to a healed nation, we have to take responsibility for our own failures, and return to being the salt and the light. We can’t go to sleep...that is the sign of a society that is under God’s Hammer - when people abdicate responsibility (David Barton, no date).

Furthermore, material written by Dennis Peacocke, who visited New Zealand before the 1996 elections, urges conservative Christians to:

Reverse this disintegration of society. It is time to reassert our God commanded role to be “salt and light and a city set on a hill”... The journey to freedom begins with the recognition of your own bondage and your commitment to breaking out of it. Contemporary Christians have allowed themselves to be ghettoized...its time to break out of our Christian ghetto (Peacocke, 1987).

¹¹ Most of these articles attempt to posit the historical centrality of Christianity to the Western world, and then argue that the separation of one from the other is the cause of many social problems, and will inevitably lead to the decline of Western civilisation. Examples of article titles include: “Culture War”, “A New Vision of Man: How Christianity Has Changed Political Economy”, “Religion in the Post-Socialist Era: The Failure of God to Die”, and “Public Policy and Religious Conviction”.

However, perhaps the most vivid example of the success of the New Christian Conservative movement is the publication of *Reclaiming the Culture* (Crippen, 1996). Published by Focus on the Family USA, the book advances the new dispensationalist critique of the separation of church and state in the United States, addresses this with a call to mobilisation, and details strategies for enacting this. The book was made available as an Australia/New Zealand edition, and included a forward by Lindsay Armishaw of the SLN and an appendix by Bruce Logan from NZEDF. Also included in an appendix are twenty-three pages listing conservative Christian organisations, media resources, and political mobilisation kits. The intended use of this book is explained in one of the forwards, where the editor, Alan Crippen, suggests that “the format lends itself to small-group study or use in Sunday school or Christian high school classrooms. Additionally, the last chapter “A Call to Action”, offers practical ideas for organised social and political action in the local church” (Crippen, 1996:4).

The principle value of this book is its use as a networking resource, bringing information and co-ordination to the emerging movement. As Lindsay Armishaw comments:

In one sense its like a warzone, and my job as a two star general is to help get the supply lines in for the big picture battle...not to go and jump in a trench (Lindsay Armishaw).

Yet in the process of bringing the actors in the “battle” together, he has performed the remarkably efficient exercise of defining what in fact the battle is. Some, or even many, of those included in the archive of organisations would not have perceived themselves as being involved in anything like a “big picture”. Or even that they had responsibilities and obligations. In a way then, *Reclaiming the Culture* is symbolic of the manner in which key New Christian Conservative figures have formed a surprisingly well-connected movement, not only in an operational sense but also ideologically. The re-narration of Christian Conservatism in New Zealand, in the form of an imported theological tradition of new dispensationalism, has brought together those conservative actors who were already active in the field but who lacked a cohesive ideology. The discourse of New Christian Conservatism

appealed to those whose old ideology largely disenfranchised them from formal political action, and this enabled the visionaries of the movement to mobilise a larger constituency.

III. The Cultural and Political Framing of New Christian Conservatism

Apart from the new discourse they promoted, one of the ways in which organisations such as the Strategic Leadership Network and the New Zealand Education Development Foundation were able to rise to such prominence as leaders of the movement was the style with which material was presented. Documents such as monographs, periodicals and newsletters appear professional and costly for what are essentially small groups.¹² This “professionalism” is also reflected in the approach to articulations not only within the movement but to wider audiences as well. A relatively detailed critique of society and Christianity’s (marginalised) place in it was developed by key figures as a basis from which to understand the threats facing the movement as well as the opportunities to overcome them. The most thorough articulation of this comes from Bruce Logan, the leading intellectual proponent of New Christian Conservatism.

(a) The ideological diagnosis: a “culture war”

Bruce Logan tackles the problem of perceived Christian political marginalisation by arguing that the church-state separation is a false construction, since the present state-enforced morality of secularism is itself inherently religious or dogmatic. Secularism, and its offspring cultural democracy, disinherit Christianity of its political role through its pluralistic philosophy of cultural relativism. This effectively reduces Christianity to being merely one value system or reality amongst

¹² The SLN, however, denies any significant funding from private sources or business interests, and claims that revenue is generated from small donations and sale of books and tapes. Visits from overseas speakers supposedly pay for themselves through the sale of tickets to seminars. The image of the organisation as “professional” is related to Lindsay Armishaw’s particular talents in that area. The NZEDF was set up by a board of trustees, and relies mainly on donations of “around five to ten thousand dollars, our largest one is quite a bit more than that” (Bruce Logan). Neither group were willing to disclose membership details.

a host of cultural realities. The result is that Christianity can not be promoted in public discourse as being a superior or more desirable system of meaning. It is this cultural relativism, however, which is perceived as creating a false sense of freedom, since it itself enforces a particular type of religious dogmatism:

One can quite reasonably suspect that cultural democracy is not really about real diversity but really a cover for demanding conformity to a specific diversity agenda...For example, cultural democrats have changed the traditional limitations that surround free speech. The new limitations are anything they claim promotes racism, sexism, or weakens the power of traditionally oppressed groups, or creates a hostile environment for diversity. These limitations shape the basis for politically correct speech, and many of the sexual harassment prohibitions. In fact they are an intrusion of politics into private life. When I was young, most people regarded the intrusion of political into private concerns to be the trappings of totalitarianism (Logan, 1995b:13).

Bruce Logan's problem with this is that the singular notion of "truth" he sees revealed in the Bible - and which he sees as forming the basis of a society grounded on homogeneity - is democratised and loses its cultural capital. Furthermore, this erosion of "truth" is intimately linked to the ability to determine morality (and hence power), expressed in the notion of tolerance. As he explains:

The new notion of tolerance seems to be that all ideas and all things lead to the same end, and that if somehow or other you find yourself disagreeing with that, you become the intolerant person. So we have got a shift of the grounds on what tolerance really is, and it's obviously been built on the nature of what truth is, whether truth is a relative thing or whether its a perennial, permanent thing (Bruce Logan).

The argument for inclusion into the political process then claims that, given secularism's dogma concerning relativism and diversity, Christianity must be recognised as legitimate lived reality. New Conservative Christians become another interest group, who must be granted status as morality-generating individuals in their own subjective way:

Christians can live very easily in a secular culture, providing that secular culture is honest, and really does what it claims to do. And its got to allow completely open debate and not pretending to have

open debate but excluding the Christian view. You see the Christian view is an exclusivist view, that God is God, and that if you don't believe in God then you're wrong...and so that Christians in a culture that wants to live and let live can be seen as the pariahs. (However, on arguing a case in a pluralist system) ...you can't impose a Christian view of marriage on our culture, but you can point out to our culture that the Christian view of marriage is the best one (Bruce Logan).

This prognosis given by Bruce is expressive of many critiques of contemporary politics and plurality. The “perennial, permanent thing” that is his truth rests amongst a host of normative metanarratives struggling to find a comfortable place where normative expressions are becoming increasingly unfashionable. He laments the notion of pluralism (and has particular contempt for those who “even try to democratise God”), and yet fails to consider the irony that it is only through a pluralist system that non-normative concerns can legitimately be voiced. His focus on notions of tolerance indicates that he is aware of the power that is granted to those who are able to define “toleration’s” parameters, but he seems uncomfortable with leasing it to those who will ultimately undermine his traditional Judeo-Christian defined position of privilege. As he states above, this pluralism recognises that issues previously considered personal are in fact inherently political, and this robs him of the power to normalise inequalities:

What is the truth about tolerance? The meaning of this virtue is not tolerating *per se*, but tolerating what ought to be tolerated (Budziszewski, 1996, quoted in *Cutting Edge*).

And such is the nature of the New Christian Conservative discourse. Like the moments of broad structural change that first produced the conservative Christian ideology of the early 1970s, the target of New Christian Conservatism is the pluralist system. Unlike its predecessor, however, New Christian Conservatism seeks to undermine this system through formal mobilisation and participation within its boundaries - a “culture war” involving “two competing and incompatible world views” (Logan, 1995b:12). The next section briefly explores how New Christian Conservatives are attempting to do this.

(b) Ideological prognosis: “think biblically, talk secularly”

One of the side effects of the perception that the conservative Christian discourse is being deliberately alienated from public policy debate, is that in order to communicate their ideas and values, that communication must be done in a secular, non-Christian frame of reference. Bruce Logan explains:

There’s no doubt that you can’t get an article published with explicit religious references, that’s interesting in itself of course. There’s a perception that if something has religious content therefore it is prejudiced and that its bigoted and its narrow. And there is a cultural war, where a religious view is seen as being necessarily narrow, which is not true at all. So you’re forced into debating the issues in a broad cultural context, which I think Christians can do (Bruce Logan).

Bruce senses here a definite loss of moral authority for conservative Christianity as a cultural system. It was argued in Chapter Three that Christian religion has never occupied a significantly superior position in New Zealand, at least in comparison to Britain and the United States, yet what Bruce experiences seems to indicate an increasingly hostile articulatory environment. As Williams explains, this often has less to do with the perceived authority of the actor making the claim, “but rather the receptivity of the cultural “field” into which the frame is entered” (Williams, 1994:794). Robyn Langton, from Women for Life, echoes this perception:

Yeah, in the specific case of programmes in schools, there’s a Christian section in the back that can be added, but you have to respect the views of other people. Now we believe that the values that are presented are Christian based, so that in itself is putting the Christian message into it, into the value of self, the value of life, and you say that, without hitting them over the head with a bible. And it’s no good quoting the bible with people who don’t believe in it because you’re turning them off (Robyn Langton).

The strategy adopted by New Christian Conservatives to overcome this also originated from the United States. Titled “Think Biblically, Talk Secularly”, it aimed at introducing New Christian Conservative ideas to the media and political debate in a manner that was culturally acceptable. In a chapter entitled “Making Your Case In the Public Square”, the author describes how:

If we intend to be persuasive, we must first be understood. We must speak in a language that communicates our ideas in ways easily comprehended. In short, we must trade in a currency the bank recognises if we want credit for our rhetorical deposits (Burtoft, 1996:101).

A pragmatic concept, it sought to overcome their perceived media isolation by compromising aspects of their traditional evangelism. The SLN-promoted audio cassette "Thinking Biblically, Talking Secularly" by reconstructionist David Barton demonstrates the strategy:

There are a lot of ways where we can get winning arguments. Take it out of a moral/religious context and put it into a context that people can relate to...How to get through to them? Take the moral issue, say unwedded teenage pregnancies, and put it in an economic context - "the cost of welfare payments to support unwedded teenage mothers. We need moral solutions or we'll never stop the flow of money" (Barton, no date).

As part of this framing strategy, New Christian Conservative organisations also enacted a process of re-imagining. Not only the style of communication, but also the content and source, were revised in a reflection of their secular social environment. Both the Strategic Leadership Network and the New Zealand Education Development Foundation were created with secular-sounding names. The recently-formed Human Relationships Foundation mimicked this trend. At the time of research, Women For Life were considering altering their name to Family Education Network. Lindsay Armishaw says of his communication with one particular organisation:

I said to them, do you mind if I make some comment about yourselves? I said you've been on the road a lot longer than me, but your name smells like death. Which is actually the opposite of what you stand for. I said have you thought of a thing called a re-image. And to some people it sounds like heresy, but I said what it means, for example, you've been doing something for a long time the same way. And if you keep doing it that way you're going to get the same results...Why are we locked into keeping the name if it's limiting the effectiveness of the organisation?

Furthermore, these newer organisations demonstrated a willingness to utilise “scientific” and “academic” evidence to support their arguments. Much of the literature produced by some organisations has a dual purpose - where limited funding translates into material intended for both sympathetic and secular consumption - and it is often the case that pamphlets contain significant amounts of statistical information, most of which is sourced. This has the effect of both disseminating information to supporters as well as presenting others with arguments that are perceived to be culturally-appropriate. As Colleen Bayer from Family Life International remarks:

We suddenly think, oh, we've got to start meeting them at their own match and even if it's, you know, a point of a, or one percent of what we're doing um, we're starting to realise that if we're going to make headway at all, we really have to meet the opposition in the same terms with what we're presenting. We've been a bit slow on the uptake there I think...(but now) we never put out a document without the actual footnotes and references, absolutely, and you've got to speak the truth at all times (Colleen Bayer).

These efforts, what Snow and Benford (1988) describe as “empirical credibility”, are seen as important features of modern social movements where ideological claims often demand justification in empirical data.¹³ On the one hand, they act to confirm the commitment of supporters to the cause by allaying any doubts about the movement's prognosis or claims. At the time of research, the SLN was compiling an “Index of Leading Cultural Indicators” for this specific purpose.¹⁴ On the other hand, they serve to increase the public's acceptance of those claims. This has proven to be especially important to some organisations within the movement

¹³ However, as Snow and Benford (1988) note, what exactly constitutes evidence for a claim is itself subject to debate. On this researcher's experience, much of the “data” presented by some organisations, particularly when used as an indication of a causative relationship, falls into a “debatable” category. One example is a chart used in the Christian Coalition political party's manifesto, where the party used figures for AIDS notifications to plot a graph under its health policy. The figure, supposedly representing a dramatic increase in people diagnosed with Aids, actually demonstrated the cumulative figure for people living with the condition. In fact, the rate of HIV reported infections had dropped.

¹⁴ A description given in the February 1997 issue of *Vital Issues* reads: “This is an assessment of the moral, social, and behavioural condition of our society, using statistics, graphs etc. Topics to be covered include crime statistics, child poverty, infant mortality, abortions, child abuse, teen suicide, etc.” (Strategic Leadership Network, 1997).

who wish to compete with other state-recognised bodies in similar fields. Much of their discourse reinforces the perception of being shut out of the public policy process, and this is particularly the case for those groups seeking preferred provider status. As Robyn Langton complains:

...that is a bone of contention when you see Family Planning get six million dollars a year, and we've made this point so often till we're blue in the face, that I feel it is really quite discriminatory, when any other group can come along on ethnic grounds or on sexual grounds or anything else and claim government support, but as a Christian group we are discriminated against in gaining public money. Absolutely discriminated against (Robyn Langton).

These strategies combined give the impression of a movement that is remarkably more dynamic than its predecessors. At an institutional level of analysis, New Christian Conservatives identified several obstacles and adapted their mobilisation accordingly. In this sense they seem to be accommodating to, rather than simply reacting against, post-modernity. It is also suggestive of a movement which, rather than demonstrating a brief period of noisy remonstrations, has accepted these limitations and prepared a plan of mobilisation with long term ambitions. As Lindsay summarises:

It's necessity and its also common sense. When you're in a battle you've got to use many tactics to win. The desired result is to win the war. You might lose a couple of battles, but the plan is to win the war...its a matter of being flexible. You don't want to do the opposite and beat yourself stupid and get nowhere (Lindsay Armishaw).

(c) Framing and the ideological structure of New Christian Conservatism

Overseas studies have revealed that as an ideological structure, Christian fundamentalism consists of a relatively small number of elements which are strongly related (Wuthnow, 1987). It has been argued here that early forms of conservative Christianity in New Zealand demonstrated a reliance on a relatively small number of mobilising issues, and a protective rather than emancipatory set of goals. New Christian Conservatism continues the tradition of having a core

ideology based in a project of cultural homogenisation. However, it appears to differ in two important ways. Firstly, it has been designed with considerable more flexibility than its predecessors. Secondly, the re-narration of the code to incorporate a core element of new dispensationalism has strengthened the conviction with which the central ideology is pursued. These two features can be illustrated in a number of ways.

(i) Flexibility in New Christian Conservatism's ideological elements

Overall, the movement "concerns" itself with many more issues than before. Still present are those such as abortion, homosexuality, sex education, pornography, and remarks about the nuclear family being eroded. Most of the organisations demonstrate some direct or indirect involvement in these spheres, although under the "umbrella" leadership and coordination of the SLN, many are being encouraged to specialise. For example, the Human Relationships Foundation has to date focussed on homosexuality, and has held seminars regarding the topic as well as published a book of articles entitled *A Reason for Hope* (Belding and Nicholls, 1996). Women for Life, on the other hand, advertise information on a range of topics which includes sex education, "women's health concerns", abortion, daycare, population control and pornography. Further still, the Traditional Values Coalition sees its role in a different sense, as being "God's department of dirty tricks" (Colin Byford) and engaging issues through shows of public outrage.

Yet there are other issues which the movement has linked to its list of concerns which are suggestive of an additional framing flexibility. Some, such as euthanasia and genetic engineering, are examples of "frame amplification" techniques. Many of these issues are addressed principally as a consequence of them arising in general public discourse. As Snow et al (1986) explain, these are moments when elements are temporarily added to the core concerns of the ideology in order to emphasise - "amplify" - the frame itself and its application to the problem (Snow et al, 1986:469). It is perhaps not surprising that in an increasingly complex and interrelated world, issues such as these appear more frequently and must

continually be addressed by social movements (particularly those which involve broad-ranging metanarratives).

Another sort of issue relates to the manner in which New Christian Conservatism has effectively assessed the mood of the surrounding environment and used this to draw attention to its core beliefs. As the 1990s progressed, issues such as crime, justice and poverty became strongly debated issues. None of these issues featured significantly in the discourse of the movement. Yet, several organisations responded by developing material or policies which were in accord with public concern. For example, John Jamieson produced a monograph through the SLN entitled *Crime, Victims and Justice* (Jamieson, 1994) in which he dealt with issues of reparation and restitution. In another case, the Christian Coalition crossed the political divide and advocated reduced-rent housing for low income families. These instances can be referred to as “frame extension” (Snow et al, 1986:472). Here the boundaries of the ideological code are extended to include issues which will generate support for the movement and improve its chances of ideological selection. These efforts are important to movements, since they go some way to ensuring their institutionalisation. This would supposedly become an even greater priority in a relatively unpredictable social and political environment such as contemporary New Zealand, since broad-ranging support on various issues, while in many cases incidental to the movement, might further the prospects of the movement’s core goals.

A fourth type of issue which is incorporated into the New Christian Conservative ideological structure involves topics that are symbolic of its core project. Debates around human rights, the rights of parents, religious freedom, and education are all expressive of the separation between the state and religion. For New Christian Conservatives, these issues act as symbolic events in which the relationship between the state and the church are in a process of negotiation. By focussing on these events, as key actors in the movement are doing, the boundaries of this separation are temporarily placed into contention and redefinition. By doing so regularly, the long term sustainability of the boundary is potentially rendered

problematic. This again demonstrates the strategic, reflective nature of the New Christian Conservative movement, in that it has a better understanding of how social relationships are maintained and contested.

(ii) Core ideology re-narration

The second feature of the structural dimension of New Christian Conservatism is the impact resulting from the re-narration of the core ideology itself. In one sense, the increased emphasis on pragmatism instead of dogmatic rigidity has enabled the ideological code to enjoy a greater flexibility in the attachment of ideological elements. Perhaps more importantly, however, the symbolic depiction of society being in the midst of a “culture war” infuses the code with a harder resilience. Previously, chains of equivalences (for example, connecting anti-smacking laws and equal rights for homosexual men and women by virtue of their antagonism to the New Christian Conservatives’ notion of family) inside the earlier conservative Christian discourse became more difficult to maintain the more that “modern secular understandings” were applied to them. However, by rejecting the legitimacy of the constructed separation of church and state, *all* issues by definition become religious. It then becomes harder for the secular observer to persuade New Christian Conservatives that they have no right (or reason) to define issues in terms of their allotted polar positions, since they will reject the definition of *anything* (such as the family) as existing outside its Biblical construction. To carry on the example above, laws regarding anti-smacking and homosexuality will always be situated in opposition to the family, as “the family” itself becomes more vigorously defended in its Biblical conception.¹⁵ As they continually remind themselves of the

¹⁵ The intention of this example is to contrast it with that given in Chapter Four. In that instance, the chain of equivalence was threatened by the changing conception of the family form, by destabilising the antagonisms between it and other elements in the chain of opposition (such as feminism). What is being proposed here, however, is that the New Christian Conservative discourse (in which everything is inherently religious, and furthermore has an unchangeable meaning to it) is more rigorous in its defence that no element can be defined outside its Biblical meaning. Here the conception of family cannot change its moral definition, and therefore cannot be used as a way of destabilising their arguments. (ie: one cannot argue that since modern society is so complex, some things are better understood outside its Biblical context, and hence are able to be redefined without reference to this context).

“truth” they possess, and its new applicability into “political” as well as their own “personal” spheres, New Christian Conservatives become more confident, and less shakeable, in their duties of fulfilling “salt and light” responsibilities. In addition to this, they return unfazed to invent new, secular-sounding ways of making their case.

IV. Summary

This chapter examined how the Conservative Christian social movement that seemed to be waning in the late 1980s, re-emerged in the 1990s as a movement with new goals and strategies. The continued survival of the movement was a result of several important developments. Firstly, the reluctance of the core constituency to mobilise politically was overcome by a re-narration of the fundamental ideology of Christian Conservatism itself. The traditional separation of church from state affairs was challenged through the influence of new dispensationalist discourses imported from the United States, and this created the space in which a mobilisation discourse could grow.

Secondly, the new leadership of the movement put into place an organisational structure that set the platform for a steady pace of ideological articulation and constituent mobilisation. Features of this structure included increased networking between movement organisations, a high level of resource production, and a process whereby key movement participants were continually educated in the methods of ideological dissemination, both internally and externally. This success at the institutional level was a consequence of a high degree of professionalisation in the nineties movement, which included a greater awareness of political opportunities than previously demonstrated.

Thirdly, the injection of this empowering ideology, coupled with the stronger structural platform, allowed key movement actors to nurture the New Christian Conservative discourse over time. A greater flexibility in the ideological code, as well as a more stubborn core, has resulted in fresh framing efforts at the same time

as enabling some stability in the face of unsuccessful attempts. In short, and in contradiction to the caricature of being backward-looking and simple, the New Christian Conservatism has re-invented itself in accordance with the demands of the environment at hand. It has achieved this with a mixture of innovation and regard for established patterns, and has defied those commentators who predicted the demise of the movement, or located it as part of a “backlash” scenario. The discussion now finally turns to two recent examples of the New Christian Conservatism, in the form of the New Zealand Education Development Foundation and the Christian Coalition.

Chapter Six

Recent Manifestations of New Christian Conservatism

I. The New Zealand Education Development Foundation

In a number of ways, the New Zealand Education Development Foundation is the embodiment of New Christian Conservatism. As director, Bruce Logan has been instrumental in reshaping the conservative Christian movement by importing mobilisation strategies from the United States and disseminating these ideas to organisations in New Zealand. He has engaged both the Christian press and the secular media on a diverse range of issues, with particular success in major newspapers such as the *New Zealand Herald* and the *Dominion*. His impressive repertoire includes articles on corporal punishment, education vouchers, affirmative action, cultural safety, taxation, euthanasia, sex education, welfare, homosexuality and immigration. This has led the organisation to boast that “we have been published in the secular press more times than any other private organisation” (New Zealand Education Development Foundation, 1996).

Explanations for this “mobilisation through media” lie in the identification of the media and education as primary agents of cultural dissemination. Through modernisation’s rearrangement of the structure and responsibilities of the nuclear family, these institutions have taken on surrogate roles in various areas of social life. While one of the strengths of the New Christian Conservative movement is the ability of its leaders to articulate new ideas amongst its organised constituents, the NZEDF perceived that in order to expand the movement beyond these niches, the “cultural war” necessitated an elaboration of its vision in the public arena. The two institutions are targeted by virtue of them having been “captured” by secular agents, and their perceived power in promoting an anti-Christian and anti-religious culture:

You see, journalists are by and large well educated, and they have been seduced and brainwashed by the university system, which in the fifties and sixties was saturated with the socialist path. It took me twenty or thirty years to get out of it - they have absorbed a view of life which is alien to common sense (Bruce Logan),

and in the case of the education system:

The point is, that if justice is to be done then the state in a liberal pluralist democracy cannot declare that education should be secular or religious because if it does it is favouring one world view over all others and in so doing is actually sponsoring one world view or religion over another (Logan, 1995c:24).

Consequently, the NZEDF has focussed on competing with “secularism” in the news media for capturing new niches of support. As stated in the *Plan For Action*, “our fundamental aim is to confront our secular culture with the claims of Jesus Christ...to turn the tide of the culture wars” (New Zealand Education Development Foundation, 1996). To demonstrate the articulation strategies employed by the NZEDF, a monograph published in the *New Zealand Herald* is examined next.

The May monograph in the *New Zealand Herald* was headed: “New Zealanders in the midst of a culture war” (Logan, 1997). In this piece, Bruce Logan argued that an “enemy seeks to overturn the existing order of things”. This enemy is “a force” which “is not easy to identify or name”. However, “it is not a conspiracy because its goals are not always understood by those who help to advance it in the political arena”. Bruce describes this “force” by constructing a link between attempts to “separate learning from discipline, sex from procreation and commitment, to undermine the notion of individual responsibility, to normalise abortion and euthanasia and to abolish the traditional distinction of gender.” Also included are those “at war with the institution of marriage” and those who have “helped transfer the provider role from the male to the welfare state”.

These elements are then constructed into equivalence by virtue of their supposed opposition to something which is described variously as “the existing order”, “traditional standards”, “traditional thought” or simply “tradition”. Without describing exactly what it meant by this (and therefore suggesting that “being traditional” is inherently and uncontestedly “good”), the article then equates “tradition” with “strong family life”, and subsequently a “sound economy”, “the continuation of the human species”, the “regulation of sexuality”, and “the maintenance of bonds between generations”.

Several themes can be highlighted here. Although the “unidentifiable force” is cast in opposition to “tradition”, he also hints at a prominent culprit being “one of the silliest ideas ever to seduce the human mind - the idea of human autonomy”. This increasingly appears to be a feature of the New Christian Conservative discourse, that the relatedness of many of the issues centre on their rejection of an essential *ownership* of one’s body. Many New Christian Conservatives, for whom all things are related to their faith, have a heightened sense of obligation, evangelicalism, and duty (“salt and light”). Arguments that give people autonomy from these responsibilities are therefore contested. New Christian Conservatives interpret the world as increasingly littered with arbitrary choices and “relativisms”, and this intimidates them:

What has happened is the individual values that people in society have broken down, there is now backup for the family, and within the family you’ve got individuals who aren’t supplying any values. So there’s no value system coming from society, none from the family and therefore you’ve got none from the individual. So therefore why should someone who’s been brought up with no values, say, respect life? (Robyn Langton).

It is in such a world of individualism and few absolutes that New Christian Conservatives seek to impose some form of moral community, and to exploit opportunities to do so when the mood of the public is ripe:

Even in the secular world, people are seeing, they’re starting to understand and judge for themselves that hey, we’ve just gone a little bit too far...people are starting to get very deeply concerned

about what's happening out there in society, and maybe when a nation starts to question itself, it starts to say enough is enough (Colleen Beyer).

This can explain Logan's emphasis on "tradition", on "home truths", and to "powerfully restrain" the "aggressive and revolutionary force" that seeks to "overturn the existing order". It is a desire rooted in beliefs of a "truth" that is singular and Biblical and which finds expression in symbols such as "commitment" and "bonds" and "covenant". He is correct when he states that "the culture war is now about the reshaping of family life and the consequent reordering of the community". However, Logan's vision is not for a community based on liberal democracy. His disdain for "self-realisation" in this article, and contempt for "socialism" in general, attest to that.¹ Instead, Logan's community is one where the values are "rooted in the universal, the transcendent and the perennial", a secularised synonym for God.

Hence Logan completes the New Christian Conservative circle of articulation. By highlighting contentious issues which are *au courante*, and associating them with liberalism and pluralism, the discourse attempts to undermine the foundations upon which these systems are accepted. Once the responsibility has thus been cast, the discourse posits that the rationale for their failure lies in a rejection of "common sense" understandings and "traditional" values. There are "self-evident truths", it is claimed, which would become apparent if only people would free themselves from the "parasitic" ideology of cultural relativism.² The solution promoted by the New Christian Conservatism is then to return to traditional epistemologies, which are couched in frames of "cohesion" and "order". The next logical step, in view of this position articulated by the New Christian Conservatism, would presumably be to persuade New Zealanders to replace the "parasitic" liberal ideologies with one of

¹ In fact, it sometimes seems that the demise of "communists" in the discourse has merely been replaced by "socialists" who want to democratise everything. In one newspaper article, he laments the "infiltration" of the church by "liberalism" and "socialist" influences (Logan, 1996).

² Bruce Logan often makes the claim that both modern and post-modern belief systems are "parasites", which are claimed to be the basis upon which we must design our political systems but which in fact distort the "truth" of Christianity from whence they both came. See, for example, "Public Policy and Religious Conviction" (Logan, 1995a).

the most mythologised normative metanarrative of Western history - Christian religion.

II. The Christian Coalition

Another example of the changes in conservative Christianity as a social movement is illustrated by its participation in the formal political arena. Disillusioned with the progress made through traditional links with the National Party, and aware of the unique opportunities of the upcoming MMP environment, conservative Christian activists and leaders such as Annetta Moran and John Jamieson formed the new Christian Democrat Party in 1995, with sitting MP Graeme Lee as party leader. After a period of frustrated negotiating with the established Christian Heritage Party, the two parties joined for the purposes of the election as the Christian Coalition.³ While the details of the interaction between the two parties as well as those directed at the electorate warrant in-depth research in their own right, three features of the electoral campaign are briefly highlighted here to demonstrate the adoption of New Christian Conservatism by the Coalition.⁴

Firstly, the Coalition incorporated the slogan "Think Biblically, Talk Secularly" to indicate the communicative style with which the 1996 elections would be contested

³ The differences between the two parties become more central to the long-term formal political viability of New Christian Conservatism, and this issue will be addressed shortly in the discussion. Some of the early negotiations between the Christian Democrats and the Christian Heritage Party are well documented in a feature article in *Metro* magazine, "Holy Non-Alliance", by Vincent Heeringa (1995).

⁴ It must be pointed out here that neither the Christian Democrats nor the Christian Coalition should be seen as the political arm of the New Christian Conservative social movement. Some leading figures, such as Graeme Lee and Annetta Moran, were established actors for the old Christian Conservatism and realised the potential for political mobilisation that the New Christian Conservatism offered, while remaining relatively ignorant of its ideological basis. Rather, with key actors such as John Jamieson active as a list MP, and Bruce Logan as education policy adviser, the political parties should be understood as agents through which elements of the ideology of New Christian Conservatism are able to be expressed. New Christian Conservatism cannot be embodied in a single organisation, comprising as it does not just of ideas but also a physical presence that consists of many organisational parts. The key actors of the movement perceive political struggles as involving individual, grass-roots contestation to change the conservative Christian mindset, as much as being at the level of formal, institutional politics. Since all the parts of New Christian Conservatism are considered to have political functions, it would therefore be misleading to label one as being more political than the next.

(Graeme Lee, Personal Communication).⁵ Promotional material made it clear to the electorate that one did not have to be a Christian to be a member of the Coalition or even to stand as a candidate. Throughout the campaign, efforts were made to avoid the Bible-quoting rhetoric that had characterised past debates on public policy - in the words of one newsletter, “reason, not rhetoric” was needed to engage the secular public (Christian Democrats Party, 1996b). Instead, appeals to the public were couched in terms of a vague and surprisingly uncontested notion of “truth”. Here the Coalition appeared to be conscious of the consequences of using “God” terminology too often in their policy justifications, yet still signalled their belief in the ultimate reducibility of all issues to this concept:

Truth is objective, existing independently of human beings. While human understanding of truth may fluctuate, truth remains constant. (Christian Coalition, 1996:26).

In another example, a Christian Coalition press release catalogued the social cost of a variety of activities such as gambling, “illegal cannabis”, and the “tax burden” of solo-parenting. In an attempt to veil the movement’s moral objections to such activities, the issues were placed into an economic context deemed acceptable to the secular belief system and were accompanied by an assessment of their fiscal consequences. In this instance, however, the media were quick to label the chart “The Wages of Sin”, and thus reversed the desired effect.

A second feature was a project of ideological dissemination akin to the strategies employed by the Strategic Leadership Network. Actors aligned directly to the Christian Coalition as well as other key movement figures perceived an urgency to create a constituency out of Christians and to activate them electorally. A series of symposiums and documents ensued such as *Why Christians Should Be Involved In Politics* (Hitchen et al, 1996), *The Bible and Public Policy* (Smelt, 1996), and a visit by American reconstructionist, Dennis Peacocke, lecturing on the same issue. In the latter presentation, a Christian Democrat newsletter reports:

⁵ The title of the Christian Democrat party was originally intended to be the secular-sounding “Conservatives”, and demonstrates how the aim of the party was to disassociate itself from religious overtones at the outset (Anon, 1994).

“We have lost much impact as salt and light because we have lost our understanding that the church is called out to rule and to reign” said Mr Peacocke. He said the word for church is based on the Greek word “ecclesia”, which is actually a political word... “Ecclesia” means “those called out to rule”. Mr Peacocke said that those who persuaded Christians not to become involved in politics were actually harming their growth towards maturity. “Maturity comes from taking up responsibility. When you take government out of the hands of the people, you rob them of responsibility, and therefore the ability to mature” (Christian Democrats Party, 1996b).

The third feature of the Christian Coalition which reflected the New Christian Conservatism was the way in which it was prepared to extend its policy frame into new territories. The Coalition’s 1996 policy manifesto, *Agreement with New Zealand*, included portions on conservation and the environment, restorative justice, and housing allowances for “people in genuine need” (Christian Coalition, 1996:9). Also present in the manifesto, as well as at the official launch of the Coalition, were references to “Maori” and “Pacific Islands and Ethnic Affairs”.⁶ These additions to the old Christian Conservatism are striking when one considers the explicit antagonism displayed by the Coalition of Concerned Citizens towards the Treaty of Waitangi in the late 1980s, and a similar history of anti-welfarism (“communism” to the old regime) and indifference towards natural resource issues. The ability to enact these changes is illustrative of the new pragmatism, where niches of support are sensed and the ideological frame aligned accordingly. In Annetta Moran’s words, it is a case of finding the “right moral fuel”. While this may not be unusual, and perhaps routine within formal politics, it marked a significant change in the ideological contestation of Christian Conservatism.

(a) The failings of the Christian Coalition in the 1996 elections

Despite polling above the 5 percent threshold leading up to the first MMP election, the Christian Coalition finished with a close 4.3 percent share of the party votes.

⁶ At the launch of the Coalition at the Greenlane Christian Centre, both Maori and Samoan addresses were heard.

However, this should not be interpreted as evidence of the “inevitable failure”, as Steve Bruce (Bruce, 1995) puts it, of the New Christian Conservatism in New Zealand society. It must be pointed out that an equally important reason why the Christian Coalition failed rests on the fact that they failed to act as *adept* New Christian Conservatives. These two propositions are briefly dealt with next.

To begin with, the latter claim is based on the observation that the Christian Coalition failed to successfully articulate with its social environment in the right places, and in the right amount. A feature of New Christian Conservatives is its ability to adapt - the flexibility of its ideological structure outside its core elements; and the pragmatism with which it communicates these elements, both discursively and organisationally. While the previous section outlined how the Coalition had achieved some political nous in this regard, it was not enough to achieve success. Several mistakes of judgement were made in the choice of ideological elements and the general transparency of its motives.

For example, in attempting to create a vision of a society requiring a return to consensus, solidarity, and old-fashioned “common sense”, the Coalition miscalculated the extent to which New Zealand had diversified. Even given that the target was only 5 percent of the voting population, the symbols chosen to represent this vision did not resonate with its potential audience. Issues such as abortion, homosexuality, the traditional nuclear family, and the role of women were simply accorded too much attention, since they no longer comprised the boundaries of “society/not society” previously accepted. Many New Zealanders come from families which do not conform to the Coalition’s narrow definition, are content with their lot, and therefore do not adorn that particular institution with the cultural significance perhaps anticipated. The Coalition’s inability to adapt to new notions of sexuality in general (as well as its jargon) was demonstrated when an electorate MP described the country as a “vaste fornicatorium”. And perhaps most damaging was the very gendered appearance of the Coalition, with only three out of their twelve list “apostles” being women. This naïve assessment of many New

Zealanders' views on gender role allocation is best summed up in an address by deputy leader Graham Capill at the Coalition launch, when he stated:

You see that was the foundation of law in the past. There was a basic understanding that there is a God, that he has in fact made us, and that that is the centre of dignity and self-worth. And I want to put it to you that we need politicians in the House of Representatives that work from that perspective of truth....It is that and that alone that will ensure that mothers feel that they have been given the very highest of callings, *not some second-best option to some glamorous career-orientated fantasy*. (Capill, 1996, Speech at the launch of the Christian Coalition (my italics)).

The framing of the New Christian Conservative ideology through the Christian Coalition was therefore dissonant with many of the particular niches available. The proportion of the electorate who had voiced concern over family issues were marginalised by statements such as the one above, i.e. through the Coalition's inability to be flexible enough. This does not deny the possibility of success in the future, but rather a failure on the Coalition's part to effectively exploit New Christian Conservatism's potential.

The second major reason for the coalition's failure lay in what could be termed the Coalition's "religious problematic". Steve Bruce, perhaps the most sceptical observer of the New Christian Right's potential in the United States, has argued that such movements fail at the formal political level due to the inherent paradox of religion and politics. He claims that these movements are required to strike a balance between appeasing their devout religiously-inspired supporters on the one hand, and other conservative supporters who are attracted by single-issue appeals. Labelling it a problem of "accommodation" (Bruce, 1987:188), leaders (and active supporters) must therefore switch between "religious thinking" and "political thinking", and this often causes tensions, factions, and ultimately fracture within the broad support base (Bruce, 1995:13).

Mapping this perspective onto New Zealand requires a little re-sketching. With only 5 percent of electoral support required for representation, the need to form coalitions with other conservative-type blocs, and therefore the level of

accommodation, may not be as important as in the United States. However, other dimensions of the political landscape need to be magnified. The Coalition, as Christian Conservatives found in 1985, could not rely on the cultural capital of their policies to grant them success. Instead, they have to win support through good arguments. Unlike their counterparts in the United States, even reaching the 5 percent level of support would necessitate transcending an extremely heterogeneous religious public, characterised by a broader spectrum of less organised catchments. While appealing to the general conservative voter was one hurdle, encompassing the religious diversity was another.

And in the Coalition's case, it proved to be significant. Debates both public and 'in-cathedra' leading up to the election highlighted disputes about the role of religion in politics, the way it should be expressed, and the manner in which this should be done. Late in the campaign, list candidate and Human Relationships Foundation board member, Julie Belding, produced a pamphlet entitled *By what right? A case for the Christian Coalition*, in a belated attempt to address these concerns. Statements in this pamphlet such as:

...so the question is not so much "Can we legislate morality?" but rather, "whose morality are we actually legislating?" (Belding, 1996).

were ineffective, however, since the Coalition had as yet failed to achieve consensus on the morality that Christians wanted to legislate. This was particularly evident in a post-election survey of people on the SLN's data base in late 1996, in which the two most "over-emphasised" policies of the Coalition were reported as being "abortion" (11 percent) and "homosexuality" (9.5 percent) (VISION New Zealand et al, no date). Conversely, heading those regarded as "under-emphasised" were "social services" (8.8 percent) and "the economy" (7.6 percent).⁷ Thus there were tensions even within conservative Christian circles, adding to the divisions

⁷ The survey, received through the Christian Heritage Party head office, was conducted between 22 November and 3 December 1996. Of 2000 surveys sent, a sample size of 772 was established. The sample was characterised by an overrepresentation of non-mainline denominations, was overwhelmingly male (67.3 percent), and comprised of mostly over forty year-olds (45 percent being aged fifty or over).

already being exacerbated between liberal and conservative Christians. Prominent members of different denominations offered their opinions on these matters, such as the comment made by the Anglican Social Justice Commissioner Jim Greenaway that the Coalition had “hijacked” the word “Christian” (Jim Greenaway, personal communication, 1996). As that statement illustrates, central to these debates was a tension over the way in which the Coalition appeared to be defining what “Christianity” meant, both as “agents” for the broad Christian communities, and on a stage in front of secular New Zealanders. As Boston advised in a review of the Christian Coalition’s performance, “no single party has a monopoly on the truth” (Boston, 1997:19). The Coalition’s persistent attempts to claim that they did undermined their credibility with the secular electorate but also, and more importantly, with their strongest source of potential support.

These two shortcomings of the Christian Coalition highlight the difficulties facing New Christian Conservatives as they attempt to enter the formal political arena. While their ideology attempts to break free from the compartmentalised thinking of their predecessors, the paradox is that in order to be successful at this level of ideological competition, compartmentalisation is exactly what is required of them. In a plural and largely secular society such as New Zealand, they confront a culture in which Christianity does not enjoy a hegemonic presence, either politically or spiritually. Thus their political ideas must be continually contested in ways and in terms which are dissonant with their own sense of identity - to argue for example that abortion is wrong in the rhetoric of human rights is to disown what it is about that issue that is important to them, that is, their faith. The insecurities projected by Graeme Lee whenever the co-leaders went on air were reducible to this tension, between the dogmatism that inspires their political involvement, and the pragmatism needed to survive it.

Conclusion

This thesis has sought to discover why conservative Christians have mobilised into a social movement and become politically active. A second question related to the strategies through which mobilisation occurred - how did the movement attract and activate support, both from its conservative Christian constituents as well as potential "others"? The methods used to investigate these questions involved interviews with prominent movement actors, and a sampling of documentary evidence produced by various groups involved in the movement. This has been guided by perspectives in the social movement literature which emphasised the role of leaders in "framing" the ideology of the movement, and the importance of social movement organisations as key sites where the articulation of ideological discourse occurs.

To date, references to this phenomenon have mostly taken place within broader commentaries on the secularisation of traditional Christian religion in New Zealand. Explanations for the political activism of conservative Christians have therefore been dominated by accounts which posit it as a predictable response to the decline of conservative Christianity itself, given the inevitabilities of cultural pluralism and a persistent modernisation. Such accounts also betray a belief on the part of commentators that conservative Christianity has become redundant, or at best reactive, in the contemporary pluralistic world. Exceptions to this included the discourse analysis of Ryan (1986), and the theology-centred historical approach of Evans (1992). Yet even then, both accounts tend to present conservative Christian activism as a cultural form in the throws of decay.

The alternative approach adopted - accounting for conservative Christian activism via a theory of cultural articulation - is an attempt to avoid replicating this constraining assumption. But it is also an attempt to overcome the limits of other approaches, such as resource mobilisation theory and discourse analysis. Cultural

articulation theory aims to incorporate the benefits of each approach into a loose framework, linked through an emphasis on the interaction of cultural forms with their socio-political environments. Conservative Christianity was treated in this approach as an ideology, a structured system of meanings which dramatised aspects of social life for established and potential constituents, and hence made claims about the proper nature of morality, the power structures flowing from this, and the consequent distribution of resources in society. The ability to achieve success in these projects was examined in reference to the production, selection, and institutionalisation of the ideology. Focussing on this dialectic relationship enables a more complete analysis of the history of conservative Christian activism than previous explanations, and offers a broader range of analytical tools with which to predict its future.

When used to analyse conservative Christianity in New Zealand, this thesis identified a critical period around 1970 which led to the production of a Christian Conservative ideology. Characterised by a disturbance in the nature of the moral order, as well as a change in the traditional economic (and hence power) structure of New Zealand society, this period created the opportunities for a Christian Conservative ideology to be developed. People dissatisfied with the changes constituted pockets of support, and these niches were successfully captured by the movement through a process of ideological framing. Ideas such as “permissiveness” were employed as symbols to dramatise the changes in the moral order, and were effectively welded together into an ideological discourse based on the importance of (and threat to) the consensual, homogeneous society.

Various moments during the 1980s highlighted the articulation of the ideology with fluctuating opportunities in the socio-political environment. A strong organisational base and leadership figures were important dimensions to the mobilisation activated by the movement in this period. The exploitation of issues such as homosexuality, which symbolised tensions within a society being propelled towards liberalism, were again effective in establishing support. By the late 1980s, however, the failure of the movement to effect changes through the legislature

signalled an underlying problem with its ideological approach. A tradition of church-state separation was perceived to be hindering the mobilising potential of the Christian Conservative social movement in New Zealand, and, coupled with the declining efficacy of its mobilising symbols, the movement lost momentum around 1988.

It is at this point that the more traditional accounts of conservative Christian activism appear to be weak. Explanations that view such activism being merely reactionary cannot account for the failure of the movement when it had activated such a high level of mobilisation just two years earlier, when it was developing a considerable infrastructure, and when the environment that supposedly provided the rationale for mobilisation became increasingly hostile. Conversely, those accounts that seek to explain it purely through an examination of the relationship between the movement's ideological symbols and the points of uncertainty and contestation in the wider social environment, will overlook the theological issue of church-state separation, which played such a central role in the self-limiting nature of the movement at this time

Consequently, the usefulness of a theory of cultural articulation is highlighted. Both the theological issue - as an aspect of the cultural and religious environment, and the effectiveness of the movement's symbolism - as a feature of the *interaction* between the movement and this wider environment, are within the limits of the theory's comprehensive framework. It also takes seriously the possibility that the movement is in fact a cultural form in its own right, not some temporary deviation from a more well-established tradition, and that its champions are determined enough to continually invent new ways of promoting it.

And the New Christian Conservatism did emerge in 1992, as a response to the demands of this residual community who were dissatisfied with public policy, and as a solution to the shortcomings of the 1980's movement. This new form of Christian Conservatism discarded the notion of church-state separation, and re-narrated the ideology to expand its mobilising potential. Positing secularism as an

essentially religious phenomenon, it sought to legitimise the political involvement of a population who had previously been marginalised, often through their own rhetoric. In conjunction with this, a sophisticated organisational structure was developed, both to communicate New Christian Conservatism to a broader audience, and to create working relationships with the formal political system. The sharing of intellectual resources on an international scale, and the re-orientation from traditional to professional methods of organisation and marketing, also enabled the movement to communicate more effectively with a public increasingly attuned to secular terms of reference.

This re-politicisation of a movement through New Christian Conservatism challenges the notion of a conservative Christianity as being merely traditional and reactionary. By naming all spaces as contestable and political, the movement was able to engage a number of new popular territories. This core ideological innovation of New Christian Conservatism created a master frame that was furthermore flexible enough to adapt to changing contexts. The movement took on a dynamic quality.

But the ideology also constitutes a deeper challenge to the current system of cultural pluralism. By claiming that cultural relativism justified a host of behaviours unacceptable to most New Zealanders and, moreover, that it could not logically nor consistently define what its limits were, refined articulations of New Christian Conservatism imply a new system of values based on notions of a “transcendent” universalism and community. Movement leaders perceive such ideas, particularly that of community, to have potential appeal in a country that has experienced over a decade of individualism through free-market oriented public policy. And ironically, that so many New Zealanders have rejected organised Christianity for some time now, in fact buoys the leaders’ hopes that this appeal is a novel, viable alternative.

In terms of real effects, however, the New Christian Conservative movement has not yet surpassed the impact of the 1980s Christian Conservatives. Highlights for

the movement include a revitalised infrastructure, steady representation in the media, and a near success at gaining formal political power. Yet these must be weighed against the gains made by rival movements, both in legislation and in popular support, and a decline in general Christian religiosity and hence their strongest constituency base. Such factors continue to make it difficult for the movement to articulate its ideology. Many of the symbols traditionally employed have lost their value as points of cultural uncertainty, and newer issues are highly contested so as to make any position crowded by other frames of meaning. Maintaining unrivalled turf under these circumstances becomes problematic, particularly for an ideology claiming a perennial "truth" when post-modern epistemologies are gaining in acceptance.

But the most serious impediment to the movement expanding past its base in the churches lies in the nature of its own argument. Politics in New Zealand requires a respect for pluralism, and yet other than rejecting it altogether, this is a demand that New Christian Conservatism cannot come to terms with. The movement is faced with a dilemma of accommodation: between satisfying the dogma of its core constituents on the one hand, or the demands made of an actor in the formal political arena on the other. These two projects are necessarily in tension, as the first involves a totalising worldview, the second one of compromise. And when coalitions of this sort have been entered into, they have been visibly and operationally uncomfortable affairs. This is a crucial problem, for the movement depends upon one for resources and continuity, the other for growth and influence. It therefore remains a principle factor hindering the movement's progression.

A Final Note

In making these claims, however, the limits of this own thesis must be stressed. A narrow, and underdeveloped, range of theoretical approaches and empirical studies concerning conservative Christian political activism in New Zealand guided the selection of the approach adopted here. Cultural articulation theory is perhaps most useful in identifying the range of factors that can account for this social movement,

as opposed to other approaches that examine certain features in more detail. Yet cultural articulation theory also provides an important analysis of the broader environment and contexts that ought to illuminate what exactly these other features are.

The movement's ideological dynamics have been highlighted here, yet there are many other important aspects. The organisational and resource structures of movement groups, sermons as social movement discourse, and the narratives of group members themselves would be placed high on such a list. The difficult nature of this particular research topic, by virtue of the amount of uncharted territory, resulted in many twists and turns in the development of this argument, and hence there are still ample spaces to be filled in. To coin Wuthnow's term, hopefully some of these topics will be "explored" in the near future, as moving through the macro to the micro levels of analysis would provide for more precise accounting. And, as smaller interest groups are presented with better opportunities for political representation under MMP, tracing the ideological competition created by movements such as this should be an interesting exercise.

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