

Doing God? Private Faith and Public Reason

1. Introduction

Queen Elizabeth I famously stated that she had ‘no desire to make windows into men’s souls’, a statement of religious tolerance amidst the religious turbulence of C16th and political rivalry between Protestants and Catholics. The scars of persecution and religious wars in Europe were to be a strong influence on Enlightenment thinking, especially the establishment of religious freedom and the idea of the secular state, and it is a principle that most Western democracies value highly. In 2007, for example, these same principles of freedom of expression and belief underpinned the Statement on Religious Diversity here in Aotearoa/New Zealand, about which I will say more later on.

In this paper, I want to look at the complex, sometimes troubled relationship between religion and politics, by examining the public statements of four leading political figures: Tony Blair, Helen Clark, Kevin Rudd and Barack Obama. In doing this, I am not wishing to peer into their souls in order to test out the truth of their personal beliefs; but I am interested in thinking about the way contemporary politicians and more importantly political discourse, is having to rethink and recalibrate the delicate balance between faith and reason in public life. What does it mean to profess a faith as a public figure? Does it inspire confidence or is it regarded as an expression of dangerous messianic megalomania? But equally, what does it mean to identify oneself as believer, atheist or agnostic in the context of debates about religion, national identity and political values?

One characteristic of Western society over the past decade has been how controversial and sensitive the reintroduction of religion into public life has become, whether that is measured in terms of the personal values of a new generation of conviction politicians, the pronouncements on current affairs by established faith leaders, or the political mobilization by particular religious bodies in order to influence public opinion.

The public pronouncements of figures such as these tax our usual approaches to the relationship between religion and politics. In 2001—although the preparation had been long—the west entered a period that we might term ‘post-secular’. This is both a chronological judgment but also a judgement about a renewal in the standing of the religions in relation to public life.

Yet paradoxically, with this religious resurgence comes a deepening of the processes of secularisation. It is not that secularisation is a tide that is on the turn, and we should thereafter expect for the sea of faith to come rushing in. Rather, we have multiple processes at work, often intertwined, that have often unlooked for and sometimes contradictory results. It is from the perspective of this new condition—both religious *and* secular—that the pronouncements of these leading political figures require analysis and judgement. And that analysis is made more demanding by their self-identification in relation to religious belief and practice and in some cases, the deployment of religious reasoning alongside political discourse.

The standard way of telling this story is to set out these individuals' religious faith or lack of it and then seek either to deduce their politics from their beliefs, to trace the influence of their beliefs on their politics, or to debate whether people of faith should vote for them. In this paper I want to offer something different, and look at a number of ways in which, in the pronouncements and public personae of these political figures, private faith and public reason interact: how their positioning of themselves as people of faith or doubt, and the deployment of the discourse of 'faith' are shaping our understanding of the nature of politics, identity and shared values in a post-ideological, post-secular, globalised world. This is not so much a matter of the orthodoxy or authenticity of their belief or non-belief, but how faith served as a form of 'discourse' in constructing their moral universe and influencing other people's sense of values.

Why these figures?

Tony Blair is known for his religious faith both in national politics from the early 1990s and latterly with the creation of the Faith Foundation and his reception into the Roman Catholic Church after leaving office in June 2007. I will argue that Blair's positioning of himself as a 'person of faith' contributed to the remoralizing of British politics, but he discovered to his cost that over the decade of his premiership, external events such as the emergence of radical Islam and his alliance with the Bush administration resulted in his professions of faith being heard and received very differently by the end of his third term in government.

Kevin Rudd is a practising Anglican, but unlike Blair and Obama, he chosen not to stress his religious affiliation at the start of his political career. More recent statements, however, especially those made as leader of the opposition, represented perhaps the boldest and most partisan theological stance of the lot.

For Barack Obama, as for any Presidential hopeful, the scandal would be if he didn't profess a religious faith. If Blair's faith was treated with suspicion in the context of a British society that is highly ambivalent towards religion – an Established Church with low levels of active observance – then the United States represents a culture where public professions of religion are de rigueur for any candidate for high office. Yet the paradox here is of course the historic separation of Church and State, so the question here is how the personal convictions of individual figures are allowed to figure so highly in influencing their electoral chances.

Helen Clark is the only woman of the group, and identifies as 'agnostic'. Yet there seems to me to be more than meets the eye here: not in terms of her own personal theology, but more about how she has located herself publicly amidst an emerging debate about religious diversity in a political culture that has tended to be 'functionally secular'. Yet her endorsement of the 2007 Statement on Religious Diversity in New Zealand goes against the grain of conventional views about keeping religion out of politics. Clark's strong advocacy of a particular model of religious diversity as a part of healthy civil society surely merits further exploration in terms of its significance for this debate.

One of the notable issues is that to a greater or lesser extent, all these political figures are speaking into public contexts in which to claim an allegiance to faith is increasingly suspect. The standard expectation is that religion is a conservative fundamentalist force, concerned with a narrow morality.

For example, Kevin Rudd is sensitive to the assumption in many people's minds that 'religion' equals right-wing moral conservatism. This is exemplified by Kevin Rudd in his critique of the way the administrations of George W. Bush and John Howard engineered 'the political orchestration of various forms of organized Christianity in support of the conservative incumbency' (2006:1). To summarize Rudd's representation of the stereotypical intervention in politics on the part of Christian politicians, which appeals to the electorate on the grounds of their being a Christian with a narrowly-defined set of views concerning sexual morality and the defence of 'family values'.

Barack Obama found himself in a political row in April over an off-the-cuff remark about 'guns and religion', showing how despite his efforts to connect with white working-class voters, he could still misjudge things and be labelled as a Washington sophisticate who associated the more religious regions of the U.S. with bigotry and backwardness. Speaking in California, he said:

"You go into these small towns in Pennsylvania and, like a lot of small towns in the Midwest, the jobs have been gone now for 25 years and nothing's replaced them. And

it's not surprising, then, they get bitter, they cling to guns or religion or antipathy to people who aren't like them or anti-immigrant sentiment or anti-trade sentiment as a way to explain their frustrations."¹

Blair, too, especially for reasons I will elaborate later, became more diffident over his decade in power, aware that he trod a fine line between the UK electorate's admiration of him as a creature of principle and a religious 'nutter'. His advisor Alistair Campbell is famously reported to have intervened in an interview to prevent Blair answering a question about his religious beliefs, allegedly with the comment, "We don't do God".² As the historian Callum Brown put it, Blair always risked transgressing the classically British sentiment about religion, 'best not to take it too far'.³

So politicians who 'do God' in public or enter the debate about the relationship between faith and public life undergo a delicate balancing act, and I want to explore some of the ways in which all these politicians are involved in negotiating the shifting sensibilities of private faith and public reason in different ways. These differences themselves show us the complexity of the interaction of religion and politics in Western democracies in a global context of post-Christian post-secular societies; yet they may also lead us to

¹ Barack Obama's 'guns and religion' blunder gives Hillary Clinton a chance - Times Online.mht, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/us_and_americas/us_elections/article3740080.ece, accessed 03/07/08.

² Brown, Colin (2003), *Daily Telegraph* (4 May) online, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main/jhtml?xml=news/2003/05/04/nblair04.xml> [11 May 2007].

³ Brown, Callum (2006), "'Best not to take it too far": how the British cut religion down to size.' *Opendemocracy.net* (8 March), online, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/xhtml/articles/3335.html> [11 May 2007], p. 1.

conclude that religion cannot any longer be – if it ever could - ‘bracketed out’ of public life and that we need all the critical faculties at our disposal to make sense of what is going on.

My argument is that the various statements on the part of these figures represent interventions into complex, multi-layered ‘discourses’ about the nature of faith in public life, and are an appeal to those who see the need to ‘value values’ in political debate. The use of the terminology of ‘discourse’ alerts us to the fact that such statements are doing more than simply describing a set of convictions; they are performing a political function, by importantly providing a set of publicly-articulated values that are capable of connecting with the electorate in a particular way: of creating alignments and meanings about the nature of politics that go beyond specific questions of religious affiliation into the very well-springs of shared values that go up to make the body politic.

Michel Foucault uses the term ‘discourse’ to explore how social institutions and practices are regulated by language, and the way in which certain kinds of statements function as authoritative by virtue of their effectiveness in creating a world of meaning. The critical task is to examine the conditions under which certain forms of discourse govern thought and action. Discourses create webs of meaning which order the world in particular ways: by indicating where authority is held to lie, what constitutes truth and falsehood, what is virtuous and what is reprehensible. They are sets of generative

principles by which reality is ordered, or a particular world-view constructed and rendered axiomatic.⁴

These politicians' statements on faith are to be seen not merely as individual apologiae for personal beliefs, or even a defence of the right of religion to engage with politics, but as strategies by which religion *represents* (stands in for) an appeal to a broader, but less coherent set of values. It requires us to interpret the meanings behind the sentiments and judge the effects of introducing religious language into public life, not just as a matter of the personal motivations or integrity of their speakers, but as part of a broader, global realignment between the sacred and the secular, faith and reason, and the practices of religion and the exercise of citizenship.

2. On Not Doing God: Religion, Secularism and Modernity

One of the factors anyone 'doing God' in public encounters is the tradition in Western political thought that wishes to separate faith and public reason. According to this view, attempts to offer religious reasoning to public debate are illegitimate since they breach basic principles of liberal democracy, which hold that religion and politics cannot mix. It is to this debate that I shall turn next.

⁴ Foucault, M. (1977), *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, London: Allen Lane.

It is a staple principle of political liberalism that public debate should be underpinned by secular rather than religious principles. In some political settlements, such as the United States for example, this has meant the constitutional separation of Church and State. The classic perspective on this is often associated with the political philosopher John Rawls, who spelt out the basic principles of liberal democracy in a pluralist society. The liberal principle of legitimacy for public forum has as its starting point the plurality of value systems in a modern society. Political, moral and religious diversity is good, since it is the outworking of that essential freedom of self-determination independent of external constraint. And yet, how does one ensure that these differences do not spill over into sectarian conflict, and that political processes are disrupted by irreconcilable differences?

Political liberals thus advocate that the limits of public reason should be honoured by all reasonable (reason being a great arbiter) citizens in their public discourse concerning fundamental political questions. As people committed to public consensus, yet knowing that they affirm a diversity of moral, religious and philosophical doctrines, they should be ready to explain the basis of their actions to one another in terms each could reasonably expect that others might endorse as consistent with their freedom and equality. Rawls thus argues for adopting a set of values and principles that anyone would willingly and openly endorse as legitimate for deciding matters of constitutional essentials and basic justice. But it requires people to leave any set of principles that might inhibit that general agreement out of the realm of public debate – such as religious difference, for example. The latter, however reasonable and valuable, are to be excluded from public discourse

because, according to the proponents of political liberalism, civility and mutual respect in public forum is possible only if it is grounded in consensus.⁵

Further elaboration of this is provided by the political philosopher Robert Audi when he argues that whilst in a healthy democracy the good citizen should ‘try to contribute in some way to the welfare of others’.⁶ In a culturally or religiously diverse society this will require any policy to be founded on principles available to all citizens, regardless of their personal convictions: ‘the ethics appropriate to a liberal democracy constrains religious considerations . . . because of its commitment to preserving the liberty of all’.⁷ Yet Audi goes on to single out people with religious convictions as exceptionally enthusiastic in their claims, and thus least likely to tolerate difference. It is therefore necessary to prevent them from encroaching on others’ freedom of thought:

[V]ery commonly those who identify with what they regard as the ultimate divine source of religious reasons believe that anyone who does not identify with it is forsaken, damned, or in some other way fundamentally deficient... [R]eligious people often tend to be, in a way that is rare in secular matters, highly and stubbornly passionate about the importance of everyone’s acting in accordance with religious reasons....⁸

⁵ Rawls, John (1971), *A Theory of Justice*. Harvard University Press.

⁶ Audi, Robert and Wolterstorff, Nicholas (1997), *Religion in the Public Square: Debating Church and State*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, p. 16.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 174.

⁸ Audi, “Liberal Democracy and the Place of Religion in Politics”, pp.31f, his emphasis.

Religious justification for public policy effectively restricts the freedom of those who do not hold to that faith or who are not conversant with its vocabulary; and hence religion is partisan and divisive, whereas secular reasoning is available to all citizens. Essentially, however, the fault-line between public and private now establishes a kind of 'firewall' between secular and religious.

Increasingly, though, such a separation is coming into question. An alternative view argues that it is only if citizens draw upon their own genuine convictions, seeking to achieve an 'overlapping consensus'⁹ on basic principles, will a vibrant civil society and a healthy democratic process be fostered. In response to Robert Audi's perspective, therefore, Nicholas Wolterstorff questions whether the freedom of the citizen in a liberal democracy necessarily has to involve the effacement of religious reasons in public debate.¹⁰ He argues against their 'bracketing out' since he believes that to require religious constraint of others amounts to a restriction upon their freedoms and civil liberties as equal citizens. Wolterstorff continues, 'I see no reason to suppose that the ethic of the citizen in a liberal democracy includes a restraint on the use of religious reasons in deciding and discussing political issues'.¹¹

In addition, it would be unrealistic for those with religious principles to leave them out of the picture, since 'there is no prospect whatsoever . . . of all adherents of particular religions refraining from using the resources of their own religion in making political

⁹ John Rawls, 'The Idea of an Overlapping Consensus' *Oxford Journal of Legal Studies* 7 (1987).

¹⁰ Audi and Wolterstorff (1997), *Religion in the Public Square*. pp. 111-112.

¹¹ *ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

decisions'.¹² If religious persons have religious reasons, it would be impossible not to include these, since 'we cannot leap out of our perspectives'.¹³ There are no grounds for believing that a policy or piece of legislation will carry greater support on the grounds that religious reasons have been left out of the debate.¹⁴

Greater clarity on this dilemma might be brought if we were to distinguish between two different types of the separation of religion and public life. Sunder Katwala argues that there has been a confusion or conflation of two distinct principles of the liberal state: firstly that the State should not privilege one form of religious expression or favour particular teachings in its social policies; and secondly, that religion should be kept entirely private. Yet the first does not necessarily entail the other; in fact, like Wolterstorff, Katwala questions its basic precept that 'religious citizens must abstract themselves from their deepest beliefs in accepting an iron distinction between private beliefs and public values ...'¹⁵ Katwala distinguishes 'ideological' secularism (the 'firewall' between religion and the State) with 'pragmatic' secularism, which respects the prerogative of religious participants to advance religious views in articulating public values. The principles of human rights should prohibit discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion (such as their exclusion from public debate), just as they would enshrine respect for a diversity of gender, sexuality and ethnicity.¹⁶

¹² *ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

¹³ *ibid.*, p. 113.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁵ Katwala, Sunder (2006), 'Faith in democracy: the legitimate role of religion.' *Public Policy Research* December-February, 246-251, p. 248.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Rowan Williams has recently made a similar distinction between what he terms 'programmatic' and 'procedural' secularism. Whilst programmatic secularism suspends any talk of value in a semblance of instrumental neutrality, procedural secularism engages with but attempts to adjudicate between, competing convictions:

"The empty public square of programmatic secularism implies in effect that the almost value-free atmosphere of public neutrality and the public invisibility of specific commitments is enough to provide sustainable moral energy for a properly self-critical society. But it is not at all self-evident that people can so readily detach their perspectives and policies in social or political discussion from fundamental convictions that are not allowed to be mentioned or manifested in public."¹⁷

But it still requires complex negotiation when faith groups or individuals expect to enter the *political* arena to state *public* claims on the basis of *private* commitments.¹⁸ It might depend on a view of the public sphere that is not so much neutral – as in classic liberal theory – as mediated, seeing how varying philosophies and truth-claims can be seen as having their own integrity whilst also needing a degree of 'translation' into a shared space of public discourse. What I want to do next, therefore, is to see how our selected figures are intervening into the changing dynamics of religion – taking account

¹⁷ Williams, Rowan (2006), 'Secularism, Faith and Freedom', Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, 23 November, [online], available at: <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/654>, accessed 08/08-08.

¹⁸ See Neuhaus, Richard (1984), *The Naked Public Square: Religion and democracy in America*.

Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, p. 36.

of factors both local and global in their various contexts – in order to participate, even influence, this wholesale realignment of religion and religious values in public life.

3. Private Faith and Public Reason

Tony Blair

The election of John Smith as leader of the Labour Party in 1992 ushered in a new era of a more explicitly values-based politics. It saw the introduction of appeals to a legacy of ‘ethical socialism’ (with R.H. Tawney the most frequently invoked) with the reconstruction of New Labour after nearly two decades in opposition, and the need to rejuvenate core policy away from the extremes of welfare centralism or free market individualism.¹⁹

The revival of the Labour party after two decades of opposition was achieved partly through a rejuvenation of core principles, most particularly the relationship between the state and the individual and the renewal of the precepts of democratic socialism. And for Smith, and those around him, those values were those of Christian socialism, and were articulated in a series of lectures and publications over the next few years of

¹⁹ Ormrod, David ed. (1990), *Fellowship, Freedom and Equality*. London: Christian Socialist Movement; Bryant, Chris ed. (1993), *Reclaiming the Ground: Christianity and Socialism*. London: Hodder & Stoughton; Haslam, David and Dale, Graham eds (2001), *Faith in Politics*. London: Christian Socialist Movement.

Labour's period of opposition, which extended beyond Smith's death in 1994 and the accession of Blair to party leader.

Blair's comments on religion in relation to politics from 1992 onwards may therefore be construed as a kind of *intervention* into prevailing political discourse, at a time of considerable volatility in terms of the relationship between values and public debate. As one of a cohort of new Shadow ministers publicly associated with the Christian Socialist Movement from the early 1990s (which also included current Prime Minister, Gordon Brown), Tony Blair contributed to a number of manifestos and publications which explored the significance of Christian values for democratic socialism. Religion, and in particular the Christian social tradition, became firmly established as a central point in (New) Labour's 'moral compass',²⁰ and Blair found in Christianity's combination of personal responsibility with community values a powerful summary of the emergent 'third way' between free market individualism and State centralism.²¹

²⁰ Brown, Gordon (2007), "I will not let Britain down", *Guardian* (25 September), online, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/frontpage/story/0,,2176532,00.html> [30/09/07]; for a critique of the term, see Francis Davis, Elizabeth Paulhus and Andrew Bradstock, *Moral, But No Compass: Government, Church and the Future of Welfare*. London: Matthew James Publishing, 2008, p. 13.

²¹ '[T]he values of democratic socialism, founded on a belief in the importance of society and solidarity with others, are closely intertwined with those of Christianity – hardly surprising in view of the Christian beliefs of many of the Labour Party's historical and present-day members ...

However, it is also a powerful compass for the direction of change in our country. The new agenda in politics will reach out past old debates between economic ideologies of State control and *laissez-faire* and embrace different issues ... These issues must derive from some political values and we are as well to be sure of what they are.

A return to *what we are really about, what we believe in*, would be a healthy journey for our country as well as the Labour Party.

It would also help us comprehend more fully the importance of personal responsibility in our lives and its relationship to society as a whole ... It places a duty, an imperative on us to reach

Nor was Blair afraid to admit to holding religious values. Yet in the dying days of the Major administration (and by then Leader of the Opposition) Blair wanted such values to be understood by the electorate not as something that set him apart from the tough decisions of governance, but as a very demonstration of his realism and moral robustness.²²

However, there were distinct phases to this, as the relationship between 'faith' and 'politics' shifted during Blair's decade in power. It was, from the early nineties through to the General Election of 1997, about the renewal of New Labour's political fortunes that found in the legacy of Christian socialism a valuable moral depth and direction. It then shifted to become a discourse aimed at affording substance and direction to the programme of 'remoralisation'.²³ After the attacks of 11 September 2001 and the allies' invasion of Iraq in March 2003 however, Blair found the ground shifting beneath his feet, as professions of personal conviction, formerly the solid bedrock of his public probity, fell on the stonier ground of public suspicion of 'doing God' in the face of the

our better self and to care about creating a *better community* to live in.' (Blair, Tony (1993), 'Foreword' in Christopher Bryant, ed. *Reclaiming the Ground: Christianity and Socialism*. (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 10-12, our emphasis).

²² 'I can't stand politicians who wear God on their sleeves; I do not pretend to be any better or less selfish than anyone else; I do not believe that Christians should only vote Labour; and I do not discuss my religious beliefs unless asked, and when I do, I discuss them personally...

Christianity is optimistic about the human condition, but not naive. It can identify what is good, but knows the capacity to do evil. I believe that the endless striving to do the one and avoid the other is the purpose of human existence. Through that comes progress.' (Blair, Tony (1996), 'Why I am A Christian', *Sunday Telegraph* 7 April).

²³ See Scott, P.M., Baker, C.R. and Graham, E.L. eds. (2009), *Remoralising Britain? Ten years of New Labour: Faith, Morals and Governance* London: Continuum.

resurgence of religious fundamentalism and widespread opposition to military intervention in Iraq.

So by the second half of his decade in power, Blair's earlier willingness to discuss his faith appeared to give way to a greater ambivalence about religion. Possibly he was bruised by his association with George W. Bush and jibes about them praying together; or perhaps he was reluctant to be identified with religion in the face of what might be termed the 'new secularism' amongst sections of the intelligentsia such as Richard Dawkins, Polly Toynbee or Christopher Hitchens.

For example, in the spring of 2003, when the allies were preparing to invade Iraq, some sections of the British media claimed that those close to Tony Blair had advised him not to end a televised address by saying, "God bless you" on the basis that viewers would be alienated by its explicitly religious nature. Instead, he closed with the words, "thank you".²⁴ We might also think of the media attention occasioned by Tony Blair's remark that God would, ultimately, judge his decision to go to war with Iraq, when he appeared on the talk show *Parkinson* in March 2006.²⁵ And most recently, interviewed for a BBC

²⁴ Brown, Colin (2003), *Daily Telegraph* (4 May) online, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/main/jhtml?xml=news/2003/05/04/nblair04.xml> [11 May 2007].

²⁵ White, Michael (2006), 'God will judge me, PM tells Parkinson', *Guardian* (4 March), online, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/frontpage/story/0,1723164,00.html> [11 May 2007]. When Parkinson asked Blair, "Does [religion] still inform your view of politics and of the world?" Blair replied, "Well I think if you have a religious belief it does, but it's probably best not to take it too far." Later, when Parkinson said, "So you pray to God when you make a decision like that?" Blair countered with, "Well, you know, I don't want to go into sermons ...". Brown, Callum (2006), "'Best not to take it too far": how the British cut religion down to size.' *Opendemocracy.net* (8 March), online, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/xhtml/articles/3335.html> [11 May 2007], p. 1.

TV series of retrospectives on his ten years in power, Blair offered the opinion that: ‘... you talk about [religion] in our system, and frankly, people think you’re a nutter.’²⁶

If this is a sign of a greater hesitancy in the face of a realisation of the divisive and negative potential of religion as political discourse, then it may reflect the fact that the language of faith and the invocation of religious values on the part of religious leaders and politicians had now come to be seen as an evasion of democratic accountability rather than a means of enriching our vocabulary of civic virtue.

There is a real contrast, then, between Blair’s halting, diffident public statements on religion by the end of his Premiership and those of the aspiring Shadow Home Secretary of a dozen years earlier. His commendation of the unambiguous merits of religion within a healthy civil society was now overshadowed by the excesses of religious extremism and the war on terror. Religion had been one means of New Labour putting the agenda of ‘remoralisation’ to work, enabling them to maintain their occupation of the political mainstream and moral high ground. However, especially after 9/11, Tony Blair began to realise that the discourse of ‘faith’ no longer worked in his favour. Rather than furnishing him with a language of political trust and personal rectitude, Blair’s professions of faith begin to isolate him from a more secular and increasingly sceptical electorate.

²⁶ BBC Television, *The Blair Years*, 2 December 2007.

As he left office, therefore, and the Blair decade came to an end, we could perhaps see a shift in his own discursive synthesis of religion, remoralisation and politics. Increasingly, he draws a distinction between 'good' and 'bad' religion – of whatever tradition – a conviction that leads him to the establishment of his Faith Foundation in 2008.²⁷ From establishing New Labour's electoral credibility, and by extension, his own integrity at a time of unprecedented volatility in terms of political affiliations, Blair's religious commitments now propel him away from party policy – indeed away from domestic politics altogether – towards a fascination with religion as a universal quest for moral values that define our very humanity.²⁸

Blair's discourse of religious conviction makes more sense, however, if we regard it as something intended to be pitched into a cultural and political context of what Anthony Giddens terms 'reflexivity', as a key characteristic of late modernity. In his theorization of modernity, Anthony Giddens has developed the notion of reflexivity to describe the nature of personal identity.²⁹ He summarises reflexivity as the situation in which 'social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information

²⁷ 'In this world, religious faith, crucial to so many people's culture and identity, can play a positive or a negative role ... In this context, interfaith action and encounter are vital. They symbolise peaceful co-existence. That is my primary argument. However, I then go further, and argue that religious faith is a good thing in itself: that, so far from being a reactionary force, it has a major part to play in shaping the values which guide the modern world, and can and should be a force for progress ...

(Blair, Tony (2008), 'Faith and Globalisation' lecture, Westminster Cathedral, 3rd April).

²⁸ Faith is not something separate from our reason, still less from society around us, but integral to it, giving the use of reason a purpose, and society a soul, and human beings a sense of the divine.' Ibid.

²⁹ Giddens, A. (1990), *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 38.

about these very practices, thus constitutively altering their character'.³⁰ This element of uncertainty and the collapse of foundational thinking – 'reason has lost its foundation, history its direction, and progress its allure'³¹ – Giddens terms 'radicalized modernity'.

Ambitions shift from the grand narrative of emancipation towards the 'life politics' of self-actualisation, as political solidarities, theories of the state, the primacy of the market are all scrutinised and dissipated. Politics becomes a kind of pragmatism in which no single agent, no one cause, can direct the course of history, although there are still 'many points of political engagement which offer good cause for optimism'.³² The third way, says Giddens, is about helping citizens to '*pilot their way* through the major revolutions of our time: globalization, transformations in personal life and our relationship to nature'³³.

Within this perspective, Blair's discursive interventions are in part about a search for a reliable and coherent public language by which he can establish his, and New Labour's, political credentials. The recurrent references to values may have originated in Blair's own theological convictions, but they were intended to appeal not to a common culture of [Christian] belief but to resonate with an electorate in search of a 'moral compass' of their own. In that context, speaking from the heart and providing a moral and religious

³⁰ Giddens, A. (1990), *The Consequences of Modernity*, Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 38.

³¹ Bryant, Christopher G.A. and Jary, David (2000), 'Anthony Giddens' in G. Ritzer, ed. *The Blackwell Companion to Major Social Theorists*, Oxford: Blackwell, p. 683

³² Giddens, A. (1994), *Beyond Left and Right: the future of radical politics*, Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 21.

³³ Giddens, A. (1998), *The Third Way: the Renewal of Social Democracy*, Cambridge: Polity Press, p. 64, our emphasis.

rationale for his policies rooted in personal conviction becomes an alternative to appeals to political theories or class solidarities with which people no longer identify.

Kevin Rudd

Kevin Rudd, elected Prime Minister of Australia in November 2007, went against the grain of predominantly secularist public debate in that country³⁴ when still leader of the opposition in 2006, by writing about the connections between faith and politics. This was more than a personal confession of faith, however, being quite overtly party-political in criticising what Rudd called ‘the political orchestration of various forms of organised Christianity in support of the conservative incumbency’ on the part of George W. Bush in the U.S. and John Howard in his own country.³⁵

Rather than bolstering the interests of the powerful within a conservative programme that stresses family values and personal morality at the expense of social justice, Rudd argues that the instincts of Christianity are prophetic and counter-cultural. He invokes the German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer as a potential role-model for those seeking an alternative model of political engagement, calling him ‘a man of faith ... a man of reason ... a man of letters ... above all ... a man of action’ (2006:1). Note how ‘faith’ which might alienate some, is quickly complemented by words which broaden out that appeal.

³⁴ See Maddox, Marion (2007), Religion, Secularism and the Promise of Public Theology. *International Journal of Public Theology* 1:1, 82-100.

³⁵ Rudd, Kevin (2006), ‘Faith in Politics’. *The Monthly* (October) online, http://www.themonthly.com.au/excerpts/issue17_excerpt_001.html, p.5 [12/06/07]

Yet Rudd is at pains to stress that neither is faith inherently party political. It must reserve the privilege of challenging all shades of opinion from an independent moral standpoint [of course secularists would say that it is not independent but very sectional and exclusive]. Repudiation of the relegation of religion into private moral concerns, and its marginalisation to the fringes of public life represents a kind of ‘two Kingdoms’ approach with which Bonhoeffer profoundly disagreed.

Rudd traces how historically, Christianity moved from being an oppressed minority into the state religion. Now, it is no longer predominant, and it is rediscovering a counter-cultural, yet engaged position. [So Rudd knows he is no longer addressing a common religious culture]. The essence of Christianity’s political witness is on behalf of the marginalised, the oppressed, the poor, although there must be a balance of realism between social justice and wealth creation: a plea for a form of Realism that respects proportionality and pluralism whilst acting out of conviction. Essentially the vocation of the Church is to ‘speak truth to power’; Rudd argues, ‘Bonhoeffer’s political theology is therefore one of a dissenting church that speaks truth to the state, and does so by giving voice to the voiceless.’³⁶

Interviewed subsequently on ABC Radio, Rudd elaborated further on the context of the article and some of his reasoning behind its publication. He admitted that in the past he had kept his Christian faith to himself - ‘It’s very much the Australian way, and if I had

³⁶ Ibid, p. 2.

my way, that would be my way as well' - but had felt motivated to speak out in the face of campaigns by the right-wing Family First party to recruit conservative evangelical religious groups to their cause (see Maddox, 2007). Rudd parodies this appeal to religious values as, 'Vote for me, I'm a Christian ... and I espouse conservative moral principles associated with regulating sexual behaviour, which I dress up in an appeal to 'family values' but then attack anyone who wants to talk about social morality, such as global poverty, asylum, Aboriginal rights, Iraq, etc. as dragging religion into politics'³⁷ He was also objecting to the way George W. Bush and John Howard have been responsible for the exploitation ('orchestration') of organized religion for conservative ends. Overall, it reflects Rudd's desire on his part to reclaim much of the ground that had been ceded to conservative, confessional interests in favour of a more progressive public theology that chooses to define 'morality' and 'faith' in more inclusive, socially responsible ways.

In the interview, Rudd insists that he was addressing people of faith as a person of faith, and concerned to challenge the view that God can be the exclusive property of the Christian Right. '... I haven't been calling for necessarily ... a *greater* Christian voice in politics ... I've simply called for a *different* Christian voice in politics.'³⁸

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 10

³⁸ Religion Report (2007), 'Kevin Rudd and "the political orchestration of organised Christianity"', ABC Radio National (online), 3 January, available at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/religionreport/stories/2007/1810679.htm>, accessed on 14/06/08, p. 2.

Yet he was still aware of speaking into a pluralist context, although his own specific theological stance does not necessarily render it illegitimate:

A Christian perspective on contemporary policy debates may not prevail. It must nonetheless be argued. And once heard, it must be weighed, together with other arguments from different philosophical traditions, in a fully contestable secular polity. A Christian perspective, informed by a social gospel or Christian socialist tradition, should not be rejected contemptuously by secular politicians as if these views are an unwelcome intrusion into the political sphere. If the churches are barred from participating in the great debates about the values that ultimately underpin our society, our economy and our polity, then we have reached a very strange place indeed.³⁹

Rudd thus places himself clearly within a tradition of Christian socialism, a progressive social democratic vision, speaking up for the needs of those with little power – including the environment.

‘This is an Australia which takes the values of decency, fairness and compassion that are still etched deep in our national soul, despite a decade of oxygen deprivation, and breathes them afresh into the great debates now faced by our country and the international community.’ (2006: 10)

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 7

Rudd shares Bonhoeffer's vision of 'a just world delivered by social action, driven by personal faith' (2006: 10); but whilst these may be shaped by Christian conviction, they are common values with deep roots in Australian society that transcends any particular group – in fact, its power lies in its insistence on transcending self-interest to embrace an inclusive and global community.

Rudd's statements may have been intended to capture the trust of sceptical voters, or establish his credibility with the electorate, but it was also about breaking the monopoly of a particular kind of religious intervention in public life and putting forward an alternative, as well as sketching out the territory on which Rudd would lead Labor (successfully, as it transpired) into the next election. Rudd was wanting to define the role of faith in politics as more than a functional one of delivering welfare services, linking government with hard to reach' communities or guaranteeing social cohesion. He wanted there to be space for a language of values in relation to faith and, perhaps like Blair, to the rejuvenation of political debate. Yet it was not about making Labor a 'Christian' or 'Christian socialist' party, since Rudd respects the secular and pluralist nature of the State. Nevertheless, he was arguing for people to be able to bring religion into their political activism and moral reasoning in the name of a healthy democracy. Rudd's statements fit well into the traditions of mainstream public theology, as a model of faith 'tempered' or 'harnessed' by reason⁴⁰, and of the adoption of a form of

⁴⁰ Something he refers to twice in the interview.

'bilingualism' which is both rooted in the specifics of Christian tradition and seeks to translate that into more publicly accessible language.⁴¹

Barack Obama

Whilst public discourse and political campaigning in the U.S. – especially for President – is altogether more comfortable with public professions of faith than Australia or the UK, the Democrats have struggled in the past to capture the religious vote and have fought shy of campaigning on 'Christian moral values'. Yet in Barack Obama there is a politician whose political roots are in church-related broad-based organizing in Chicago, and who announced his candidacy on the steps of his local church. So like Rudd, Obama seems to be reclaiming the discourse of religious faith from the conservative Moral Majority and directing it to supporting more progressive values of social justice and inclusion.

Obama's strengths as an orator are well-known, especially his ability to inspire and move his audience. In that respect, what seems most powerful to me is the way he stands in a tradition of African-American public speaking that evokes the cadences of the pulpit and transposes it into mainstream politics. But Martin Luther King Jr, who

⁴¹ See Bedford-Strohm, Heinrich (2007), 'Nurturing Reason: the public role of religion in the liberal state'. *Ned Geref Teologiese Tydskrif* 48, 1 & 2, March-June, 25-41, p. 35; see also Forrester, Duncan "The Scope of Public Theology." *Studies in Christian Ethics* Vol 17, No. 2, 2004, 5-19.

perhaps exemplifies that tradition par excellence, was after all a Baptist minister, whereas Obama was trained as a lawyer. You might say that both professions make their living by public speaking but it's the direct way that Obama has picked up on the quasi-theological language in his campaign that is of note, since it constitutes much of his impact and appeal. He has also been shaped by the rhetoric and ideals of the 1960s civil rights movement, which would also have been unimaginable without the contribution of religion in general and the African-American church in particular.

Obama, of course, is a Church member (although a Newsweek poll reported in spring 2008 that 13% of those polled thought he was a Muslim), but he resigned his membership of Trinity United Church of Christ in Chicago following controversial comments from its pastor, Jeremiah Wright. Wright had claimed in his sermons that 9/11 was a punishment for the United States' imperialist foreign policy and that HIV/AIDS was deliberately introduced into the African-American population by the government. 'No, no, no, not "God Bless America"' he declaimed, "'God damn America, that's in the Bible, for killing innocent people'!"⁴²

Yet once again, several commentators have argued that it's not just about Obama's private convictions and much more about tapping in to a vein of (perhaps uniquely) American political discourse that allows, even expects, overt reference to faith and God.⁴³ In speaking about hope, vision, aspiration as fundamental to his political project, Obama is mining a deep and rich vein, of the religious foundations of America's national

⁴² Timothy Lavin, 'Chimes of Freedom', *The Tablet*, 3 May 2008, 4-5, p. 4.

⁴³ Jonathan Raban, 'Good news in bad times', *Guardian* January 5, 2008.

identity, of its destiny as divine gift, of its democratic, egalitarian polity as embodying the best of the human spirit. It chimes in perfectly with Robert Bellah's analysis of 'civil religion'. In the absence of any prescribed or official religion, the nation develops a set of shared symbols that transcend sectional interest and become the over-arching ideals against which national identity and common purpose are defined.

For Obama, therefore, it's more than simply portraying himself as a trustworthy individual, as in Blair's case, but about rooting his own ambitions in a set of collective ideals that can only be expressed in religious language. So will the Presidential race boil down to the question of rhetoric; of who has the most fluent command of that language of civil religion?

But Obama is also tapping another seam, it seems to me, which again is strong in the United States: that of religion as a potent source of social capital, or the values and norms that inspire us to forge social bonds, to form relationships of trust and outreach. According to scholars such as Robert Putnam, those who belong to communities of faith are statistically more likely to be active in charitable or political causes, and religious organizations are often at the heart of neighbourhood networks.⁴⁴ Obama articulates this very precisely, in what he says about religion offering a framework of meaning and values which connect us in to a wider set of values beyond. It's classical sociological theory according to Durkheim, in fact, of religion as a source of 'social cohesion' that protects us as individuals from anomie and connects us to collective mores: 'Americans

⁴⁴ Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, 2000; and *Bowling Together*.

want a narrative arc to their lives. They are looking to relieve a chronic loneliness ... They are not just destined to travel down that long highway towards nothingness ... Without a vessel for my beliefs, without a commitment to a particular community of faith, at some level I would always remain apart, and alone.'⁴⁵

Once more, we may view this through an understanding about the reflexivity of late modernity, in which the electorate is looking for bearings by which to set its own 'moral compass', not necessarily by following the content of a politician's beliefs so much as identifying with an almost autobiographical quest to establish their own orientation. For Obama, religion provides that 'narrative arc', sets out a world-view into which Obama can immerse himself and in the process tap into its language, symbols and traditions. African-American theology and church life generates the 'faithful capital' that drives social renewal. The churches are guardians of values that characterize America's faith in itself and its people, united in a recovery of its founding principles.

'What the crowds crave from this scrupulous agnostic is his capacity to deliver the ecstatic consolation of old-time religion – a vision of America that transcends differences of race, class and party, and restores harmony to a land riven under the oppressive rule of a government alien to its founding principles.'⁴⁶

Another example comes from earlier in the campaign for the Democratic nomination, from an interview he gave with David Brooks of the New York Times in April 2007.

⁴⁵ Jonathan Raban, 'Good news in bad times', *Guardian* January 5, 2008.

⁴⁶ Raban, p. 3

Brooks asked Obama what he had been reading recently, to which Obama quoted the (ostensibly) unlikely choice of the liberal Protestant public theologian and ethicist Reinhold Niebuhr. When asked what he takes away from his reading of Niebuhr, Obama's answer is once again superficially measured but is of course directed against his political opponents both within and beyond his own party, with particular censure aimed at those who allow an excessively doctrinaire world-view to inform their political decisions:

I take away ... the compelling idea that there's serious evil in the world, and hardship and pain. And we should be humble and modest in our belief we can eliminate those things. But we shouldn't use that as an excuse for cynicism and inaction. I take away the sense we have to make these efforts knowing they are hard, and not swinging from naïve idealism to bitter realism.⁴⁷

It is of course possible that he knew the question was coming in advance of the interview, but it is still significant that he chooses to invoke the work of a formidable public intellectual, a key figure in the twentieth-century tradition of theologically-informed comment on social, economic and political affairs, as well as indicating an interest in the moral legacy of Niebuhr's Christian Realism for contemporary international politics. This represents another example, I contend, of a deliberate effort to communicate across gulfs of religious and moral pluralism into a shared public discourse in ways which manage both to respect the pluralism of their intended audience without selling short the speaker's own integrity.

⁴⁷ Brooks, David (2007), 'Obama, Gospel and Verse' *The New York Times* (26 April), online, <http://select.nytimes.com/search/restricted/article?res=FA0810FD3E5A0C758EDDA> [12/06/07].

Helen Clark

Helen Clark, Prime Minister of New Zealand since 1999, differs from the other three figures in that she identifies herself as an agnostic. But in spite of that, she has been prominent, even outspoken, on the importance of respecting religious faith and diversity within Aotearoa New Zealand, as evidenced by her support for the NZ Statement of Religious Diversity, published in May 2007. What has emerged for me – and clearly I speak as an outsider on this – is that this Statement, if realised effectively in workable public policy, would represent a very different relationship between religion and the State from the classic liberal Western Enlightenment model (even though that is probably honoured as much in the breach.) This is not about the neutral secular state insisting on the ‘bracketing out’ of religious conviction and affiliation in matters to do with citizenship, national identity and multiculturalism. It reflects instead an understanding that cultural diversity has to embrace religious diversity; and that this may have to be promoted and protected by the State in various ways.

So, in launching the Statement at a Regional Inter-faith conference in Waitangi in May 2007 Helen Clark said this:

‘My government works hard to ensure that all ethnicities and faiths are valued and included in 21st century New Zealand. I hope that *the spirit of Waitangi* (my emphasis) will assist your work ... on how the many faiths and cultures in our region can live in harmony ... For we do not accept that there is anything

inevitable or unavoidable about tension and conflict between ethnicities, cultures, and faiths.’⁴⁸

On one level, this comes over as a ‘motherhood and apple pie’ speech (or whatever the Kiwi equivalent of that may be). Yet the Statement, and Clark’s close association with it, came under strong attack, both from secularist and humanist groups⁴⁹, and from conservative Christian elements⁵⁰ – and some of that antipathy was directed towards Clark in person. But this is entirely consistent with my overall thesis, I think, that in a culture of political and personal reflexivity people are looking as much to the personal comportment of politicians in these matters, and so Clark’s integrity – or for her detractors, lack of it – is inevitably implicated.

An argument in support of the 2007 Statement could be that by enshrining religious identity and affiliation into public policy, government is taking a significant step to guarantee the parameters of social cohesion against the manifestations of religious

⁴⁸ Helen Clark (2007), Address at Opening Ceremony of the Third Asia-Pacific Regional Interfaith Dialogue, 29 May, (online), available at: <http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/print.html?path=PA0705/S00741.htm>, accessed on 14/06/08.

⁴⁹ See for example, ‘Helen Clark’s diplomacy’, *Open Parachute* (online), May 30 2007, available at: <http://openparachute.wordpress.com/2007/05/30/%C2%B6-helen-clarks-diplomacy/> [accessed 21 June 2008].

⁵⁰ In particular, Brian Tamaki and the Destiny organization, which organized a counter-demonstration against the Statement at Waitangi to coincide with its launch. Tamaki issued an alternative statement, which was intended ‘to cement New Zealand’s Christian identity in such a way that it cannot be tampered with by future Governments.’ Tamaki’s view that ‘New Zealand is essentially a Christian nation’ could be seen as a somewhat revisionist, if not idiosyncratic reading of the 1840 Waitangi Treaty, which others would see as enshrining freedom of religion and Pakeha/Maori biculturalism. ‘Tamaki to protest as leaders discuss religious diversity’, 29 May 2007, [online], available at <http://www.infonews.co.nz/news.cfm?1=1+t=124&id=2107>, accessed on 5 August 2008.

resurgence globally, and that this is motivated both by a concern for human rights and for national security. Take the classic liberal segregation of religion and politics, as an ideal form of ‘strong’ secularism, in which all partisan values and principles, especially theologically-derived, are to be insulated from the public domain. In a ‘post-secular’ world, however, such a distinction could actually militate against any kind of public transparency or accountability on the part of minority religious groups, by disallowing any common space in which religiously-motivated policies could be debated. Neither secular states nor secularist public rhetoric are necessarily a protection against religiously-motivated politics – quite the opposite, in fact - if a residue or minority of religious parties takes on a mission of actively shaping the political or civic agenda. Without a statement on religious diversity that is both theological *and* political, New Zealand might find itself vulnerable to such a process.

But it does seem as if there are these twin agendas of human rights and national security. Whereas the authors of the report stress the value of interfaith relations and a Statement such as this as a step towards ‘learning the art of dialogue’⁵¹ between faith communities and wider society, Helen Clark’s comments in her Preface betray a second concern. ‘It is my hope’, she says, ‘that the Statement will help all New Zealanders, of whatever faith or ethical belief, to feel free to practice [sic] their beliefs in peace and within the law.’⁵² The Statement does contain some comment on people’s right to practise religion free from harassment, and the need to address disputes between faiths – however that might be sanctioned by legislation - but Clark’s emphasis also reflects a

⁵¹ Dame Sylvia Cartwright (2007), Foreword, *Religious Diversity in New Zealand: Statement on Religious Diversity*, New Zealand Diversity Action Programme, p.2.

⁵² Helen Clark, (2007), Preface, *Religious Diversity in NZ*, p. 1, my emphasis.

tension between aspirations towards interfaith understanding and government anxiety about national security, social cohesion and religious extremism.⁵³

The 2007 Statement on Religious Diversity, and Clark's advocacy of it within a broader scope of the Government's ambitions towards social cohesion, represent a significant acknowledgement of a religious dimension to public life in Aotearoa New Zealand. As one commentator, Joris de Bres, remarked, the Statement is entirely consistent with the non-partisan brief of the NZ Human Rights Commission, since 'the State has as much of a responsibility to engage with citizens who share a community of belief as they do with those who share a community of culture, ethnicity or geography.'⁵⁴ Clark herself seems to have little embarrassment about 'doing God' in public;⁵⁵ and perhaps the absence of a personal agenda – in all but the minds of her most virulent opponents – helps to ease her policy of a characteristically Kiwi 'non-alignment' in matters spiritual.⁵⁶

⁵³ During the Report's preparation, Clark stated that Government did need to address the question of religious extremism to prevent the kind of second- and third-generation Muslim activism seen in the UK. Audrey Young, 'Clark calls for action to combat extremism', *New Zealand Herald* 27 December 2006, [online], available at

⁵⁴ Joris de Bres, 'Human Rights and Religious Diversity', *Aotearoa Ethnic Network Journal* Volume 2, Issue 2, August 2007, 9-14, p.9.

⁵⁵ She is commended for lending her official support to many multi-faith activities, such as hosting Eid and Diwali celebrations at Parliament. 'Helen Clark has wanted to send a message that New Zealand's government now regards these important religious days as just as legitimate as traditional events like Christmas and Easter.' See <http://www.lists.ccc.govt>, accessed 6 August 2008.

⁵⁶ During a debate about the revision of the opening prayers at Parliament to make them less exclusively Christian, Clark was quoted as saying, 'I believe it is very important that our law makers acknowledge God before they go about their business. By doing so they honour the founding values of our nation and are reminded that there is a higher authority than themselves, although I suspect this reminder is the very reason why they want the prayer removed.' 'MPs want Prayer Changes to Reflect Religious Diversity', *Anglicans All* June 1, 2007, [online], available at <http://www.duomo.ac.nz//acnz/?=p590>, accessed 6 August 2008.

4. Analysis

I have been tracing the interventions across a range of political contexts made by my four chosen political figures regarding faith and politics. Each of them is, I argue, speaking into a slightly different discourse about how religion should or should not shape public life. For three out of the four, that involves identifying themselves with a particular faith commitment, but overall I think we can see how such professions have to be mediated into a wider context in which religion of one or many kinds carries meanings and associations that have to be negotiated carefully. But what seems to be new at the start of the twenty-first century is the sense that religion is seen as a powerful and legitimate source of private motivation and public values: if not for the population at large, then at least in some respect by proxy.

Which may beg the question: why bother with a rhetoric of values at all? Why should a government not instead concentrate on effective delivery of outcomes as required by agreed policy objectives? One answer to this question is offered by the philosopher Simon Critchley: '[T]here is a motivational deficit at the heart of liberal democratic life, where citizens experience the governmental norms that rule contemporary society as externally binding but not internally compelling.'⁵⁷ One of the reasons for this state of affairs might be the reflexivity that I introduced earlier: citizens are more and more concerned to pilot their own way, according to their own expressive desires. Yet perhaps given the decline of social and cultural prominence of religious leaders, it is to politicians that they look for some clues as to the bearings of their 'moral compass'.

⁵⁷ Critchley, Simon (2007), *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance* (London: Verso), p 7.

Perhaps in this respect politics, like religion, has shifted 'from a form of social engagement focused on commitment to a bounded community, to a form of consumption, focused on individual needs which may change over time.'⁵⁸ In the absence of hard and fast affiliations to labour unions or long-term commitment to political ideologies, the personal integrity of politicians comes to matter more. It becomes less compelling and less effective for political figures to speak out of traditions of political philosophy, but more significant to represent themselves as the kinds of people who understand what it means, in the words of Margaret Archer, to 'value values'.⁵⁹

The debate about the role of religion in a western, post-Christendom, liberal polity-nation, it seems to me, needs to proceed in some such fashion, although the way is not easy nor is it comfortable. One thing is for sure: the secular proceduralism of the liberal polity is being tested in new ways by the globalising and de-secularising processes.⁶⁰ Yet these debates also highlight the importance of the agenda of the *moralising* of a polity, and the role that different kinds of faith or spirituality should play in underpinning the values and visions by which we live. Questions of the common good, and of virtue and vision, both personal and corporate, lie at the heart of any healthy body politic, and it is to their credit that all four of the political leaders I have discussed are seeking to uphold that aspect of public life. And it is clear in that respect, that some kind of interaction between religion and politics will always be part of the equation.

⁵⁸ Guest, M. (2006), p. 63.

⁵⁹ Archer, Margaret (2007), *Making Our Way Through the World: Human Reflexivity and Social Mobility*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 230.

⁶⁰ See Casanova, José (1994), *Public Religions in the Modern World*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.