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An Exploration into Christian Engagement in Freedom of Religion or Belief

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Abstract

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in Freedom of Religion or Belief

This study explores the challenges and opportunities facing Christian organisations engaged in the pursuit of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB). The thesis suggests that FoRB is consistent with the mission of God and demanded by it.

Chapter one sets out the method and narrative for the research. Chapters two to four provide a case study of the research subject, Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), an evangelical human rights charity engaged in FoRB. The challenges, opportunities, and ambiguities facing Christian organisations in this field are here explored. Chapter five considers Christian ideas behind Article 1 and Article 18 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Chapter six identifies historic examples of theological thought that flowed into Christian activism in the Declaration.

The thesis aims to provide a reflection which supports Christian praxis in this field: crucially, chapters seven and eight attempt to lay this foundation. The material considers selected texts which explore human dignity, and the universal character of God's mission that responds to all human suffering. My final chapter offers some practical thoughts for Christians engaged in FoRB.

This qualitative ethnographic study explored the organisation's understanding of the biblical drivers behind their praxis through a series of twenty-nine semi-structured interviews. Interviews were supplemented by primary material from the World Council of Churches (WCC), the United Nations and the Evangelical Alliance UK. My own study journal provided opportunities for reflexivity.

Ultimately, this study aims to make a contribution to an area of ministry with scope for more specific theological reflection.

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in Freedom of Religion or Belief

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June 2019

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Abbreviations

APPGFORB	All Party Parliamentary Group on Freedom of Religion or Belief
CCIA	WCC's Commission for International Affairs
CJDP	Campaign for a Just and Durable Peace
CSI	Christian Solidarity International
CSW	Christian Solidarity Worldwide
DRF	US Department for Religious Freedom
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council of the UN
ECHR	European Court of Human Rights
EHRC	Equalities and Human Rights Commission
FCC	Federal Council of Church of Christ
FoRB	Freedom of Religion or Belief
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office
GCF	Global Christian Forum
HRC	United Nations Human Rights Council
IIRF	International Institute for Religious Freedom
IJPR	International Journal for Philosophy of Religion
IMC	International Missionary Council
IPPFoRB	International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of Religion or Belief
JCRL	Joint Committee on Religious Liberty
JRE	Journal of Religious Ethics
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NCEASL	National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka
RFI	The Religious Freedom Institute

RLP	Religious Liberty Partnership
SEANFoRB	South East Asia Network on FoRB
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
USCIRF	United States Commission on International Religious Freedom
WEA	World Evangelical Alliance
WCC	World Council of Churches

Statement of Copyright

Acknowledgements

This thesis has been my Mount Everest. Like all successful expeditions no one gets to the summit unaided. I am indebted therefore to a host of wonderful people without whom I might still be in the foothills looking up.

My first thanks must go to those who were there at the beginning of the journey. Much thanks to Mervyn Thomas, CEO and founder of CSW, and to the entire staff and Board who welcomed this thesis as an important part of their own learning experience and without whom this work would not have been possible. Vikki McLachlan was a colleague and cheerleader who also took time to assist with the transcript of my early interviews and added some finishing touches to the final stages.

I am hugely grateful to Rev. Prof. David Wilkinson, Principal of St John's who talked me into attending Durham and to the DThM faculty and fellow students whose friendship and support made this possible.

Very special thanks must go to my two supervisors, Prof. Mike Higton and Rev. Dr Gavin Wakefield. My gift to them was to improve their quota of patience; their gift to me was to enable me in completing my adventure.

Thanks is also due to Prof. Christof Sauer, Dr David Muir and Prof. Malcolm Evans who offered specific insights in the final stages of the thesis.

I also owe a special thanks to Dr Anthea Henderson whose proofreading was so invaluable in the final steps to the finishing line.

A special thanks to my wife, Carol, who gave me lots of space as I hid away for endless hours to scramble up the mountain.

Chapter One

Overview and Method

1.1   A thesis on FoRB

For many Christian communities, the 'secular' instruments of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) and within it the commitment to Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB), are at variance with Christian mission. FoRB is the right to belief or to change religion without coercion and is enshrined within Article 18 of the UDHR.[1] Throughout this thesis FoRB should be understood as religious freedom for Christians and people of other faiths and none.

The central purpose of this thesis has been the identification of an absent coherent ideological framework for CSW's praxis which the charity itself acknowledged. In response this thesis will suggest that everyone made in God's image is endowed with the dignity which protects their religious freedom. I will argue that the mission of God defends freedom from coercion which is also espoused in the UDHR. Consequently, Christians committed to the unique claims of their faith may also regard as collaborators those who work to protect such freedoms for everyone else, irrespective of their faith or belief.

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[1] United Nations, 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' (1948) < http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/> [accessed 2 November 2018].

In laying out this position, the reader will therefore be presented with a breadth of missiological perspectives, observations on human rights and theological insights which have been deduced from the empirical evidence. Indeed, the theological explorations which I offer here reflect the fact that whilst much has been written on human rights and religious freedom more broadly, the literature specifically supporting Christian engagement in FoRB is not extensive.

I will argue that the pursuit of FoRB is consistent with God's response to all individuals who suffer for their belief irrespective of their belief. I will also suggest that Christian engagement in upholding FoRB has historic precedents and a theological rationale which not only legitimises work in this area but also commissions Christian engagement in advocating for FoRB.

In this chapter I will set out my own interest in this issue along with an overview of the methodology that will be guided by my research question.

Chapters two to four provide a profile of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), the evangelical human rights charity specialising in FoRB that was the subject of this research. Chapter two presents a case study of the organisation, chapter three explores a number of ambiguities of identity and language that faced the staff as specialists in FoRB and chapter four provides a comparative study of reactions to persecution from respondents.

During the course of the research it was evident that the ambiguities and challenges that faced the organisation were due to three critical issues. The first was a lack of appreciation that the UDHR was itself influenced by Christian ideas. Chapter five responds to this issue. Equally, CSW was unaware that throughout Christian history there have been important voices who

have defended religious freedoms for everyone. In chapter six I provide a brief overview of this history.

Crucially, CSW was aware of the third gap: a lack of a theological framework for their praxis. In chapters seven and eight I provide an exegetical study and theological overview, respectively. In brief, both chapters offer excursions into a biblical argument for human dignity and a universalism that preserves an evangelical soteriology whilst recognising that the mission of God is fully committed to the well-being of everyone made in his image. Both chapters respond to the charity's understanding of its work and suggest ways of reading the texts that provide plausible support for this work. Rather than setting out a conclusive theological theory for FoRB, I have attempted to raise questions and offer possible insights to support Christian engagement in FoRB. My final chapter extrapolates from CSW's experiences in order to provide some practical responses to the challenges and opportunities facing Christians engaged in FoRB.

This thesis is not an unqualified defence of human rights as a political framework for international relationships. Rather, my purpose is simply to explore the degree to which the pursuit of FoRB that is positioned within the instruments of human rights may be supported from biblical ideas that legitimise Christian praxis in this field. This thesis also attempts to address the relationship between important themes of Christian mission and human suffering within a Christological framework.[2]

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[2] The circuitous progression of the title meant that the interviews and letters of invitation were predicated on the penultimate thesis title which incorporated the notion of the *missio dei* and *freedom from suffering*. In spite of this methodological anachronism, I was satisfied that the interview questions and the empirical material remained true to the final research question.

It will be evident to the reader that this thesis will have traversed various disciplines. In order to address the lacuna in the philosophical framework for CSW's work this thesis combines theological and missiological reflection along with Christian activism and elements of human rights discourse.

This framework should therefore do more than give consent; it should commission engagement in FoRB as being integral to the mission of God.[3]

What began as a much broader account of mission (as engagement in the pursuit of freedom from suffering shared by everyone made in God's image and demonstrated in the human rights arena) became focused throughout the study and gathered momentum during my experience as a participant observer with CSW, who were already engaged in such work. As Peter Clough and Cathy Nutbrown suggest, my initial motivation was 'not so much to *prove* things - but more to *investigate* questions and explore issues'.[4] During my informal conversations that preceded the formal interviews, it became evident that the underlying tensions arising from CSW's engagement in FoRB were due in part to insufficient reflection in this field.

At an early stage it was evident that the charity faced ideological and epistemological challenges that could potentially hinder its unique role in this human rights arena. In guiding the research method my research question became, 'What are the challenges and

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[3] DThM Summer School, Thesis presentation, September 2017.
[4] Peter Clough and Cathy Nutbrown, *A Student's Guide to Methodology* (London, New Delhi: SAGE publications, 2002), p. 4.

opportunities facing Christian engagement in pursuit of FoRB?' I noted therefore that, as a participant observer with CSW, my study would,

> reflect on the practice of a human rights ministry pioneering a Christian approach to the pursuit of FoRB in order to provide new opportunities for learning in this field and consider new elements of theological reflection in a relatively unexplored but increasingly important area of Christian ministry.[5]

The focus of this thesis, exploring Christian engagement in FoRB, was the direct result of the research process, theological reflection and reflexivity. The process enabled me to better understand the extent to which a Christian articulation of engagement in FoRB remained a methodological and theological challenge for the evangelical community, which is broadly conservative in its theological and moral values. Notwithstanding its conservatism, the evangelical community is increasingly exploring the social and political implications of its gospel proclamation. Evangelicalism remains a tradition with mixed responses to social action, ambivalence to the human rights agenda and unexplored suspicions about the pursuit of FoRB.

1.2   Approaching the thesis

My initial interest in this thesis emerged between 1985 and 1995. During this period I combined local pastoral care with a series of national roles in evangelical leadership across cultural and denominational loyalties. I was also involved with the criminal justice system as a probation officer. These experiences coincided with a growing awareness among

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[5] Study journal, 12 March 2015.

evangelicals of equality issues, global poverty and human rights that led to critical assessment of the church's role as an agent of transformation.[6]

In addition, my own understanding of the social dimension of evangelicalism resulted in active involvement in a range of external activities and advisory roles with the Metropolitan Police Service and the Equalities and Human Rights Commission between 2006 and 2010. Of most significance was my engagement as a founder member and director of Micah Challenge International, a global Christian response to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).[7] This involved developing theological ideas to inspire and encourage evangelical partnerships with civil society. My inclusion as a human rights advisor to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs during this period consolidated my focus on the issues leading to this study.

1.3 Secularisation and the case for FoRB

Evangelical responses to injustice included a growing concern about religious persecution. Nevertheless, as I will discuss in my final chapter, the pursuit of FoRB remains sensitive for evangelicals. In recent decades Christians have become involved both in the defence of persecuted Christians around the world, as well as responding to the perceived erosion of Christian freedoms as a result of secularisation.

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[6] During this period EAUK publications developed this biblical justice awareness. See *For Such a Time as This: Perspectives on Evangelicalism, Past, Present and Future*, ed. by Steve Brady and Harold Rowdon (Milton Keynes: Scripture Union, 1996); Ian Randall and David Hilborn, *One Body in Christ: The History and Significance of the Evangelical Alliance* (Cumbria: Paternoster Press, 2001).

[7] *Micah's Challenge: The Church's Responsivity to the Global Poor,* ed. by Marijke Hoek and Justin Thacker (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2009); Joel Edwards*, Just Mercy* (Surrey: CWR, 2010). The MDGs, launched by the United Nations in September 2000 in a process in which over a hundred and seventy nations agreed to reduce extreme poverty by half by 2015, became a catalyst for an unprecedented global evangelical advocacy against extreme poverty between 2004 and 2014.

The Catholic charity Aid to the Church in Need was acknowledged by Pope Pius XII in 1947.[8] Open Doors' acclaimed work on behalf of persecuted Christians began in 1955,[9] and Release International in 1968.[10] CSW followed later, initially as Christian Solidarity International (CSI) in 1979,[11] and the Barnabas Fund providing aid and support for Christians was set up in 1993.[12] These, amongst other UK-based Christian charities, have firm roots in their Christian support base from which they defend persecuted Christians around the world. Despite its history of defending Christians and people of other faiths since 1846, [13] the World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), which has consultative status with the Economic and Social Council of the UN (ECOSOC), is almost exclusively concerned with the persecution of Christians. Similarly, whilst the Religious Liberty Partnership (RLP), which draws together an international group of evangelical religious freedom agencies claims that 'it supports and advocates religious freedom for all',[14] most of its members focus on defending persecuted Christians.

For many Christians in the West the pursuit of FoRB is complex and there remains an increasing perception that secularisation and the adaptation of the European Human Rights directives into state law is eroding Christian freedoms which has led to defensive responses to human rights more broadly. Over the past two decades the legal battles fought by Christian companies and individuals in the European Court of Human Rights has left organisations

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[8] Aid to the Church in Need, 'About Us' (no date) <https://acnuk.org/about/our-mission-and-history//> [accessed 18 May 2018].
[9] Open Doors, 'About Us' (no date) < https://www.opendoorsuk.org/about/our-history/ > [accessed 17 May 2018].
[10] Release International, 'About Us' (no date) <https://releaseinternational.org/events/50th-anniversary/> [accessed 17 May 2018].
[11] Interview Founder/CEO 1st July 2015. The charity's beginning is not readily identified in their public information.
[12] Wikipedia contributors, 'Barnabas Fund', *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia* (no date) <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barnabas_Fund > [accessed 18 May 2018].
[13] Randall and Hilborn, *One Body*, pp. 71-102.
[14] Religious Liberty Partnership 'About' (no date) <https://rlpartnership.org/about/ > [accessed 18 May 2018].

such as Christian Concern in the United Kingdom with the belief that the human rights

agenda is having an erosive effect on Christian values. Christian Concern claim therefore 'to

be a strong Christian voice in the public sphere, arguing passionately for the truth of the

gospel and defending the historic freedoms that we have enjoyed in this nation for so long'.[15]

Whilst Article 9 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion) of the European Convention

on Human Rights (ECHR) replicates the provisions of Article 18 of the UDHR,[16] its

interpretation would appear to create an impasse in counter claims between religious groups

and 'secular' values. For example, in the 1993 landmark case, *Kokkinakis v Greece*, the

Jehovah's Witness Kokkinakis successfully had his right to witness upheld. However, in

interpreting Article 9 the ECHR adjudicated that,

> in its religious dimension, [Art. 9] is one of the most vital elements that go to
> make up the identity of believers and their concept of life, but it is also a
> precious asset for atheists, agnostics, sceptics and the unconcerned[17]

As Thomas Schirrmacher and Jonathan Chaplin say, the inference is that neither side of the

debate 'is entitled to public privilege'.[18] Indeed, in a political environment in which

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[15] Christian Concern, 'About Us' (no date) <http://www.christianconcern.com/about > [accessed 18 May 2015].
[16] '1. Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance. 2. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.' European Court of Human Rights, *European Convention on Human Rights* (2010), < https://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Convention_ENG.pdf>, Article 9, 'Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion' [accessed 26 March 2019].
[17] Kokkinakis v Greece, ECHR 25 May 1993, <http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-57827> [accessed 26 Mar 2019].
[18] Thomas Schirrmacher and Jonathan Chaplin, 'European Religious Freedom and the EU', in *God and the EU: Faith in the European Project*, ed. by Jonathan Chaplin and Gary Wilton (London: Routledge, 2017), pp. 151–174 (p. 158).

liberalism is going through a regime change, as Chaplin suggests,[19] the European directives translated in the UK's Equality & Human Rights Act 2010 have given rise to significant concern amongst Christian communities in the UK. This is due in part to the fact that the 2010 legislation positions religious freedom under the remit of anti-discrimination in public services and freedom of speech, rather than preserving the ideological aspirations and traditions or priority of the Christian faith.[20] As Christian Concern cautioned, 'the exemption provided for religious organisations is limited and, crucially, the law does not provide an exemption for an organisation whose sole or main purpose is commercial'.[21]

This raises complicated issues that have become even more intense where individualised equal rights have come to determine how human rights are to be understood and applied between competing claims. As Chaplin suggests, where secular values appear to contradict the theocratic ideals of religious communities 'a misplaced understanding of "equality" lies behind the liberal secularist view of religion's place in democracy' and the legitimacy of Christian values in public engagement.[22]

The concern is that Christians engaged in public services may be asked to abandon their Christian values in areas such as sexual orientation when public expectations conflict with their personal beliefs. In 2014 this conflict was exemplified in the case of Ashers Baking Company in Northern Ireland when the Christian company was accused of homophobic

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[19] Jonathan Chaplin, 'Living with Liberalism: Understanding Regimes of Tolerance', *Comment*, 9 April, 2015, <https://www.cardus.ca/comment/article/living-with-liberalism-understanding-regimes-of-tolerance-1/> [accessed 28 November 2019].

[20] Equality Act, 2010, Chapter 15, Part 2, Chapter 1: Protected Characteristics, 10. Religion or Belief, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/pdfs/ukpga_20100015_en.pdf > [accessed 22 May 2018].

[21] Christian Legal Centre, *Guide to the Equality Act 2010: Religious Organisations and the 'Provision of Services'*, <http://www.christianconcern.com/sites/default/files/equality-provision%20of%20service-proof.pdf>, [accessed 2 November 2018], p. 3.

[22] Jonathan Chaplin, *Talking God: The Legitimacy of Religious Public Reasoning* (London: Theos, 2008), p. 17.

discrimination for refusing to bake a wedding cake for a gay couple saying, 'Support Gay

Marriage'. Ashers, who had previously provided a service to the couple, said that the slogan

was contrary to their religious convictions. The case against Ashers when Northern Ireland

was still the only part of the UK where gay marriage was illegal was also supported by the

Equality and Human Rights Commission. Eventually, the decision against Ashers was

overturned in the Supreme Court, on 10 October 2018.[23]

Despite the concerns about the marginalisation of Christians in the West as well as overseas

there has been limited discourse between Christian agencies who champion domestic

Christian freedoms, overseas missionary agencies, and charities like CSW whose work is

primarily or exclusively overseas.

Exploring this anomaly is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, this has important

implications for it suggests a binary response to the legal and moral characteristics of human

rights engagement. For increasing numbers of Christians, human rights represent a

gladiatorial conflict for the preservation of moral values consistent with a Christian culture

and legacy. In this sense, the morality of rights has to do with defending moral freedoms

against the encroachment of legal instruments designed to erode an historic moral consensus.

This perception is not conducive to Christian engagement in FoRB. Whilst acknowledging

the challenges to Christian norms inherent in mixed cultural economies, Christian

engagement in FoRB defends the legitimacy of rights as those universally agreed instruments

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[23] BBC News, '"Gay Cake" Row in Northern Ireland: Q&A' (10 October 2018).
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-32065233> [accessed 2 November 2018].

which prohibit the abuse of human dignity, particularly in regimes with scant attention to the rule of law.

Whereas domestic UK responses to religious freedom may increasingly limit the rights discourse to moral categories, agencies engaged in FoRB for all will regard rights language as a moral and legal imperative. This thesis will argue therefore, that despite its limitations, the UDHR and the provisions of FoRB should be regarded both as a legal and moral response to human dignity.

From the research I will argue therefore, that Christian engagement in FoRB remains consistent with defending persecuted Christians and the mission of God. I will suggest that as Christian organisations extend their work beyond prayer for persecuted Christians to become advocates for religious freedom for everyone, this has important implications for their organisational ethos, message and method. It is also politically important as encounters with institutions such as the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC), the US Department for Religious Freedom (DRF) and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) inevitably demands the political language and ethos of FoRB. Similarly, partnerships with non-Christian organisations has led to further awareness that exclusive 'ministry' to persecuted Christians is generally incongruous with such agencies who work entirely within a FoRB ethos. In its growing relationship with the FCO for example, Open Doors described itself as a partner in the FCO's Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief.[24] Launching its 2017 World Watch

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[24] Open Doors, 'About Us' (no date), <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/about/how-we-help/advocacy/> [accessed 18 May 2018].

List the organisation recommended that, 'the UK government should develop a strategy for positive action in support of the right to freedom of religion and belief (FoRB)'.[25]

As will be discussed in my final chapter, the trajectory in Christian response to persecution would seem to indicate that Christian participation in FoRB will increase in the face of a growing political emphasis on inclusivity. The critical question for Christian advocacy in this arena is the degree to which such organisations - and indeed their support bases - should pursue FoRB, not as a matter of political expedience, but as partners who work with civil society on this issue. Christian relief and development agencies that operate inclusively across people of all faiths have already set this precedent. What is particularly instructive in relation to this research is that such agencies have an established history of theological reflection which informs their praxis.[26]

CSW therefore provides a working model of a Christian organisation with its genesis in defending persecuted Christians and has maintained this priority whilst embracing the opportunities and challenges in the pursuit of FoRB as an overtly Christian organisation. It was important therefore that their own insights and experiences influenced the research method.

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[25] APPGIFORB, '2017 World Watch List Launched in Parliament: Persecution Increasing' (11 January 2017), <https://appgfreedomofreligionorbelief.org/2017-world-watch-list-launched-parliament-persecution-increasing/> [accessed 18 May 2018]. It is also noteworthy that whilst remaining committed to its substantial Christian support base Open Doors has skillfully integrated its advocacy with bodies such as All Parliamentary Party Group on FoRB (APPG) and the FCO.

[26] See for example, Tearfund's Dewi Hughes, *God of the Poor: A Biblical Vision of God's Present Rule* (Carlisle: OM Publishing, 1998); *Advocating Justice: An Evangelical Vision for Transforming Systems and Structures*, by Stephen Offutt, F. David Bronkema and others (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016).

1.4 Method

In the earliest stages of my engagement with CSW it was evident that an important and unresolved discussion was already taking place around which, at least for the time being, an uncomfortable truce had evolved. As an overtly Christian organisation committed to religious freedom for all, CSW was on a quest for a coherent internal narrative which was true to their emerging identity and evangelical ethos.

The readiness with which both staff and officers embraced the research illustrated the convergence between my academic interest in this area and their own desire for understanding and confidence on the issues raised by the study. This 'fusion of horizons' between my research and the charity's perceived needs was negotiated at the very start of the process when both the founder/ CEO (CEO) and the COO agreed that the study 'would not be primarily concerned with CSW's structures or performance indicators but with their perceptions about their work as mission'.[27]

From the outset therefore, my methodology, staff interviewees and crucially, my thesis and its objectives were owned by the organisation and welcomed 'as timely and beneficial for CSW - and potentially beyond.'[28]

CSW describes itself as 'a Christian organisation working for religious freedom through advocacy and human rights, in the pursuit of justice'.[29] A process of evolution influenced by

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[27] Study Journal, 17 February 2015.
[28] Ibid.
[29] CSW, 'About US' (no date) <http://www.csw.org.uk/about.htm> [accessed 23 May 2018].

an emerging vision and professional recruitment has developed a vibrant advocacy department that will be described more fully in the following chapter.

1.4.1 Qualitative, hermeneutic phenomenological research

The desire to explore the theological framework within which a Christian charity like CSW understood their engagement in the human rights arena was a principal motivator for my research. A *hermeneutic phenomenological* approach therefore involved close proximity to CSW's staff over a period of time in order to gain insights into their own perceptions of their work, the language and nuances used by the various players. Clark Moustakas suggests that this helps the researcher 'to determine what the experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it'.[30] My role as a participant observer with opportunities for independent academic reflection and reflexivity was important to this methodology.

This enabled me to explore and reflect on the internal dimensions of CSW's self-perceptions of its own work. As Swinton and Mowat suggest, the purpose of qualitative research 'is the search for meaning and the process of interpretation'[31] and also to, 'enable people to see the world differently and in seeing it differently to act differently'.[32] There were clear indications that the research led to action and invariably interviewees concluded the sessions acknowledging that the process had provoked fresh insights.

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[30] Clark Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods* (New Delhi, SAGE, 1940) p. 13.
[31] John Swinton & Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research* (London: SCM Press, 2006), p. 101.
[32] Ibid., p. 107.

Throughout the study I had immediate awareness of internal issues to which the organisation attached deep significance such as informal conversations about the need for an organisational name change. This 'rapid access to culturally sacred matters'[33] as John Van Manaan describes it, became available to me as participant observer. I felt too that my 'insider' status provided an 'understanding of the language, concepts, categories, practices, rules, beliefs… used by members of the written-about group'.[34] Throughout, CSW seldom felt like 'a scientific object' of the interviewer; rather, through the interview process I became a part of its emerging identity, engaging in the evolution of the language it used to describe itself. [35] Language, its use, misuse, and non-usage became a critical challenge in the charity's attempts to unite for common purpose.

1.4.2 Participant observer

The research was designed to include my own involvement as a participant observer for six months between February and July 2015. CSW's important organisational transition and branding process during this time mirrored something of my own journey from very active Christian ministry to a reflective period so that the research itself became what Clough and Nutbrown calls 'part of the life of the researcher'.[36]

The purpose of this pre-research period as proposed by Moustakas, was to 'build trust and rapport' in the full knowledge that as observer I was also being evaluated.[37] There was therefore, something of Eileen Barker's 'professional stranger' to my role, and I experienced

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[33] John Van Maanen, *Tales of the Field: On Writing Ethnography* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2011), p. 4.
[34] Ibid., p. 13.
[35] Ibid., p. 7.
[36] Clough and Nutbrown, *A Student's Guide to Methodology*, p. 15.
[37] Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods,* p. 3.

the paradox 'in which the stranger has to be known before being accepted in the stranger role'.[38] Indeed, from my first formal meeting with the CEO and then COO (who left CSW in 2016), this was my experience of this live performance.[39]

Both the CEO and COO helped to shape the interview questions and made recommendations about suitable staff to meet. Before formal interviews commenced, an all-staff meeting provided an interactive setting in which to introduce the research and this served to consolidate the ownership of the project. These arrangements were carried out with the full awareness that the research was neither a historic survey of CSW nor the intellectual property of the charity.

Initial interviews were conducted with the executive leadership and individuals whom I deemed to be the principal custodians of the organisation's history. Throughout the summer of 2015 my interviews drew in other members of the staff together with individuals from other agencies.

Further developments between September 2015 and March 2016 deepened my position as a participant in the charity. In September I joined the team two days per week as strategic adviser. The task would be two-fold: to provide a theological framework for CSW's engagement in FoRB and to offer strategic support for the senior team.

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[38] Eileen Barker, 'Brahmins Don't Eat Mushrooms: Participant Observation and the New Religions', *LSE Quarterly*, (1987), pp.127-152 (p.142).
[39] Research Journal, 17 February 2015.

1.4.3 Biblical reflection

The first task flowed immediately from my interview with the CEO in which he acknowledged the need for a more coherent theological underpinning for CSW's work. Rather than imposing any biblical references beyond their own internal discourse my aim was to deduce the participants' own biblical understanding of their praxis from the empirical evidence. This material was gleaned in a number of ways, firstly, through the formal interviews. Secondly, documents such as their Organisational Strategy 2015-2017 cited a wide range of texts.

Thirdly, a three-part series of biblical reflections conducted at the organisation, *Faith in FoRB*? (Appendix I) played an important role in exploring the charity's own hermeneutical approach to its praxis. As a direct response to the CEO's request, three interactive bible studies were conducted which involved the entire staff in 2016 between January and March. The agreed purpose was 'to formulate a theological narrative which is true to our current identity and mission'. This meant providing a 'coherent narrative and compelling story for our staff, board and stakeholders' as well as 'a coherent communications "story" which is also understood as a philosophy for human rights specialists beyond the Church'.[40]

These sessions were preceded by a number of interviews with staff (not included in the formal interviews). These conversations provided anonymous 'inside voices' to the formal process. The programme, authorised by the CSW Board in advance, was designed in partnership with the CEO and facilitated with full input from the staff.

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[40] CSW, *Faith in FoRB: A Theological Reflection on Religious Freedom for All*, January 2016, p. 1.

The first of the three sessions focused on the persecution of Christians and aimed to 'sharpen our biblical mandate for working for persecuted Christians while claiming to represent freedom of religion for all as an overtly Christian charity'. Session two explored broad issues, tensions and biblical ideas in supporting FoRB by reference to Galatians 6.10 and Hebrews 13.3 - two of the charity's most prominent biblical references found in their literature. Sessions involved discussions using both of these texts, first in relation to the defense of persecuted Christians, then in relation to engagement in FoRB. The final session explored the story of the 'good' Samaritan, which featured during the formal interviews.

Faith in FoRB? was the charity's first corporate reflection on familiar biblical texts which had intuitively guided their praxis as a Christian human rights agency. I return to these texts in chapter seven where I explore the charity's theological intuition as a basis for a theological foundation.

Fourthly, in chapter seven and eight, I explore a theological framework from a range of biblical themes that emerged from the interviews. This provided a thematic framework for further reflection based on their own understanding of the biblical drivers informing their work.

1.5 Process

The research narrowed as I became aware that my initial scope was somewhat ambitious. From a wide-ranging interview list the process was reduced to three groups of interviewees that I discuss below. After considerable reflection I opted for an analytical approach more

suitable to my own pattern of learning and which I believe enabled me to maximise the experience.

1.5.1 Interviews and primary sources

Initially, I identified over forty-five interviewees under five categories that I subsequently reduced to twenty-nine interviews in three categories.

Figure 1: Categories of Interviewees

A. CSW staff	B. Church leaders	C. Victims
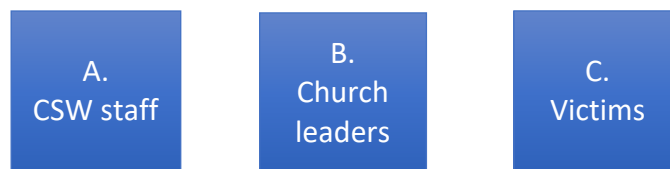
In order to manage the output, I limited the Board's input to a single interview with the chair of the Board and utilised extensive access to Board minutes which included significant contributions from the chair on critical questions of the charity's identity and task.

All twenty-nine interviewees were sent an 'invitation to participate' outlining the research title, the one-hour time allocation, a short description of the process and an assurance of confidentiality (Appendix II). Participants were also given the option of anonymity. Each interview consisted of eleven semi-structured questions in an ordered sequence that, as Richard Osmer advocates, became 'adapted to the emerging flow of the conversation'.[41]

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[41] Richard R. Osmer, *Practical Theology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), p. 63.

Group A: CSW staff

All proposed CSW interviewees were agreed upon with the CEO and COO. The list included a number of previous CSW staff and supporters whose interviews were not included in the research. Seventeen of the twenty-nine interviewees were CSW staff members.

The 'standard' questions (Appendix III) posed to staff were designed to explore perceptions about mission, suffering, self-identity and biblical reflection. With few exceptions all seventeen staff members were asked the same questions which were transcribed and reviewed manually. The transcriber was asked to complete a confidentiality agreement (Appendix IV).

In order to create a historic record of the organisation along with its evolving self-identification, Group A was subdivided into four groups:

A1 director/historic gatekeeper: founding executive staff and board

A2 manager/historic gatekeeper: advocates and senior managers

A3 managers: team leaders not necessarily with long service

A4 team members: specialists, finance and administration, intern

In order to explore CSW's insights I was especially interested in responses to Q2, 3, 7, 8, 9, and 10 as important primary sources in chapters two (CSW as a Case Study), seven (Biblical Foundations) and eight (Theological Reflection).

Group B: Church leaders

Staff responses to Q4 revealed a clear disconnect between CSW's view of its work and their perception that churches did not view their work in the same way. This led to interviews

with five church leaders: one UK Pentecostal; one director of a Christian Broadcasting company; one Scottish leader with a long service as a missionary; one Coptic Egyptian; one German Pentecostal. An additional Sri Lankan church leader was included in my Group C sample. Apart from the first two introductory questions, the questions posed (Appendix V) were the same as with Group A.

Responses to Q2, 3, 4 and 5 from Group B were important in formulating chapter three (Christian engagement and ambiguities) and chapter four (A discourse on persecution and rights). Reflections on Q7, 8, 9 and 10 were also of significance in chapter eight (A theological framework for FoRB).

Group C: Victims of Persecution

I interviewed seven people with varying degrees of experience of persecution: four Sri Lankans and single individuals from Nigeria, Pakistan and Azerbaijan. These were all asked the same questions as Group A.

Responses to Q5, 6, and 7 from Group C were of key importance in chapter four (A discourse on persecution and rights). These reflections on Christian persecution borne out of personal experience provided an absorbing counter-narrative to groups A and B as well as important insights in chapter eight (A theological framework for FoRB).

My research journal offered opportunities to identify my own reflexivity in this ethnographic study. These selective entries traced my own insights, reflections and emotive responses to developments as they occurred.

The research was also aided by materials from the archives of the United Nations website, the Evangelical Alliance UK and the World Council of Churches library in Geneva, Switzerland.

1.5.2 Analysis

I opted not to use any formal analytical tools which felt methodologically alien to my style of working. I was concerned that the time invested to make this work would have been counter-productive.

All interviews were recorded on an Olympus Digital Recorder VN-711PC and uploaded to a confidential Dropbox account where they were transcribed and returned for my attention. Interviewees consented to this process and my transcriber committed to confidentiality (Appendix IV). Interviews were then printed and used extensively with audio support. This *sight and sound* process provided an efficient opportunity to relive the existential encounter in a dynamic way.

Individual responses were recorded according to the staff category in which the interviews took place. In this way, staff responses were categorised in organisational layers of responsibility. Individual contributions were not compromised by this group approach as responses were noted for individual insights as well as overlapping or discordant ideas. It was therefore possible to see some elements of group attitudes/responses to a particular question. For example, responses to Q5 from two A1 individuals demonstrated a less competent grasp of the subtle differences between Q5, a, b, and c compared to other staff members.

The approach also demonstrated the gap between claims that the organisation was Bible-led and the low level of textual support for its praxis. Similarities across all three categories

became evident as a result of this approach. For example, all interviewees identified

engagement in FoRB as God's mission but felt that the church had a discordant view.

The *sight and sound* approach also enabled me to identify and quantify key reoccurring

concepts such as Kingdom, Jesus, and the 'good' Samaritan, which surfaced unsolicited from

the questions, identifying the complementary and conflicting voices across the categories and

adding depth and richness to the hermeneutic phenomenological method. This resulted, for

example, in unexpected disparities between the three groups in responses to persecution.

1.6 Conclusion

This opening chapter provides an overview of my method, process and motivation for

embarking on this thesis, setting out my approach to interviews and locating myself as a

participant observer within this qualitative research.

I have also provided a rationale for undertaking this study identifying the scope for research

in what I regard as an important area of Christian praxis for which little theological reflection

has been devoted to date. Importantly, my methodology began with CSW's own biblical

understanding of its work: this has been the basis on which I later offer explorative

approaches to biblical texts and theological ideas supporting Christian engagement in FoRB.

To that end I met with the CEO, the new COO, and the chair of the Board twelve months

after the interviews to reflect on draft chapters germane to the charity's development. It was

clear from the meeting that CSW had made significant strides in a number of areas. By their

own admission their review of the chapters (and particularly chapter three), offered a window

into the heart of the organisation's journey.

Having thought 'long and hard' about the issues, it was their view that the opportunity to

reflect theologically, and the changing complexion of the Board along with 'God's timing'

had all facilitated the critical discussions which led to a subsequent rebranding. The review

had also been timely for the COO who was updating CSW's strategy for an imminent Board

meeting. As a researcher, it was particularly affirming to be told that 'We couldn't have done

this without you'.[42]

From my initial engagement with CSW, and throughout the process it was evident that

beyond the information contained in the Board records, the organisation had no historic

account of its pioneering work. Consequently, the interview process itself emerged as the

basis for an organisational case study to which I will now refer in my following chapter.

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[42] CSW interview, 19 June 2018.

Chapter Two

Christian Solidarity Worldwide: a case study in FoRB

In this chapter, I consider a case study of Christian Solidarity Worldwide, including its global reach and organisational structure. Its pioneering experience also reveals early signs of tension that receives attention here. Despite the early fissures associated with CSW's unique journey, I identify the sense of vocation that has been a unifying factor in its mission.

In approaching the research I begin, however, with the benefits of approaching this task from the perspective of a participant observer.

2.1 Establishing the role of participant observer

The absence of a written history was both a challenge and an opportunity to engage with the organisation's own recall of its unique journey. Methodologically, the interview process mentioned in the previous chapter was designed to obtain this historic perspective and to support the charity in the retelling of its own story.

Two factors were important in the decision to conduct this ethnographic research as a participant observer. Firstly, I was attracted to CSW as a specialist organisation pioneering Christian engagement in FoRB in what I discovered to be an uncharted area of evangelical work in the UK. Secondly, their openness to exploring a more rigorous theological foundation for this work meant that a phenomenological approach provided the framework

which allowed me to support the organisation in developing its own understanding of their work which was also of personal interest to me.

This research may broadly be presented in four distinct phases to which I have already alluded in the previous chapter. In February 2015 I approached the CEO and then the COO/deputy CEO for an exploratory meeting to discuss the remit for my research. From the outset I was clear that the study would not be concerned with CSW's structures or performance indicators. Rather, it would explore their own perceptions of their human rights work as an expression of the mission of God. Both welcomed the project as timely and beneficial for CSW and other religious freedom agencies. The meeting was opportune, particularly as the COO/deputy CEO who also had oversight for the advocacy department was in the early stages of developing a 2015-2017 strategic plan.

Even at this initial stage there was a recognition that the research would be advantageous in helping the organisation clarify its theological framework. At this point I was particularly drawn to the charity's core purpose, identity and vision and 'feeling very much as though I really could settle for making the study and my work at CSW the mainstay of the next three years'.[1]

Although formal interviews began in July 2015, my involvement as participant observer and volunteer between February and July 2015 was particularly helpful in gaining the trust and confidence of the staff.

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[1] Research Journal, 12 March 2015.

Located at an intern's desk in an open plan office positioned me at the gateway of the office small talk and allowed access to important issues developing in different parts of the charity's global work. It also offered a cloak of invisibility. As James Clifford and George Marcus describes it, my shop-floor status meant that I was 'anchored to a large extent in the subjective, sensuous experience' of the organisation.[2]

As a participant observer, I was keen to explore and reflect the internal dimensions of CSW's perceptions of its praxis. This case study sought, therefore, to provide a portrait of the organisation's understanding of its existential journey and how its formative years influenced its direction in pioneering Christian engagement in FoRB.

The initial discussions and my in-house conversations as a semi-insider significantly influenced the nature of the interview questions. As Beth Leech suggests, 'What you already know is as important as what you want to know. What you want to know determines which questions you will ask. What you already know will determine how you ask them'.[3]

In the second phase, my participation in the charity deepened when I joined the team as strategic adviser for two days per week between September 2015 and March 2016. My task was to provide a theological framework for CSW's work in FoRB and offer strategic support to the senior team. This realization provided a mandate for *Faith in FoRB?*, the three-part interactive series of biblical reflections mentioned in chapter one.

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[2] James Clifford and George Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Los Angeles: University of California, 1986), p. 32.
[3] Beth Leech, 'Asking Questions: Techniques for Semi-Structured Interviews' in *PS Political Science and Politics*, 35 (Dec 2002), pp. 665-668 (p. 667).

A third stage followed the unexpected resignation of the COO/deputy CEO in March 2016, at which point I was invited to assume further interim responsibilities at three and a half days per week for the advocacy and strategic leadership team, beginning 1 March 2016. Full participation in the life and leadership of the charity together with significant levels of professional engagement demanded even clearer delineation between 'the researcher' and the 'team leader' roles.

This presented clear advantages and pitfalls as increasingly my role in the organisation meant balancing academic integrity as researcher with my role as a strategic decision-maker. This reinforced their awareness that my academic work should not be subject to editorial control from CSW's staff or leadership.

The fourth phase of my involvement (April to November 2017) meant a formal appointment as director of advocacy. This involved providing strategic oversight and direction of the advocacy department as well as supporting its talented and experienced team leaders. This appointment was preceded by the appointment in December 2016 of a new and gifted COO, who works in close harmony with the CEO and provides very effective leadership in guiding critical areas of the charity's work including CSW's challenging re-branding which had been a troublesome issue for over a decade and to which we will return in more detail in the following chapter.

Inadvertently, my status as a 'semi-insider' provided an opportunity to explore some of the historic tensions about CSW's identity and role contained in the official minutes of the Board. From the records it was evident that CSW's initial focus on persecuted Christians subsequently morphed into professional advocacy in the pursuit of FoRB. This ambivalence

between defending persecuted Christians, FoRB, and human rights more broadly, was in fact

a signal attraction to me as a researcher. However, this tension which I explore more fully in

the following chapter created deep ambiguities for the charity.

As a staff-researcher, presenting CSW's case study proved to be a significant challenge. Far

from being 'an authoritative monologue',[4] my voice as the researcher became something of a

contributor to the dialogue taking place and demonstrated the extent to which the relationship

between research and researcher became what Clough and Nutbrown see as 'an essential

feature of research'.[5]

2.2   A brief factual profile

As stated earlier, the absence of a written history of CSW presented something of a research

dilemma. To date, the organisation has no formal historical narrative.[6]

CSW's brief historical profile came from a number of sources. These included access to

Board papers from 2010 to 2015, along with a small number of strategic papers and CSW's

website. Important information emerged from the records of the Board of Trustees.

Unintentionally, I began by reading the minutes from the most recent records, reading

chronologically backwards. The most recent records offered little of the emotional or

strategic profile of the organisation and amounted to no more than a catalogue of agreed

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[4] Peter Clough and Cathy Nutbrown, *A Student's Guide to Methodology* (London, New Delhi: SAGE publications, 2002), p. 68.
[5] Ibid. p. 68.
[6] Note 16 below is one of the few examples of any historical perspective on CSW's work.

positions. Eventually, it became clear that in November 2010 the decision that minutes

'would be briefer and would contain *action points*'[7] had muted details of the charity's history.

Anecdotal information was also forthcoming from information from the then Special

Ambassador's biography[8] and the interview method was specifically designed to yield further

information from interviews with Board members, executive staff designated

'director/gatekeeper', and experienced staff described as 'managers/gatekeeper.' However

the CEO who I interviewed over two sessions provided the main supply of CSW's history.

In 2018 the CEO published an autobiography touching elements of CSW's journey and

which he attributed in part to the interview process.[9]

Born in 1952, Mervyn Thomas is CEO and founder of CSW. As a classical Pentecostal

during the 1970s, his keen interest in politics was untypical for his denomination at that time.

Thomas' political involvement began as a Conservative councillor in 1977, and soon after he

became an assistant to a Catholic Conservative politician who later became an MP. Although

he received support from his own family, his political trajectory expressed in an article

advocating political engagement 'certainly didn't go down well'.[10]

As a Parliamentary Assistant, he was introduced to the Swiss-based organisation Christian

Solidarity International (CSI) and became involved in opposing persecution of Soviet Jews

and Baptists in Russia. This led to establishing a UK-based CSI. Thomas admitted that at

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[7] CSW Board minutes, 9 November 2010.
[8] Stuart Windsor and Graham Jones, *God's Adventurer: The Story of Stuart Windsor and the Persecuted Church* (Oxford: Monarch Books, 2011).
[9] Mervyn Thomas, *Standing Up, Speaking Out: Forty Years of Fighting Injustice,* ed. Tim Pettingale (UK: River Publishing, 2018).
[10] CEO/Founder, interview, 1 July 2015.

this stage, 'It didn't enthuse me'.[11] Attending an exploratory CSI UK meeting in 1978, he

left with conflicting responses to this experience. In his own words,

> I found myself roped in. I had no interest… no knowledge of the persecuted Church.
> But I remember very clearly driving home that day and - I'm always very careful
> about saying God spoke - but God certainly put a strong impression on my heart and
> showed me, not what CSI was at that time, but what the organisation would become.
> It would become, in my mind, the Christian version of an Amnesty International[12]

According to Thomas, this took place in 1978 (or 1979) when he was twenty-seven years old.

Through a series of events he became treasurer and deputy chair of CSI UK. In 1981 he

became chair of the Board building a cadre of evangelical trustees to consolidate the work.

From its predominantly Pentecostal foundation, CSI UK exerted some moderate ecumenical

influence establishing relationships with prominent Catholic and Orthodox individuals.

But it was evident that even as chair Thomas was already developing wider relationships with

political figures in the UK and the USA whom he recruited in the fight against persecution.

Many have proven to be long term and strategic relationships.[13]

In the intervening years, significant formative developments emerged within the organisation.

In its infancy CSI UK mobilised people 'to pray and protest' for an Orthodox priest, Father

George Calciu, whom Thomas regards as one of his two spiritual fathers.[14]

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[11] Ibid.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid. These would include political figures such as Congressman Frank Wolf who authored the International
Religious Freedom Act in the USA.
[14] CEO, 1 July 2015.

CSI UK's involvement in educating, mobilising churches and advocating for religious freedom was incremental. Even its campaign to free Father Calciu was more about church awareness and mobilisation than political advocacy.

CSW's political advocacy accelerated with the arrival of Baroness Caroline Cox whose work as president along with a new national director, Stuart Windsor, combined humanitarian activity with effective advocacy between 1993 and 1999. In this period, obtaining authentic country reports for campaigns became a distinctive element in what was still then CSI UK.[15]

Financial, stylistic and marketing dissonance became apparent between the two ministries resulting in a separation in 1997. The conflict lay, in significant measure, between humanitarian projects as political advocacy on one hand, and trans-denominational activism on the other. The rift eventually precipitated the termination of CSI-UK's relationship with Baroness Cox as president, and a departure from CSI-Switzerland. More fundamentally, it signalled the degree of ambivalence that lay at the heart of CSW from its inception.

Details of the organisational tensions remain anecdotal but 'the reasons given at the time highlighted the need for greater autonomy and flexibility'.[16] However, it later became clear for CSW that 'prevailing conditions made it impossible for us to remain part of CSI whilst retaining our full integrity and righteous ways of working'.[17] Similar branches of CSI in Austria, Germany and the USA followed CSI UK's secession from the Swiss CSI.

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[15] CEO, 1 July 2015.

[16] *Establishing and Growing CSW as an Internationally Networked Organisation*, October, 2016. This was a discussion paper submitted by the current COO for consultation on future relationships with various CSW 'branded' ministries in USA, Hong Kong and Nigeria in October 2016.

[17] *Area Reps Training Manual*. This document, written between 2005 and 2007, would have been made available for all CSW church representatives for whom the history would have been a live issue. The document

As the newly appointed CEO in 1999, Thomas challenged the direction of CSI UK as it transitioned to become CSW:

> one of the first things I did was to say to the Board, "I believe we've been sidetracked by going into projects. I don't believe that's what God's called us to. I believe God's called us to be a voice." And so, the Board […] everybody totally agreed.[18]

CSW UK, despite Thomas' vision of a Christian version of Amnesty International, remained focused on Christian persecution with undisguised ambivalence about defending non-Christian victims of persecution. In its training manual, its mission statement claimed that Christian Solidarity Worldwide is 'a human rights charity working on behalf of those persecuted for their Christian beliefs. We promote religious liberty for all'.[19]

Unresolved issues of mission, purpose and identity, for which the ministry appeared to have no effective dialogical process, surfaced in a variety of debates amongst staff and between the staff and the Board. Between 2005 and 2007, tools of conciliation were hurriedly constructed, and a watershed document, *2020 Vision*, appeared alongside submissions from staff to the Board.[20] All of these were designed to create a new organisational narrative clarifying CSW's vision, mission, and purpose whilst providing an uncompromising affirmation of its Christian identity.

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also explained that for legal registration, CSW would legally remain CSI UK. It is highly unlikely that an equivalent document would currently need such an explanation.

[18] Ibid.

[19] *Area Reps Training Manual*.

[20] Ibid.

2.3 A global profile

The case study provided a rich field of enquiry for an area of Christian engagement that is still being pioneered. In spite of the ambiguities which I will discuss in the next chapter, the organisation continued to develop a global profile.

CSW-branded partnerships evolved in the US with a board of volunteers focussing on growing a national development office taking its lead from CSW UK. In 1997, CSW Hong Kong[21] also developed regional interest in the South and East Asia region. CSW Nigeria came into being in 2008.

In seeking to position itself as a charity committed to the pursuit of FoRB, CSW has taken key steps in defining its global mission. Its Organisational Strategy 2015-2017, for example, describes its core principles in the following terms:

> **2.1 Who we are:**
> CSW is a Christian organisation working for religious freedom through advocacy and human rights, in the pursuit of justice
> **2.2 Core Purpose:**
> To be a voice for justice, pursuing religious freedom for all.
> **2.3 Our Remit:**
> We exist to redress injustice and stand in solidarity and partnership with those facing discrimination and/or persecution due to their religion.
> Within this remit, we prioritise serving those persecuted for their Christian faith, regardless of denomination or tradition, whilst upholding the right to freedom of religion for all peoples. Recognising the universality of human rights as enshrined in

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[21] CSW Hong Kong withdrew from formal relationships in 2018. This was due in part to the branding exercise that clarified and affirmed CSW as a Christian charity engaged in FoRB and human rights advocacy.

the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), we also address wider human rights violations, when they complement our work for freedom of religion.[22]

In its 'overriding approach' it aims to be 'the most reliable and respected international voice for freedom of religion and belief, motivating, educating and equipping an active supporter base to stand in solidarity with us for those who suffer'.[23]

Standing within an evangelical tradition, the charity identifies itself with the Apostles' Creed and sees itself 'working for religious freedom through advocacy and human rights, in the pursuit of justice'.[24]

CSW works in twenty-four countries across six regions: Sub Saharan Africa, Middle East and North Africa, South Asia, East Asia, Latin America and Europe. At the time of writing this thesis, country desks are supported by staff who advocate in the international settings of the US and UK governments, European Union, United Nations and the African Union. A skilled advocacy department carries out research and capacity building, enabling victims of human rights and religious freedom abuses to fact-find, collate and present evidence in international arenas. Its credibility depends not only on skilled and experienced staff but also on partnership and collaboration with in-country experts and human rights defenders.

Effective parliamentary work is carried out through its public affairs team that represents and advises country teams in presenting submissions to institutions as well as orchestrating

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[22] CSW Organisational Strategy 2015-2017, Appendix 1 *Christian Solidarity Worldwide Identity and Vision Statement*, 30, June 2015, p. 8.
[23] Ibid., p. 8.
[24] CSW 'About Us' (no date) <http://www.csw.org.uk/home.htm> [accessed 21 September 2018].

collaborative relationships with other specialists, NGOs and faith communities. The public affairs team also provides press and media information to both Christian and wider media outlets. As a mark of the respect with which the work is held, CSW's successful application for ECOSOC status in 2017 was supported by an open letter with signatures from over thirty eminent public figures from across the world including UN Special Rapporteurs, permanent representatives and significant statesmen such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu.[25]

The teams and parliamentary officers provide effective advocacy in representing people incarcerated for their faith and, in at least one example, CSW visited an Indonesian atheist who was imprisoned because he no longer regarded himself as a Muslim.[26] The work has included direct submissions to institutions monitoring human rights abuses in the US State Department, the European Union, the United Nations in Geneva and New York, the UK FCO, and countless meetings with ambassadors.[27]

In contrast with relief and development work in areas of public health, child sponsorship and development, the work is often slow and unspectacular. As Adam – a senior A1 staff member - put it, in relief and aid agencies,

> I think people are gratified more easily. And they feel they've *done* something if they pay for a water well, or they sponsor a child. And they have a picture of a child. They can go away and feel they've done their bit, and they can thank God that they have been able to do this. *Whereas* our work is *hard* work. It's people on desks, doing research, they need a computer, they need to travel - and you don't see outcomes. The outcomes take a long time.[28]

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[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Adam, 1 July 2015.

However, positive outcomes have included successful campaigns for a UN Commission of Enquiry on North Korea and Eritrea, collaborating for the release of prisoners of conscience in oppressive regimes in many parts of the world, or training human rights defenders in political regimes where personal safety was at risk. Six members of staff have security profiles which protect their identity and allow them to carry out sensitive work in such volatile conditions.

The charity is also committed to educating, equipping and mobilising churches and activists to support the work through prayer and petitioning. Their communications team provides the amplification of its advocacy fieldwork to its support base through editorials, visual platforms and social media. The communications team interfaces with CSW's Christian support base and plans a range of events including public exhibitions and the annual conferences, as well as its short-term and major campaigns. A behind-the-scenes support team exerts considerable influence and empowerment through fundraising and administration.

With an administrative presence in England, Scotland, Brussels, Nigeria, and Washington DC, CSW is giving serious consideration to regionalising its global presence in order to maximise the immediacy and credibility of its reports and network of relationships. The charity has a team of some forty-five individuals along with interns and volunteers. To its credit the entire composition represents a range of age, ethnic, gender and professional backgrounds.

2.4 CSW leadership structure

CSW Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) comprises representatives from advocates, communications, financial and support services and meets regularly to provide strategic and

operational oversight for the organisation. SLT meetings are facilitated by the COO who also manages strategy and operations, the Head of People and Culture (human resources), the Head of Finance and Communications and the Director of Advocacy. The COO is accountable to the CEO who provides an ambassadorial role for the organisation and is ultimately responsible to the Board.

The Board of Trustees meets four times each year with one of those meetings as an away day. Final responsibilities for the charity rests with the Board of Trustees with some legal and fiduciary responsibilities delegated to the Executive Committee. Historically, most members of the Board and Executive were recruited informally and have a long-term relationship with the organisation and a corporate memory which has wrestled through some of its most difficult transitions in defining its mission, purpose and identity. It has also given cautious and considered leadership in the transition from an exclusive focus on persecuted Christians to a more unequivocal support for FoRB.

The Board of fifteen individuals reflect a combination of legal expertise, pastoral skills, theological education, accounting, fundraising and peace and reconciliation. It has four female members and has been consciously working towards a more diverse composition with four of its members under the age of forty. Nonetheless, the Board reflects what may broadly be described as 'White' English-speaking evangelicals. The chair of the Board who has considerable experience as a former Middle East diplomat provides formal support to the CEO on behalf of the Board.

2.5   Difficult developments

From its inception, philosophical and methodological tensions existed at the heart of this ambitious ministry. Clearly the aspirations of an Amnesty look-alike Christian ministry

within the conservative ethos of an evangelical-Pentecostal community would have been highly imaginative. During its inception, the defence of persecuted Christians behind the Iron Curtain in the unprecedented work of Brother Andrew, founder of Open Doors (described in his book *God's Smuggler*), was in itself a novelty.[29] Supporting persecuted Christians offered an increasingly global church opportunity to reach out to fellow Christians. However, as Samuel Moyn argues, human rights advocacy would not become a global movement for another twenty years after the 1948 UDHR and the subsequent covenants covering political, civic, cultural and economic rights in 1966.[30] In an era when evangelicalism and conservative Christian traditions were only just rediscovering a biblical mandate for justice, social consciousness and political engagement,[31] a vision to represent people of other religions as well as persecuted Christians could still be regarded as high-risk idealism.

In addition, whilst there was a growing body of Christian literature on issues of justice and Catholic defence of human rights, there was little evidence of any coherent theological framework for engagement in FoRB to support CSW's work. In building its case to become a Christian version of Amnesty International, CSI UK/CSW had no theological framework for its praxis. As I will discuss in subsequent chapters, every member of the staff acknowledged that the Bible was central to its mission. However, beyond a limited range of isolated biblical

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[29] Brother Andrew with Elizabeth Sherrill, *God's Smuggler* (UK: Signet Books, 1968).

[30] Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2010).

[31] See for example, John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today* (Basingstoke: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1984); Jim Wallis, *The New Radical* (Nashville: Lion Publishing, 1983); John Perkins, *A Quiet Revolution: Meeting Human Needs Today – a Biblical Challenge to Christians* (Basingstoke: Marshalls, 1976); Ron Sider, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, 1977). Additionally, *The Lausanne Covenant* of 1974, influenced by Latin American theologians and written by Stott, was a major watershed in evangelical reflection on social action. A helpful resumé of this journey is provided by C. René Padilla, *Mission between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom* (Cumbria: Langham Monographs, 2010); James Davidson Hunter, *To Change The World, The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility Of Christianity In the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

texts[32] and references to biblical examples such as the 'good' Samaritan[33] there was no shared biblical narrative for a Christian organisation arguing a FoRB position.

From my first meeting with the CEO and COO/Deputy CEO in February 2015, it was clear that there were tensions about the relationship between human rights more broadly and defending persecuted Christians. This meant that while grappling with these tensions themselves, the staff were also attempting to take their support base, churches and partners on the journey with no coherent theological reference point for their work in general or the transition in particular.

During interviews it was evident that in responding to Q5[34], which explored the relationship between the persecuted church, religious freedom and human rights, that A1 staff (director/historic gate keepers) were unable to differentiate between these concepts as succinctly as all other categories of interviewee. A response from an A1 respondent illustrated the ambiguity as much as his own journey,

> So, they are all interlinked with the overriding thing being human rights. And the question - one of the questions in my mind - has always been, "was this, [support for the persecuted] especially to the household of faith?"   So that's why I always said, "We'll *only* do it for Christians, but if there's others alongside them, we'll do it, but we won't go specifically looking, for [non-Christians]." So, *but* I think I'm being challenged every day *more* that it's not about persecuted Christians it's about *justice*. I think *that* justice is what it's about. And God is a God of justice.[35]

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[32] Proverbs 31. 8, 9; Galatians 6. 10; Hebrews 13. CSW's 2015 - 2017 Organisational Strategy identifies eight bible texts but fails to give a narrative which holds them together.
[33] Luke 10. 25-37.
[34] See Appendix III.
[35] CEO, 1 July 2015.

Despite these prevarications, there was clear evidence of significant strides in tackling the ambiguity through debate, and through a well-executed branding process that has put theological reflection at the heart of the exercise, engaging Board, staff and supporters. As Thomas explained, 'It's a journey. And it's a great journey'.[36]

2.6 Calling and vocation

As we will discuss in the following chapter, the challenges of change were accompanied by significant tensions and awkward moments. However, when asked if they considered their work as 'mission', staff from across the entire team showed a high sense of personal calling to CSW and to its work for religious freedom. Curiously, their journeys to CSW revealed a confluence between personal connections with individuals already associated with the ministry, and a conviction of being called to this work by God.

In Serena's view (A3 manager, team leader) , 'God's Spirit spoke to me',[37] and Barry (A2 senior manager) said that his work is 'intertwined with my faith'.[38] For Selwyn (also an A3 manager), it was 'a sense of calling and learning experience'. [39] Members of the office support team also shared this sense of vocation. Leona in administration, for example, described how, through a series of unusual events, her work at CSW was 'exactly for me'[40] - an assertion she made on four occasions. Even more significant, younger members of the staff clearly saw CSW developing both their professional skills and their Christian faith.

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[36] Ibid.
[37] Serena, 25 August 2015.
[38] Barry, 18 August 2015.
[39] Selwyn, 8 August 2015.
[40] Leona, 23 July 2015.

Throughout the interviews there was consensus that their personal engagement and understanding of the mission of God was consistent with the charity's involvement in human rights.

This sense of FoRB as mission was, however, less explicit in responses from A1 respondents, for whom the question was met with more historical anecdotes, ambivalence, or a poor grasp of the question. This may have been due in part to the fact that the A1 gatekeepers and senior leaders were clearer in their historic commitment to CSW as a persecuted church ministry and were yet to develop a clearer narrative for FoRB and the human rights ethos which had evolved around them.

As a pioneering organisation CSW's case study reveals an ambitious organisational adventure for which no ideological road map has yet been available. Yet despite the trauma of its rebirth the charity has grown both in terms of its awareness of its own internal tensions as much as its global profile.

2.7 Conclusion

As a Christian human rights charity, CSW's journey has been an untypical example of Christian engagement in FoRB. In this chapter I have outlined their journey from the perspective of my role as a participant observer and described some of the inherent issues.

Guided by the CEO's account the chapter provides a brief narrative of the charity, identifying its growth, organisational development and global profile.

However, I conclude by acknowledging the substantial sense of calling and the ownership of CSW's mission identified across the staff.

In this chapter I have also explored some of the difficulties associated with the development encountered by the organisation during its important period of transition from a persecuted church ethos to engagement in FoRB. This will be further explored in the following chapter.

Chapter Three

Christian Engagement and Ambiguities

My immediate experience of CSW was of a highly motivated and professional group of committed Christians with clear evidence of personal vocation but who nonetheless were caught in a web of conflicting perceptions about their organisational identity and lacking a firm biblical foundation for their pursuit of FoRB in a 'secular' setting.

This chapter draws attention to the ambiguities endemic within Christian engagement in FoRB demonstrated in CSW as a UK-based Christian charity pioneering in this field.

These ambiguities emerged from the formal interviews and casual conversations as a participant observer. Important insights were also available from the formal records of CSW's Board meetings from 2008 to 2017, when I left the organisation. The chapter also explores the symbiotic relationship between CSW and myself as a participant observer in this ethnographic study that seeks to provide a semi-insider reflection of the charity's awareness of its praxis.

3.1 A question of identity

The question of identity has remained the single most disruptive and constant ambiguity for CSW in recent years. From my own record on 11 March 2015, I noted that,

> I was particularly drawn to the core purpose and identity and vision statement. To be quite honest, I would love to have the responsibility to re-write it. It does betray the lack of a coherent theology or layout. My impression is that it's one of those exercises which was important when it was done but is now of very little consequence to the running of the work. However, it should be the opportunity to explore again WHO and WHAT CSW is in a changing landscape.

Casual conversations suggested that there were inherent tensions in how the ministry positioned itself between defending persecuted Christians, FoRB and human rights. In the formative period of the research an informal lunch conversation with a staff member indicated that at an earlier stage the charity had been confident in presenting itself as a Christian human rights organisation. Subsequently, it became less certain of this identity. More latterly, it began nurturing its supporters to understand its mission not only in terms of defending persecuted Christians but also as a Christian charity committed to pursuing FoRB for all.

This informal discussion had a profound impact on the research process. Not only did it shed light on CSW's equivocation on its identity, it also highlighted the ideological tensions in its attitudes to persecuted Christians, FoRB and human rights.

More crucially, the informal conversation led to a shift in the focus of the thesis from Christian engagement in human rights to the more unexplored and nuanced issue of Christian engagement in Freedom of Religion or Belief.

Attempts to bring clarity to CSW's vision and purpose were conveyed in its 2015-2017 Strategic Report presented to the Board in June 2015. The charity described itself as, 'Upholding the right to religious freedom for all: We, Christian Solidarity Worldwide

(CSW), are a Christian organisation working for religious freedom through advocacy and human rights, in the pursuit of justice.'[1] In positioning itself within the human rights arena the document broadly identified itself as a 'distinctive Christian organisation speaking out for justice and advocating for change, standing in solidarity and bringing hope, raising awareness and being a catalyst for action.'[2]

In July 2015 CSW held its 2015-2017 vision casting away day. The event, planned to discuss the Strategic Report, displayed an organisational diffidence that mirrored the earlier lunchtime discussion. Presenting the three-year vision, the CEO reviewed the history of the ministry at length, describing the charity's work as a 'mission' committed to its 'distinct Christian identity.' As founding CEO, his description of his early vision of CSW as 'a Christian version of Amnesty International' created a palpable resonance with the staff who clearly saw this as a critical disclosure. By his own admission he realised the comparison would be understood as an official acknowledgement that CSW should be regarded as a human rights ministry defending the freedom of people of all faiths and none, rather than limiting itself to the profile of a persecuted Church organisation. As my journal noted, 'Lunch had a gentle buzz. Mervyn … is enjoying lots of positive feedback from staff. Someone told him, "Having heard you I now understand why I am in CSW"'.

In light of the CEO's statement, the away day became a platform from which others affirmed CSW's engagement in human rights and FoRB. Kathy, an experienced A2 staff member underscored CSW's credentials as an advocacy organisation which neither proselytised nor

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[1] CSW Organisational Strategy 2015-2017, Appendix 1: CSW Identity and Vision Statement, Vivid Description (Who We Will Become), p. 1.
[2] CSW Organisational Strategy, p. 13.

provided aid. Speaking up for people of all faiths, she insisted, was biblical and opened opportunities for wider partnerships in their field. She presented FoRB as a fundamental 'first freedom' and reflected on the concerns of a recent CSW Board meeting which warned against the loss of a Christian identity through engagement in FoRB and the risks associated with a name change to reflect its work in advocacy. In challenging this ambiguity, Kathy suggested, 'We don't have to say "Christian" to be Christian'. In her analogy, 'A tiger doesn't talk about its tigritude: he just jumps!'

Barry, also an experienced A2 staff member, suggested that engagement in FoRB was the organisation's 'chief focus' and considered CSW as a unique Christian organisation combining FoRB, human rights and 'high-end advocacy', with prayer at its centre.

Clearly, the away day that followed the Board's authorisation of the 2015-2017 Strategic Report and the CEO's disclosure became an opportunity to accelerate the confrontation with the deep organisational ambiguities about its identity.

The July away day occurred a few days after my initial interview with the CEO. At the formal conclusion of our interview Thomas confirmed that the staff had never heard of his vision of CSW as a Christian version of Amnesty International. Having agreed with him that this statement could be useful to the staff, I felt fully implicated in his subsequent disclosure at the staff conference.

Indeed, following the CEO's presentation, Sylvia, an A3 team leader, suggested that I had 'gone native'. The experience demonstrated the extent to which, as the interviewer, I was

unable to be what Peter Collins calls 'merely a passive observer'.[3] At this point and throughout the research, I found myself in what Clifford and Marcus describe as 'a delicate balance of subjectivity and objectivity'.[4]

CSW's quest to clarify its own identity was also an amplified reflection of my own transition from thirty years of active public ministry to the more reflective role as a research student. From the vantage point of my own transition, I felt particularly sensitised to the apprehensions and vulnerabilities associated with a review of an organisational self-portrait.

CSW's shifting self-awareness was symptomatic of an unspoken confusion about its identity and more specifically its name that I will now address briefly.

3.2 Naming the mission

Whilst I was aware of the organisation's internal ambiguities around its mission and identity, I was also conscious that the name of the organisation was an unspoken and contentious issue. Adam, a senior A1 staff member, was the first person who reflected this covert unease during the formal interview the day following the staff away day. As he put it,

> Christian Solidarity Worldwide is who we are, who we've been, but it's obvious from the comments [yesterday] that the advocates find that title very, very difficult. And for years the advocates have been trying to campaign for a name change.[5]

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[3] Peter Collins, *Negotiating Selves: Reflections on 'Unstructured' Interviewing*, 3 vols. (Sociological Research Online, 1998*), iii* p.7. <http:www.socresonline.org.uk/3/3/2.html> [accessed 13 October 2014].
[4] James Clifford and George Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Poetics And Politics Of Ethnography* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), p.13.
[5] Adam, 1 July 2015.

Interviews were not designed to address the specific and covert concerns about CSW's name, which existed at that time. However, the fact that Serena, an A3 team leader, keenly volunteered to raise it as an additional issue was indicative of the ambiguities associated with this protracted unease. This was most striking in this extended section of my interview with her:

Serena: I think we are a very unique organisation because we are so human-rights-based and we have such an amazing reputation on all the platforms where I attend. At the same time, we do have a strong Christian identity and I think it's very good. I think we are - I think we have managed to do it quite well actually.

Joel: Is that a difficult tension in your work?

Serena: No. I do think sometimes, you know, if people don't know our work and then I'm telling them where I'm coming from, that we are a Christian human rights organisation, I always have to quickly explain what we do and what our approach is because often people think, "Oh you're just, you know, like any other persecuted church organisation".

Joel: What does that mean?

Serena: I mean, because our name is *Christian Solidarity Worldwide* people think, OK, you address issues of Christians only . . . So I think the name doesn't really serve us always so well.

Joel: Would you advocate getting rid of the name?

Serena: I don't think it's possible. I don't think there's thinking around that but if someone would, you know, if there would be someone who'd be like, "Oh maybe we could change the name", I would support that. But I think it's OK. But when you work in public, when you work with secular press and so on, you know, we always have to be very quick at explaining things.

Joel: Yeah. My impression is that the 'Christian' bit might help when you're talking to the church … but not if you're doing advocacy.

Serena: [And also] because we are Christian Solidarity it sounds like we share solidarity with other Christians so it's not only the 'Christian', it's the 'Solidarity'.

Joel: How much of your work is actually trying to explain that away?

Serena: Well, I'm always really quick at explaining. Then I give example of how we - you know - address issues of Rohingya Muslims in Burma or when we went to visit an Indonesian humanist blogger. I always give like a couple of examples of how we work with the Baha'i international community so people understand, you know, they have a different approach.

Joel: And one of the interesting things it seems to me about CSW is that it's the only organisation doing this work with the name 'Christian' in it.

Serena: Yeah. Yeah that's true. But that's a very difficult question because from my perspective it would be quite good to change the name but then again, it might also be just God's plan that we have the name and we have such a strong Christian identity. You know, and it hasn't prevented us from doing our work really well. So, in a way, maybe we should just stick with it.[6]

This lengthy exchange with Serena was the most explicit expression of the prevailing ambiguity surrounding CSW's name at that time. While it echoed the concerns of a number of staff it was not currently an open conversation between the A1 and A2, 3, 4 CSW staff members.   The challenge facing the organisation was therefore the management of this organisational confusion that is the focus of my next section.

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[6] Serena, 26 August 2015.

3.3 Managing the identity

What soon became evident was that this issue had been a protracted area of contention between the Board and members of staff - particularly for advocates in their professional interface with the international human rights community. The Board records revealed the extent of this tension and the degree to which it remained a sensitive ambiguity for the organisation.

My reading of the Board minutes inadvertently began from the most recent record in November 2011 and worked back in time to November 2007. By reading in this way I understood more clearly how the Board arrived at its most recent position in relation to the difficult historical debates with senior staff and advocates. Limiting my research to this period provided an element of distance from the most current thinking whilst sufficiently appreciating the journey of ambiguity.

For the purposes of this research, however, I will identify the records in chronological order beginning with the discussions in 2007. At this point the Board reiterated its commitment to its 'external' work of advocacy in the human rights institutions and its 'internal' work with its evangelical supporter base. The suggestion was that staff should embrace both the negative and positive implications of its Christian name. In an attempt to be clear about its identity, the CEO suggested a strapline of 'Religious Liberty for All'.

In March 2008, the Board meeting highlighted 'the developing issue over CSW's name' and noted that the advocacy staff favoured a change of name. The meeting agreed that a paper from the staff would be discussed on 2 April in anticipation of further discussion in June

2008.[7] The 19th June meeting became an extended discussion on a briefing paper, 'Name

Change Debate', presented by the chair. Its table of contents listed five sections including,

'An Identity Crisis' and 'What Will Happen If We Don't Change Our Name?' In its focus on

'An Identity Crisis' the chair observed that,

> The unrest felt by some regarding the organisation's name is a symptom of a much
> more serious issue which is currently coming to the fore - an identity crisis.
>
> Broadly speaking, we operate as a Christian human rights organisation
> specializing in freedom of religion or belief, prioritizing work concerning the
> persecuted church. But we communicate CSW's activities as only a voice for the
> persecuted church or sometimes as a mixture of the two. This does not accurately
> reflect what we do.[8]

The paper highlighted the discrepancies between CSW's website presenting itself as a

'human rights organisation which specialises in religious freedom' and mobilising the

Christians to, 'pray, protest and provide' for persecuted Christians.   Its Annual Report sought

to 'speak up on behalf of those who are persecuted for their beliefs' and claimed that,

'CSW's vision is of a world where Christians of all denominations are free to practice their

faith without fear of repercussions'.[9] These messages aimed primarily at the church,

contrasted with its wider human rights identity. The 2008 paper included a heading which

conceded that, 'Our Message is confused' and clearly identified,

> a tension between the message we are communicating to the church, broadly that 'we
> are a voice for the persecuted church' and the work that we are actually delivering,
> which is much wider. Our current name 'Christian Solidarity Worldwide' and brand

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[7] CSW Governance Committee, 10 March 2008 item 9, iii.
[8] CSW Board meeting, 8 Debate, 'An Identity Crisis, A paper presented to the CSW Board of Trustees by the Advocacy Directors', 1. May, 2008, p. 8.
[9] Ibid., item 2. 2., p.9.

works with the message 'we are a voice for the persecuted church'. But it doesn't work with 'a Christian human rights organisation specializing in freedom of religion and belief'.[10]

The paper provided a brief biblical foundation for its work as a FoRB organisation and concluded with the bold assertion that,

> The work that we currently do is that of a human rights organisation that specialises in freedom of religion or belief. This *is* a Christian ministry.
>
> We are not simply a persecuted church agency. This is not where the advocacy department is at, nor does it reflect the work that we are doing. If we adopt this description of ourselves we will be limiting the effective work we can do for the persecuted church, those persecuted for their religious belief and human rights in general. The world is not the same place it was in 1979 when we started. [Thirty] years on, the landscape has changed. Like a chameleon, we must adapt to our environment to be effective and to survive, whilst still remaining true to who we are at our core.[11]

The ensuing debate included submissions from advocates and involved significant discussions about the name-change. As the chair also reminded the meeting, the spiritual and secular mix of the organisation's work influenced its hybridised identity, which inevitably led to some discomfort. At the closure of this contentious debate there was 'a great measure of agreement on the Board that we are primarily a persecuted church agency and not a Christian human rights charity'.[12]

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[10] Ibid.
[11] Ibid., item 5. p.13.
[12] CSW Board Minutes, 19 June 2008.

The debate about name-change and identity persisted. The Board meeting on 2 April 2009 again demonstrated the level of ambiguity remaining, as 'grave concern' was registered about CSW's trajectory. The question was raised: 'Are we a human rights organisation with a Christian flavour or vice versa?' A long-standing member was clear that, from its beginnings, CSW was 'working for Christians who were persecuted, and we still are now. Our work is on behalf of Christians and we must not detract from that. This is our main cause, and this is where we are'. Another recalled that there had already been a decision on 4 October 2008 to consider a name change and confirm CSW as a Christian organisation with a human rights flavour. Evidence emerged of an even earlier name-change conversation between 2006 and 2007 that was later abandoned as the suggested budget appeared prohibitive at that time.

However, the Board meeting on 1 July 2009 welcomed a 20/20 vision statement that raised fundamental issues of identity. This made no specific references to name change but opened the door for further submissions from the staff. It then reverted to the language of the persecuted Christians in which,

> The Board re-affirmed their desire to support all Christians who are facing persecution. They agreed the 20/20 Vision document should be regarded as outline planning permission for future development. It should be fulfilled in phases as circumstances, finance and the Holy Spirit dictate. We should also explore creative ways of increasing capacity to help the persecuted Church.[13]

Following a series of difficult encounters between a small number of advocates, the Executive Committee and Board, the meeting on 17 June 2010 discussed issues of identity.

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[13] CSW Board meeting, item.7, 20/20 Vision, 1 July 2009.

A decision, 'on a rough show of hands,' identified an agreement that, 'if and insofar as being a human rights organisation is different from being a persecuted church agency, we are a persecuted church agency'.[14] In addition, a joint working group with the Board and staff was arranged for 6 July 2010. Four senior advocates submitted extensive comments for the working group on identity planned for 5 July. Here a joint paper written by the CEO and a Board member, 'Who We Are', made fifteen points. This paper, culminating some three years of debate, stated in its first two points that CSW 'stands in solidarity with the persecuted church'[15] with an obligation to pursue 'the relief of hardship, distress and poverty of persons throughout the world who are being persecuted as a result of their religious beliefs and the promotion of the Christian religion'.[16] It added that, according to the mission statement approved by the Board on 5 July 2005, 'Christian Solidarity Worldwide [CSW] is a human rights organisation which specialises in religious freedom, works on behalf of those persecuted for their Christian beliefs, and promotes religious liberty for all'.[17]

The language of FoRB used unequivocally in the chair's 'Name Change Debate' paper in May 2008, was carefully avoided by the Board a month later during its 19 June meeting, in which CSW described itself as 'primarily a persecuted church agency' rather than a Christian human rights charity. However, having unanimously agreed that CSW should remain a Christian human rights organisation in its 1 July 2009 meeting, it reverted to the language of 'persecuted Church' in its meeting, 17 June 2010.

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[14] CSW Board meeting, item 8, CEO Report 17 June 2010.
[15] CSW Board meeting, item 12, 'Who We Are', 1. 5 July 2010.
[16] Ibid., item 2., 5 July 2010.
[17] Ibid., item 7., 5 July 2010.

The Board's uncertainties carried forward as late as its meeting of 10 November 2011. When the issue of working with non-Christians was again raised, its 'Cry Freedom Campaign' title was changed to 'Religious Freedom for Christians' that, according to the Board, reflected CSW's remit.[18] Indeed, the discussion unveiled some disquiet about the effectiveness of working with human rights institutions such as the United Nations, although 'it was agreed that it is important we continue to input into these'.[19]

However, this ambiguity expressed in the November 2011 meeting was a clear departure from its much earlier commitment to religious liberty for all as early as its November 2007 meeting and from the discussions available in the records, it was clear that the Board was never comfortable admitting any engagement in freedom of religion or belief.

As will now become apparent, in the absence of an agreed identity, the charity was unable to find the appropriate language for its work.

3.4   Ambiguity and the language of FoRB

Having reviewed the historic indecision across phases of CSW's development, it was evident that the use of language was central to its understanding of its mission and vision. The charity oscillated between its core task of defending persecuted Christians and its responsibilities as a Christian organisation involved in the pursuit of FoRB. Inevitably, CSW's self-description required a flexibility which would enable it to operate as an equal in the professional contexts of the human rights community providing indiscriminate advocacy for people of all faiths and

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[18] Board meeting, item 9.2.3, 10 November 2011.
[19] Board meeting, item 10.5, 10 November 2011.

none. Conversely, its 'Christian Solidarity' descriptor was reassurance that it would remain true to its core beliefs and constituency.

The choices between defending the 'persecuted church', 'religious freedom', 'human rights' or FoRB, presented both ideological and linguistic challenges for the organisation. The fear was that these activities were incompatible. Conversely, advocates invariably found it necessary to give reassurances to other agencies that an organisation with a Christian worldview would be capable of delivering impartial support for victims of human rights abuse whose religious ideology was at variance with their own. What appeared to feed the frustration and ambiguities during the initial stages of the research was the total absence of any formal dialogue across the staff or between the staff and the Board about the use of language.

The introduction of Q5 precipitated by my informal lunchtime conversation, was therefore an attempt to explore this linguistic and ideological fissure in CSW. My impression was that Q5 lay at the heart of CSW's ambiguity. It asked,

> How would you describe the relationship between:
> a. defending the persecuted church
> b. defending religious freedom
> c. working to promote human rights

Of the four staff categories, only A1s (historic gatekeepers and founding executive staff) initially found this question difficult to grasp and in two cases had to have the categories repeated.

While there was general agreement across A1 that all three were interconnected, with human rights as 'a big umbrella' and religious freedom as 'a touchstone of human rights',[20] there were also concerns that human rights included 'gay [rights] and other things' and was more political. Sonnie, an experienced and senior administrator, struggled to articulate any difference between religious freedom and human rights, but was clearly suspicious about human rights, which he felt 'has no taint of religion about it'.[21] Generally, A1 respondents were ill at ease with the political implications of FoRB and human rights, regarding these as ideological dragnets for secular values and norms conflicting with Christian faith and practise. At the same time however, they identified the transition that was taking place in the organisation's identity and mission. Like the CEO, Adam recognised that '[focusing on] the persecuted church is a narrow definition of what we are doing', and 'we are changing'.[22] He also identified the name CSW as politically problematic for an organisation engaged in FoRB.

By contrast, all other interviewees in A2 to A4, with one exception, engaged with the question with more familiarity, and introduced key ideas in their responses. However, as we shall consider, these responses were not uncritical of some of the presuppositions buried in the three areas thrown up by the question. As with A1, other CSW staff identified an overarching relationship between defending persecuted Christians, religious freedom and human rights. Barry for example, described them all as sub-categories of Article 18. Far from distancing themselves from human rights, he wanted Christians to redeem the language of

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[20] COO/deputy and CEO, 19 August 2015.
[21] Sonnie, 26 August 2015.
[22] Adam, 1 July 2017.

human rights, opposing the stoning of a gay person if needed whilst speaking up for heterosexual marriage.

For Kathy, Q5 exposed the long-standing internal tensions surrounding CSW's identity as a human rights organisation engaged in FoRB. 'At the very top,' she suggested, 'we have an understanding of where we are supposed to be'. Kathy resisted the suggestion that staff who supported a human rights approach were 'some sort of closet atheist and fifth columnists trying to undermine the organisation'.[23] Gloria regarded the issue as a matter of semantics, suggesting, 'We use the language to get the job done. At the end of the day what you call it just doesn't matter. You just need to get them out [of prison]'.[24]

Of all three elements in Q5, defending the persecuted church provoked the most critical responses. As an evangelical human rights agency CSW has a core commitment to advocate for persecuted Christians across the world. Nonetheless, respondents in A2 to A4 were generally critical about defending Christians to the exclusion of other faiths.

Anthea, one of the charity's most experienced A2 respondents was concerned that the phrase 'persecuted church' was 'problematical' and not understood outside the church.[25] Serena recognised that whilst Christians were allegedly more persecuted than any other faith, CSW could not ignore other faiths. She believed that political engagement could not be limited to the defence of Christians and that CSW was already known across human rights institutions as a FoRB organisation.[26]

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[23] Kathy, 27 August 2015.
[24] Gloria, 22 July 2015.
[25] Anthea, 5 November 2015.
[26] Serena, 26 August 2015.

However, Selwyn, a more recent A3 team leader, agreed that whilst FoRB provides CSW with a legal and intellectual framework, unlike 'persecution' it is not a biblical concept and is therefore less intelligible to Christian audiences.[27] Cliff, also recently recruited as department head and promoted to COO in 2017, reflected on a friend in church leadership who struggled with the notion of human rights but would,

> get 'persecuted church', which I find a little . . . a little dangerous. I find it a little bit Zionist.[28] Just that way of thinking that we protect ourselves and we look after the church [as] number one: but I think the call of Jesus on our lives is to love our neighbour whoever they might be.[29]

Crystal, an insightful A4 interviewee, viewed persecution as 'one word for violations of the rights of freedom of religion or belief'.[30]

The view was widespread that human rights were particularly challenging to communicate to its support base. Selwyn and Adam mentioned that it introduced LGBT issues, which were difficult for supporters. Eve said, 'it's a difficult one; I mean, looking at it from my perspective, I think about how to talk to the church about that, so I guess "persecuted church" is often the easiest way'.[31]

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[27] Selwyn, 18 August 2015.
[28] Cliff's reference here appeared to be particularly provocative and was in no way meant to be a reflection on CSW's position on the politics of Israel or the Middle East.
[29] Cliff, 22 July 2015.
[30] Crystal, 23 July 2015.
[31] Eve, 22 July 2015.

Consequently, educating the church was a theme emerging from Q5, with Adam suggesting that, although freedom of religion is important, CSW has 'a big task to educate and inform them [Christians]'. For Eve, such an education would be a journey:

> I think you take people on a journey of understanding. You have to try to figure out where people are now and what they get and then you're taking them on the journey to help them understand it. I think as an organisation we've done that journeying as well. You know, you wrestle, you wrestle with the issues and you kind of ask, 'Where are we? What do we think about these things?' And I think when you're talking to the church you've got to take them on that journey […] to the broader human rights picture.[32]

There appeared to be a direct correlation between CSW's identity and the political language it deployed to describe its mission. The fact that there was no understood or mandated language appeared to contribute to the prevailing ambiguities.

As I came to realise, the ambivalent language was inherent in my own approach to Q5. In reviewing the material, it became evident that in my question to interviewees I alternated between, FoRB, 'freedom of religion or belief', 'religious freedom', and 'freedom of religion' - unconsciously using all four terms interchangeably. Inevitably, there was a commensurate level of ambiguity with respondents also using a diversity of expressions in their response to Q5.

With hindsight, I became aware of how much I participated in the currency of ambiguity and confusion of language prevalent in the organisation. Whilst I was already aware of the

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[32] Eve, 22 July 2015.

distinctions between the terms, 'religious freedom', 'freedom of religion' and FoRB, I failed to recognise the degree to which these terms were being used interchangeably across CSW. It was only in the process of reviewing the interviews that I became aware that what was written in Q5 was not 'freedom of religion or belief' as I had supposed, but 'defending religious freedom' and that this confusion was compounded by a wording which may have influenced the level of inconsistency from the respondents.[33]

Similar ideological and linguistic ambiguities existed for Group B church leaders that I will now consider.

3.4.1 Leadership, language and Q5

Given the consensus around Q4 that the church did not necessarily regard human rights engagement as consistent with the mission of God, church leaders' reactions to Q5 was of special interest.

Andreas, a senior Orthodox archbishop and public champion of FoRB, believed that the image of God in everyone means that 'freedoms are given by God and enshrined in international law'.[34] Everyone should therefore abandon the idea of a monopoly over suffering and persecution. An ordained Baptist minister and CEO of a Christian broadcasting network, Patrick was sceptical of church leaders' ability to make the journey towards justice and declared himself 'agnostic about turning to church leaders to mobilise people'. He was equally pessimistic because in his view churches were 'interested, but not interested enough'

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[33] See Appendix VI.
[34] Andreas, 4 February 2016.

to respond.[35] Like Andreas, Rex, a senior Pentecostal minister with considerable experience

in educating and mobilising Christian communities in human rights, best expressed this idea

of the cognitive and attitudinal journey:

> There is for me, no contradiction. These three things, they belong together […] and
> we went on a certain way, we started with the concern of the persecuted brothers and
> sisters. We realised that this was actually a question of religious liberty and then we
> realised religious liberty actually is a question of human rights. So that's how we
> finally got to the point where now we can see these three things as relating to each
> other.[36]

In contrast with CSW staff, church leaders seldom used the language of 'freedom of religion

or belief' even when affirming the idea.[37] This suggested the degree to which Group B

interviewees had an absence of human rights language. Significantly, the only case in which

I specifically used the language of FoRB was in questioning Andreas, whom I already

assumed to understand the issues as a result of his extensive interfaith and political

involvement in FoRB issues. Again, my inconsistency in itself demonstrated the persistent

ambiguities around ways of speaking about religious freedom. Pre-selecting Andreas as the

only Christian leader to whom I specifically directed the language of FoRB also unveiled the

potential subjectivity of the participant observer in qualitative research.

Two of the five Group B respondents offered no form of religious freedom language in

response to Q5.

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[35] Patrick, 21 January 2016.
[36] Rex interview, 5 February 2016.
[37] See Appendix VII.

Also apparent from Group B respondents was the degree to which domestic perspectives appeared to influence their reactions to human rights issues. Whilst CSW staff were aware of the church's reticence towards the human rights agenda, church leaders communicated what could be described as a representative caution about human rights in terms which were absent from Group A's perspective. Reflecting on his own experiences in the Middle East and the UK, Martin referred to 'a human rights agenda that's out there with, you know, many people supporting the human rights of Christians in the Middle East and out in Saudi Arabia'.[38] In Jonathan's view,

> [human rights] is on all the tabloids. It's the headlines on News at Ten and yet the beheading of Christians and the complete obliteration of the church from parts of the world is completely veiled over and not spoken about. So human rights is for everyone, but I think the Christian does have a responsibility to say, 'Christian lives matter as well as a Muslim's life matters' - as course it does, as well as non-believers' lives matter.[39]

The cautious responses in Group B were never evident in Group A's approach to pursuing FoRB. However, the fact that it appears to be a living issue in the minds of church leaders at all may well have unconsidered importance for CSW's support base in the years ahead. As we will consider in chapter four, this tendency to compare Christian persecution 'at home' with persecution abroad appears to be a common feature in the discourse about freedom of religion.

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[38] Martin, 18 February 2016.
[39] Jonathan, 22 February 2016.

3.4.2 Language, victims and Q5

My presentation of Q5 to the seven interviewees in Group C, who experienced varying degrees of FoRB abuse, was as erratic as with other interviewees. Two of the seven respondents who were professional activists in Sri Lanka and a Nigerian all responded in FoRB language.

With one exception, there was unanimous support for FoRB in practice. Rudi was quite clear:

> I consider freedom of religion or belief as one core human right. Human rights is very broad, so this is one and this is considered non-divisible right that means that under any circumstances this right cannot be taken away even when there is war or natural disaster.[40]

Assid keenly explained his own insights:

> As Christians we stand for justice, so justice includes the right of freedom of other people, as well as non-Christian, and most important, the way I look at it as the follower of Jesus Christ, we have this distinctive role to play in this world where we live in this fallen world and have to fight for the rights of the freedom of other people as well coming to the defending the persecuted Christian.[41]

Beltram, a senior Pentecostal leader in Sri Lanka demonstrated a radical grasp of the issues, suggesting, 'I have the right to convert; I have the right to adopt a religion of my choice, but I must respect the right of a guy who's going to move away from me and worship a flower'.[42]

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[40] Rudi, 11 August 2015.
[41] Assid, interview, 27 April 2016.
[42] Beltram, interview, 13 August 2015.

With the exception of Elbar (see below), there was evidence of multi-faith collaboration in pressing for freedom of religion or belief. Five of the seven respondents were actively involved in practical partnerships in training and advocacy.

Of particular significance was the hermeneutic of experience by which Group C responded to Q5. As Beltram suggested, 'you get battered by persecution and then you begin to understand human rights'. Assid's final reflection on Q5 was that, 'all three things I think, you can find in my story'.

Elbar's reflection on Q5 was both poignant and complex. Having suffered persecution and marginalisation, Elbar admitted that he wrestled with the right to religious freedom for Muslims. Paradoxically, he felt it was his freedom as a Muslim that gave him the right to consider Christianity, resulting in his conversion.

> When I was Muslim I was free to go to the mosque. I was free to read [the] Quran, I was free to teach the Quran. I was free to preach [the] Quran. I had such, you know, a wonderful freedom for my faith to say anything I would have liked to say about Islam in my country; nobody would persecute me and that was great. And that freedom helped me to meet with Christians. That freedom allowed me to come before God in free prayer to ask the Lord to show me the right way because I was free to pray in Islam.

However, the experience of persecution made him reluctant to support freedom for all:

> Well to be honest, because we were persecuted not only by government but also by the Muslim community, you don't really think that the religious freedom has to be for Muslims and other faiths as well because you are persecuted.[43]

Evidently, Q5 unveiled the complexity of Elbar's response to his own experience of persecution: in the course of the interview he gave the impression of exploring these issues with new insights.

In reviewing the feedback to Q5, I became aware of the obvious variation in responses between all three groups. As I will also reflect in the following chapter, the experience of interviewing professionals at an office base where analytical skills and the language of FoRB were prevalent was in stark contrast to the pastoral reactions of Group B and the first-hand experience of Group C, some of whom were interviewed in the geographical setting of their marginalisation.

What seems plausible from all of the responses to Q5 is Clough and Nutbrown's contention that the research could be considered as a moral and political act in that 'persuasive' research changes people and things.[44] The interview process raised new levels of awareness for interviewees, provoking personal and organisational reflection. In most cases, interviews concluded with some acknowledgement that the process had opened up new insights for the participants.

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[43] Elbar, 23 March 2016.

[44] Peter Clough and Cathy Nutbrown, *A Student's Guide to Methodology* (London, New Delhi: SAGE publications, 2002), p. 14.

This goes to the complex issue of the researcher's aspiration to create 'understanding' through research in such a way that the researcher seeks to understand the interviewee 'better than he understands himself'[45] and, as Patton observes, to 'deduce what is significant… observe activities and infer meanings not in the awareness of participants'.[46] As Beth Leech suggests, in the dynamic of the interview it is possible to experience those instances where the researcher, in the light of his or her expertise or interests, seeks out 'very specific answers to very specific questions'.[47]

As I learned in this process, the interaction between researcher and interviewees opens up a range of complex issues beyond the range of this study. As Clifford Geertz suggests, a very real distance exists between the experience of the interviewee and interviewer who is never fully able to experience or express the cultural realities of their subjects.[48]

However, it was also evident that for CSW interviewees the distinct lack of unanimity was demonstrated in the diversity of the language being used. In Hans Gadamer's complex theory, 'language is the universal medium in which understanding occurs'[49] and the means by which substantive agreement take place.[50] Language, he suggests, establishes the fact that people already share a prior agreement of the essential meaning of the words being used.[51] In

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[45] Ibid., p. 192.
[46] M. Patton, 'Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods' (Newbury, CA: Sage, 1990) quoted in C. Mousakas, *Phenomenological Research Methods* (London: SAGE Publications, 1994), p. 3.
[47] Beth Leech, 'Asking Questions: Techniques for Semistructured Interviews', in *Political Science and Politics,* 35 (2002), pp. 665-668 (p.665).
[48] Clifford Geertz, 'From the Native's Point of View: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding', in *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 28 (1974), pp. 26-45 (p. 30).
[49] Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, ed. by Joel Weinsscheimer and Daniel G. Marshall (London: Bloomsbury, 1989), p. 407.
[50] Ibid., p. 402.
[51] Ibid., p. 401.

the context of this research it was clear that the charity struggled to establish such a common language.

As a participant observer, it was evident from the feedback that in Q5 my voice as researcher contributed materially to the dialogue.[52] In my own experience at CSW I discovered that as Clough and Nutbrown suggest, the relationship between research and researcher undoubtedly became 'an essential feature of research'.[53]

Beyond the specificity of language, the research suggests a potentially wider external ambiguity that may have been influential in CSW's ambiguity.

3.5 External ambiguities

From my research it would appear that CSW's internal nervousness about compromising its Christian identity may also have been influenced by two external factors.

The first is the fact that Christian scholars have not been unanimous in their support of human rights. Ethna Regan's synopsis of the debate identifies scholars such as John Hollenbach and Jürgen Moltmann who have argued for positive engagement with human rights, as opposed to scholars such as Alasdair McIntyre, John Milbank, Stanley Hauerwas and Oliver O'Donovan who approach human rights with 'theological disdain'.[54] This theological undercurrent which reflects popular Christian attitudes towards human rights has

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[52] Clough and Nutbrown, *A Student's Guide to Methodology*, p. 68.
[53] Ibid., p. 68.
[54] Ethna Regan, *Theology and the Boundary Discourse of Human Rights* (Washington: Georgetown, University Press, 2010), pp. 63-76.

inevitably stimulated a culture of caution within the charity. I will return to this issue in my theological chapters.

Secondly, there appears to be a paucity of theological guidance on the specific features of FoRB. Recent Christian reflections on religious freedom[55] and freedom of belief from a missiological perspective[56] have been helpful and the Berkley Center's Religious Freedom Project, for example, has provided significant resources in this area.[57] However, the subject has had little direct attention and the charity therefore suffered a lack of specific biblical reflection on its role.

Working from an explicitly evangelical ethos to defend religious freedom for people of all faiths and none, the charity appears to have strayed into relatively uncharted theological terrain. This has been a recipe for ambiguity in terms of its own identity and its theological confidence and in understanding and communicating its mission within the human rights arena as well as to the church as its support base.

3.6 Internal theological ambiguity and Q7

Consequently, Q7 and Q8 were designed to explore CSW's reflection on its biblical foundations.

   7. In what way does a biblical/theological framework guide your work?

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[55] Timothy Samuel Shah, 'The Roots of Religious Freedom in Early Church Thought', in *Christianity and Freedom: Historical Perspectives*, ed. by Timothy Samuel Shah and Allen D. Hertzke (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 33–61.

[56] See Tore Lindholm: 'Freedom of Religion or Belief from A Human Rights Perspective'*, in *Freedom of Belief and Christian Mission* ed. by Hans Aage Gravaas and Christof Sauer (Oxford: Regnum Books, 2016), pp. 3-29.

[57] See Religious Freedom Project: <http://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/rfp> [accessed 23 August 2016].

8. How does your Christian ethos inform your relationship with other FoRB agencies?

Although all interviewees responded to these questions, in order to bring specific focus on the extent to which theology has influenced the staff's mission as FoRB practitioners, I have limited this section to responses from Group A.

As the research was primarily concerned to highlight CSW's self-awareness and organisational identity, rather than focusing on comparisons with other Christian and non-Christian agencies in the field, Q7 eclipsed Q8 to become the main focus of the research.

Without exception, all Group A interviewees agreed that the Bible provided a firm foundation for CSW's work. The CEO was clear that, 'we're always quoting Scripture' and Anthea, for example, insisted that 'justice and truth and righteousness are calls that are made again and again' in Scripture, with the New Testament underpinning the work.[58] Crystal said that a reliance on Scripture 'comes through very, very strongly' from the leadership.[59]

However, the unambiguous consensus about biblical priority was at variance with the significant absence of any clear biblical texts in interviewees' responses to this particular question. Only two specific texts were mentioned by interviewees: Sonnie mentioned Proverbs 31. 8-9 and Bekka, an A4 staff member, referenced Galatians 6.10. Other texts such as Hebrews 13.3 alluded to in CSW's material, strategic documents and devotional settings were not mentioned during the formal interviews.

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[58] Anthea, 5 November 2015.
[59] Crystal, 23 July 2015.

Responses to Q7 did however reveal a deep awareness of the need for more in-depth study and a clearly defined biblical framework. The CEO was keen to have more Biblical study. Serena advocated the need for 'a wider understanding' of biblical information. Eve lamented the lack of 'clear-cut answers' and identified the need for a clearer teaching and a theology of suffering.

In response to Q7, Gloria, an A4 Masters student, presented perhaps the most compelling case:

> From a corporate point of view, I think we're still figuring that out. I think it was easier for CSW when they were just working for Christians. I think that we have done the right thing as an organisation for working for all, but I think they haven't quite put their biblical theology for that yet in place in an official way.
>
> There is a general understanding throughout the organisation that justice is the right thing to do from a biblical perspective […] But in terms of the specific biblical strategy I think we're still figuring that out […] So when I came to the organisation and you hear some people, you know, the kind of people that pre-date FoRB, you hear them talking a lot about the persecuted church.
>
> And then you come in and you hear the newer people talking about FoRB more. When we talk about the religious persecution of Christians we often whip out Bible verses and talk about it and talk about how it is like a spiritual attack on the church. But then we work for a Muslim and we don't.[60]

Gloria's insightful and provocative reflection presented the most urgent rationale for theological coherence 'to catch up with ourselves in terms of FoRB stuff'. What was particularly significant from her insight was the clear distinction between a generic

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[60] Gloria, 22 July 2015.

understanding of biblical justice and the need for a theological and phenomenological matrix specific to FoRB.

Significantly, whilst very little textual evidence was offered in defining a biblical framework for working towards FoRB, a number of references emerged. These included a number of themes such as the 'kingdom of God' to which I will return in later chapters. A theological core that was central to all such themes was a pronounced Christocentricism that Cliff articulated and which I highlight here:

>   Cliff: It's about valuing people. Loving one another. We love because God first loved us.

>   Joel: Is that a biblical framework for you? I mean how does a biblical theological framework inform what you do? Or what CSW does?

>   Cliff: I'm sure it informs what CSW does. I just look to see what Jesus would do and you can call that a biblical theological framework. But you know I love because Jesus first loved us and you know, I look to the stories of Jesus. I look at the way Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well. And it's like, how could we pass by and not engage with people, especially those that need our help? In whatever way that is. And human rights give you that framework to think around. Sure, there's stuff that's not covered but it gives us a framework to attach your theological framework to. These are the areas that we can look at.

>   Joel: So, you would go much more: it sounds like you're saying, "Let's not get too technical about biblical framework or theology" but actually the starting point is what we see in Jesus.

>   Cliff: Absolutely. Yeah.

>   Joel: That's your theological framework?

> Cliff: Yeah yeah. Absolutely. Yeah. I'm I'm yeah very sorry […]   I don't have the verses to back up my position, but I do know Jesus and I think, I understand what he would do.[61]

Whilst CSW identifies the Apostle's Creed as its theological orientation and has a high commitment to Scripture, respondents were clearly motivated by an incarnational and experiential model.

As an evangelical organisation, theological certainties have been at the heart of CSW's identity and sense of purpose. Consequently, the charity's clear alignment of engagement in FoRB with a more robust biblical framework has mitigated the internal restlessness and satisfied the Board's concerns about its culture of prayer, Christian identity and its name.

The research encountered no evidence within CSW for any theological arguments prohibiting FoRB. Texts such as Galatians 6.10 and Hebrews 13.3 have served as a mandate to prioritise persecuted Christians rather than excluding others. In the three-part interactive *Faith in FoRB?* study these texts were understood to argue for a more inclusive and biblical response to FoRB. Subsequently, I was commissioned to provide a more considered FoRB-specific theological framework for the charity.[62]

In the latter stages of the research, a significant identity and branding review demanded substantial and urgent steps to bring increasing theological clarity to underpin CSW's work.

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[61] Cliff, 22 July 2015.
[62] In October 2016 I submitted, 'The New Neighbourhood', an unpublished paper of a theology of FoRB based on Luke 10.25-35.

In relation to this, the Board and executive team agreed on a theological core statement declaring that, 'As Christians, we believe that freedom to believe is God's gift to all humanity made in his image'.[63] Of even more significance was the Board's agreement in pursuing FoRB:

> This board affirms our commitment to work within the United Nations' historic understanding of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB) contained within Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
>
> We believe that this is consistent with the freedom of conscience and freedom to choose or change religion as fundamental gifts of God to all peoples.
>
> Given the political challenges inherent in FoRB, our work will remain committed to our historic Christian creeds and will resist any cultural, ideological or political trends and individual cases which threaten to erode our commitment to Christ, or which seek to recast freedom of religion or belief in ways that are incompatible with the biblical claims of our Christian faith.[64]

This statement, with which I was closely involved, represented a significant step forward in CSW's confidence in its Christian identity as well as its intentional engagement in religious freedom for all.

3.7 'Mission' and Q3

In the face of the prevailing ambiguities, two factors contributed significantly to the ministry's coherence. First, as was already alluded to in the previous chapter, the ambiguities existing for CSW staff were offset by unanimity around the organisation's purpose and a

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[63] Currently an unpublished statement which is at the heart of a rebranding and name change exercise launched March 2018. This was an extensive and professional two-year process which fully engaged staff, Board and stakeholders.

[64] This statement was formally approved at the Board meeting 27 June 2017.

widespread sense of personal vocation elicited by Q2, which asked, 'What led you to work with CSW?'

There was also widespread agreement across the staff in relation to Q3: What connection, if any, do you think there is between Christian organisations' involvement in human rights work, and God's mission?

It transpired that, with three exceptions, responses to Q3 revealed a significant level of cohesion between all interviewees, identifying the disparity between the general view that engagement in FoRB was consistent with the mission of God and the absence of this perspective from churches that will be considered shortly. For example, the CEO's view that 'speaking up for others who we don't agree with is part of the mission' was broadly representative of the entire staff as well as interviewees from Group B and Group C.

Anthea, however, was cautious about the term mission, regarding it as 'confusing' and suggesting that the church needed an education in its nuances before it could be regarded as a helpful descriptor for CSW's work.[65]

Two strident reactions to the concept of 'mission' came from Crystal and Gloria who expressed strong reservations about the concept. Crystal was particularly concerned that the term was often conflated with evangelism and the Great Commission which she regarded as 'a small part' of CSW's work. In preference, she offered the more inclusive concept of the 'Kingdom of God' and conceded that the charity was a kingdom/mission enterprise. Crystal

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[65] Anthea, 5 November 2015.

admitted that she seldom used the term 'mission'. Gloria was similarly adamant that it was 'too complicated' to describe CSW's work as mission, suggesting that as a 'Christian human rights organisation, the charity would be more productive if we distance ourselves from the legacy of mission.' CSW, she concluded, did not need to be 'doing mission' in order to build the Kingdom of God.[66]

The counter-narrative of these two respondents is noteworthy in that they also expressed a very high degree of 'calling' in general and to CSW in particular. Indeed, within a few months of being interviewed Gloria left the organisation for an oversees agency in a move which she saw as entirely consistent with her own sense of vocation of which CSW was an integral part. Whilst the scope of the research did not allow a deeper exploration of the motivation behind their reluctance to see the work as 'mission' I would argue that this suggests a growing issue for the charity.

3.8 The gap between the mission and the church

The second issue on which there was widespread agreement was on the distance between the staff's view of human rights as a missional tool and the church's perception.

Importantly, Q4, which asked 'Does the church understand this?' produced a strong consensus that the church did not regard Christian engagement in human rights as necessarily consistent with the mission of God. In Kathy's mind, CSW had internalised this discord and was 'afraid of FoRB'.[67]

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[66] Gloria, 22 July 2015.
[67] Kathy, 27 August 2015.

However, the responses to Q4 highlighted the impression of a distance between CSW's position and the church from which it drew its support and which it purports to represent on matters of FoRB. This perceived disparity between Q3 and Q4 during initial interviews with Group A was the catalyst for extending the interview process to church leaders in Group B, as well as to leaders in Group C who were victims of FoRB abuses.

Respondents from Group B were aligned with CSW staff in their response to Q4. Christian leaders were also concerned with definitions of church. Andreas, for example, believed that 'the first hurdle is what you mean by "church"'.[68] Patrick was anxious to 'play around with the word, "church"', whose members and leaders he regarded as 'unqualified to be great libertarians' given the church's negative associations with issues of slavery and gender. Exercised by the church's 'determinants for its own preservation', Patrick was impatient with what he described as 'the clergification process' of the church.[69] Somewhat despairingly, Martin acknowledged, 'we are still struggling with it [human rights]'.[70] Perhaps even more intriguing, was the fact that interviewees in Group C were also in agreement.

The charity's case study reached an important milestone when I met with the CEO, COO and Chair to reflect on their responses to the research. As mentioned in chapter one, having finally agreed a positive theological position which affirmed the language of FoRB across the staff and Board, the organisation had also finalised its name with the acronym 'CSW' along with a new strapline, 'everyone free to believe', and a bold contemporary brand. The fact that

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[68] Andreas, 4 February 2016.
[69] Patrick, 21 January 2016.
[70] Martin,18 February 2016.

the leadership had made contingency for the potential loss of financial and active support as a result of its new messaging and brand was an indication of the courage, confidence and clarity that had emerged from the two-year branding process.

The steps taken to address the ambiguities and tensions associated with CSW's identity and its use of language have I believe, served as a helpful model for other organisations on a similar journey. This was the intent of CSW's leadership and an aspiration of this research.

3.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored in more detail some of the difficulties and ambiguities initially raised in the previous chapter. Exploring CSW's internal challenges, I suggest that a substantial issue faced by the organisation was the ambiguity of human rights and FoRB language in its work as a Christian human rights agency.

In doing so, I examined in detail responses to Q5, which differentiated between defending persecuted Christians, human rights and FoRB. I then evaluated and compared reactions to Q5 from the three interview groups identified in my methodology in chapter one. Additionally, I considered the theological uncertainties associated with the agency (Q7) and its ambiguities and insights on the church's response to engagement in FoRB as integral to the mission of God (Q4).

More briefly, the chapter noted external voices who expressed reservation about FoRB and human rights as appropriate responses to FoRB abuses.

Other lessons flow from the ways in which Christians engaged in FoRB understand and respond to the task. How Christians in this field respond to persecution through prayerful resilience and advocacy is one such lesson on which I reflect in the following chapter.

Chapter Four

A Discourse on Persecution and Rights

The underlying tension between defending persecuted Christians and engagement in FoRB raised in the previous chapter leads to a more intentional conversation here about a theological response to the inevitability of persecution for Christians.

It is not my intention here to explore a theology of Christian persecution that has been dealt with extensively elsewhere.[1] Neither is this a distraction from my primary focus on FoRB. Rather, it acknowledges that for CSW with a Christian support base, questions about church growth and persecution present significant challenges to its work as a human rights organisation.

In this chapter I will explore respondent's attitudes to Q6: 'If it is true that the church grows when it is persecuted is the quest for religious freedom still valid?' which raised critical questions for CSW. If indeed God's mission may be accelerated in the midst of, or as a result of persecution, does Christian intervention for religious freedom become an incongruous contradiction?

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[1] Daniel Philpot and Timothy Samuel Shah, 'Introduction', in *Under Caesar's Sword: How Christians Respond to Persecution*, ed. by Daniel Philpot and Timothy Samuel Shah (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2018); Paul Marshall and Nina Shea, *Silence, How Apostasy & Blasphemy Codes Are Choking Freedom Worldwide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); *Suffering, Persecution and Martyrdom, Theological Reflections,* ed. by Christof Sauer and Richard Howell (Johannesburg and Bonn: AcadSA and VKW, 2010).

By way of response the chapter reflects the perspectives of all three groups, evaluating how respondents react to the premise of this question and the place of experience in Christian perspectives on this critical issue. Finally, I will briefly consider how Scripture and the idea of resilience contribute to our subject.

4.1 Musings on Q6

Tertullian's alleged mantra about the blood of Christians being the seed of the church was not representative of CSW's ethos and I had no conscious awareness of hearing it spoken or disapproved of by the staff.

However, this was clearly a live issue for interviewees, and the discussion of the church's potential to grow in persecution created some of the deepest levels of personal reflexivity for respondents. Kathy declared, 'it's a tough one', recognising that 'there's a tension'. Eve said it was 'a good question' and 'a difficult question' with 'no clear-cut' answers, while Cliff described it as 'an interesting tension'. Gloria wondered if CSW would regard non-Christians as 'persecuted' and Rex reflected that this issue was discussed at length in a denominational commission, stirring opposing views about the place of justice in presenting the gospel.

The issue was clearly of more relevance for Group C who had experienced varying degrees of persecution. Paul admitted he had been asked several times: 'if this is God's will, am I going against God's will to work for the persecuted and my answer constantly is, "No"'.[2] Confronted with the proposition in his own work, Rudi took an entire day to reflect on the issue.

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[2] Paul, 15 March 2016.

Having discussed Q6 with interviewees, it was intriguing to have this identical question raised independently by a CSW staff member not involved in interviews. Jon's email described as 'musings on persecution' found it interesting that, 'barring Paul's appeal to his rights as a Roman citizen, the disciples didn't always (or even that often) try to protest against or prevent the persecution they experienced'. He admitted that he found it 'massively challenging' to reflect on whether our human rights approach as practiced today would have been an obstacle to the early Church.[3] Jon's email resulted in a subsequent lunch-time discussion on the issue.

Having established that this subject was indeed a matter of material concern for interviewees, the more substantive issue was an appreciation of ways in which respondents reacted to the premise of the question. Broadly, Q6 elicited three responses: rejection, ambivalence, and pragmatic acceptance.

4.2 Rejection and Q6

The overwhelming response from interviewees in Group A was one of rejection and condemnation - including those who conceded the possibility that growth took place in persecution.

Serena regarded the premise as 'a dangerous argument'.[4] Sylvia also said it was 'a dangerous idea'.[5] Cynthia thought it incredible and posed a series of rhetorical questions: 'Who says?

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[3] Jonathan Radmall, *Musings*, email Tue 04/07/2017.
[4] Serena, 25 August 2015.
[5] Sylvia, 14 December 2015.

What scriptures would they use to back this up? What kind of growth?'[6] Gloria was incensed. She was clear that, 'If the church leaves people to rot so that they can grow, I don't know how they can sleep at night.'[7] Adam, who recalled a number of moving encounters with persecuted people over many years, concluded, 'you can't not do something'.[8]

The CEO and Crystal suggested that the church did not always grow in persecution. The CEO cited examples in the Middle East and Russia, whilst Crystal outlined what appeared to be a considered example of China where she suggested that the church 'survived' during persecution and thrived when it enjoyed limited freedom. Anthea provided the 'stark example' of Japan, where the church was decimated in the eighteenth century. She warned against a simplistic approach to persecution that was in danger of 'glorifying the concept of the persecuted church' and overstating the idea of forgiving those who perpetrate violence as a substitute for action and advocacy.[9]

Church leaders were equally impatient with the notion that persecution was inevitable. Patrick reacted strongly to the idea, dismissing it as 'nihilistic' and insisting that the church should be a champion of human rights. Rex believed that preaching and traditional missionary activities were important but insisted,

> I think again it's a question of balance; not doing anything when people are
> mistreated and are treated unjustly – I think this is wrong. We cannot just tolerate
> injustice. We also have the command of Jesus to live a just life and to care for those

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[6] Cynthia, 15 December 2015.
[7] Gloria, 22 July 2015.
[8] Adam, 1 July 2015.
[9] Anthea, 5 November 2015.

that are treated unjustly and care for those who suffer and do something for them whether the church grows.[10]

Jonathan denied the idea that martyrdom was the basis of the church's growth and failed to see evidence of growth in places where 'genocide' and 'obliteration' had taken place.

> I read a very interesting article recently, [it] may have been on social media, with the headline where they were completely contesting the idea that 'the blood of the martyr is the seed of the church' because that's a very nice phrase that many of us have actually quoted as if it was holy writ [but] it does not seem to be the case in places where there's huge expression of genocide and the church is virtually being obliterated.[11]

Not surprisingly, the empirical evidence showed that respondents in Group A and Group B who lived outside experience of persecution were overwhelmingly intolerant of persecution and clearly channelled their empathy into the pursuit of FoRB. In the absence of any biblical support for an end to persecution and the inexplicable evidence of church growth, which ran counter to their instincts as advocates, CSW also empathetically inhabited the lived tension between the church's ability to grow in persecution and the pursuit of human rights.

Interviewees in Group A and Group B shared a distinct unease with any proposed causal relationship between persecution and church growth and persecution which they regarded as irreconcilable. Crystal's pragmatic response to the apparent contradiction between persecution and church growth was, 'We expect it, but we don't accept it'.[12]

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[10] Rex, 4 February 2016.
[11] Jonathan, 22 February 2016.
[12] Crystal, 23 July 2015.

Not everyone in these two groups responded negatively. Far from expressing outrage and convinced by their own experiences, some respondents showed surprising ambivalence to the argument of causation between persecution and church growth.

4.2.1 Ambivalence and Q6

Respondents in Group A and Group B generally believed that persecution would remain ubiquitous in a fallen world. Like the CEO the former COO/deputy believed that Christian faith would always attract persecution as 'a cost to pay when you choose to walk down a certain track […]'.[13] Gloria conceded that there would be no end to persecution or poverty until Jesus returned.

However, there was clearly some reluctant concession to the premise of Q6. Barry and Kathy, two very experienced advocates, conceded that there were cases in which elements of growth took place during persecution. As Barry suggested, 'I think it's certainly true at least in some places; I think it's certainly true - even if it's not true in growth of number, I think it's true in terms of growth of the depth of faith.'[14] This resonated with the CEO's observation that, 'Persecution breeds people who are determined to preach the gospel and determined to live out the Christian faith. It produces a different kind of leader'.[15] In Eve's view, 'We don't like it and it's not comfortable to us to see people suffering but God is still at work in it, so we try and look for opportunities to tell those stories of how God is at work'.[16] From his own context as a missionary, Martin was clear that,

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[13] See 2 Timothy. 3. 12.
[14] Barry, 18 August 2015.
[15] CEO, 19 August 2015.
[16] Eve, 22 July 2015.

We certainly saw that in Ethiopia. I mean, during the Marxist time the Church grew exponentially in Ethiopia and even during the Italian occupation when a lot of the missionaries were thrown out in the 1930s. The Church […] just grew exponentially at that time as well.[17]

In spite of her strong condemnation of the injustices of persecution and Christian complicity, Anthea, another experienced CSW advocate, included some surprising insights:

I remember the first time I went on a trip with CSW […] we met a number of different pastors who said different things. But one of them - and particularly in the older generation this was very common - he said, "We don't want advocacy; we just want you to pray for us and we don't want you to pray for us that the persecution stops but we want you to pray for us that persecution continues and that we stay strong under it". Which really struck me.

I would say that that was not a sentiment that was shared by any other pastors in China of a different generation – of a younger generation; they all said, "No thank you. We recognise there's persecution, we will go through it, we'll be strong: but we prefer that you pray for it to stop and that China changes".[18]

The hostility and ambiguity which were distinct features of Groups A and B were noticeably missing from interviewees in Group C who had themselves experienced varying degrees of persecution and in some cases continued to live or work in hostile conditions or marginalised settings. In these cases, respondents were less disturbed by the premise of Q6 and demonstrated a higher degree of pragmatic acceptance.

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[17] Martin, 18 February 2016.
[18] Anthea, 5 November 2015.

4.2.2 Pragmatic acceptance and Q6

The evidence clearly indicated that whilst Group A and Group B either rejected or were ambiguous about Q6, Group C showed far more willingness to accept or concede the proposal.

Paul casually admitted that in Nigeria, 'the Church grows in the face of persecution and the Bible also says that whoever wants to follow Christ must carry his cross daily and should also expect persecution'.[19] Elbar was adamant that, 'persecution helped me to be a Christian' and that as 'a way of life […] the church is built on the basis of persecution'. [20]

Assid's experience supports this awkward premise:

> Joel again, I will give you an example of our own work in Afghanistan and in Pakistan; we have thousands of Christians from Muslim background in the last 20 years; you know that the underground church is growing at a marvellous pace, ok.

Assid's summary of the discussion was that, 'the church grows out of persecution but as human beings they need freedom'.[21] Respondents in Sri Lanka all agreed that growth and persecution co-existed.

In contrast to CSW staff who live and work outside the reality of persecution, the research suggests that interviewees who had experienced persecution were more likely to agree that growth *can* and *does* occur during persecution. What follows therefore, is a brief synopsis of

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[19] Paul, 15 March 2016.
[20] Elbar, 23 March 2016.
[21] Assid, 27 April 2016.

empirical material that pointed to two factors that seemed to contribute to the disparity between the three groups.

Firstly, I raise the question of passivity in the face of persecution that came principally from respondents from Sri Lanka. Secondly, I briefly discuss the experiential impact of persecution in what I have described as the 'personal pronoun' factor.

4.3 Persecution and passivity

The rationale in visiting Sri Lanka was that it appeared to be fertile soil for Christian engagement in FoRB. Like many parts of South Asia, Sri Lanka is highly religious, and Christians form a religious minority making these issues very poignant.

According to the 2012 census 70.19% of Sri Lankans were Theravada Buddhists, 12.6% were Hindus, 9.7% Muslims. Of the 7.6% Christians, 6.1% were Roman Catholic and 1.3% from other Christian communities.[22]

A visit in 2015 provided access to six individuals, four of whom are included as participants. Of these, two were Catholic (Rudi and Diane), Geoff was an evangelical leader and Beltram a senior Pentecostal leader.

The research demonstrated that generally, church members in Sri Lanka (and Nigeria) also failed to see engagement in FoRB as integral to the mission of God and were therefore at

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[22] Wikipedia contributors, 'Religion in Sri Lanka', *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia* <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion_in_Sri_Lanka> [accessed 24 August 2016]. The study also gives a second figure of 7.4% of Christians.

variance with Christian human rights activists working on their behalf. Indeed, in Rudi's experience, the church in Sri Lanka was committed to the idea that persecution led to growth:

> Rudi: I think the question that I was confronted with by someone else was that it was God's will that I and many other friends and colleagues are arrested or killed in the course of fighting for human rights. And I came away after one day with the reflection that it is not God's will.

> Joel: … is that typical of the church generally?

> Rudi: Mostly, I think. Not 100%, but mostly.

> Joel: What percent would you put on it if not 100%? I know it's difficult.

> Rudi: Maybe 60% - 70%. Certainly the majority.

> Joel: And that makes your task even more difficult?

> Rudi: It is more difficult because it makes it a bit more unpleasant. So, more difficult […] I think I have to be strong to resist.[23]

Rudi's reflection of the church's passivity in the face of persecution is not unanimous. However, interviews with Sri Lankan participants indicated that the church sometimes acted unwittingly as an accomplice in its own persecution.[24] As Geoff suggested,

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[23] Rudi, 11 August 2015.

[24] There is no suggestion here of blame attached to Christian communities. As I complete this thesis Sri Lanka has just experienced one the country's worst religious attacks as churches were bombed during Easter Sunday, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2019/apr/21/sri-lanka-explosions-dozens-killed-and-hundreds-injured-in-church-and-hotel-blasts> [accessed 21 April 2019].

We have a great responsibility to look inwardly and to correct some of the practices that we have been involved in as a church. There is another ministry I know: they give all these food package and tinned fish and if the children don't come for Sunday school they take one tinned fish off. If they don't come two Sundays another tin is taken off. [25]

In Beltram's view, naivety, assertive evangelism and a failure to realise that 'the winning, the convincing comes from interaction where people understand each other' fanned the flames of opposition.[26] It was clear that organisations such as the National Christian Evangelical Alliance of Sri Lanka (NCEASL) has done a great deal to record abuses against Christian communities and to empower them in reducing behaviour which might attract persecution.[27] The NCEASL had also built active relationship with other minority faith communities.

4.4 Persecution and the personal pronoun

Inevitably, the 'texture' of the interviews varied significantly between those who had experienced persecution and their counterparts. I was more conscious of my own sensitivity and visceral responses to Group C than to other interviewees.

In reviewing the material through *sight and sound*, I was intrigued by the contrasting tones between the groups. Consequently, I compared answers to Q6 from three individuals from Group C and contrasted the use of personal pronouns with seven participants from Group A and Group B combined. The sample of singular and plural pronouns ('I', 'we', 'us', 'our') from Group C respondents avoided abstract references ('I think', 'we wondered'). The

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[25] Geoff, 12 August 2015.
[26] Bertam, 13 August 2015.
[27] Chad Bauman and James Ponniah, 'Christian Responses to Repression in India and Sri Lanka: Religious Nationalism, Legal Restriction, and Violence', in *Under Caesar's Sword*, pp. 259-297 (p. 286).

exercise crudely identified some one hundred and eleven personal pronouns from the three individuals in Group C compared with one hundred and two from the seven individuals from Group A and Group B. In addition, many of the references to persecution from Group A and Group B (such as Anthea above), related to other people who had experienced, or were directly experiencing persecution.

This illustration suggests that the experience of persecution, (or being with those who experience persecution), influenced the responses to Q6. This existential reality was also prominent during my interview with Diane and Rudi from Sri Lanka.

Experience appeared to be a dominant feature in the qualitative character of the interview encounter, reinforced, possibly by the fact that all participants in Group C had English as a second language that in some instances made the verbal interaction between us both intense and intentional. On reflection, what I have described here as persecution and the personal pronoun did appear to be an area worthy of further attention.

Beyond such subjective analysis however, Q6 demands a response informed by an element of biblical application.

4.5 Is there biblical support for Q6?

Tertullian's cryptic reference to the blood of the martyrs being the 'seed of the church', demands a brief biblical reflection.

Suffering and persecution are pervasive in the Bible. Arguably, this has to do with the fact that most of the biblical records take place within the context of oppressive regimes.

The Exodus event is already emblematic of God's commitment to resolve Israel's suffering. However, the equally dominant experience of the Babylonian captivity was of similar magnitude in shaping the story of the Old Testament. It was by the rivers of Babylon that the psalmist reflected on God's relation with his people and offered some of the most vindictive sentiments in the entire Bible.[28] Captivity was the existential reality from which the stories of Daniel and Esther emerged. Nonetheless, both the seventy years of Babylonian captivity and the pre-liberated people in Goshen illustrate the paradox of flourishing and growth in conditions of captivity.[29]

These accounts of endurance are repeated in the New Testament. There is no way of avoiding the fact that the dominant message in the life and teaching of Jesus is one of perseverance and that hostility would be normative in discipleship. He himself would be the subject of persecution.[30]

The letter to the Hebrews, and the epistles of James, Peter and John all reflect this religious and political hostility. Even as a Roman citizen, Paul's prolific work reinforces this attitude.[31] Within this arena of persecution and marginalisation the early church experienced growth and development.[32]

Seemingly, this reality informed the Patristic church. Shah's view is that the church's political theology, Christology, eschatology and preaching were all deeply influenced by this

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[28] Psalm 137. 1-7.
[29] Genesis 47. 27; Exodus 1. 9-21; 8. 22; 9. 26; Daniel. 1. 3-16.
[30] Mark 8. 31; Matthew 16. 21-28; Luke 9. 22-27.
[31] 1 Corinthians 4.12; 2 Corinthians 4. 9; Galatians 5. 11; 2 Timothy 3. 12.
[32] Luke 10. 17; Acts 4. 4; 16. 5; 19. 20.

narrative that predisposed the early Christians toward what he describes as 'a preferential option for persecution'.[33]

This view does not entirely take account of the more subversive nature of the New Testament on issues such as servants and masters,[34] gender relationships[35] and explosive ideas of Jesus as King,[36] all of which allow for aspirations of freedom beyond the norms of the church's cultural and political realities. However, given the biblical passages promoting social compliance and obedience to the state,[37] Shah's suggestion provides a reasonable working hypothesis.

The discourses on the church's response to persecution and the biblical evidence on which we base our insights should take account of the fact that from the Exodus event to the final statements of John's Revelation, the narrative on social, economic and political freedoms was written in the context of theocratic or autocratic rule in which democratic ideas of civil citizenship were severely curtailed. What is striking therefore, is the extent to which the concepts of civic responsibility and citizenship for the common good in the face of captivity or marginalisation became integral to this narrative.[38]

The evidence is that two apparently contradicting realities were at work concurrently. Whilst God's people enjoyed fruitfulness and spiritual power in persecution, this was also

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[33] Timothy Shah, 'Roots of Religious Freedom in Early Christian Thought', in *Christianity and Freedom*, ed. by Timothy Samuel Shah and Allen D. Hertzke (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 33–61 (p. 39).
[34] Colossians 3. 22, 23; 4. 1; 1 Timothy 6. 2; Ephesians 5. 5 – 9; Philemon 8-18.
[35] Ephesians 5. 25 – 28; Colossians 3. 18, 19.
[36] Matthew 16. 9; 20. 21; 26. 29; Mark 15. 2-12; Luke 22. 30; 23. 2, 3, 42; Acts 1. 6.
[37] Romans 13. 1-7; 1 Timothy 2. 1-4; Titus 3.1.
[38] Jeremiah 29. 1-23.

accompanied by a pragmatic desire to flee persecution.[39] Seemingly, endurance and freedom have always been biblical bedfellows. Even so, the desire for freedom has always been the dominant impulse. It means therefore that the Christian experience of persecution has been sustained by a combination of hope-filled resilience, irrespective of whether this experience has been accompanied by growth.

4.6 Resilience, persecution and growth

A Christian perspective on the relationship between persecution and human rights introduces an element of complexity to this debate: it is the assurance of God's sovereignty in the midst of human suffering.

This is not an issue with which non-faith human rights agencies would be concerned. As has been discussed however, it may reveal conflicting convictions for Christians who rely on the 'secular' tools of human rights advocacy. Consequently, whilst all respondents recognised the ubiquitous nature of persecution, Q6 highlighted this tension on which there was no unanimity. Respondents did not declare persecution and church growth as incompatible, but neither was there any agreement that persecution *caused* growth.

In the face of this uncomfortable discussion no one - as expected - concluded that intervention was inappropriate or indeed an obstacle to God's purpose. The summary of the empirical material indicates that, even where the church grows in persecution, efforts should be exerted to defend those who suffer. Clearly, from CSW's work the practical response to this ideological impasse has been to encourage resilience for victims of persecution. As Rex

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[39] Exodus 5. 1-3; Matthew 10. 23; Acts 8. 1-4; 9. 23-25; 11.19.

expressed it, we have a responsibility 'to care for those that are treated unjustly and care for those who suffer and do something for them whether or not the church grows'.[40]

I propose then, that resilience infused by hope[41] offers a perspective which goes to the core of the issues raised by Q6. This is because hope-filled resilience exceeds mere endurance and reflects more faithfully the spirit of the New Testament by actively seeking to build Christian confidence in the face of persecution.

Justine Allain-Chapman's *Resilient Pastors* offers helpful insights by describing resilience as the capacity to resist deformation or destruction 'and indeed to be strengthened by pressure'. Resilience copes with adversity and change 'in such a way as to identify, fortify and enrich resilient qualities'.[42] Crucial to her approach is the idea that, more than survival,

> Resilience comes from my reluctance to witness more anguish, to again find that such anguish echoes my own in the form of memories of the past or fear for the future. Resistance comes too from the expectations of myself and others that I can somehow help, bring comfort or perform a miracle […] resilient people find healing for themselves as they work for healing others by altruistic activity.[43]

Resilience is infused with the notion that suffering approached with openness, courage and 'altruistic activity' strengthens character beyond personal survival to help develop resilience

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[40] Rex, 4 February 2016.
[41] Acts 28. 20; Romans 5. 3-5; 12. 12; 1 Corinthians 15. 19; 2 Corinthians 1. 7.
[42] Justine Allaine-Chapman, *Resilient Pastors: The Role of Adversity in Healing and Growth* (London: SPCK, 2012), p. 15.
[43] Ibid. pp.101-102.

in others. Viktor Frankl, for example, identified this quality in his personal account and in psychiatric studies of Holocaust survivors.[44]

Christian resilience in persecution is evident across the widest range of socio-political contexts, and in their unprecedented global study on persecution Philpot and Shah have shown that persecuted Christians 'are not inert, passive victims'.[45] The study concludes that,

> Christian responses to persecution evince a *creative pragmatism* constituted by short-term efforts to ensure security, accrue strength through associational ties with other organisations and actors, and sometimes mount opposition to the government. The pragmatic, improvisational character of these efforts does not negate the long-term theological conviction that a future day of freedom will come.[46]

It is precisely in the combined experiences of suffering and resilience that Christian activism may offer a distinct perspective which locates resilience in the ideas of suffering, death and resurrection. Here, Schillebeeckx's view that 'suffering becomes a problem only for the man who believes in God'[47] is a provocative defence of his central thesis that the biblical argument advances a unique zero tolerance against all gratuitous suffering. In Wheeler Robinson's view, it is 'the suffering of God himself, revealed through Jesus Christ, which throws most light on the suffering of men, and bestows most strength on the sufferer'.[48]

In Christian praxis, the vortex of persecution and suffering is recognised as that place where people who serve a liberating God find themselves in hostile conditions of captivity precisely

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[44] Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Washington: Square Press, 1988).
[45] Daniel Philpot and Timothy Samuel Shah, 'Introduction', in *Under Caesar's Sword*, p. 2.
[46] Ibid., p. 3.
[47] Edward Schillebeeckx, *Christ – The Experience of Jesus as Lord* (New York: Crossroad, 1990), p. 672.
[48] H. Wheeler Robinson, *Suffering Human & Divine* (London: SCM Press, 1940), p. 6.

because they believe in this kind of liberating God. In this chapter which has provided an important sub-theme of the thesis, my purpose is to suggest that since its inception Christian praxis has therefore been rooted in the paradox of hope and resilience and is therefore well positioned to participate in the pursuit of human freedoms. Through its faith and praxis, it has shown that even where persecution may be conducive to its growth it continues to rebel against this stimulus.

Christian human rights activism suggests that between faithful endurance and the pursuit of human rights, resilience will also be developed through prayer, Christian witness and practical support. These are crucial components carried out by Christian agencies working with persecuted Christians.

In its response to the dichotomy between Christian persecution and human rights, CSW has chosen to put its trust in prayer but also in its engagement in FoRB.

As the charity works in the acknowledged discomforts of this dichotomy between persecution, growth and the defence of human rights, salient questions remain. Is engagement in FoRB the appropriate tool with which to respond to the persecution of the Christian church whose faith evidently does grow in opposition? Equally, are people of other faiths 'persecuted' and on what grounds can an overtly Christian organisation advocate of behalf of others who do not, or refuse to accept a Christian response to suffering premised on the unique suffering of God in Jesus Christ?

4.7 Conclusion
In briefly examining the issue of persecution this chapter has presented an important sub-theme to my focus on Christian engagement in FoRB. As Jon's email demonstrated it is

nonetheless an inevitable subject for Christians actively engaged in FoRB. As a participant

observer, responses to Q6 exposed me to some of the most visceral and unexpected reactions

across the three groups. These ranged from outrage and ambivalence to pragmatic agreement

that there might be some element of causation between persecution and growth. More

disturbingly, it became clear that in some unusual instances the church's naivety might

contribute to its own difficulties.

I have also explored briefly the extent to which an informal sampling revealed an obvious but

none-the-less substantial difference between respondents who talked about their experiences

through what I described as the 'personal pronoun' and those who had not. I then followed

this with a brief biblical study on the relationship between persecution and freedom. In

summary, I suggest that hope-filled resilience - a response that distinguishes faith

organisations from non-faith models of intervention - offers a way in which the paradox of

faith and advocacy may co-exist.

Having considered CSW as a case study and the challenges posed by its own internal

ambiguities, organisational transition and identity, the following chapters will focus on

reflections that address the theological gap which the organisation identified as a missing

element in its praxis.

To begin, the following chapter provides a synopsis of Christian ideas which directly shaped

and promoted some of the major themes that eventually emerged in the aspirations of the

UDHR.

Chapter Five

Christian Ideas and the Shaping of the UDHR

CSW's profile revealed important challenges experienced in the pursuit of FoRB. However, the challenges and uncertainties already addressed in my previous chapters were consistent with an organisation pioneering important work in this area. The research also highlighted important gaps in CSW's development as a human rights charity.

The first was an absence of clear theological framework, of which the organisation was becoming increasingly aware. The second was ignorance of the track record of Christian reflection over two millennia that came to shape modern views on human rights. Thirdly, the charity appeared oblivious of the degree to which the UDHR and the provisions which gave birth to FoRB were themselves influenced by Christian reflection and activism.

This chapter responds specifically to this third element. The developments leading to the UDHR were 'wide-ranging, covering a large number of distinct yet interrelated issues'[1] and the culmination of 'years of debate, intense struggle and hard work'[2] but as I will discuss, Christian thinking played a critical role in this process.

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[1] *Rapporteur's Digest on Freedom of Religion or Belief: Excerpts of the Reports from 1986 to 2011 by the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief Arranged by Topics of the Framework for Communications*, ed. by Heiner Bielefeldt (Geneva: OHCHR, 2011), p. 4.

[2] Michael Roan et al., *Study Guide: Freedom of Religion or Belief* (University of Minnesota Human Rights Library, 2016) <hrlibrary.umn.edu/edumat/studyguides/religion.html> [accessed 22 February 2017].

I identify the extent to which ideas about human dignity and choice were foundation stones of the defence of religious freedom in Article 1 and Article 18. I also raise brief questions about the degree to which Christian participation contributed to the political tensions associated with Article 18 and the right to choose.

The events surrounding the formation of the UDHR and more specifically Article 1 and Article 18 which I deal with below, were therefore the most current expression of a historic pattern in which Christian thinkers and activists became embroiled in the contentious and fragile political debate about human freedoms.

5.1 Human Rights: the fragile consensus

In June 1945 the UN Charter gave birth to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) which then achieved what Ethna Regan describes as the 'fragile and negotiated consensus'[3] of the UDHR between 1947-1948. Linda Lindkvist's study on Article 18 suggests that the disparate ideas which gave rise to the UDHR are more clearly understood with a wider reading of drafters' thoughts beyond their biographical accounts, or the official UN archives.[4]

An important influence in these debates was President Roosevelt's proposal of four freedoms: freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. [5] As Haiti's representative to the Commission on Human Rights (CHR)

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[3] Ethna Regan, *Theology and the Boundary Discourse of Human Rights* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2010), p. 17.
[4] Linda Lindkvist, *Religious Freedom and the UDHR* (Sweden: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 12.
[5] In his State of the Union Address, 1 January 1941 Roosevelt proposed freedom to worship, freedom of speech, from want and freedom from fear as pillars for a democratic and post-totalitarian world. Mary Ann Glendon*, A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York: Random House, 2002), p. 10; *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt 1928-1945*, (Washington, D.C., 1969), vol. 9, p. 672.

agreed at its Third Committee, such freedoms of conscience, freedom of expression, freedom

from want and fear had 'expressed clearly the aspirations of twentieth century man'.[6]

Nevertheless, the UDHR's 'rocky start'[7] was a symptom of the vested national interests that

made Article 18, in Lindkvist's words, 'a multi-layered patchwork of different concepts of

religious freedom as opposed to a single movement or cross-cultural agreement'.[8]

The challenge of human rights, Malik observed, 'is still at the barest beginning of a long and

difficult historical process'. By 1949 he complained of 'people losing heart'.[9] As Tore

Lindholm suggests, as 'globally acknowledged minimum standards' for human dignity,[10] the

rights expressed in the UDHR emerged from significant ideological tensions.

It was in this precarious political environment that Christian thinkers participated in shaping

the UDHR, bringing both positive and disruptive influences to the process. This

development occurred in the aftermath of global warfare and emerging nation states.

5.2 War, peace and religious freedom

Although events leading to the UDHR occurred in the immediate aftermath of World War II,

Moyn and Lindkvist[11] see the emergence of human rights as part of a longer and complex

process in which the War played only a partial role. Moyn suggests for example, that human

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[6] Mr. Saint-Lot (Haiti), Rapporteur of the Third Committee submitting draft of UDHR A/777 to 180 Plenary Meeting of the CHR, 9 December 1948, p.852, < https://undocs.org/A/PV.180> [accessed 12 December 2016].
[7] Glendon, *A World Made New,* p. 35.
[8] Lindkvist, *Religious Freedom,* p. 143.
[9] Habib C. Malik, ed. *The Challenge of Human Rights: Charles Malik and the UDHR,* ed. Malik (Oxford: Charles Malik Foundation in association with The Centre for Lebanese Studies, 2000), p. 163.
[10] Tore Lindholm, 'Freedom of Religion or Belief from Human Rights Perspective'*in Freedom of Belief and Christian Mission*, ed. Hans Aage Gravaas, Christof Sauer (Oxford: Regnum Books, Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, 2015), p. 16.
[11] Lindkvist, *Religious Freedom,* p. 19.

rights 'were not a response to the Holocaust, and not indeed focused on the prevention of catastrophic slaughter'.[12]

Neither Roosevelt's influential four freedoms, nor the Cuban desire for 'a world in which man, freed from fear and poverty, could enjoy freedom of speech, religion and opinion'[13] made any references to conflict. Equally, given the significant and vibrant Jewish lobby at this time it is surprising that explicit references to the War and Holocaust were not more prominent.[14]

However, there were sufficient sensitivities about the horrors of war to suggest that this was a key motivation for Christian lobbyists as well as drafters directly involved in the process.

As Lindkvist herself acknowledges, Christian activist O. Frederick Nolde's *Power of Peace* in 1946 linked issues of conscience and freedom to change religion with world peace.[15] Nolde's ideas were by no means isolated. The birth of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in 1937 was in part a response to the emerging international crisis and in 1940 the Federal Council of Church of Christ (FCC) set up the Commission on a Just and Durable Peace and its Joint Committee on Religious Liberty (JCRL) in 1942. During this period ecumenical groups championed religious freedom as a cornerstone of human rights which

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[12] Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia*: *Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 47.

[13] Mr. Perez Cisneros, Cuba, 181st Plenary Session A/777 of the Third Committee, 10 December 1948, pp.876-877 < https://undocs.org/A/PV.181> [accessed 12 December 2016].

[14] Representatives of the World Jewish Congress were, for example, present as observers at the 21st meeting of the Drafting Committee 4 May 1948 even though they were not permitted to make a verbal contribution. E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.21 < https://undocs.org/E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.2> [accessed 12 December 2016].

[15] Lindkvist, *Religious Freedom*, p. 83.

'undergirds and sustains human democracy'[16] and Pius XII's 1942 Christmas Message became an influential signature for Christian engagement in the call for a stable world order.

This movement (which included T. S. Eliot's *Idea of a Christian Society*[17]) was associated with a Christian vision for peace that became even more influential with Nolde's involvement - he was by now a global champion for religious freedom at the UN - as executive secretary of the JCRL in 1943 and as representative for the WCC's Commission for International Affairs (CCIA) after 1946.[18] As Moyn asserts, Dulles' *Six Pillars of Peace* that set out a programme for lasting peace consistent with Christian values, together with the 1940s movement for a Just and Durable Peace 'prioritised freedom of religion as its essential linchpin'.[19]

Evidently similar associations were being made by drafters. One of the earliest documents submitted to ECOSOC in January 1947 made resolutions on 'Problems of War and Peace'.[20] This resolution claimed there could be 'no human freedom or dignity unless war and the threat of war is abolished'[21] and subsequent references condemned the 'barbarous acts which have outraged the conscience of mankind'.[22]

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[16] John Nurser, *For All Peoples and All Nations: Christian Churches and Human Rights* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2005), p. 87.

[17] T. S. Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society* (London: Faber and Faber, 1939).

[18] Nurser, *For All Peoples and All Nations,* p. 117.

[19] Moyn, *Christian Human Rights,* p. 149.

[20] In 1945 the Inter-American Conference in Mexico City wrote a draft declaration of Rights A/C.1/38 submitted by Chile 8 January 1947, E/CN.4/2 < https://undocs.org/E/CN.4/2> [accessed 2 December 2016].

[21] First Session Drafting Committee on an International Bill of Rights, 1 July 1947Annex A, E/CN.4/21 < https://undocs.org/E/CN.4/21> [accessed 2 December 2016].

[22] Third Session of Commission of Human Rights, Draft Declaration A/777, Preamble, 7 December 1948, <http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/777> [accessed 12 December 2016].

Clearly, the UN Charter was already influenced by the shocking evidence that emerged from the concentration camps, expressing as much concerns about the ravages of war as it did about economic and social freedoms.[23] In an early draft of the preamble, René Cassin, the Catholic French philosopher who played a major role in shaping the first drafts of the UDHR, identified the unity of all races which had been 'shamefully violated in the recent war'.[24] The fact that Cassin's references to the atrocities of World War II were dropped in the Third Committee stage[25] should not diminish awareness of the underlying reactions to the War which informed the drafters.

The association between conflict and human rights was clearly established at the 180th Plenary Meeting, 9 December 1948 in which all states were urged to agree to the Convention on Genocide 'in order that that basic human rights should be put under the protection of international law'. Malik surmised that the declaration had been inspired 'by opposition to the barbarous doctrines of nazism and fascism' as well as Roosevelt's four freedoms.[26]

War was not necessarily the *raison d'être* of the UDHR. However, to underplay its significance is, Fred Alford implies, to misread the prevailing moral mood[27] and with it the significance which Christian activists attached to the place of peacemaking in shaping the UDHR.

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[23] Glendon, *A World Made New,* pp.18, 19.
[24] Ibid. p. 67.
[25] Ibid., p. 176.
[26] 180th Plenary Meeting, 9 December 1948, A/PV.180 pp. 852-857, https://undocs.org/A/PV.180 [accessed 12 December 2016].
[27] C. Fred Alford, *Narrative, Nature, and the Natural Law: From Aquinas to International Human Rights* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), p. 4. In this work Alford associates the UN's response to the atrocities of World War II to as potent example of Natural Law principles at work.

Beyond the concerns for world peace the Christian drafters brought important reflections on the intrinsic value of the person in relation to the state expressed in concepts of friendship, choice and dignity which were integrated in Article 1 and Article 18, and which I will now consider.

5.3 Article 1: the state versus the individual

Christian engagement in the formation of the UDHR was pronounced in the shaping of Article 1. Here, two key anthropological ideas were influential: *personalism* and the Christian contribution to the concept of human dignity.

In 1949, Malik told a public meeting that Article 1 provided 'a certain definition of man'.[28] As such, the notion of personal dignity and the primacy of the individual over state control was further evidence of the important influence which Christian thinkers exerted on the formation of FoRB.

> All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

As an anthropological starting point, says Glendon, Article 1 emerged as a statement without mention of any specific rights 'because it was meant to explain why human beings have rights to begin with'.[29]

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[28] Malik, *The Challenge of Human Rights,* p. 127.
[29] Glendon, *A World Made New,* p. 146.

However, the drafting of Article 1 exhibited an ideological battle in which individual *human rights* versus state intervention remained contentious.[30] The various state submissions for Article 1 which appeared in the First Session of the Draft Committee, 9-25 June 1947, are illustrative:[31]

Annex A (Secretariat)

Art.1   Everyone owes a duty of loyalty to his State and to the (international society) United Nations. He must accept his just share of responsibility for the performance of such social duties and his share of such common sacrifices as may contribute to the common good.

Annex D (France)

Art.1   All men being members of one family are free, possess equal dignity and rights, and shall regard each other as brothers.

Annex F (Drafting Committee)

Art. 1   All men are brothers. Being endowed with reason and conscience, they are members of one family. They are free and possess equal dignity and rights.

Clearly, what it meant to be an accountable person in community continued to be problematic and revealed ideological and political differences which were prevalent throughout the discussions. The tension between a freedom bequeathed to individuals by the state and the inherent freedom of each individual led to robust discussions in the final moments of the 182nd and 183rd Plenary Sessions, 10 December 1948. In the 182nd Plenary, Yugoslavia condemned the individualistic western influence of the drafting committee, and Egypt

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30 Glendon, *A World Made New,* p. 96.
31 Draft Committee First Session, Commission on Human Rights submitted to Economic and Social Council, 1 July 1947 E/CN.4/21 < https://undocs.org/E/CN.4/21> [accessed 12 December 2016].

expressed serious reservations about conversion that undermined the state. In addition, the

USSR appealed unsuccessfully for an additional 31st Article that would reinforce the power

of the State.[32]

The on-going debates about personhood therefore remained critical in the effort to embed

ideas of human dignity in the UDHR. The next two sections will briefly explore the concept

of personalism and the foundational idea of human dignity.

5.3.1 Personalism, Maritain and Malik

Article 1 navigated a precarious tension between state control and individualism. A Christian

response was to advance ideas on *personalism* and human dignity.

Catholicism and a stream of pre-World War II ideas influenced Christian thinking about the

person. In Jacques Maritain's influential ideas, personalism responds to the extremes of

individualism and totalitarianism because each human soul shares a direct relationship with

the Trinity so that 'it is in society with God' that we possess the common good.[33] Maritain

concluded that 'each concrete person' could gain full independence 'by the economic

guarantees of work and property, political rights, civil virtues, and the cultivation of the

mind'.[34]

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[32] These debates reappeared throughout in First Session Draft papers, 13 June 1947, E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.2, < https://undocs.org/E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.2> [accessed 12 December 2016].   E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.3, < https://undocs.org/E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.3> [accessed 12 December 2016].

[33] Jacques Maritain, *The Person and the Common Good*, trans. John J. Fitzgerald (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1946), p. 22.

[34] Jacques Maritain, *The Rights of Man and Natural Law* (London: The Centenary Press, 1944), p. 27.

Maritain's critique of the liberal atomisation of society, according to Robert Song, challenged a political culture in which 'rights are granted primacy and obligations are justified by consent' in such a way that the individual as a human entity became detached from community. The result was that rights can be claimed 'without a consideration of the social and cultural circumstances which are constitutively necessary for human agency'.[35] Maritain's New Christendom repositions the person between the existing political polarisations of statism and individualism. He does so by calling for a degree of neutrality in which the values of the state are supported by religious communities in their own terms which also complies with natural law.[36]

Similarly, Maritain's 'civic friendship'[37] exceeds the utilitarian bourgeois-individualistic society in which 'one asks only that the State protect his individual freedom of profit against …other men's freedom'.[38] His invective against totalitarianism amounted to the notion that humanity is related to the Absolute and consequently 'the human person transcends all temporal societies and is superior to them. There is nothing above the human soul except God'.[39]

According to Roger Ruston, Maritain's view of rights began, 'not from the sovereign individual, but with the social person made in God's image, endowed with reason and freedom of choice'.[40] Song assesses that his insistence on religious freedom provided a

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[35] Robert Song, *Christianity and Liberal Society* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 129.
[36] Ibid. p. 131.
[37] The idea of 'friendship' which I will deal with more fully in chapter eight was also significant to the Article 18.
[38] Jacques Maritain, *The Rights of Man and Natural Law*, p. 24.
[39] Ibid., p. 11.
[40] Roger Ruston, *Human Rights and the Image of God* (London: SCM Press, 2004), p. 11.

precedent for other liberties [41] and Moyn suggests that he 'forged the most durable version of personalism'[42], championing human rights within Catholicism by locating individual rights 'in the framework of the common good'.[43]

Malik's ideas on *personalism* - distinguishable from *individualism* - antagonised the USSR and India[44] and confused the UK delegate.[45] As the person most responsible for the personalistic language of the UDHR,[46] Malik's four basic principles adopted by the Committee claimed that: the concept of 'person' was more important than 'individual' and 'inherently prior to any group to which he may belong'; conscience and mind should be regarded as 'sacred and inviolable'; social coercion is wrong; and the state can be wrong.[47]

As a critical contribution to the process, personalism therefore provided a middle way that avoided the extremes of statism over – and against - individual freedom without responsibility. The ideological foundation supporting these ideas was the conviction that human dignity belonged to everyone made in the image of God.

5.3.2 Human dignity

Moyn has argued extensively for the Catholic contribution to the idea of human dignity in the UDHR. His account begins from notions of freedom in the French revolution, moves

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[41] Song, *Christianity and Liberal Society*, p. 131.
[42] Moyn, *Christian Human Rights*, p. 69.
[43] Ibid., p. 83.
[44] Glendon, *A World Made New*, p. 42.
[45] Malik, *The Challenge of Human Rights* ed. by Malik, pp. 33-35. Also see UN Documents on First Draft, discussion on Art.14 E/CN.4/AC.1/3/Add.1 p.6, < https://undocs.org/E/CN.4/AC.1/3/ADD.1> [accessed 12 December 2016].
[46] Malik, *The Challenge of Human Rights* ed. by Malik, p. 29.
[47] Ibid., p. 29. Malik made this submission 4 February 1947 and were accepted by the Committee 6 February 1947.

through Pope Pius XI's 1937 *Divini Redemptoris* to the 'religious constitutionalism' of the 1937 Irish Constitution (which Moyn regards as 'the most crucial date in Christian engagement in human rights'[48]), and culminates with Maritain and with Pius XII's 1942 Christmas message, which Moyn also regards as 'a critical turning point … that has defined history since'.[49] In Maritain, personalism and dignity were coterminous ideas in an 'evangelical message', in which 'the transcendent dignity of our human person was made manifest'.[50]

As Nurser has shown, Protestant missionary interests came together with Catholic reflection to make the case for human rights on the premise that people made in God's image were worthy of dignity.[51] These ideas evidently seeped into the drafting process of the UDHR through the critical work of Charles Malik and Renè Cassin. Illustratively, in contrast to Annex A that omitted reference to dignity, Annex D and F above, which do, were products of Cassin. In the First Session Draft, Malik argued that the Secretariat document 'did not contain sufficient reference to the dignity of man' which he felt should be, 'the basic woof of the Preamble'.[52] Subsequently, the Chair, Mrs. Roosevelt, and the China representative, Mr. Chang, agreed to the inclusion of dignity in Article 1.[53]

Admittedly, religion itself was not a dominant theme in the UDHR and Christian drafters came to accept that the notion of a Creator as the source of human dignity and rights would

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[48] Moyn, *Christian Human Rights*, p.15.
[49] Ibid., p. 2.
[50] Maritain, *The Rights of Man*, p. 41.
[51] Nurser, *For All Peoples*, p. 22. On 12 April 1944 the US Joint Committee on Religious Liberty issued a statement on Religious Liberty in which human dignity was located in the image of God, WCC and CCIA Archives, Box: 428.3.01 1948-1964.
[52] First Session Draft meeting, 11 June 1947, E/CN.4/AC.1/SR. 2, p.4, <https://undocs.org/E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.2> [accessed 13 December 2016].
[53] First Session Draft meeting, 20 June 1947, E/CN.4/AC.1/SR. 8, p.2, <https://undocs.org/E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.8> [accessed 13 December 2016].

be an ideological impasse. In the closing sessions of the 1948 General Assembly, for example, the Czech delegate insisted that secular Darwinism did not require divinity in order to affirm the dignity of man.[54]

However, what became Article 1 of the UDHR was in effect an internationally agreed anthropological premise, from which humankind carries out its flawed conversation about our futures. This broad agreement on human dignity was not reflected in the entirety of the UDHR. However, its status as a foundation stone for human rights was clearly attributable to Christian influences.

The relationship between Christian reflection on human dignity and human rights has been rightly acknowledged[55] and Moyn sees 'no other obvious source' for the inclusion of dignity in the preamble and first Article of the 1945 United Nations Charter.[56] Christian reflections on human dignity as a foundational human right is therefore important in understanding the pursuit of FoRB as a development in which Christian ideas played a central role.

5.4 Christian engagement and Article 18

Christian insights that shaped Article 18 had to do with individual freedom, the primacy of conscience and religion expressed in the sanctity of choice.

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[54] One Hundred and Eighty-First Plenary Session of GA, 10th December 1948 A/777 < https://undocs.org/A/PV.181> [accessed 12 December 2016].
[55] See also Jürgen Moltmann, *God for A Secular Society, The Public Relevance of Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1999). Moltmann, *On Human Dignity, Political Theology and Ethics* (London: SCM Press, 1984); Mary Ann Glendon, 'The Influence of Catholic Social Doctrine on Human Rights', *Journal of Catholic Thought* 10 (2013), pp. 69-44; David Hollenbach, *Claims in Conflict: Retrieving and Renewing the Catholic Human Rights Tradition* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979); Nick Spencer, *The Evolution of the West: How Christianity Has Shaped Our Values* (London: SPCK, 2016), pp.125-137.
[56] Moyn, *Christian Human Rights*, p. 55.

I will argue here that crucial to all of this was the impact of missiological reflection which appreciated the politics of reciprocal freedom in order to preach the gospel. However, I argue that Christian political activism in this field resulted in a measure of inadvertent provocation as Christian drafters fought for the high ground of individual freedom over the state.

5.4.1 Article 18 as a political catalyst

In recognizing Article 18 as 'the all-important pronouncement on freedom of thought and conscience'[57] Malik confirms its centrality in the minds of the drafters.

> Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

In presenting Article 18 as the critical cornerstone for FoRB four points are important.

Firstly, as the most enduring political totem of religious freedom, Article 18 was symptomatic of the prevailing ideological warfare between the priority of the individual and that of the state. In the decade preceding the UDHR Nurser shows that Christians presented individual religious freedom as 'the very making of the state' which 'undergirds and sustains human democracy […] Without it, all other freedoms are in danger'.[58]

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[57] Malik, *The Challenge of Human Rights*, p. 128.
[58] Nurser, *For All Peoples*, p. 87.

This view reflected the proclivity of American Protestant missionaries for religious freedom and is reflected in the First Amendment of the US Constitution.[59] This primacy of religious liberty, which influenced US missionaries, captured for example by Waldman's work,[60] should not be underestimated. This issue was sufficiently important that Protestant denominations abandoned theological differences to defend this position.[61]

Secondly, this meant that Christian advocates were adamant that religious freedom should be understood not within the narrow political constraints of freedom to worship, but within the wider democratic remit of freedom of conscience, thought and religion.

In the Eighth Meeting of the Drafting Committee, Cassin and Malik proposed, 'liberty of conscience of worship and of thought' as 'absolute and sacred'.[62] By contrast, the freedom to 'manifest' religious practice and conduct public worship were regarded as matters of public order.[63]

In June 1948, this idea was consolidated when Malik supported Netherland's suggestion of inserting 'thought' after the words, 'freedom of'.[64] As the Committee struggled to understand what was meant by 'belief' (which according to Malik 'had been enlarged to include all

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[59] Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 53. The First Amendments of the US Constitution guarantees, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, press, peaceful assembly and freedom to Petition the Government.
[60] Steven Waldman, *How Our Founding Fathers Forged a Radical New Approach to Religious Liberty* (New York: Random House, 2008).
[61] Moyn, *Christian Human Rights*, p.148.
[62] Malik, *The Challenge of Human Rights*, p. 65.
[63] First Session, Eighth Meeting, 17 June 1947, p.12   E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.8, <https://undocs.org/E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.8> [accessed 13 December 2016].
[64] Twenty-Sixth Meeting of Drafting Committee, 10 May 1948, p.4 E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.26 <https://undocs.org/E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.26> [accessed 13 December 2016].

forms of belief' within the scope of Art.16), the debate became even more complex.[65] In the ambiguities of the debate, Mr. Pavlov, the USSR delegate insisted that:

> Every person shall be allowed freedom of thought and freedom to engage in religious worship in accordance with the laws of the country and in accordance with social customs.[66]

Christian leaders resisted the limitations of 'freedom to worship' because it left open the possibility of state control, insisting that 'religious freedom' was more consistent with wider liberty to exercise the freedom to assemble and to carry out charitable functions.

As secretary of the Joint Council on Religious Liberty (JCRL) from 1942, Nolde, credited by Nurser as a champion of this cause,[67] actively opposed an earlier 1927 Concordat of 'freedom of worship' and together with the US Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, became actively involved in shifting the focus to religious freedom.

As early as June 1947, pressure to replace the notion of 'freedom to worship' with the wider 'religious freedom' had already come from religious groups.[68] In as much as the British Evangelical Alliance had any comments about the WCC or UN, it agreed that, 'Religious Liberty […] must also include the right to teach, to persuade, to propagate and to convert others' and that this freedom should be available to everyone everywhere. The task of the UN it insisted, was 'to establish a code of human rights securing "freedom of religion."'[69] The

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[65] Thirty-First Meeting of Drafting Committee, 13 May 1948 p.8 E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.31, <https://undocs.org/E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.31> [accessed 13 December 2016].

[66] Ibid., p.7.

[67] Nurser, *Christian Human Rights*, p. 128. Also, Lindkvist, *Religious Freedom*, pp. 106-107.

[68] Eighth Meeting Drafting Committee, 17 June 1947 p.12 E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.8, <https://undocs.org/E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.8> [accessed 13 December 2016].

[69] Martyn H. Gooch, ed. *Evangelical Christendom*, July-September (London: 1948), p.78.

fact that the Collation of Comments from Governments in the Third Session, 16 April 1948, had firmly exchanged 'freedom of worship' for 'the right to freedom of thought, religion, conscience and belief'[70] in Article 16 was a major triumph of Christian activism which resisted the political attempts to allow religious worship to be determined by the state.

Thirdly, the politics of choice became an indicator of the underlying state versus individual dynamic throughout. By the Third Meeting of the Drafting Committee (11 June 1947) there were clear political tensions associated with the idea of choice with a variety of conflicting positions on the issue.[71] According to Malik, there could be no freedom 'if one is not free to change his mind.'[72] By the Eighth Meeting of the drafting committee, Mrs. Roosevelt presented the US's proposal that 'everyone is free to change, hold or impart, within or beyond the borders of the state, his opinion'.[73]

The political debate about choice was constant, emerging again as a major consideration in the final hours of the plenary debates. Hours before the Declaration received its final assent, Pakistan[74] and Egypt[75] gave qualified approval to the concept of choice and freedom to change religion. This final plenary session demonstrated the degree to which the individual-

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[70] Commission on Human Rights Submission of Governments, 16 April 1948, E/CN.4/82, <https://undocs.org/E/CN.4/82> [accessed 12 December 2016].
[71] The Summary Record of the Third Meeting of the Drafting Committee, 11 June 1947 E/CN.4/AC.l/SR.3, <https://undocs.org/E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.3> [accessed 13 December 2016].
[72] The Summary Record of the Third Meeting, 11 June 1947, p.3 E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.3, <https://undocs.org/E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.3> [accessed 13 December 2016].
[73] First Session, Eighth Meeting, 17 June 1947, p.13   E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.8, <https://undocs.org/E/CN.4/AC.1/SR.8> [accessed 13 December 2016].
[74] Hundred and Eighty-Second Plenary Meeting, 10 December 1948, pp. 889-890 report of the Third Committee A/777 records Sir Mohammed Zafrullah Khan comments on Art. 19, <https://undocs.org/A/PV.182> [accessed 13 December 2016].
[75] Hundred and Eighty-Third Plenary Meeting, 10 December 1948, pp.912-913 Report of the Third Committee A/777 records Mr. Raafat comments on Art. 19, <https://undocs.org/A/PV.183> [accessed 13 December 2016].

state tensions remained a real threat to the entire process. The freedom to 'choose' or 'change' could not be separated from the societal and nationalistic interests of member states.

Fourthly, peculiar to Christian engagement in the inter-war years was the combination of missionary aspirations with theological reflection and political lobbying from activists who clearly grasped the relationship between human rights and the politics of reciprocation.

Between 1921 and 1938, a succession of meetings convened by the International Missionary Council (IMC) came to see mission as 'a major arena for highlighting human rights'.[76] Through the Campaign for a Just and Durable Peace (CJDP) and the direct involvement of missionary agencies such as the FCC, Christians regarded the mission for a just society, human dignity and religious freedom as basic human rights.

As early as 1932, a letter from Prof. Radl, chairman of the International Philosophical Congress and Professor of Philosophy, Prague University, to Dr. Oldham of the WCC, advocated the need for theological reflection on human rights.[77] Radl's letter was one of a number of responses to Prof. Hocking's 1932 paper, 'The Ethical Basis Underlying the Legal Rights of Religious Liberty'. In 1942 the IMC of North America and the FCC established its Joint Commission on Religious Liberty, for a coherent study on human rights. The outcome led to the publication of *Religious Liberty*, an extensive study written by the academic,

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[76] Dietrich Werner, 'Mission Human Rights and Religious Freedom A Relationship of Light and Shadow: Historical Ecumenical and Interreligious Perspective', in *Freedom of Belief and Christian Mission*, ed. by Hans Aage Gravaas et. al. (Oxford: Regnum Books International, 2015), pp. 93–113 (p.100).
[77] WCC Archives: box 26.16.06/1.

M. Searle Bates, with the aim of presenting to the United States 'and the wider world'[78] a paper that had a major influence on ideas of choice.[79]

The missionary imperative remained transparently present for the key Christians in the drafting process. Malik's missionary zeal, for example, led him to accept a CCIA invitation from Nolde for a meeting to 'advance the knowledge of Christ.'[80] As early as June 1947 the consultative draft of Nolde's paper, on 'The Church and International Affairs', explicitly argued that

> The Christian church recognises the commission to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the uttermost parts of the world. This commission can, and if there is no other way, must be obeyed in the face of persecution.[81]

In 1949 Malik reflected that the Church as 'the only answer' with 'the full deposit of truth'[82] was failing in its leadership on human rights. Malik fought for religious freedom not only from anti-communist convictions but as a Christian conversionist.[83]

Missionary societies across Europe and the US saw human rights as integral to mission.[84] In its Memorandum to the Foreign Office in April 1948, the British Council of Churches and the Conference of Missionary Societies in Great Britain and Ireland recommended that the Declaration should strengthen 'those provisions that concern religious liberty'.[85] In their

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[78] WCC 26.16.06/5 RL#22 p.1.
[79] Lindkvist, *Religious Freedom*, p. 74.
[80] Lindkvist, *Religious Freedom*, p. 63.
[81] WCC and CCIA archives 428.3.01 p .3.
[82] Malik, *The Challenge of Human Rights*, p. 137.
[83] Moyn, *Christian Human Rights*, p. 149.
[84] Nurser, *For All the Peoples*, p. 20.
[85] WCC 26/16.07/9 II. b p. 2.

view, there could be 'no compromise on the inescapable obligations of Christians everywhere to proclaim the Gospel and to try to win others to the Christian faith'.[86]

The scope of the Netherlands' ambitions was reflected in its 1948 recommendation that beyond its traditional role of promoting the Christian message, freedom of thought, conscience, belief and religion should include:

> The freedom of religious denominations or similar communities (including missionary societies) to organise themselves, to appoint, train and support their ministers to enjoy civil and civic rights, to perform educational, medical and other social work.[87]

Christian engagement in the UDHR sprung from an uncompromising commitment to Christian witness across the world and as Lindkvist suggests, human rights and the UDHR became inseparable from the church's 'missionary need' in the world.[88]

In Moyn's view, whilst Marxism had a universal appeal 'the striking prominence of Christian social thought among the framers' was pivotal[89] and for most nations involved 'the ideology closest to their hearts was a Christian one'.[90] Christians invested in the ideological construction of the UDHR so extensively that the project may have appeared as Christian hegemony.[91]

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[86] WCC 26/16.07/9 VI. p. 5.
[87] Third Session Commission of Human Rights, comment on Art 16, 16 April 1948, E/CN.4/82 https://undocs.org/E/CN.4/82 [accessed 13 December 2016].
[88] Lindkvist, *Religious Freedo*m, p. 66.
[89] Moyn, *The Last Utopia*, p. 64.
[90] Ibid., p. 66.
[91] Ibid., p. 75.

5.4.2 Christian engagement and the politicisation of Article 18

I argue therefore, that Christian engagement in the framing of Article 18 was both missional and highly political. A number of developments contribute to this conclusion.

Christian engagement both shaped Article 18 and provoked political tensions by an anthropology that elevated humanity conscience and freedom above state control. By insisting that the freedom to preach the Christian message was consistent with everyone's freedom to practice his or her belief without coercion, this inadvertently participated in the politicisation of choice.

As demonstrated, the collaboration between churches and missionary agencies in Europe and the US was clearly calculated to exert sustained pressure on the process. This global pressure was accompanied by an uncompromising commitment to proselytizing and historic missionary activities around the world. This meant therefore that Christians who defended religious freedom became embroiled in political discourse with regimes that supported state-sponsored freedom.

Article 18 therefore became the crucible for geopolitical tensions in which universal religious freedom would be considered as the touchstone for all human rights and Christian engagement inadvertently contributed to the political opposition it experienced. The blatant profile of the church's mission explains, in part, the ideological fears expressed by the delegate from Egypt that, Article 19 (soon to become Article 18) could stir 'the machinations

of certain missions, well known in the Orient, which relentlessly pursue their efforts to convert to their own beliefs the masses of the population.'[92]

This thesis therefore challenges the notion that the battle against choice was merely a West versus East political debate or an impulsive opposition to freedom of choice from Muslim states. Without diminishing the critical issues for religious freedom and the fragility still associated with the issue today, such a simplistic reading underestimates the complex interconnectedness between religious freedom and the political context with which it is inevitably associated. As Lindkvist has shown, a number of Western states were also wary of aggressive proselytizing.[93]

What was critical here is that Christian activists regarded FoRB as important to the future of the Christian message as much as to stable communities. They also wanted nation states to remain open for accountability on their human rights performance. This explains why long after 1948 Christian missionaries and activists continued to struggle for the preservation of the spirit of Article 18 in subsequent international agreements. [94]

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[92] Hundred and Eighty-Third Plenary Meeting, 10 December 1948, p. 913 report of the Third Committee A/777 records Mr. Raafat comments on Art. 19, <https://undocs.org/A/PV.183> [accessed 13 December 2016].
[93] Lindkvist, *Religious Freedom*, pp. 100-102.
[94] For example, in July 1964 the CCIA presented a statement to the Thirty-Seventh Session of ECOSOC urging that Article 18 be retained in the 1966 Covenant and that freedom of religion or belief should include atheists. The fact that the 1966 International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) retained Article 18 and that Article 4.2 of the ICCPR stipulates 'non-derogation' from Article 18 was a recognition that FoRB was regarded as a cornerstone of all human freedoms and a testament to the Christian engagement which went beyond 1948 to include the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination based on Religion or Belief in 1981.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I identify the role played by Christian activists and drafters who helped in shaping the UDHR. I reflect on the political context in which the Christian thinking about human dignity contributed to the formation of the UDHR and the degree to which Christian engagement became a political influence in the process.

I argue that Christian influence was motivated by historic reflections and commitments to religious freedom which preceded the UDHR and which persisted beyond 1948. My next chapter will provide a brief selection of these historic ideas.

Chapter Six

Christian Tributaries to FoRB

In the previous chapter I considered how Christian ideas and activism contributed to the

formation of Articles 1 and 18 of the UDHR. I also reviewed how Christian ideas and

activism contributed to the UDHR and, by implication, the degree to which CSW's work in

FoRB was already shaped by Christian influences.

In this chapter I consider selected individuals from earlier Christian history who offered

embryonic ideas that relate to the emergence of FoRB.   The contributions included here

demonstrate that CSW is itself involved in a long history of Christian engagement in

religious freedom along with the complexities associated with this work.

This overview offers brief insights into some early Fathers who reflected on religious

freedom in the context of persecution. I also consider Thomas Aquinas[1] here, not because he

defended religious freedom but because he provided an important framework for later

activists including Francisco de Vitoria and Bartolomé de Las Casas. Roger Williams, the

seventeenth-century Protestant pioneer and Anabaptist who advanced similar ideas in a very

different religious setting is also included. All three provide a comparable missionary

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[1] Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. by the Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 2nd edition
(London: Burns, Oates and Washbourne, 1920–1925), <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/index.html>
[accessed 27 April 2018].

perspective, which was so critical to the ideas that influenced Christian drafters of the UDHR. I conclude with John Locke, whose political theology was influential in developing ideas of religious tolerance in Europe and America during the Enlightenment.

Common themes of non-coercion, the *imago dei* and the primacy of natural law are threaded throughout the chapter, illustrating the extent to which Christian thinking in this area was forged in the midst of the complex relationship between Christian truth-claims and the call for religious tolerance, as much as in the tensions between freedom of conscience on one hand, and civic and political responsibilities on the other. It becomes apparent that Christian apologetics on these issues fostered its own ambiguities that have remained typical in current Christian responses to FoRB.

This overview is not a comprehensive or representative review of Christian ideas on religious freedom. I have merely identified a small sample of religious thinkers and offered an introduction to their insights on religious freedom in order to demonstrate the legacy of Christian thought available to Christians engaged in FoRB.

6.1 Tertullian, Lactantius and religious freedom

Two formative thinkers are important here: Tertullian (AD 160–220) and Lactantius (AD 240–320), whose work covers pivotal years between a time of severe persecution and a more conciliatory period before Constantine's Edict in AD 332. Both writers are amongst the earliest thinkers to provide substantial frameworks for religious freedom from the context of persecution as a minority community.

Their work is important for three reasons which offer important similarities to FoRB. Firstly, as a persecuted community they were anxious to present non-coerced religion as true religion. Predicated on the *imago dei,* everyone, they believed, should worship free from the coercion of the state.

Secondly, this minority status which presented Christians as cultural heretics shaped the nature of the discourse between the early Christians and the opposition they faced from the state and other religious communities. As Ramsey MacMullen has argued 'no polytheistic accusation against Christians was more common or more angry than atheism'.[2] Perceived as anti-societal atheists, Christians became 'a common threat because they were godless'.[3] Persecution was, in MacMullen's view, a combination of political culture, personalities and Roman militarism.[4] Arguably, uncompromising Christian monotheism made confrontation inevitable and, whilst denouncing persecution, Christians also embraced it as emblematic.[5]

Thirdly, the tensions inherent in Christian orthodoxy and civic life meant that as Guy Stroumsa states, Christian apologists were often 'unwilling (or unable) to accept the basic premise of religious toleration: a certain relativism in religious matters'.[6] As the Roman authorities initially regarded Christian 'atheism' as antithetical to Roman civility, so also Christians came to regard paganism as heresy and a threat to civil society.

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[2] Ramsey MacMullen, 'Religious Tolerance Around the Year 313', in *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 22 (2014), pp. 499-517 (p. 511).
[3] Ibid. p. 512.
[4] Ibid., p. 503.
[5] Tertullian spoke about Christian sacrifice and death in defiant tones reminiscent of Jesus (Matthew. 26. 28; Mark 14 .24; Luke 22. 20) and Paul (Philippians 2.17; 2 Timothy. 4. 6; 1 Corinthians. 15. 54 – 55) For example see also Ignatius of Antioch, 'To the Ephesians*, IV, '*To The Romans', (c)', in *The Early Christian Fathers,* ed. by Henry Bettenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 45-46.
[6] Guy Stroumsa, 'Tertullian on Idolatry and the Limits of Tolerance', in *Tolerance and Intolerance in Early Judaism and Christianity,* ed. by Graham Stanton and Guy Stroumsa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 173–184 (p.174).

However, as I will suggest, for Tertullian, Lactantius and subsequent advocates of religious freedom, monotheism, conversion and a commitment to civil order imposed serious limits on their views on toleration.

6.1.1 Tertullian and the right to religious freedom

Typical of Christian advocates, Tertullian's framework of religious freedom is based on the *imago dei*. Stroumsa describes a culture of religious pluralism in which Tertullian's theistic concept of a God who is known to everyone was able to flourish.[7] In this religious environment tolerance was therefore 'accessible to anyone who has even a rudimentary conception of deity'.[8] Moreover, in Adam, everyone enjoys social cohesion and legitimate claim to the natural resources available through God the Father.[9]

In Tertullian's *To Scapula* 2,1-2 (his discourse on religious freedom),[10] Timothy Shah believes Tertullian 'achieves the culmination of patristic arguments against religious persecution', by arguing for religious freedom as a human right.[11] Authentic religion, Tertullian suggests, is free worship, enjoyed as a human right (*humani iuris*) and a privilege of nature (*naturalis potestatis*). It is, then, 'no part of religion to compel religion - to which free-will and not force should lead us […] Accordingly, the true God bestows His blessings

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[7] Stroumsa, 'Tertullian on Idolatry', p. 175.
[8] E. Gregory Wallace, 'Justifying Religious Freedom: The Western Tradition', 114 Penn. St. L. Rev. 485 (2009), p. 504, <http://scholarship.law.campbell.edu/facsw> [accessed 26 March 2016].
[9] *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought*, ed. by Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), p. 52.
[10] The date for this work varies between AD 212 and 217.
[11] Timothy Samuel Shah, 'The Roots of Religious Freedom in Early Church Thought', in *Christianity and Freedom: Historical Perspectives*, ed. by Timothy Samuel Shah and Allen D. Hertzke (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp.33–61 (p. 52).

alike on wicked men and on His own elect'.[12] As Shah suggests, Tertullian sees authentic

worship as 'a personal rather than civic affair',[13] so that those who worship non-Roman gods

can still be full citizens.

In view of the responses to persecution raised in chapter four, Tertullian's attitude to

persecution also warrants a brief mention here. Ostensibly, Tertullian endorses persecution as

a stimulus for church growth. For example, he wrote to the Church in Rome, 'How happy is

that church, on which the apostles poured forth all their doctrine with their blood'.[14] The

view that Tertullian condoned persecution[15] arises from his Apology 50. This passage has

been variously translated as, 'we are mown down by you: the blood of the Christians is a

source of new life',[16] and more ambiguously, 'The more we are mown down by you, the

more we grow. The blood of Christians is seed'.[17] In all probability a more reliable meaning

of this statement has been lost in antiquity. Arguably, it is best understood as a statement of

resilient hope in the face of persecution and injustice. This is the only way in which

Tertullian is able to embrace persecution whilst emerging as a pioneering advocate for

religious freedom and human rights.

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[12] Tertullian, *To Scapula*, ch. II, trans. by S. Thelwall, in *A Select Library of Ante-Nicene Fathers* (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1885), pp. 105–6, <http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/tertullian05.html> [accessed 23 October 2016].

[13] Shah, 'The Roots of Religious Freedom', p. 55.

[14] Tertullian, 'De Praescriptione Haereticorum', 36 in *A New Eusebius* ed. by J. Stevenson (London: S.P.C.K, 1970), p.175.

[15] This popular idea was expressed during interviews. See Jonathan's interview in chapter nine.

[16] Early Christian Texts, <http://www.earlychurchtexts.com/public/tertullian_blood_christians_seed.htm> [accessed 3 August 2017].

[17] Christian History Institute, 'Tertullian's Defense' <https://www.christianhistoryinstitute.org/study/module/tertullian/> [accessed 3 August 2017].

6.1.2 Lactantius and freedom to worship

Lactantius, who purportedly influenced the Imperial household, brought critical analysis to the idea of justice.[18] According to Robert Wilken his *Divine Institutes* (AD 305-310) 'are without precedent in the ancient world'.[19] As Lactantius protested,

> For who is so arrogant, who so lifted up, as to forbid me to raise my eyes to heaven? Who can impose upon me the necessity either of worshipping that which I am unwilling to worship, or of abstaining from the worship of that which I wish to worship?[20]

Coerced worship, he argued, was both 'polluted and profaned'.[21] Justice was 'inseparable from equality, and the expulsion of justice', Lactantius declared, 'is to be deemed nothing else […] than the laying aside of divine religion'.[22] In other words, any denial of freedom was a denial of justice and therefore an irreligious act. In Shah's observation, it followed that 'religious freedom was not just a private matter, but one that required civic autonomy'.[23] By contrast, Christian conversion was exemplary because it nurtured faith, 'And thus no one is detained by us against his will, for he is unserviceable to God who is destitute of faith'.[24]

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[18] *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought*, ed. by Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999), pp. 46-47.

[19] Robert Louis Wilken, 'Christian Roots of Religious Freedom', in *Christianity and Freedom vol. I: Historical Perspectives*, ed. Timothy Samuel Shah and, Allen D. Hertzke (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 64.

[20] Lactantius, 'Of the Fortitude of the Christians'*, in The Divine Institutes*, Book V *(Of Justice)*, trans. by William Fletcher in *A Select Library of Ante-Nicene Fathers* 7, ed. A. Cleveland Coxe (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1886), pp. 149–50, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/07015.htm> [accessed 6 August 2016].

[21] Lactantius, 'Of the Vanity and Crimes, Impious Superstitions, and of the Tortures of the Christians', in *The Divine Institutes,*< http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/07015.htm> [accessed 6 August 2016].

[22] Lactantius, 'There was True Justice under Saturnus, but it was Banished by Jupiter'*, in The Divine Institutes,* <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/07015.htm> [accessed 6 August 2016].

[23] Shah, 'Roots of Religious Freedom', in *Christianity and Freedom*, p. 54.

[24] Lactantius, 'Of the Vanity and Crimes, Impious Superstitions, and of the Tortures of the Christians' in *The Divine Institutes* <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/07015.htm> [accessed 6 August 2016].

As Maijastina Kahlos claims, Lactantius' idea of forbearance (*patientia*) 'resembles modern ideas of tolerance in which it is usually understood that, despite the disapproval of the religious, moral or political views of other people, one does not take action against them'.[25] Lactantius repudiated paganism whilst insisting that pagans should not be persecuted.

6.1.3 Tertullian, Lactantius and the limits of tolerance

As history attests, these early reflections, which emerged from their own experience of persecution,[26] dissipated with alarming speed in the aftermath of Constantine's edicts of Toleration[27] and the birth of Christendom.

More alarming has been the recognition that these pioneers of Christian religious freedom were among the first to also exhibit clear limitations to the idea of tolerance. Tertullian, who introduced religious freedom as a *humani iuris*, also displayed 'repressed aggression toward the surrounding polytheistic world'[28] and was vocal in his dislike of the Jews.[29]

Similarly, Wilken claims that Lactantius' tolerance was a short-term pretext for eventual 'concordance' with the Christian faith.[30] Eventually all pagan worship was expected to concede to the Christian God. In Lactantius' notion of "justicia", 'justice excludes the deities of other religions'.[31]

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[25] Maijastina Kahlos, 'The Rhetoric of Tolerance and Intolerance: From Lactantius to Firmicus Maternus', in *Continuity and Discontinuity in Early Christian Apologetics*, ed. by Anders-Christian Jacobsen, Maijastina Kahlos and Jörg Ulrich (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2009), p. 9.
[26] Timothy Samuel Shah, 'Introduction', in *Christianity and Freedom*, ed. by Shah, p. 4.
[27] E. Wallace, *Justifying Religious Freedom*, p. 513.
[28] Kahlos, 'The Rhetoric of Tolerance and Intolerance', p. 4.
[29] Stroumsa, 'Tertullian on Idolatry' pp.177–181.
[30] Wilken, 'The Christian Roots of Religious Freedom', in *Christianity and Freedom*, p. 94.
[31] Kahlos, 'The Rhetoric of Tolerance and Intolerance', p. 8.

Nevertheless, as members of a marginalised religious minority, both men provided a coherent legacy for persecuted minorities today.

A number of influential ideas such as non-coercion and the *imago dei* lay behind Christian attitudes to religious freedom. Reflections on natural law have also been an important and durable factor. Tertullian's embryonic *humanum ius* and *naturalis potestas* signalled some of the earliest coherent Christian approaches to the concept of natural law.

Natural law which Maritain describes as 'an order or a disposition which human reason can discover and according to which the human will must act in order to attune itself to the necessary ends of the human being'[32] has been an important influence because as Fred Alford suggests, it raises questions about 'what it means to live a fully human life, and the conditions required to fulfil it'.[33]

It is this important idea of natural law that I now wish to consider with specific reference to Thomas Aquinas' influential ideas.

6.2 Thomas Aquinas and natural law

My singular interest in Aquinas is predicated on his seminal influence on subsequent Christian teaching which eventually contributed to the formation of the UDHR.   Whilst

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[32] Jacques Maritain, *The Rights of Man and Natural Law* (London: Geoffrey Bles / The Centenary Press, 1944), p. 35.
[33] C. Fred Alford, *Narrative, Nature, and the Natural Law: From Aquinas to International Rights* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), p. 29.

Wallace has identified other important contributions to natural law,[34] Thomas Aquinas (AD 1225-1274) remains a towering figure in Christian reflections on natural law.[35]

I have not attempted a synopsis of Aquinas' elaborate ideas on religious freedom. However, as I will show, his views on natural law provided an important philosophical framework for subsequent Christian reflections on religious freedom. This section offers a modest inclusion of ideas which contextualises these contributions.

Aquinas roots natural law firmly in the *imago dei.* It is above temporal human rationality but accessible to it, [36] and 'ordained to the common good'.[37] It is available because God instilled it into human consciousness where it is naturally understood.[38] In creation, the image of God made us 'fit for God' and the Incarnation becomes possible. Indeed, 'natural law is nothing else than an imprint on us of the Divine light […] and the rational creature's participation of the eternal law'.[39]   Through natural law, God's wisdom rules over creation[40] and is conducive to harmonious relationships because each of us has a 'natural inclination to know the truth about God, and […] avoid offending those among whom one has to live'.[41]

Whilst reason helps us to fulfil our natural abilities, our supernatural goal is attained only by revelation and a shared life of fellowship with God through the Spirit.[42]

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[34] E. Wallace, *Justifying Religious Freedom*, pp. 535 – 565.
[35] See, David Hollenbach, S. J., *The Common Good and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[36] ST 1-II.90.1.
[37] ST 1-II.90.2.
[38] ST 1-II.90.4.
[39] ST 1-II.91.2.
[40] ST 1-II.91.1 and ST 1-II.93.
[41] ST 1-II.94.2.
[42] ST 1-II.91.4.

How is it conceivable then, that fallen humans can behave in ways that are counter-intuitively good and act in the common interest? Aquinas proposes that through 'connaturality' humans adopt a 'second nature' so that, 'things which are not part of our design can become so habitual, so ingrained, that they seem as though they are'.[43] Connaturality, is therefore a complex application of 'effective cognition'[44] - the ability to know and incline toward the good. It behaves as a kind of wisdom that stems from love (*amor*) that is shared and gifted by the Holy Spirit.[45] In this experience of love, everyone bearing the image of God has the capacity to experience *amor* in such a way that, 'As far as human love is concerned, I become the other while remaining irredeemably myself'.[46]

Connaturality, as 'the complete realization of the Thomistic realism',[47] is understood then as 'the habit of truly good men and women, who naturally love what is true and right, want to do it, feeling joy when they do so'.[48] Aquinas presents us with a framework for love in which the love of God is perfected in love of neighbour.[49]

Aquinas' contribution does not relate directly to any positive views on religious freedom that he espoused. On the contrary, writing during a period in which the church-state relationship was becoming opaque,[50] Aquinas' views on freedom also had stark limitations so that Christendom's suppression of heresy 'was accepted as a necessary safeguard of Christian

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[43] J. Budziweski, 'The Natural, the Connatural and the Unnatural, St. Thomas Aquinas and the Natural Law', Jacques Maritain Center, 6-11 July 2004, Departments of Government and Philosophy, The University of Texas at Austin, <https://maritain.nd.edu/jmc/ti04/budz.htm> [accessed 14 November 2018].
[44] ST I, 64, 1; ST I-II 97, 2, 2.
[45] ST I-II 32, 6; II-II, 139, 1.
[46] Alford, *Narrative, Nature, and the Natural Law,* p. 35.
[47] Ibid.,p. 35.
[48] Ibid., p. 36.
[49] Luke 10. 27.
[50] E. Wallace, *Justifying Religious Freedom*, p. 535.

society'.[51] Consistent with Augustine, Aquinas regarded heresy as a corrupting disease[52] and advocated that 'the rites of other unbelievers, which are neither truthful nor profitable are by no means to be tolerated, except perchance in order to avoid an evil'.[53]

However, Aquinas is important in that his approach to natural law preserved the concept of revelation whilst presenting an anthropology that links human reason and attainment to God's purposes in the world and in human relationships. He also offers a way of recognising our God-given potential for good without denying the reality of human sin. In Wallace's estimate Aquinas' worldview provides 'a significant step toward an expanded concept of freedom of religious conscience'.[54]

This expanded concept of religious freedom became influential in Catholic thinking for succeeding generations. In the following section I describe how this influence impacted religious freedom in the New World.

6.3 Christian influence and the New World

In this section I consider the work of three missionaries whose activism flowed immediately from critical reflection on religious freedom. Two of these, Francisco de Vitoria (AD 1483-1546) and Bartolomé de Las Casas (AD 1484-1550s), radically applied Thomist reflection to their work during the volatile period of Spanish expansionism in Peru. The third, Roger

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[51] Ibid., p. 533.
[52] Giorgi Areshidze, 'Does Toleration Require Religious Skepticism? An Examination of Locke's Letters on Toleration and Essay concerning Human Understanding' in *Interpretation: A Journal of Political Philosophy* 43 (2016) pp. 29-56; ST II-II, 11, 3.
[53] ST II-II.10. 11.
[54] E. Wallace, *Justifying Religious Freedom,* p. 541.

Williams (1603 - 1683) who established Rhode Island, Massachusetts during the Anglo-American War of Independence, championed Indian rights as an Anabaptist.

These individuals provide comparable points of reference. In all cases they worked as missionaries in contexts where they found themselves at variance with their political and religious authorities whilst working on foreign soil. All three men pioneered ideas of religious freedom against the prevailing ideological norms and supported the theological conviction that people of other faiths should have such freedoms protected by civic authorities. The confluence between mission, politics, religious freedom and non-coercion coalesced in their work and anticipated the combination of issues which became typical of their Christian successors who participated in drafting the UDHR.

6.3.1 Francisco de Vitoria and Bartolomé de Las Casas

Whilst Aquinas' framework for natural law did not amount to a defence of religious freedom for non-Christians, both Vitoria and Las Casas deployed his natural law ideas to support their arguments for religious freedom in the New World.

Vitoria argued that the Fall destroyed neither the image of God nor the Peruvian Indians' capacity for worship. Consequently, neither belief nor unbelief altered their rights. Vitoria proposed that canon law declared it 'wrong to confiscate the possessions of Jews and Muslims, simply on the grounds of their unbelief in Christianity'[55] and that the same should

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[55] Roger Ruston, *Human Rights and the Image of God*, p. 82.

apply to the Indians. From Aquinas' ideas[56] he defended their right to worship based on the immutable image of God in all human beings.[57]

During Spanish expansionism and the political volatility of the Reformation, Las Casas 'argued his way towards natural rights and political liberties'.[58] His work was as much to do with defining freedom as it was to do with the natural and human rights of the Indians. As Ruston states, Las Casas believed that the Indian's political liberty was, 'a requirement of evangelism' and the gospel was to be received, 'freely, without any type of coercion'.[59] In his 1550 debate against Sepúlveda, his position was that Indians, made in God's image, had the right to resist slavery in their own domain.

Las Casas' argument was that the Indian's propensity to worship was evidence that they too shared the image of God as fellow humans. His defence of ritual human sacrifice, which approached the sacrilegious, amounted to a claim that all sacrifice is ultimately offered to God and that 'men are obliged to offer the best in sacrifice'.[60] Even with this extreme illustration, Ruston surmises that with Las Casas 'The coming together of theology, law and the struggle for justice in the first European colonies is clearly a moment of first importance in the development of human rights'.[61] According to Willie James Jennings, his application of natural law enabled Las Casas 'to grant a conceptual space for native religious practices,

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[56] ST,II. 57, Art.1, 2.
[57] Ruston, *Human Rights and the Image of God*, p.85.
[58] Ibid., p. 120.
[59] Ibid., p. 135.
[60] Bartolomé de Las Casas, *In Defense of the Indians*, ed. by Stafford Pool. C.M. (Illinois: Northern Illinois Press, 1992), p. 228.
[61] Ruston, *Human Rights and the Image of God,* p.161.

precisely on the ground of a Christian vision of creation in which such visions have their own integrity'.[62]

Jennings has compellingly highlighted Las Casas' 'groundbreaking position' by contrasting his 'theological generosity'[63] with the eminent Jesuit, José de Acosta Porres who arrived in Peru ten years after Las Casas. Whilst Acosta did vital work in re-contextualising his Catholicism, he continued to exhibit what Jennings calls 'a manifestation of colonial power,' and showed clearly 'the future of theology in the New World, that is a strongly traditioned intellectual posture made to function wholly within a colonialist logic'.[64] With Acosta, Western theology was launching itself 'into the unknown world doing self-protective theology'[65] and perpetuating a theological imperialism in which 'the native students will always remain the barbarians'.[66]

However, Las Casas' approach to religious freedom exhibited serious flaws. As a fierce defender of religious freedom for native Andeans he viewed Black slaves as inferior[67] and regarded Turks as 'scum' who posed a threat to the Spanish provinces.[68] His tolerance was itself limited in that he fully expected that in due course, Peruvian Indians would become Christians. Indeed, Las Casas so anticipated their conversion to Catholicism that he became 'willing to withhold tolerance'[69] from natives who ultimately failed to convert.

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[62] Willie James Jennings, *The Christian Imagination: Theology and the Origins of Race* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 101.
[63] Ibid*.,* p. 100.
[64] Ibid., p. 83.
[65] Ibid., p. 89.
[66] Ibid., p. 102.
[67] Ibid., p. 101.
[68] Daniel R. Brunstetter, 'Sepúlveda, Las Casas, and the Other: Exploring the Tension between Moral Universalism and Alterity' *The Review of Politics*, 72 (2010), pp. 409-435 (p. 427), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20780330> [accessed 27 September 2016].
[69] Ibid., p. 426.

Nevertheless, Las Casas' radical and liberating application of natural law, remains important. In searching Indian culture for 'signs of sameness',[70] he provides a critical setting from which to evaluate the Western influence of natural law and human rights.

As Acosta's subsequent approach demonstrated, neither Vitoria or Las Casas' radical ideas resulted in lasting change. However, these ideas remained important contributions in the growing Christian impetus for religious freedom.

Their missionary task carried out within specific geopolitical realities applied natural law principles in formulating a theology of religious freedom for everyone. Both shared this in common with the North American missionary Roger Williams.

6.3.2 Roger Williams, freedom and dissent

In the American 'New World' a more durable development in religious freedom was made in European settlement. The struggle for religious freedom in the American colonies has many champions in the dissenting traditions. Jonathan Chaplin cites these early dissenters who developed the radical ecclesiology of the Reformers,[71] as foundation stones for his proposed theology of 'principled pluralism'. These early influences in freedom of conscience in American religious and political life included important figures such as John Smith and

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[70] Ibid., p. 424.

[71] Jonathan Chaplin, '*Liberté, Laïcité, Pluralité*: Towards a Theology of Principled Pluralism' in, *International Journal of Public Theology*, 10 (2016), <https://doi-org.ezphost.dur.ac.uk/10.1163/15697320-12341450> [accessed 7 March 2019].

Thomas Helwys.[72] Other important voices such as Isaac Backus[73] and John Leland[74] argued

from personal experience for private conscience as an inalienable right.

There is insufficient scope here to explore these important contributors to freedom of

conscience in the New World of America, or indeed the political work of the American

founding Fathers covered in works such as Steven Waldman's *Founding Faith*.[75]

However, Roger Williams is of special interest. Exiled from London and the church

community in Massachusetts, Williams' battle extended beyond his own personal or

denominational interests. Like Vitoria and Las Casas, Williams pursued an early expression

of FoRB that emerged from his activity as a missionary.

The cornerstone of his religious and political conviction was that 'forced conversion was no

conversion'.[76] Williams' *Queries* presented six arguments denouncing persecution as a

violation of the Christian spirit.[77] His radical work, *The Bloudy Tenent*, argued for the

freedom of 'Jewish, Turkish, or anti-Christian consciences'. Free worship should be granted,

'to all men in all nations and countries' who should only be opposed by 'the sword of God's

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[72] Walter Burgess, *John Smith, the Se-Baptist, Thomas Helwys and the First Baptist Church in England* (London: Scholar Select, James Clarke, 1911), p. 12.
[73] Isaac Backus, *An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty, Against the Oppressions of the Present Day.* (Boston: John Boyle, 1773).
[74] John Leland, *The Rights of Conscience Inalienable, and Therefore Religious Opinions not Organizable by Law: or, The High-flying Church-man, Stript of His Legal Robe, Appears a Yaho* (New London: T. Green and Son, 1791).
[75] Steven Waldman, *Founding Faith: How Our Founding Fathers Forged a Radical New Approach to Religious Liberty* (New York: Random House, 2009), p. 3.
[76] Edwin S. Gaustad, *Liberty of Conscience: Roger Williams in America* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company,1991), p. 30.
[77] Ibid., p. 68.

Spirit, the word of God'.[78] Urging the church to follow Jesus rather than Moses[79] Williams condemned coercion as a theocratic anachronism. Rather than a parochial theological defence of the political status quo, Edwin Gaustad believes Williams' arguments were calculated 'to do nothing less than alter the institutional structures of the Western world'.[80] Arguably, Williams legacy suggests that he made good progress in achieving this.

6.4 Locke, political liberalism and FoRB

Finally, I conclude with Locke (1632-1704) who exerted significant political influence during the post-colonial settlement in which Williams was so active. Locke's political theology which was a 'prime influence on Thomas Jefferson'[81] inhabits the ideological intersection between religion, freedom of conscience and politics with which FoRB is concerned.

His pivotal role opens two important questions. Firstly, to what degree should Locke be regarded, as Ron Sider suggests,[82] as a Father of secularism? Clearly, Locke's pioneering work on the relationship between revelation and reason left him open to allegation of Deism making faith subservient to reason. In defending Locke against Macpherson's Marxist analysis of 'possessive individualism', for example, Song is clear that Locke's theological presuppositions must be taken into account[83] and Ruston argues that his natural rights emerged from his perspective 'as a Christian theologian'.[84] His opposition to state

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[78] Roger Williams, *The Bloudy Tenent*, *Of Persecution for Cause of Conscience discussed in a conference between TRUTH and PEACE*, ed. by Richard Grove (London: Mercer University Press, 2001 [1644]), p. 3.
[79] Ibid., p. 68.
[80] Edwin S. Gaustad, *Liberty of Conscience,* p. 75.
[81] Roger Trigg, *Equality, Freedom & Religion* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), p. 28.
[82] Ronald J. Sider, *The Scandal of Evangelical Politics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), pp. 129–130.
[83] Song, *Christianity and the Liberal Society*, p. 16.
[84] Ruston, *Human Rights and the Image of God,* p. 201.

paternalism, for example, was based on Christian anthropology,[85] and as Micah Schwartzman points out his views on toleration 'cannot be understood or made coherent except in relation to its religious content'.[86]

This raises a second important question: to what degree can Locke's 'sectarian' theological foundation be regarded - then and now - as 'adequate'[87] for non-Christians? Both Schwartzman[88] and Areshidze[89] cite Jeremy Waldron's claim that, 'the Christian theological content of Locke's *Letter* "cannot … be bracketed off," and more broadly [that] "Lockean equality is not fit to be taught as a secular doctrine"'.[90] Waldron's position amounts to a tacit admission that, unless Locke is totally removed from political discourse, the Western edifice of human rights has therefore inevitably been influenced by Christian thought.

Central to Locke's approach then, is the conviction that 'God has established the basic equality of all human beings. Everyone has an ultimate interest in pleasing God'.[91] Natural law suggests therefore that toleration is 'the chief characteristic mark of the true church'[92] and religion and conscience as a matter of choice cannot be coerced. Freedom then, is 'to follow my own will in all things [and] to be under no other restraint but the law of nature'.[93]

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[85] Ibid., p. 50.

[86] Micah Schwartzman, 'The Relevance of Locke's Religious Arguments for Toleration', *Political Theory* 33 (2005), pp. 678-705 (p. 682). See also, Alford, *Narrative, Nature,* p. 7.

[87] Ibid., p. 678.

[88] Ibid., p. 681.

[89] Giorgi Areshidze, 'Does Toleration Require Religious Skepticism?', p. 2.

[90] Ibid., p. 2; Jeremy Waldron, *God, Locke and Equality: Christian Foundations in Locke's Political Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 210.

[91] Micah Schwartzman, 'The Relevance of Lock's Religious Arguments', p. 685.

[92] John Locke, *Two Treaties of Government & A Letter Concerning Toleration* (Stilwell, KS: Digireads.com Publishing, 2005), p.150.

[93] Ibid., p.78.

Locke's epistemology means that magistrates were limited in determining ultimate truth,[94] and churches should teach 'that liberty of conscience is every man's natural right, equally belonging to dissenters as to themselves'.[95] Religious and civil freedoms belonged therefore to 'the Presbyterians, Independents, Anabaptists, Arminians, Quakers and including pagans, Mahomedtan, and Jew' who were all included in 'the commonwealth'.[96]

In Locke's framework, material rights included 'the right and franchises that belongs to him as a man' and were therefore beyond the remit of religious leaders.[97] The responsibility to 'protect men's lives and […] the things that belong unto this life is the business of the commonwealth'.[98]

However, Locke's prioritisation of individual conscience over religious tradition and civil powers unveiled the limits of his tolerance. Given that 'belief in God is the foundation of morality and without it no-one can be trusted to fulfill his or her part of the social contract',[99] this meant that according to Locke, Catholics loyal to the Pope, and atheists who undermined the fabric of a Protestant consensus, became political liabilities and objects of intolerance.

In spite of these shortcomings, Schwartzman believes that from the margins of religion Locke contributes to 'an overlapping consensus on a principle of toleration in liberal democratic societies'.[100] In his own turbulent context, 'Locke aims not just to moderate and pacify

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[94] Ibid., p.170.
[95] Ibid., p. 172.
[96] Ibid., p. 174.
[97] Ibid., p. 156.
[98] Ibid., p. 170.
[99] Schwartzman, 'The Relevance of Locke's Religious Arguments', p. 695.
[100] Ibid., p. 697.

Christianity, but also to preserve it as a civil religion that can check absolutism'.[101] In Alford's view, he provides 'the modern foundation of human rights thinking, which culminated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights'.[102]

The limitations of Locke's philosophy of tolerance typifies an age-old struggle to harmonise the relationship between religion and its relevance to civil society, as much as the limits of freedom in a democratic community.

6.5 Conclusion

In this selective list of influential thinkers, I have argued that in the early church, and in the modern period, religious freedom has been defended on theological grounds. These convictions were not motivated exclusively by self-preservation and the campaign for religious freedom extended beyond Christians to people of all faiths - even where such faith led to practices diametrically opposed to their biblical ideals. In some instances, the adversity Christians themselves experienced from state and religious leaders served only to hone these convictions.

It has also been evident that even where these ideas were rejected or not widely adopted, Christian ideas of natural law played a critical role in the subsequent formation of FoRB. It is also clear that in their attempts to balance religious freedom with social cohesion these leading characters themselves displayed ambiguities and paradoxically advocated religious intolerance.

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[101] Giorgi Areshidze, 'Does Toleration Require Religious Skepticism?', p. 31.
[102] Alford, *Narrative, Nature, and the Natural Law,* p. 123.

My aim here is simply to demonstrate that FoRB is not an entirely secular invention. Rather, religious freedom has always been a fragile discourse between freedom of conscience and political power and also between individual freedoms and state responsibility in which the church has always participated. As I have shown, Christian traditions have therefore had a long and established engagement in the precarious development of ideas that eventually gave birth to the pursuit of FoRB.

From this argument I now wish to turn to the heart of CSW's ambivalence: its need for a theological framework for its praxis with which the next two chapters are concerned.

Chapter Seven

Biblical Foundations for FoRB

7.1 Responding to biblical themes

Having discussed the nature of CSW's ambiguities earlier I deal here and in the following

chapter with the desire for theological reflection that the charity identified. As a *Faith in*

FoRB? 'inside voice' suggested, 'Our Christian identity is a strength, but the way it is

communicated is schizophrenic. This is a challenge that needs to be overcome'.[1]

In this chapter I explore a limited number of biblical texts working with these passages and

themes that emerged from CSW's own discussions and consider whether these texts can be

approached in ways that support CSW's own understanding of its work. This material was

gleaned in a number of ways.

Firstly, documents such as their Organisational Strategy 2015-2017 cited a wide range of

texts which referred more broadly to issues of justice. Secondly, *Faith in FoRB*?, which I

describe in chapter one, played an important role in exploring the charity's own

hermeneutical approach to its praxis. This study was important because it explored two key

texts (Galatians 6.10 and Hebrews 13.3) that were already prevalent in the organisation's

literature and corporate consciousness.

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[1] *Faith in FoRB?*, January 2016

Thirdly, a range of biblical themes emerged unsolicited from the interview questions, which demonstrated the staff's understanding of the biblical parameters within which they perceived themselves to be carrying out their mission. The chart below demonstrates the cluster of key ideas that emerged from the interviewees.

Figure 2: Key Themes from the Interviews
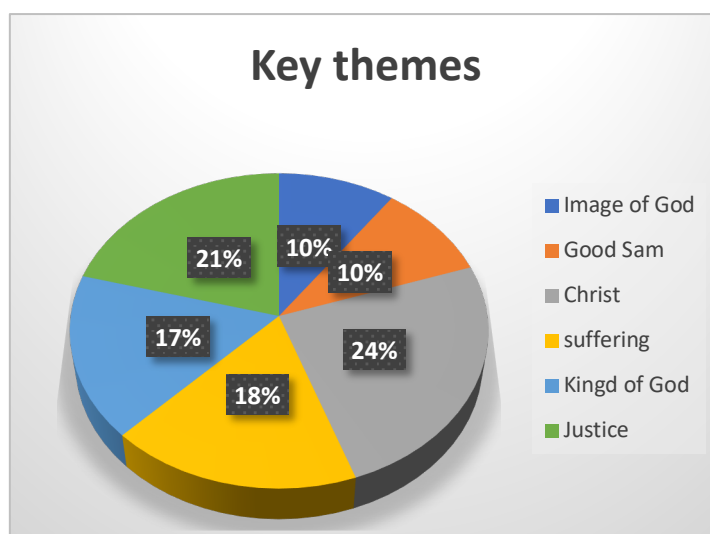
However, rather than responding to these themes separately I have gathered them under two major topics which incorporate the material more coherently.

The first provides an overview of a biblical response to human dignity as explored in the *imago dei*. I focus primarily on the foundational material in Genesis. The New Testament gives some witness to the idea of the *imago dei* [2] and David Kelsey has demonstrated that

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[2] See Acts 17. 28, 29.

more could be said on how the image of God is renewed in Christ [3] but this would take us beyond my current focus. I have relied exclusively, therefore, on three texts from Genesis (Genesis 1.26-31; 2.15-17; 9.6), that provide the most foundational narratives for Christian anthropology.

These texts I argue, can be read as claiming that all human beings have been given dignity by God, that this dignity includes their freedom and that God demands that we respect and protect this dignity. This approach, I believe, suggests a biblical rationale for engagement in FoRB and a framework for its partnerships with human rights specialists beyond the Church.

Secondly, I present an over-arching Christian universalism that insists that *all* people are called to respond to all forms of suffering experienced by people of *all* faiths and none. Christian universalism is not understood here as referring to universal salvation. Rather, I argue that the mission of God integrates elements which reach beyond the saving of souls and that these show the scope of God's universal concern for all his creatures.

Firstly, this involves the idea of human suffering. I suggest that Isaiah's Servant (Isaiah 53.4 - 7) which is often understood as referring exclusively to atonement for sin might also describe God's concern for all human suffering. Secondly, I argue that the ethical teaching of Jesus as understood in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5.1-12) and eschatology (Matthew 25.31-46), along with Luke's 'good' Samaritan (Luke 10.25-37) point toward a social ethic which is specific to Christian discipleship but not necessarily exclusive to it. These texts can therefore be read not only as providing instruction for how Christian disciples treat each

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[3] David H. Kelsey, *Eccentric Existence: A Theological Anthropology* (Kentucky: John Knox Press, 2009), pp. 896-897.

other, but instruction for everyone on how to respond to all human suffering. Thirdly, I will mention the ideas of hospitality explored in *Faith in FoRB?* (Galatians 6.10; Hebrews 13.3).

I suggest here that these passages can be read as calling the church to engage itself with the suffering of all people. My proposal is that the universal scope of God's activity available from these texts can be read as supporting CSW as 'an overtly Christian charity' carrying out a biblical mandate for defending persecuted Christians and pursuing FoRB for all people.

In the empirical material, Christ emerged as the most dominant reference. As another 'inside voice' mused, 'We need a Christology on religious freedom. The narrative should make Jesus more central than religion'. I have elected, however, not to make Jesus an independent focus. Instead, the centrality of Christ will be demonstrated by exploring his teachings.

In this chapter I will therefore set out a series of exegetical reflections that can contribute to a theological framework for FoRB. The theological foundation aims to present a reflection based on a Christian understanding of human dignity and also offers a version of Christian universalism that is consistent with the kingdom and mission of God. In setting out the former, I will begin with the selected passages from Genesis.

7.2 Genesis and human dignity (Genesis 1.26-31; 2.15-17; 9.6)

My reference to human dignity is premised on these texts that are foundational to a Christian

anthropology, and specifically Genesis 1.26, 27, described by Richard Middleton as 'the

locus classicus of the doctrine of *imago dei*'.[4]

> Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that
> they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds
> in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the
> creatures that move along the ground."
> So, God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created
> them; male and female he created them.

Discussion of the 'image' (*tselem)* and 'likeness' (*demūth)* of God has been protracted and

complex. The debate introduces etymological problems around our understanding of *tselem*,

which rarely appears in Genesis [5] and includes references to false gods.[6] Similarly, *demūth*,

which appears some twenty-five times in the Old Testament, ranges from abstract ideas to

concrete concepts of representation.[7]

Given the inconclusive nature of the image-likeness debate it is plausible that some

definitions are, as Victor Hamilton puts it, 'subjective inferences, rather than objective

exegesis'.[8] Indeed, Middleton's overview of the history of the image-likeness debate

confronts the subjectivity which he believes is 'constitutive of the hermeneutical enterprise'[9]

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[4] J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), p. 15.
[5] Genesis 1. 26, 27; 5. 3; 9. 6.
[6] Numbers 33. 52; II Kings 11. 18; II Chronicles 23. 17; Ezekiel 7. 20; Amos 5. 26.
[7] Gordon John Wenham, *Genesis, 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary (Texas: Word Book, 1987), p. 29.
[8] Victor P Hamilton, 'The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17', in *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament* (NICOT), ed. by R.K. Harrison and Robert L. Hubbard (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), p. 137.
[9] Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, p. 37.

and concludes that these word studies 'still do not disclose exactly what the resemblance or likeness of humanity to God consists in'.[10]

From these three texts I will briefly discuss three specific insights. Firstly, the *imago dei* claims a substantial relationship between all human beings and God himself in which everyone has been given responsibilities for the created order and human relationships within it. Secondly, I will briefly argue that the 'image' and 'likeness' of God involves the capacity for moral choice. Thirdly, that Genesis 9.6 offers poignant indicators of God's covenant response to gratuitous suffering and homicide.

7.2.1 Human dignity and royal responsibility (Genesis 1.26, 27)

As shown, interviewees identified the idea of the 'image of God' as an important biblical driver.

Clearly, Genesis 1.26, 27 attaches unique attributes to humankind. This is shown by the corporate decision to create humankind ('Let us make man'), and the intentionality with which *ādām* was created by the 'breath of God'.[11] The reference alludes to a deep and ontological relationship between humans and the heavenly realm that defies precise definitions of human nature. As Westermann says,

> God has created all people […] That holds despite all differences among people; it goes beyond all differences of religion, beyond belief and unbelief.

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[10] Ibid., p. 48.
[11] Genesis 1. 26-28; 2. 7.

> Every human being of every religion and in every place, even where religions are no longer recognised, has been created in the image of God.[12]

John Hartley suggests therefore, that *ādām* may be regarded as 'standing for all humanity, that is, those God made at the beginning as well as their descendants'.[13] This spiritual solidarity is later woven into Paul's anthropology[14] as much as his soteriology.[15]

The theological complexities associated with the image-likeness debate should not overshadow the responsibilities bequeathed to humankind. As Middleton suggests, the human godlikeness is to be associated more with 'the special role of representing or imaging God's rule in the world,' rather than a 'substantialistic' interpretation consumed by the comparative natures of image and likeness.[16] By virtue of our 'image' and 'likeness', humans are therefore God's emissaries, bearing a 'royal office or calling' as God's representatives and agents in the world'.[17]

According to Gerhard von Rad and Walter Brueggemann, Genesis is best understood as a redemption story in which *ādām* as a corporeal expression of humankind participates in God's plan of salvation,[18] and, in John Hartley's view, is a 'collective standing for all humanity' - past and present.[19]

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[12] Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, trans. by John J. Scullion (London: SPCK, 1984), p. 158.

[13] John E. Hartley*, Genesis*, New International Bible Commentary, (Cambridge, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Inc., 2000), p. 48.

[14] Acts 17. 22-30.

[15] I Corinthians 15. 22-45.

[16] Middleton, *The Liberating Image*, p. 26.

[17] Ibid., p. 27.

[18] Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, trans. John H. Marks (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1956), p. 55. Also see Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis,* Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982).

[19] John E. Hartley*, Genesis*, p. 48.

Barth locates 'image' and 'likeness' firmly in the relational context of creation as 'the foundation for every "covenant of grace"'.[20] Genesis is, for Barth 'actual instruction about the ground and being of man and his world' as well his duty in the world[21] by which 'God willed to create man as a being corresponding to His own being - in such a way that He Himself […] is the original and prototype and man the copy and imitation'.[22] Humanity therefore has to do with the potential for an I -Thou partnership between God and humanity.[23] The inference is that this call to duty inherent in the *imago dei* includes everyone and is not limited to God's covenant people.

Integral to God's creative design, therefore, is a biblical idea of delegated authority to everyone who shares the divine image. As Christopher Wright advocates, the 'image' involves God 'passing on to human hands a delegated form of God's own kingly authority over the whole of his creation'.[24] Devolved authority therefore becomes the basis for just leadership that defends the poor. This was the admonition given to Pharaoh who oppressed the Hebrew slaves [25] and Nebuchadnezzar who neglected the poor.[26]

In biblical terms then, the image of God includes all humanity in a shared life in God by which everyone becomes a custodian of the created order. In the *imago dei* no nation may avoid its duty to act justly, and all may be called to give account when they fail to discharge this responsibility. This anthropological orientation results in Schillebeeckx displacing an

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[20] Karl Barth, 'The Doctrine of Creation', in *Church Dogmatics, III.1*, ed. by G.W. Bromley & T. F. Torrance (London: T & T Clark, 2009), p. 42.
[21] Ibid., p. 62.
[22] Ibid., p. 196.
[23] Ibid., p. 183.
[24] Christopher J.H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Hyderbad: Authentic 2006), p. 426.
[25] Exodus 5. 2; 6. 1, 29; 9. 27.
[26] Daniel 5. 18.

exclusive Christian anthropology in favour of a common human spirituality in which

Christians and non-Christians engage in the mission of God because they share the nature of

God.[27]

I argue then that Genesis 1. 26, 27 provides a portrait of human nature which, though

complex, offers an understanding of how the *imago dei* implicates all people in God's

mission, not as a theological afterthought, but as a fundamental part of the creation story.

Crucially, the image-likeness provides the most profound embodiment of our shared human

stewardship and accountability to God.

This human interconnectedness that traverses cultural particularities has profound

implications for human behaviour and the moral choices which are made by individuals as

much as by political leaders who carry this delegated responsibility to care for all people. I

propose therefore, that the freedom to choose as described in the creation narrative carries

with it a responsibility to preserve the dignity of all people made in God's image. I briefly

trace this principle through two biblical passages which highlight the relationship between

moral choice and God's response to gratuitous violence.

7.2.2 Moral choice, violence and human dignity (Genesis 2.15-17; 9.6)

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take
care of it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree
in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and
evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." (Genesis 2.15-17)

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[27] Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Mission of the Church* (London: Sheed and Word, 1973), p. 73.

In chapter eight I will explore more fully some of the difficulties associated with the concept of choice. Without returning to the image-likeness debate, the texts suggest the human capacity for moral choice [28] which carries responsibilities. As Brueggemann suggests, in these three verses, we are brought to 'a remarkable statement of anthropology' in which 'human beings before God are characterised by vocation, permission and prohibition'.[29]

In one important area the capacity to exercise choice responsibly and in the interest of one's neighbour is entirely attainable: gratuitous violence. The following text illustrates the relationship between the moral choice to commit gratuitous violence and God's strong disapproval of this action.

> Whoever sheds human blood,
>   by humans shall their blood be shed;
> for in the image of God
>   has God made mankind. (Genesis 9.6)

This text, which has echoes of Cain's brutal murder of his brother, Abel,[30] shows God's intolerance against violations of human dignity. In this covenant with 'all living creatures', homicide is regarded as a direct assault on the image of God and elicits strong condemnation. The text is important in that it binds ontological questions about human nature to human responsibilities. Murder becomes an act of sacrilege because, as Hamilton says, 'to kill another human being is to destroy one who is a bearer of the image of God'.[31] In

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[28] Aquinas, ST I.93.2; Calvin *Institutes*, III.7.6; II. II. 13; Barth *The Doctrine of Creation,* p. 198.
[29] Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, p. 46.
[30] Genesis 4. 1-16.
[31] Hamilton, 'The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17', p. 315.

Westermann's view it is 'a direct attack on God's right and dominion. Every murderer confronts God'[32] because, in the words of von Rad, 'man is God's possession'.[33]

The Noahic covenant is important here, because it positions the dignity of human life within the setting of a universal grace offered not only to Noah, but to all people for all times including those who are likely to rebel against God.[34] The promise to Noah confirmed the forward movement of God's wider plan of salvation and as Brueggemann believes, it 'affected an irreversible change in God'[35] who promised that, 'humankind will never again be forgotten by God'.[36]

I have argued here that the complexities of the image-likeness debate are of secondary importance in exploring a theological basis for engagement in FoRB. More importantly, the texts may be read as portraying a substantial connectedness between God and all humankind that is indispensable to Christian anthropology and the idea of human dignity.

The text shows that God cares for everyone and that all people have dignity because they are made in his image. We are all keepers of everyone and ultimately responsible to God who hears the anguish of everyone who suffers violence, and that violating such responsibilities attracts divine disapproval.

This overview of the image of God suggests a corporate human connectedness and the universal scope of God's care for all people. It offers an initial approach to some key texts in

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[32] Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, p. 468.
[33] von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary,* p. 128.
[34] Genesis 9. 12,13
[35] Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis*, p. 81.
[36] Ibid., pp. 85-86.

Genesis and reflects on CSW's own references to the image of God. I suggest here that it is feasible to regard the idea of the image of God as supporting the notion that everyone has human dignity, that this dignity includes their freedom, and that God holds us accountable for their protection.

Following this brief overview on human dignity from these selected texts I now consider the hypothesis that an appreciation of the universal scope of God's response to human suffering provides an important contribution toward this initial biblical response to FoRB.

7.3 Universalism and FoRB

The *imago dei* and the universality of the Noahic promise cohere with an inclusive redemptive agenda that continues in the promise to Abram for 'all peoples of earth'.[37]

Here, I argue for a universalism that, in Greggs' words, remains consistent with the 'particularity of the Christian faith […] retained in the Christian tradition'.[38] This is not a call to universal salvation. Rather, it reflects the character of the universal Kingdom of God that is concerned with the well-being of everyone bearing his image. It acknowledges Christ's complete and unique death for human sin whilst recognizing that his suffering also has a universal scope that reaches beyond salvation from sin as illustrated in Isaiah's Suffering Servant.

In arguing for this kind of universalism, I will begin with an exploration of the scope of salvation in Isaiah's Suffering Servant which includes ideas of penal substitution, but which

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[37] Genesis 12. 2.
[38] Tom Greggs, *Barth, Origen and Universal Salvation: Restoring Particularity* (Oxford: OUP, 2009), p. xiii.

also embraces the full range of human suffering. I then reflect on ethical ideas in Matthew and Luke which potentially allows for a much wider reading than is usually associated with these passages. I will then offer brief references to the universal ideas of hospitality that flow from Galatians and Hebrews.

7.3.1 The Servant's Suffering (Isaiah 53.4-7)

> Surely he took up our pain
>   and bore our suffering,
> yet we considered him punished by God,
>   stricken by him, and afflicted.
> But he was pierced for our transgressions,
>   he was crushed for our iniquities;
> the punishment that brought us peace was on him,
>   and by his wounds we are healed.
> We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
>   each of us has turned to our own way;
> and the Lord has laid on him
>   the iniquity of us all.
>   He was oppressed and afflicted,
>   yet he did not open his mouth;
> he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
>   and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
>   so he did not open his mouth.

No other Bible text carries the weight of sacrificial suffering as significantly as Isaiah 52.13 - 53.12. It also raises a number of intractable hermeneutical questions. Central to this is the Servant's identity as understood in both the Old and New Testament.

The identity of Isaiah's Servant has been confined exclusively to the Old Testament, portrayed as a New Testament interpretation of the Servant, and also as a character whom Jesus recognised as a prophetic description of himself. What unites all of these approaches however, is the view that the Servant suffered not only as a substitute for sin, but as one who stands in solidarity with all human suffering.

I argue here that in the New Testament, Jesus fully identified himself with the Servant who died a substitutionary death for human sin and with all human suffering and injustice. Such a view reflects CSW's theological understanding of the Servant as both Saviour and liberator.

However, this text and the servant's identity has been problematic. Walter Brueggemann (who identifies the Servant as Israel)[39] states that whilst the text is both '*rich and theologically suggestive*' it remains 'inaccessible and without clear meaning'.[40] Similarly, David Clines' influential work says that 'the references to the servant's "death" are all ambiguous'.[41]

Charles Shepherd's comparison of Duhm, Childs and Motyer's work demonstrates the degree to which hermeneutical presuppositions have been key determinates in identifying the character and work of the Servant. As Shepherd shows, Duhm and Childs apply 'questions of critical historical reconstruction' which limits the role of the Servant to the historical setting of the Old Testament.[42] John Goldingay identifies Isaiah himself as the Servant and

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[39] Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, Westminster Bible Companion (Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1998), p. 143.
[40] Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66,* p. 141.
[41] David Clines, *I, He, We & They: A Literary Approach to Isaiah 53* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1976), p. 29.
[42] Charles Earl Shepherd, 'Theological Interpretation and Isaiah 53: A Study of Bernhard Duhm, Brevard Childs, and Alec Motyer' (unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Durham University, 2012), p. 17. Available at Durham E-Theses Online: <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/5935/>.

sees 'no explicit indication that Isaiah 52.13 - 53.12 is working with a legal model' requiring any form of penal or substitutionary atonement.[43]

Morna Hooker represents the view that Jesus did not regard himself as the fulfilment of Isaiah's Servant: this concept of Jesus as a substitutionary sacrifice she believes, begins in the New Testament writing. [44] The Old Testament metaphor of the Servant, John Goldingay suggests, 'helped the New Testament to understand what Jesus was about'.[45]

In contrast to Duhm and Childs, Motyer's evangelical Christocentric approach that Shepherd describes as his 'core doctrinal conviction'[46] prompts an interpretation in which the long-term application of Isaiah's words may properly be related to the New Testament. [47] Motyer builds on the centrality of Jesus as the Servant, understood subsequently in the New Testament as the crucified, resurrected and ascended Messiah.[48] This Christocentric hermeneutic allows Isaiah's long-range prophecy to be validated by the New Testament witness in which numerous texts associate the suffering of Jesus with the condition of sin.[49]

However, I argue for an identification of the Servant which is consistent with Jesus' own self-description. Jesus alludes to himself as the Son of Man, a 'ransom for many'[50] and the

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[43] John Goldingay, *The Message of Isaiah 40–55: A Literary Theological Commentary* (London: T & T Clark, 2005), p. 485.

[44] Morna D. Hooker, 'Did the Use of Isaiah 53 to Interpret his Mission Begin with Jesus?', in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins*, ed. by. William H. Bellinger Jr., and William R. Farmer (Penns: Trinity Press International, 1998), pp. 88-102.

[45] John Goldingay, *Isaiah for Everyone* (London: SPCK, 2015), p. 206.

[46] Shepherd, 'Theological Interpretation and Isaiah 53', p.15.

[47] Ibid., p.16.

[48] Shepherd, 'Theological Interpretation and Isaiah 53', p.180.

[49] For example, Matthew 1. 21; 26. 28; Acts 4. 8-12; 5. 31; 10. 43; 13. 38,39; 22. 16; Romans 3. 23-25; 4. 25; 5. 6-8; 10. 9; I Corinthians. 15. 3, 14-17.

[50] Matthew 20. 28; Mark 10. 45.

embodiment of Moses' serpent. [51] Whilst the New Testament is not replete with direct

references to Isaiah 53 it is difficult to understand these references in the absence of such

textual consciousness. Indeed, Matthew suggests a clear reference to the Servant figure

fulfilled in Christ[52] and Jesus' self- disclosure as the one of whom the prophets spoke[53] would

suggest an unambiguous Servant self-consciousness. Arguing from Acts 24. 25-27,

therefore, Mikeal Parsons posits Isaiah 53 as 'one of the texts that Luke had in mind when he

referred to Christ's suffering according to the scriptures'.[54]

Whether or not the Servant is understood to have suffered as a substitution for sin, there is

agreement that the Servant is identified with the full spectrum of human suffering and that

this is central to Isaiah's message.

Brueggemann, who discounts the individualised vicarious Messiah 'bearing the sins of many'

(Isaiah 53. 4,11), sees a powerful theology of identification in the first-person pronoun, 'we'

of Isaiah 53. 4.[55] Commenting on Isaiah 53.3 Westermann depicts 'a man of blows and

humiliation caused by sickness' or pain (*mak'ōbā*) identifiable as rejection in other Old

Testament passages .[56] Whybray cites Isaiah as the Servant who will 'share the suffering of

the people rather than suffering in their stead'.[57]

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[51] John 3. 14-16.
[52] Matthew 12. 14-16 is a direct reference to Isaiah 42. 1-4.
[53] Luke 24. 25-27.
[54] Mikeal C. Parsons, 'Isaiah 53 in Acts 8: A Reply to Professor Morna Hooker', in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins*, ed. By. William H. Bellinger Jr., and William R. Farmer (Penns: Trinity Press International, 1998), p. 118.
[55] Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66*, p. 146.
[56] Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, p. 261. He cites, for example: Ps. 38. 18; 69. 27; Job 33. 19.
[57] R.N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66*, New Century Bible (London: Marshal Morgan Scott, 1975), p. 183.

For others such as Oswalt, the Servant did indeed die vicariously suffering *for* the people rather than *with* the people bringing *šalôm* and wellbeing.[58] Motyer's approach speaks, therefore, of a 'complete' and substitutionary death in which,

> The Servant dealt with every aspect of our need. With all the *infirmities* and *sorrows* that blight our lives (4) and the moral and spiritual wrong and guilt that alienates God (5). Positively, in respect of the former he brings us healing (5a) and in respect of the latter, peace (5c).[59]

The Servant therefore dealt 'with our sinful state' (53.4) while also bringing šalôm (53.5) as a 'rounded wholeness comprising personal fulfilment, harmonious society and a secure relationship with God'.[60]

I have reflected here on a complex text but one which goes to the heart of evangelical soteriological concerns. Whilst the exegetical debate about this passage and its application to the New Testament remains difficult, there are those who support the notion that the text relates not only to substitutionary suffering for sin but also describes the Servant as the one who identifies fully with all human suffering.

Irrespective of the challenges posed by this text it seems clear that however the Servant is viewed, commentators agree that his suffering and death should not be limited to ideas of a substitutionary death and that his suffering, universal in its scope, may be understood as addressing all forms of human suffering.

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[58] John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), p. 388.
[59] Alec J.A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Leicester: IVP, 1993), p. 429.
[60] Ibid., p. 430.

In chapter eight I will consider more fully how this non-substitutionary suffering results in a wider 'fellowship of suffering' with non-Christians. In what follows I illustrate ways in which the ethical teachings of Jesus as told by Matthew and Luke may be universally applicable to Christians and non-Christians alike.

7.3.2 The Beatitudes and the ethics of the Kingdom (Matthew 5.1-12)

My aim here is to show that Matthew's ethical teaching in the Sermon on the Mount may be read as a set of kingdom principles which, even though aimed at his would-be followers, were at least in part, also accessible to those beyond his inner circle of disciples. My submission then, is that the Sermon may suggest a universal ethic, which affirms human relatedness in God as Father.[61]

As a Jewish author Matthew was conscious of the magnitude of Jesus' universal kingdom[62] and his careful genealogy from Abraham through David to Jesus the Messiah [63] suggests Matthew's concern to depict Jesus as Messiah and Servant.

In the Matthean soteriology, an individual born of a woman would be called Jesus because he would die for the sins of his people.[64] Matthew thereafter has a number of references to Isaiah's prophecies[65] including statements directly identifying Jesus as the Servant.[66] In

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[61] My assertion here comes from the fact that God as Father is a key feature of the Sermon, as in Matthew 5. 45
[62] Matthew begins with the most extensive genealogy in the New Testament (Matthew 1. 1 -17) and concludes with the church's most elaborate Commission (Matthew 28.16-20).
[63] Matthew 1.1-17.
[64] Matthew 1. 21.
[65] Matthew 1. 23; 3. 3; 4. 16.
[66] Matthew 8. 17; 12. 15-21.

Matthew's perspective, the authentic Servant leads his disciples and the crowd to the mountain where he would announce the ethical characteristics of his would-be disciples.

The Sermon on the Mount is the setting in which Jesus offers his most extensive kingdom ethic. In proposing a universal reading in Matthew's account therefore, I raise questions regarding the degree to which this ethic may have been accessible to those who were not or would not become disciples.

The entire Sermon recorded in Matthew 5.1-7.29 is important. Matthew appears to have in mind a community in which would-be disciples are made aware of a covenant in which they become God's offspring and 'brothers' through obedience.[67] Nevertheless, Matthew seems to provide important insights that challenged the exclusivism of his audience.

Three indicators suggest that in Matthew's mind, Jesus might have been doing more than offering an exclusive and wholly non-transferable ethic for the disciples. To begin, I briefly mention Jesus' audience which was wider than his immediate disciples. More importantly, Jesus' references to the ones who are blessed (μακάριοι) and the merciful (ἐλεήμονες) seem to suggest that the Sermon may have a universal application beyond Jesus' closest followers. Finally, I will draw some wider inferences based on these suppositions.

Firstly, I suggest that the Sermon, addressed to a Jewish crowd, was nevertheless offered to a group wider than Jesus' immediate disciples. As a prelude to the Sermon, Matthew 4. 23-25 is clear that a large crowd is gathering and in Terence Donaldson's words, Jesus begins his

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[67] The term 'Father' or 'sons' of God is used some thirteen times in this passage. 'Brother' occurs on three occasions.

'messianic ministry among the crowds'.[68] It is therefore feasible that many who heard and were inspired by his message did so without subsequently becoming committed followers of Jesus. Indeed, if the Sermon, which is not shared with Mark's material, was drawn from 'a variety of Jesus' teachings on related topics as Craig Keener suggests,[69] they may be regarded as principles of the kingdom rather than a strict catechism for committed disciples.

Secondly, the 'blessedness' of which Jesus speaks describes the 'happy ones' (μακάριοι) that exhibit a lifestyle prescribed by the values associated with the kingdom Jesus inaugurates in the Sermon. Clearly, there is overwhelming evidence that the New Testament's understanding of μακάριοι is descriptive of those who have been identified as followers of Christ.[70] The only notable exception appears in Luke 23. 29 where Jesus ascribes this word more ambiguously and suggests that barren women (presumably during the anticipated fall of Jerusalem) should regard themselves as blessed. In this admittedly unique instance, μακάριοι is sufficiently broad to be tentatively applied beyond the disciples. Jesus' idea of μακάριοι however, is illustrative of the complexity associated with the Sermon.

This arises because Matthew chapters 5-7 presents us with two realities: highly demanding teachings which are exclusively descriptive of Jesus' would-be followers, and universal ethical imperatives - including murder, adultery and revenge - exemplified in the disciples' lives but that may be applicable to all human relationships.[71]

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[68] Terence L Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain: A Study in Matthean Theology* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1985), p. 106.
[69] Craig S. Keener, *Matthew*, The IVP New Testament Commentary (Leicester: IVP, 1997), p. 103.
[70] Matthew 11. 6; 13. 16; 21. 9; 23. 39; Mark 10. 16; Luke 2. 34; 6. 20-22; 7. 23; Romans 4. 6; 4. 8. I Peter 3. 14.
[71] Matthew 5. 21-22; 5. 27-30; 5. 38-42.

As with the Ten Commandments there are ethical principles at work here which, whilst applicable to a covenant relationship, are held up as a mirror to a wider society.

Thirdly, μακάριοι is reflected in the 'happiness' associated with the merciful (ἐλεήμονες). Admittedly, the Septuagint (LXX) has a strong allied covenant understanding of mercy (*hesed)* by which God relates to humankind.[72] New Testament ἔλεος is most frequently associated with God's actions toward people.[73] However, 'mercy' between individuals occurs sparingly: in this text and again in Matthew 18.33 where Jesus' parable castigates a servant who failed to show mercy. Matthew is clear that ἔλεος includes 'giving to the needy and should be done in secret'.[74] Significantly, Jesus challenges pedantic worship that omits the greater matters of 'justice, mercy and faithfulness'.[75] It is precisely this hypocrisy that is highlighted in the story of the 'good' Samaritan who as the outsider demonstrated a quality of ἔλεος toward the stranger who had been robbed which Israel's religious leaders palpably failed to accomplish.[76]

In setting out these exegetical observations, my purpose is not to undermine their implications for Christian discipleship. Rather, I aim to demonstrate that, like the Ten Commandments, these kingdom principles may be emulated by people made in God's image who are expected to act in the interest of the common good.

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[72] Colin Brown, gen ed 'Mercy' in *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* Vol 2 ed. by Lothar Coenen, Erich Beyreuther and Hans Bietenhard (Grand Rapids: Paternoster Press, 1992), p. 594.
[73] Matthew 15. 22; 17. 15; 20. 30; Luke 1. 58; Romans 9. 15-18.
[74] Matthew 6. 2.
[75] Matthew 23. 23.
[76] Luke 10. 37.

What follows therefore, is an argument for a more universal application of the Sermon. In doing so I now explore the exegetical material more fully and respond to opinions which run contrary to this view.

Martin Lloyd-Jones claims that the Sermon amounts to a 'complete portrayal and representation of the Christian'.[77] Stanley Hauerwas likewise sees in it 'a description of the life of a people gathered around Jesus'.[78] Hauerwas argues that the characteristics identified in the Beatitudes are shared exclusively within the Christian community.[79] Stassen and Gushee who see resonances of the Sermon with Isaiah 61 describe it as 'marks of the discipleship that participates in the larger drama of the reign of God'.[80] Similarly, Richard Rohr's devotional commentary on the passage suggests that the Beatitudes are so important that they are addressed, 'not to the crowds or the disciples, but to the inmost circle of the Twelve'.[81] Rohr's inference at this point is that these teachings were addressed to an exclusive inner group of disciples as opposed to the masses.

Evidently, the Sermon is intended as a way of identifying the distinguishing features of true disciples. How these ideas were to be applied by Christian disciples was precisely Bonhoeffer's concern about the dangers of 'cheap grace' that regard these teachings as optional and ethereal principles. Bonhoeffer's *Cost of Discipleship,* written as an invective against a selective application of the Sermon, defended the literal application of these

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[77] D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* (London: IVP, 1959), p. 26.
[78] Stanley Hauerwas, *Matthew*, SCM Theological Commentary on the Bible (London: SCM Press, 2006), p. 61.
[79] Ibid., p. 64-65.
[80] Glen H. Stassen & David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics, Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003), p. 37.
[81] Richard Rohr, *Jesus' Plan for a New World: The Sermon on the Mount* (Ohio: Franciscan Media, 1996), p. 129.

teachings for Christian ethics.[82] These concerns should not be easily dismissed and Stephen

Mott lists a number of scholars who apply the New Testament ethic to personal Christian

lifestyle rather than as guides for public morality.[83]

I propose that a more inclusive application of the Sermon is still available to us which both

respects the high ethical code which Jesus laid down for his disciples as 'salt' and 'light' and

a more universal ethic which is offered in the inclusive kingdom of God. Such an approach is

also feasible for whilst these teachings do indeed describe the profile of Christian disciples,

there is no suggestion that they lead to personal salvation or are limited to those who are

saved by grace.

Whilst acknowledging the priority of discipleship intended in this text, I will present a

number of objections to this exclusive reading which I believe are justified from the text and

which reflects Matthew's kingdom orientation as opposed to a pastoral-ecclesial reading.

Firstly, it is the more unpredictable character of the kingdom rather than ecclesial order that

sets the stage for Matthew's Sermon. Having said that, it is not my purpose here to discuss

the relationship between the church (ἐκκλησία) and the kingdom (βασιλεία) in Matthew's

thinking. Whilst Matthew's reference to the ἐκκλησία is unique in the gospels,[84] more than

any other gospel, it is the kingdom that dominates his thinking.

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[82] Perhaps Bonhoeffer more than most theologians wrestled with the inherent tensions in reconciling the literal demands of the Sermon on the Mount for Christian discipleship with its application in social and political life. In her study of nineteen scholars' responses to the Sermon, Bauman deals extensively with Bonhoeffer's dilemma: Clarence Bauman, *The Sermon on The Mount: Its History of Interpretation in Modern Times*, PhD University of Edinburgh, 1974, pp. 347-385. Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*, pp. 125-145.
[83] Stephen Mott, *Jesus and Social Ethics* (Nottingham: Grove Books, 1984), pp. 3-4.
[84] Matthew 16. 18.

Hans Küng has shown that the kingdom 'is at the very heart of Jesus' preaching'.[85] The

church he insists, 'must not shut itself off from the world in a spirit of asceticism, but live in

the everyday world, inspired by the radical obedience of love towards God's will'.[86]

Likewise, Chris Sugden identifies the kingdom as the basis for the disciple's commission in

which God's mission work includes forgiveness, justice and a renewed creation.[87] According

to Mott, it is precisely God's reign that provides the 'context for God's universal ethical

concern'.[88] This view is entirely consistent with a universalism in which God's people were

admonished to go beyond the most sacred law of love for neighbour to love for one's

enemy.[89] These were to be the hallmarks of the universal kingdom of justice.

Secondly, evident in the Sermon is a tension which exists between an apparently exclusive

pedagogy designed for would-be disciples and the more inclusive character of the kingdom

typified in Jesus's teaching. In defending this view, I have made tangential observations

about Jesus' proximity to the crowds.

This ambivalence between a strict call to discipleship and its wider societal application is

reflected in a number of commentators. As will be discussed shortly, both Rohr and Stassen

and Gushee present contexts to the Sermon which appear to be far wider than their exclusive

conclusions suggest. As Bauman has shown, Bonhoeffer himself wrestled with this inherent

tension. In his later years Bonhoeffer offered a wider application of the Sermon's ethical

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[85] Hans Küng, *The Church* (London: Search Press, 1978), p. 45.
[86] Ibid., p. 101.
[87] Chris Sugden, 'A Presentation of the Concern For Kingdom Ethics' in *Kingdom and Creation in Social Ethics*, Grove Ethical Studies No. 79 (Nottingham: Grove Books Ltd., 1990), p. 12.
[88] Mott, *Jesus and Social Ethics*, p. 9.
[89] Matthew 5. 43-46.

principles as an aid to human capacity to do good. Significantly, he modified his tone on the Sermon, insisting that 'we shouldn't run man down in his worldliness, but confront him with God at his strongest point'.[90]

Thirdly, the assertion that the Sermon was addressed exclusively to the committed disciples on the mountain and throughout Christian history limits the ethical applicability of the Sermon to a degree that seems inconsistent with openness of the kingdom Jesus was inaugurating.

As shown above there are compelling reasons for suggesting that the blessedness attached to this passage should include a wider group beyond the immediate disciples and this may be deduced from the fact that Jesus' Sermon was addressed to individuals who would never respond to his invitation to discipleship.

This in no way displaces the unique obligations of Christian disciples. Rather, as Schillebeeckx suggests, 'salvation which is actively present in the whole of mankind, is given in the church'.[91] It is precisely this 'concreteness of the Scripture'[92] that gives the Sermon its breadth of social application and opens more inclusive dimensions for the Sermon without neutralising the specificity of its demands on Christian disciples.

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[90] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (London: The Folio Society, 2002), p. 308.
[91] Edward Schillebeeckx, *The Mission of the Church* (London: Sheed and Word, 1973), p. 46.
[92] Mott, *Jesus and Social Ethics,* p. 19.

Bauman is right to refute the idea that Jesus's teaching was 'too lofty for ordinary men in usual circumstances', and that his demands are therefore intended exclusively for the original disciples 'transfigured by the divine aura of their master'.[93]

Fourthly, a cognitive gap becomes evident as a number of commentators attempt to apply the specific demands of the Beatitudes to praxis. I will discuss this gap with regard to Jesus' blessings on the 'poor in spirit' and the 'merciful'.

Committed as they are to 'recover the Sermon on the Mount for Christian ethics',[94] Stassen and Gushee apply a very liberal reading of the virtues in the Sermon. The 'poor in spirit' is, by their own example, open to an audience much wider than the disciples so that, '[i]n the Bible the poor rely more on God. Just spend some time serving the poor in a homeless shelter and talk with people long enough to get to know them'.[95] The suggestion is that as God delivers the humble and the poor, 'Jesus's followers can rejoice – because as a community we participate in this deliverance'.[96] The authors appear to apply the same openness in relation to those who suffer for righteousness.[97] Even more striking is their approach to 'mercy', which they regard as 'a human virtue as well as a divine attribute'.[98]

This ambiguity exists too in Rohr's work for whom the poor (πτωχοὶ) means 'the bent-over beggars, the little nobodies of this world who have nothing left'.[99] Such a description cannot belong entirely to disciples. It is difficult to see, for example, how this describes wealthy

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[93] Bauman, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 587.
[94] Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics,* p. 11.
[95] Ibid., p. 38.
[96] Ibid., p. 39.
[97] Ibid., p. 42
[98] Ibid., p. 43.
[99] Rohr, *Jesus' Plan for a New World*, p. 130.

Christians today. More aptly in today's world this may be applied to countless millions outside of the Christian Communion.

Renè Padilla has no such ambiguities and insists that 'the beatitude is pronounced from the perspective of the poor' and that the spiritualizing of 'the poor' reflects the mindset of those who have no material need.[100]

The 'merciful' is perhaps the characteristic which relates most closely to the profile of individuals associated with the field of human rights and FoRB. As has been suggested, 'merciful' has deep theological import for those who find themselves within the embrace of God's forgiveness and who are therefore called upon to show mercy. However, there is biblical warrant suggesting that this virtue is within the moral reach of individuals who bear the image of God even if they are unlikely to become disciples.

Whilst mercy is associated closely with forgiveness in his thinking, Rohr suggests that through mercy, 'God has made a covenant with creation' which is 'written in the divine image within us. It's given, it sits there'.[101] As William Barclay says, the merciful is 'the man who gets right inside other people' and finds that 'others will do the same for him'.[102] Similarly the peacemakers are 'doing a Godlike work'.[103] Understood in this way, Davies believes that the blessings bestowed on the merciful 'need no qualification'.[104]

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[100] Padilla, *Mission Between the Times*, p. 188.

[101] Ibid., p. 137.

[102] William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew, Vol.1, Chapter 1-10*, *Daily Study Bible* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1975), p. 105.

[103] Ibid., p. 110.

[104] W.D. Davies and Dale Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew, Vol. 3* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), p. 429.

Fifthly, such a restricted ethic and public morality overturns the principles of natural law and common grace by which all human beings have an inherent ability to comprehend and partially respond to God's expectations. It seems implausible therefore, that Christian ethical teaching would exclude non-Christians from aspiring to love one's neighbour as oneself, refrain from murder or exempt themselves from justice, mercy and humility.[105]

If indeed the Sermon is about action aided by character, Reed is right to remind us that human goodness is a universal human disposition that may appear in religious guise but is not always prompted by religious conviction.[106] Thus, the pursuit of ethical standards in partnership with non-Christians, Hollenbach argues, is a critical feature of Christian witness for the common good.[107]

Unless the Sermon is entirely indifferent to public morality, spirituality and ethics, Christians should assume that natural law would have something to contribute to its application in public life - in the same way that the Lord's Prayer is permissible on the lips of non-Christians who choose to identify with its principles. Indeed, Aquinas' thoughts on connaturality addressed in chapter six, and the idea that men and women experience happiness by doing the right thing would seem to be an important issue on which Christians should reflect in considering the Sermon on the Mount.

Finally, as a brief addition, the New Testament idea of grace is consistent with doing good works. Believers are called and equipped to do good works.[108] However, as discussed earlier

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[105] Micah 6. 8.
[106] Esther Reed, *The Ethics of Human Rights,* p. 85.
[107] Hollenbach, *Common Good*, p. 149.
[108] Ephesians. 2. 8-10.

this does not discount God's common grace at work in non-Christians. Common grace and its mediating power at work in everyone is therefore worthy of more attention as theological reflection responds to the tensions between strict catechism and public ethics in the Sermon.

I argue then, that as an introduction to the kingdom, Matthew 5.1-12 may be read as foundational principles for a peaceful community of co-existence exemplified by grace most fully and consistently expressed in the followers of Jesus.

What the Sermon allows, however, is the potential for an inclusive blessedness to those who, by common grace and the *imago dei* fall in line with kingdom behaviour. As Tom Wright puts it, the 'wonderful news' means that 'people who are already like that are in good shape'.[109] In the Sermon it is therefore conceivable that Jesus offers an extensive kingdom ethic, exemplified most fully in the community of disciples but which nonetheless is conceivable for everyone who shares the *imago dei.*

In the following section I suggest that Matthew's eschatology also offers an interpretation which may be understood from a more universal perspective than is customary.

7.3.3 Eschatology and ethics (Matthew 25. 31-46)

My aim here is not to detail Matthew's eschatology *per se*: the intention is again to identify underlying ethical principles that act as performance indicators in the last days.

The chapter contains three illustrations: the story of the virgins, (25.1-13), the talents (25.14-30), and the sheep and goats. The final story introduces three important ideas which may

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[109] Tom Wright, *Matthew for Everyone, Part I: Chapters 1-15* (London: SPCK, 2002), p. 36.

suggest a universal reading in Matthew's work: 'all the nations' (25.32), the acts of kindness (25.35-39) and critically, 'the least of these, brothers and sisters' (25.40, 45). In keeping with my focus on a proposed universal ethic, I will limit my attention to the references to 'all the nations' and 'the least of these'.

Firstly, Matthew describes a final judgement in which people from 'all the nations' (25.32) gather to be separated for reward or punishment based on their acts of kindness (25.35, 36) to 'the least of these brothers' (25.40). Matthew's equation is that people become identifiable as sheep based on their kindness to 'the least of these brothers'. The debate about the inter-relatedness of these three features in this passage reflects the degree to which scholars accept the Matthean version of universalism as much as their understanding of who is eligible for eternal salvation.

The question arises: what is meant by 'all the nations'? Robert Gundry, for example, concedes that 'all the nations' cannot be restricted to the disciples and rightly resists the notion that this implies universal salvation for all the nations.

Donald Hagner accepts that 'all the nations' means all humanity, but like Cranfield, Ladd and other scholars, he suggests that 'the principle articulated here concerns in the first instance, deeds of mercy done to disciples […] and only by extrapolation to others'.[110] He does not accept that Jesus' original words would have any universal connotations. Similarly, Don Carson says that 'the fate of the nations will be determined by how they respond to Jesus'

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[110] Donald A Hagner, *Matthew 14-28,* Word Biblical Commentary (Texas: Word Books, 1995), p. 745.

followers, […] charged with spreading the gospel and do[ing] so in the face of hunger, thirst, illness and imprisonment.[111]

The imagery of all nations used here should be understood in the Hebraic tradition of a God who alone is able to summon the entire creation for a judicial hearing.[112] The text does not promote universal salvation based on 'all the nations'. Rather, it may be read as a universal canvas for Matthew's apocalyptic ideas to which he returns in the closing verses of his book.

Secondly, by way of definition, Grundy insists that 'the least of these' should be limited to the 'Christian refugee'[113] who 'carried the gospel from place to place as they fled from persecution'.[114] However, the text does not require such a restricted understanding of 'the least of these'.

Without marginalising the reference to 'sisters', the argument that 'brothers' (ἀδελφοῖς) relates to his disciples is well attested in Matthew's Gospel[115] and more extensively in the New Testament.[116] However, beyond blood relations, 'brother' was applicable to 'the crowds and to his disciples'.[117] Paul used the word to address the synagogue officials,[118] the crowds in Ephesus,[119] and the Sanhedrin in this way.[120] Not only were these individuals not blood relatives, they were, in varying degrees, hostile to the gospel he preached.

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[111] D. A. Carson, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Michigan: Zondervan, 1984), p. 520.
[112] Psalm 79. 6, 10; 82. 8; 86. 9; 96. 10; 99. 1.
[113] Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 513.
[114] Ibid., p. 514.
[115] Matthew 12. 46-49; 28. 10.
[116] Luke 8. 21; John 20. 17; Romans. 8. 29.
[117] Matt. 23. 8.
[118] Acts 15. 7
[119] Acts 22. 1.
[120] Acts 23. 1-6

One two occasions 'brothers' may be understood more generically as 'humankind'.[121] Consequently, the flexibility associated with 'the least of these brothers' should not be used as an exegetical constraint on Matthean universalism.

Matthew's 'least' appears synonymous with caring for vulnerable children as 'the little ones'. These 'little ones' associated with eternal rewards[122] are also regarded as lost sheep.[123] Clearly, 'the least of these brothers and sisters' becomes critical in Matthew's approach. As Davies suggests, 'the least of these' aligns with 'all in distress [as] more consistent with the command to ignore distinctions between insiders and outsiders'.[124]

Moreover, the suggestion that the nations will be judged by their response to the needs of Jesus' disciples exclusively is similarly unduly restrictive and militates against the biblical principles of caring for the poor. There is no biblical precedent that caring for the poor and destitute should be limited to the covenant people. Indeed, the birth of Israel as a people was informed by injunctions to care for the stranger.[125] This is a theme to which we will return in reviewing the Galatians and Hebrew texts below. Rather than limiting 'the least of these brothers' to a post-Resurrection description of persecuted Christians, it is more in keeping with the Old Testament to assume that Jesus wishes to draw attention to the kingdom of God and its concern for all people who suffer injustices and human deprivation.

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[121] W. E. Vine, 'Brother, Brethren, Brotherhood, Brotherly' in *Expository Dictionary of Bible Words* (London: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1981), p. 155. Vine cites ἀδελφῶν (Matthew 25. 40) and ἀδελφοῖς ὁμοιωθῆναι (Hebrews 2. 17).
[122] Matthew 18. 1-9.
[123] Matthew 18. 10-14.
[124] W.D. Davies, 'A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew', in *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew 3 vols* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), p. 429.
[125] Deuteronomy 24. 17 - 22; Leviticus 25. 35; Proverbs 27. 13.

In this passage, Matthew proposes that at the end of the age, God will call all nations to acknowledge that in the kingdom a sobering continuity exists between eternal reward and our willingness to offer practical help to 'the least of these'. Despite the variety of approaches to this passage I argue that this text can still be regarded as a call to care for everyone in need regardless of their faith or identity - including the prisoner.[126] All of this 'supports the universalist interpretation'[127] and Jesus' injunction to love our enemies.[128]

I suggest therefore, that this theme of God's care for all people is reflected in Jesus' ethical teaching in which Jesus introduces his listeners to the open facility of the kingdom.[129] This ethical teaching also addressed the deep antipathies between Jews and Gentiles. The story which demonstrates this kingdom response to the 'other' is best summed up in the story of the 'good' Samaritan to which I will now refer.

7.3.4 The ethics of the 'good' Samaritan (Luke 10. 25-37)

As shown in the chart above, the 'good' Samaritan was clearly a significant part of CSW's story. Typically, it was spoken of as an example of selfless kindness to the *other* and appended to their own specialism as human rights activists. A third of respondents made unsolicited references to the 'good' Samaritan as a source of inspiration for praxis. Cynthia identified the biblical licence in this story: 'What I like about working for CSW' she said, 'is that our mandate is to work for all faiths and none. But I don't think the church gets that'.[130]

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[126] W.D. Davies, 'A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew' in *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew 3 vols* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1997), p. 423.
[127] Ibid., p. 422.
[128] Ibid., p. 429.
[129] Matthew 13. 31
[130] Cynthia, 15 December 2015.

Kathy demonstrated this universal understanding, linking acts of kindness to the *other*.

> The Samaritan reached out to somebody who actually otherwise rejected him. This is
> the Samaritan. And at the same time the people who should have helped this guy
> actually walked by completely.[131]

Kathy's reference was infused with biblical concepts rather than specific texts admitting that,

> the scriptures just go out my head but some of our founding scriptures or key
> scriptures like, "this is the fast that God has chosen", that we're here to lose the heavy
> burdens and set captives free and those captives are not necessarily only the Christian
> ones.

The reference to the Samaritan was an indication of the degree to which the illustration has

come to dominate cultural awareness so that, in the words of John Paul II, 'The Good

Samaritan is everyman who is overwhelmed by the suffering of others'.[132]

Luke's account places Jesus in the Transjordan region between Galilee and Jerusalem where

Jews and Samaritans were historically poor neighbours.[133] Calling Jesus a Samaritan was

equivalent to calling him demonic[134] and earlier, his disciples advocated calling down fire on

Samaritans[135] whom they regarded as enemies rather than outcasts.[136]

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[131] Kathy, 27 August 2015.
[132] Pope John Paul II, *Feast of Our Blessed Lady of Lourdes, the Sixth Year of our Pontificate* (St Peters, Rome, 11 February 1984), VII. 28.
[133] John 4. 9.
[134] John 8. 48.
[135] Luke 9. 51-56.
[136] James Edwards, *The Gospel according to Luke*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Nottingham: Apollos, 2015), p. 322.

Unlike Matthew and Mark's Gospels, Luke's abrupt beginning avoids the events immediately before this incident.[137] Having failed to trap Jesus in the presence of the Sadducee and fellow lawyers, the Pharisee's indignation led him to 'justify himself' - literally 'to make himself righteous' (10. 29). Jesus' response, unique to Luke's account, redefined the meaning of neighbour.[138]

The story that follows identifies 'a certain person' with unspecified ethnicity or religion beaten, bleeding and left for dead on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho and ignored by religious leaders.

However, in this shocking story Luke sets out to do more than encourage charitable behaviour. Through the teaching of Jesus, he introduces his audience to a universal appreciation of 'neighbour' in which the enemy from an alien culture and religion demonstrated biblical tolerance for the 'other'.

Crucially, Jesus did not use the adjective, 'good'. The modern inclusion of '*good*' Samaritan is therefore a diversion from the disturbing illustration of what it means to treat your enemy as your neighbour. Popularising 'a Samaritan' as 'the Good Samaritan' diminishes the key emphasis. If the Samaritan is understood as a moral hero this only serves to illustrate the possibility of a new moral universe in which a Samaritan became recognisable as

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[137] Matt. 22. 34-40; Mark 12. 28-31.
[138] Edwards, 'The Gospel according to Luke', p. 319. Here Edwards notes that in first century Judaism 'neighbour' was understood as all Israelites including strangers who shared the land with them [Leviticus 19. 34] but not Gentiles.

compassionate by identifying with the suffering of *another*. What this Samaritan achieved was to redefine the meaning of 'neighbour' in a way which institutional religion failed to do.

Luke's Gospel addressed to a Greek nobleman, Theophilus,[139] was arguably intended to introduce him to a new ethic that transcended religious cultures through relationship with Jesus. We can assume that this was Luke's way of profiling a Messiah who was reconstructing a new kind of community response to the *other*. In doing so he was willing to exonerate the enemy, preventing hate speech against them,[140] healing and allowing them to worship him.[141]

Beyond its moral message about good works, the story illustrates Tom Wright's observation that Jesus' ministry 'dramatically redefines the covenant boundary of Israel, of the Torah itself, and by strong implication the Temple cult'.[142] As Edwards suggests, 'for first century Judaism, as in the OT, '"neighbor" designated Israelites including strangers who shared the land with them [Lev. 19.34], but not Gentiles'.[143]

As mentioned earlier, the story of the 'good' Samaritan introduced an important theological dimension: as an outsider it was a Samaritan who demonstrated 'mercy' (ἔλεος) when the religious establishment failed to fulfil its own law of love.

What it meant to be a neighbour changed that day because, as Edwards states, in Jesus' mind, 'one does not *have* a neighbor; one is a neighbor, or better, becomes a neighbor […] it is a

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[139] This is my assumption from Acts 1:1.
[140] Luke 9. 51-56.
[141] Luke 9. 11-19.
[142] N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 2004), p. 307.
[143] Edwards, 'The Gospel According to Luke', p. 319.

choice one makes to those who need it 'irrespective of ethnic, religious, cultic, or radical differences'.[144] In this story Jesus upholds the principle of defending an individual without defending the religious edifice of the Samaritans.

In this universally known fable Jesus reinterprets and demonstrates what it means to transcend one's own religious and cultural worldview and to empathise completely with the *other.* It has therefore been an invaluable tool in communicating religious freedom across religious and political boundaries. I am suggesting therefore that the story of the Samaritan illustrates the protection of individuals whose faith and political culture may be entirely at odds with the Christian faith.

Indeed, the story, which illustrates a new way of being neighbour demonstrates Jesus' ethical response to his own culture whilst emphasizing the importance of hospitality - a theme which would have been important to his listeners. In what follows, I argue that this theme of hospitality presented in Galatians and Hebrews was intended for Christian and non-Christian alike.

Even where there is a suggestion that the Matthean material is exclusively intended for Jesus' disciples, the story of the Samaritan presents 'mercy' as behavior which can be demonstrated by anyone to everyone.

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[144] Ibid. pp. 323-4.

7.3.5 Hospitality in Galatians and Hebrews

In this final section I include two texts that appeared to be woven into the fabric of CSW's culture and more prominently within the Group A1. Although Galatians 6.10 was mentioned only once during the interviews, I frequently encountered Galatians 6.10 and Hebrews 13.3 in conversations and in office documents. These texts therefore became key verses in the transitional work undertaken in *Faith in FoRB?*

Both texts are also important in that they speak to the duty of care that the church was expected to extend as a mark of its mission. They raise two important questions: who are the beneficiaries of the church's acts of mercy? Does the teaching throw any light on Matthew's understanding of 'the least of these brothers'?

Galatians 6.10

> Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.

The author writes primarily to Gentile Christians who were wrestling with the influences of Jewish believers. As a result of the internal tensions,[145] Paul presents a version of the gospel consistent with Jewish history, but which was also dependent on faith in Jesus Christ.[146] Irrespective of the dating of the letter it is presumably written in the climate of the cultural and religious turmoil associated with the Council of Jerusalem (AD 49). Galatians should therefore be approached, not only as an indication of theological conflict, but also in its wider

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[145] Galatians 2.1-15.
[146] Galatians 3-5.

context of ethnic diversity. In this setting Paul was obliged to confront Peter about his own attitude to Gentile Christians.[147]

The likelihood is that in 'doing good to all people' Paul is speaking about alms giving and prioritises 'the family of believers'. Set against its immediate context Galatians 6.7-9 offers encouragement based on future eschatological hope: because God faithfully rewards good deeds, Christians should not become weary about doing good. Some commentators see here a reference to Christians supporting other Christians exclusively.[148] This reading would be consistent with the narrow reading of 'the least of these' discussed in Matthew.

What Paul means by 'to all people' (πρὸς πάντας) in comparison to 'the family of believers' is of particular importance. James Boice believes that Paul speaks 'broadly about the obligation to do good to all men whilst prioritizing Christians'.[149] Others, like Thomas Schreiner, suggest that although priority is given to believers, 'the "all" includes unbelievers',[150] and Richard Longenecker suggests that πρὸς πάντας shows a universalism which is tempered by prioritizing believers.[151] Leon Morris says that while prioritising Christians we are called to 'enlarge our horizons'[152] by reaching out to non-Christians. Douglas Moo claims that in spite of the internal tensions 'the Galatian Christians are to manifest the love of Christ and grace of God to all'.[153]

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[147] Galatians 2.11-16.
[148] Alan Cole, *Galatians: An Introduction, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (London: Tyndale Press, 1969), p. 179.
[149] James Montgomery Boice, *Galatians*, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), p. 504.
[150] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), p. 371.
[151] Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1990), p. 282.
[152] Leon Morris, *Galatians: Paul's Charter for Christian Freedom* (Leicester: IVP, 1996), p. 184.
[153] Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), p. 389.

Hans Dieter Betz regards this injunction as a timeless Christian value.[154] Doing good, he suggests is thus definitively doing *the good* as a singular work of the Spirit and the Christian community is therefore 'obliged to disregard all ethnic, national, cultural, social, sexual, and even religious distinctions within the human community'. In what Betz regards as a 'high-flying universalism' that is modelled in the Christian community,[155] this text can be read as a call to do good to everyone, not just those in the family of believers.

In this final section I will consider how this theme of hospitality in Hebrews contributes to our exegetical foundation for engagement in FoRB. The study includes comparisons of issues of brotherhood and mercy already mentioned in the Matthean material.

> Hebrews 13.1- 3

>> Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. **2** Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.
>> Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.

The text offers reassurance as much as a reminder of Christian obligations to those who are actually suffering for the faith. However, I will argue that this initial reading does not necessarily prohibit an exegetical position which rules out hospitality for non-Christians who may be experiencing incarceration.

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[154] Hans Dieter Betz, *Galatians: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Churches in Galatia* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), p. 310.
[155] Ibid. p. 311.

Like Galatians, the book acts as a theological bridge between the Jewish communities and the emerging Christian community (chapters 3-9). Jesus as the universal Saviour is to be worshipped and emulated (chapters 1, 2, 9,10,13). In any event it is likely that these Christians were also victims of institutional persecution either from Jewish authorities or their Roman overlords.[156] Thomas Hewitt suggests that the letter was addressed to Hebrew converts who formed 'a definite society or group of readers, who had steadfastly endured persecution and suffered the loss of property'.[157]

William Lane is reluctant to extend the New Testament reading of 'brotherly' to anyone beyond the immediate Christian community. He reasons that in the LXX 'brotherly' was limited to blood relations and when used by Jesus would have been restricted to his immediate disciples.[158] Therefore one's 'neighbour in the Levitical sense should be understood as the confessing community'.[159] Lane draws an immediate catechetical parallel with Matthew's Gospel which doesn't necessarily advance his case:

> Do not neglect hospitality to strangers Heb. 13.2 (Matt. 25.35)
> Remember those in prison Heb. 13.3 (Matt. 25.36)

Lane's reading of the text, shared by other scholars including William Barclay,[160] Brooke Westcott[161] and James Moffatt,[162] is that within the marginalised Christian community,

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[156] Acts 4. 23-27; 10. 23-47;15. 5-19;16. 19-40.
[157] Thomas Hewitt, *Hebrews: An Introduction and Commentary, Tyndale New Testament* Commentaries (London: Tyndale, 1973), p. 32.
[158] John 13. 34, 35; 15. 12,17.
[159] William Lane, *Hebrews 9-13*, *Word Biblical Commentary* (Texas: Word Books, 1991), p. 510.
[160] William Barclay, *The Letter to the Hebrews, The Daily Study Bible* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrews Press, 1979), pp. 190 -193.
[161] Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews: The Greek Text* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 430.
[162] James Moffatt, *Epistle to the Hebrews, International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1924), pp. 224-226.

roving missionaries and poor Christians struggled to find suitable accommodation or hospitality. Indeed, Christians gained a positive reputation by demonstrating hospitality to those 'who became outcasts, the objects of contempt and ill-treatment, because of their faith'.[163]

This reading of Hebrews 13.1-3 raises obstacles already found in Matthew 25 in that the use of 'brothers' (Hebrews 13. 2) suggests an exclusive duty of care for Christians 'who are mistreated' and in prison (13.3). As discussed earlier, the reference to 'brothers' - and by inference 'sisters' - is not conclusive evidence that the term would not have been understood more widely by the time Hebrews was written. Moreover, the juxtaposition of 'brothers and sisters' with 'strangers' to describe members of the same community appears incongruous. 'Strangers' would seem to be as applicable to outsiders as much as it might to roving Christians.

Whilst Alan Kreider has argued that such openness became restricted as opposition grew and Christians became more cautious,[164] a privatised Christian hospitality appears at odds with the openness and public witness endorsed by Peter's letter.[165]

It seems evident that the book of Hebrews was written from an insider perspective and was undoubtedly a pastoral injunction for Christians to stand in solidarity with other Christians. However, as a hermeneutic for Christian praxis that flows with the nature of the biblical attitude to 'the stranger' and Jesus' model of a Samaritan who showed ἔλεος, there is no

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[163] Lane, *Hebrews 9-13,* p. 513.
[164] See Alan Kreider, *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom* (Pennsylvania: Trinity Press International, 1999) describing the church as an exclusive underground community.
[165] I Peter 4. 19.

exegetical reading of Hebrews 13. 3 prohibiting this text from extending solidarity to non-Christians incarcerated unjustly, and no reason to suppose that the author who admonished his readers to 'live at peace with all (πάντων) men' (12.14), had no interest in a response to the wider world. Cockerill therefore identifies a literary parallelism between 13.1, 2 linking 'brotherly love' and hospitality to 'strangers' so that whilst the primary reference may be 'to those unjustly imprisoned for their faith',[166] that love and hospitality should overflow, 'to those beyond' the Christian community.[167]

Similarly, Wright's contemporary application suggests that whilst the defence of persecuted Christians remains an important priority, the writer was unlikely to have excluded the wider work of caring for those in prison in the modern world where locking people up is used far more often as a straightforward punishment than it was in the ancient world.[168]

Hospitality as understood from these two texts has implications that reach beyond the cultural context of the Christian community. It is clear that in both texts the authors prioritised the material needs of the fledgling Christian community. However, the universal scope of the Christian message and the porous relationship which the early church had with its community, so evident in the book of Acts, makes a narrow hospitality highly unlikely. As Rodney Stark has shown the rapid growth of the church was partly attributable to this culture of hospitality.[169] By the fourth century this kind of indiscriminate hospitality had become so characteristic of the Christian community that, as John Piper reminds us, the Emperor Julian

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[166] Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub., 2012), p. 681.
[167] Ibid., p. 682.
[168] Tom Wright, *Hebrews for Everyone* (London: SPCK, 2003), p.170.
[169] See Rodney Stark, *The Rise of Christianity* (San Fransico: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996).

attributed the growth of the Christian atheists to the indiscriminate care they offered to all sections of society.[170]

I argue that whilst the passage in Hebrews may be understood as prioritising the care of the Christian community, it can also be read as advocating care for all strangers who are incarcerated.

7.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have taken a limited selection of biblical texts and themes which emerged from the empirical evidence and which were influenced by CSW's own biblical understanding of its praxis. From this a number of themes evolved which I have gathered in two over-arching ideas.

Firstly, having explored a Christian anthropology presumed in the *imago dei* I have suggested that all people have been given delegated authority and responsibility to care for creation and for one another and that everyone has dignity that includes the freedom to make moral choices. This means that as bearers of the divine image, everyone should be protected from indignity and that violence to other human beings amounts to acts of sacrilege.

Secondly, I considered Christian universalism that reflected the charity's belief that the mission of God included *both* personal salvation from sin *and* identification with all human suffering. From this brief exegetical overview I also conclude that whilst Jesus' teaching was

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[170] John Piper, *A Godward Life: Seeing the Supremacy of God in All of Life* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Press, 2005), p. 253.

focused on the disciples, it included elements such as the pursuit of mercy that was addressed to everyone. I found too, that Jesus' ethics that issued a call to work for the wellbeing of all people who suffer and experience marginalisation was adopted by the early church which extended its internal hospitality to the wider world.

In this survey I have explored a range of biblical material that has emerged from CSW's professional engagement in FoRB. These offer tentative ideas for a biblical framework which call for fuller theological exploration. In charting such a theological journey I am fully aware that no single text or collection of insights provides a definitive 'doctrine' on FoRB. That is not the aim of this thesis. The chapter suggests, however, that some important texts can be read in ways that support CSW's work and a number of commentators clearly read them in this way.

In the following chapter I explore in more detail the implications of some of the texts in proposing a FoRB-specific theology.

Chapter Eight

A Theological Framework for FoRB

8.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed a number of selected texts and explored some of the

exegetical issues associated with them. I argued that these passages show that God cares for

the dignity of all people made in his image, and that his work of salvation includes

forgiveness of sin as well as identification with all human suffering. I also suggest that God's

mission calls everyone to show mercy to everyone.

My purpose in this chapter is to show how these ideas may provide biblical support for

Christian commitment to FoRB.

I am not attempting here to provide a comprehensive theology of FoRB or indeed a defence

for rights language in which FoRB is imbedded. Rather, I want to consider a single argument

in defence of Christian involvement in FoRB by presenting three assumptions. The first is

that God's mission involves protecting all human dignity including the freedom of religion or

belief. The second is the view that this mission can be recognised by its response to human

sin as well as all human suffering. Thirdly, I argue that because everyone shares the image of

God and can participate in this task, Christians should be open to collaborate positively with

others who respond to human suffering.

8.2 Praxis and theological reflection

As a Christian human rights agency with a high regard for the Bible, CSW recognised that its praxis lacked this biblical framework. This realisation became the methodological impetus for my research.

In exploring a theological framework for Christian engagement in FoRB, the study reflects on Christian activity already taking place but for which there is an apparent scarcity of reflection, explicit biblical references or theological fora in which to evaluate the praxis.

Since the UDHR was agreed in 1948 there has been little significant theological argument that specifically explores Christian engagement in FoRB. Andrew Walker's thesis on religious liberty in contemporary social ethics provides a theological defence for religious liberty 'as an assumed principle taken for granted' within evangelicalism.[1] Walker reviews the subject from the perspectives of eschatology, Christian anthropology and soteriology, noting the absence of evangelical scholarship in providing a coherent theological response to the subject. However, this important work makes no reference to the specificity of the UDHR provisions or the implications for Christian praxis in FoRB.

In this chapter I build on the charity's own intuitive insights and respond to the challenges and opportunities facing the organisation by proposing a theological narrative with which it may interpret and translate its mission to its support base and wider audiences.

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[1] Andrew Thomas Walker, 'Religious Liberty in Contemporary Evangelical Social Ethics: an Assessment and Framework for Socio-political Challenges' (unpublished PhD, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018).

The research method outlined in my first chapter explored the charity's own understanding of its Christian identity and mission as a human rights organisation seeking to apply its evangelical ethos to its praxis. The appetite for deeper theological reflection was evidenced in the interviews as well as during the *Faith in FoRB?* engagements, and a theological statement mentioned in chapter three which formed the core of the organisation's identity.[2]

As a *Faith in FoRB?* insider voice put it, 'We tell people that we endorse FoRB *and* we are an overtly Christian charity. But how do we get them to understand that we endorse religious freedom for all *because* we are an overtly Christian charity?' Gloria indicated that the charity 'needs a theology to catch up with ourselves in terms of FoRB'.[3] Whilst Selwyn believed they had 'a head knowledge of what we are doing is according to the Scripture',[4] he was among the majority of interviewees who identified the need for theological clarity.

8.3 Human dignity and freedom for everyone

The foundational concept which I have already explored is that everyone bears the image of God that bestows human dignity, and that dignity is to be protected. Here I will argue more extensively that this dignity includes the right to freedom including the freedoms of thought and belief.

This assumption is made for three reasons that arise from the biblical material. Firstly, it is founded in the idea of God as creator. Secondly, it involves the idea that all people share

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[2] This statement was formally approved at the Board meeting 27 June 2017.
[3] Gloria, 22 July 2015.
[4] Selwyn, 18 August 2015.

God's image together. Thirdly, it suggests that all people who share God's image are called to work together for the common good.

8.3.1 Human dignity and the language of rights

In positing a theological framework for FoRB, I am equally cognisant of those biblical ideas discussed in chapters six and seven which are reflected in the Preamble and Article 1 and Article 18 of the UDHR. I argue therefore, that any theological reflection pertinent to FoRB will have some resonances with human rights language and the aspirations already included in the UDHR.

However, locating human rights as a suitable language for human dignity is not universally accepted. Stanley Hauerwas,[5] Oliver O' Donovan[6] and John Milbank,[7] are amongst a number of scholars who express serious reservations about rights language. John Milbank, for example denounces the ascendance of human rights and appeals to the idea of dignity as an alternative for public discourse.[8]

O'Donovan's concern articulated in his critique of Wolterstorff's *Justice: Rights and Wrongs*[9] levels three objections to the language of rights.[10] The first is political. Rights, he

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[5] See for example, Stanley Hauerwas, *In Good Company, The Church as Polis* (London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), p.199 - 216; Review of Rowan Williams's *Faith in the Public Square*, *Theology* 116.2, (2013), p.119 -122; Hauerwas, 'Freedom of Religion: A Subtle Temptation', *Soundings*, 72.2/3 (Summer/Fall 1989), pp. 317-339.

[6] Oliver O'Donovan, 'The Language of Rights and Conceptual History', in *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 37 Vol. No. 2 (June, 2009) pp. 193-207.

[7] At a Henry Jackson Society Lecture, Westminster, London, 27 February 2017, Milbank argued for tolerance in place of human rights on the basis that tolerance allows for diversity whereas human rights speak a different ideological language and therefore risks alienating religion and promotes Islamic extremism and individualism.

[8] John Milbank, 'Dignity, not Rights: Against Liberal Autonomy', *ABC Religion and Ethics*, 8 January 2016 <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/dignity-not-rights-against-liberal-autonomy/10097418> [accessed 15 March 2019].

[9] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008).

[10] O'Donovan, 'The Language of Rights, p.194.

suggests, results in a conflict between abstract universal rights and the concrete system of law and justice in a particular place. The second is a conceptual problem: the language of 'rights' conflicts with the unitary language of 'right': that is, the idea of multiple competing individual rights conflicts with the idea of a single right order to society.

Both objections are precursors to his more substantive concern about the historicity of rights language. O'Donovan's argument is that 'antiquity had no separate "language of rights"'. Rights language, initially associated with property rights in the fifteenth century became pervasive in the eighteenth century,[11]and was ultimately 'promoted precisely to challenge our moral intuitions'.[12]

O'Donovan laments the repudiation of a creation framework in order to reconstruct human relationships 'outside the realm of morality and metaphysics, on a purely judicial basis'.[13] However, the distinction between the morality of 'right' and a legality of 'rights' is an unnecessary binary construct. What O'Donovan appears to overlook here is that like the Christian drafters of the UDHR, Wolterstorff's idea of 'bestowed self-worth' is predicated on human dignity rooted in the *imago dei.*[14]

The difficulty with these considered reservations about human rights language (as well as more populist objections),[15] is that dignity - like tolerance - offers little real protection in the absence of internationally agreed sanctions. Conversely, Charles Villa-Vicencio upholds

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[11] Ibid. p. 201.
[12] Ibid. p. 204.
[13] Ibid.p.205.
[14] Wolterstorff, *Justice*, pp.343-360
[15] David Cross, *What's Wrong with Human Rights? Uncovering a False Religion* (Lancaster: Sovereign, 2018), pp. 145-160. Cross' approach dismisses human rights as demonic.

human rights as a basis for human flourishing,[16] and Wolterstorff defends rights as the language which identifies 'the moral significance' of unjust behaviour.[17]

This thesis therefore supports the intersection between Christian core beliefs and the use of human rights language. This is because, the church is, in the words of Vincencio, called to 'locate the human rights struggle at the centre of the debate on what it means to be human'.[18] As Ethna Regan suggests, the language of human rights provides 'a "dialectical boundary discourse" of human flourishing' securing the space in which the higher values of 'love, virtue, and community can flourish'.[19] This means that human rights discourse may provide a forum - albeit an imperfect one - in which Christians might engage with non-Christians about human relationships. Indeed, David Hollenbach advances an 'intellectual solidarity' with non-Christians which 'embodies a dynamic interaction between the biblical faith handed down to them through the centuries of Christian tradition and the intelligence that is a preeminent manifestation of the *imago Dei* in all human beings'.[20]

Human rights language is unlikely to be the native language of Christian communities who talk about human dignity. However, it is a language into which core Christian ideas can be translated in order to participate in what Hollenbach describes as the 'give-and-take of mutual learning among people who see the world differently'.[21]

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[16] Charles Villa-Vincencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction: Nation-building and Human Rights* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).
[17] Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Journey Toward Justice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), p. 54.
[18] Villa-Vincencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction,* p.128.
[19] Ethna Regan, *Theology and the Boundary Discourse of Human Rights* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2010), p. 2.
[20] David Hollenbach, S. J., *The Common Good* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 154-155.
[21] Ibid., p. 138.

Even with the attendant difficulties which I will raise shortly, the discourse on human dignity

offers Christian advocacy a potential ideological point of engagement for people who may

share a commitment to human flourishing but do not share the Christian presupposition of the

imago dei. Indeed, as Moltmann states, whilst Christian anthropology holds no exclusive

rights to a definition of dignity, it opens the potential for a distinct contribution to the

subject.[22] This was evident in a 2018 presentation from Jan Figel, the EU's Special Envoy

for FoRB, who regarded human dignity as 'the foundational principle of human rights' and a

criterion in public policies across people of all faiths and none.[23]

I argue, therefore, that cardinal ideas such as dignity and choice enshrined in the UDHR are

already expressed in biblical ideals. These principles preserving human dignity from

violations by individuals or the state find resonance in the scriptures and advances the idea of

freedom for everyone.

Human dignity wedded to the existence of God remains the biblical bedrock on which CSW

builds its own presuppositions about its work. However, the *imago dei* is arguably *the*

critical disagreement between a Christian charity and non-Christian agencies in this field.

In response to this ideological mismatch Soulen and Woodhead recommend the need for a

recontextualizing of dignity. They hypothesise that the anthropocentric Greco-Roman

meaning of dignity was later Christianised and understood in biblical terms, 'not so much in

entering into oneself but in reaching out in love and care to the other'[24] as directed by the

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[22] Jürgen Moltmann, *On Human Dignity: Political Theology and Ethics* (London: SCM Press, 1984), p. 10
[23] Jan Figel, 'Advancing Religious Freedom in the Context of Defending Human Dignity' (Bangkok, 4th Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief in South East Asia, 17 August 2018).
[24] R. Kendall Soulen and Linda Woodhead, 'Contextualizing Human Dignity', in *God and Human Dignity*, ed. by Soulen and Woodhead (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), pp. 1–25 (p. 6).

scriptures. The suggestion is that Enlightenment 'decontextualisation' detached the idea of dignity from God in order to 'vindicate a concept of dignity that stands alone, prior to, and independent of every concept of God'.[25] Their proposal is a return to a concept of human dignity that is not dependent on secular foundations of human rights.[26] Soulen and Woodhead argue, therefore, for a 'recontextualisation' of human dignity that reverses this Enlightenment approach[27] and provides a robust Christian response that withstands Enlightenment scepticism.[28]

Rather than seeing Christian insights as an important contribution to the human rights discourse as discussed earlier, this approach condemns human rights as entirely 'insufficient to sustain the ethical and metaphysical weight that modern rights-talk would place upon it'.[29] This position makes the assumption that Christian presuppositions retain the right to arbitrate in public discourse. Additionally, it lacks an appetite for the kind of dialogical response within the human rights arena.

Clearly, a Christian approach to human dignity has very different roots from secular arguments which will lead to alternative solutions for human dignity. However, rather than approaching this in oppositional terms the language of human rights may provide the basis for collaboration for the common good as advocated by Regan's 'boundary discourse',[30] and Hollenbach's 'intellectual solidarity'.[31]

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[25] Ibid., p.11.
[26] Ibid., p.12.
[27] Ibid., p. 14.
[28] Ibid., p.16.
[29] Ibid., p. 15.
[30] Ethna Regan, *Theology and the Boundary Discourse of Human Rights* (Washington: George Town University Press, 2010).
[31] Hollenbach, *The Common Good*, p. 137-170.

In the interest of preserving human dignity, I argue that Christian mission should persevere with these inherent difficulties for a number of reasons.

Firstly, one might argue that the Christian recontextualisation of human dignity was already at work in shaping the UDHR. As noted in chapter five, Malik's insistence that the reference to human dignity in the Preamble may be seen as the direct result of ideas about God was led primarily by Catholic thinking which influenced the process. Vincencio believes that 'a theology of human rights is an inherent part of theological anthropology'.[32] It accomplishes this by offering a narrative of transcendence that challenges both individualism as well as political collectivism. Hollenbach adds that 'Dignity is thus a transcendental characteristic of the person […] which claims respect in every situation and in every type of activity'.[33]

Esther Reed's Christological approach to the 'right' is grounded in God and ultimately fulfilled in Christ so that 'every good' draws humanity 'toward higher things and union with God'.[34] Whilst this approach differs from secular ideas, Christian neighbourliness 'revealed pre-eminently in Christ'[35] partners in human rights as a response to God's command for human dignity.

Secondly, as I have already discussed in chapters five and six, natural law ideas played an important role in influencing the UDHR focus on human dignity. Without revisiting the discussion here, Maritain combines ideas of natural law and revelation in his approach to

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[32] Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction,* p. 129.
[33] Ibid., p. 90.
[34] Esther Reed*, The Ethics of Human Rights: Contested Doctrinal and Moral Issues* (Texas: Baylor University Press, 2007), p. 39.
[35] Ibid., p. 3.

human dignity. He asserts that 'the rights of the human person is therefore based upon the idea of natural law'. Whilst ideas of dignity existed in paganism, he suggests, 'the message of the Gospel' revealed that people are 'called upon to be sons and heirs of God in the Kingdom of God'.[36] Christians approaching human rights from a theological worldview can therefore find common ground with secular rights advocates of human dignity. This is possible because they have common purpose in human flourishing and because Christians can see in secular human rights an expression of natural law at work.

My third point addresses the notion that secular human rights promotes an atomising individualism. The concern is that this runs contrary to Christian ideas and even natural law principles. This legitimate concern, which does not apply to all secular rights advocates, was played out in the founding of the UDHR. As noted in chapter five, Christian drafters like Charles Malik distinguished between 'personalism' and 'individualism' and promoted the idea of 'intermediate institutions' of family and social networks as critical elements in the balance between individualism and the state.[37] As Malik suggested, Article 1 of the UDHR that incorporated the concept of dignity and provided the philosophical basis for human relationships under international covenants, offered a 'definition of man'.[38]

However, as Christian influence at that time shows, this strengthens the argument for Christian values and creates an opening for Christians to participate with integrity. Hollenbach suggests therefore, that in community 'freedom and interaction in social solidarity can be seen as companions rather than adversaries'.[39] Similarly, Alford's

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[36] Jacques Maritain, *The Rights of Man and Natural Law* (London: The Centenary Press, 1944), p. 37.
[37] *The Challenge of Human Rights: Charles Malik and the UDHR,* ed. by Habib C. Malik (Oxford: Charles Malik Foundation in association with The Centre for Lebanese Studies, 2000), p. 26.
[38] Malik, *The Challenge of Human Rights*, p. 100.
[39] Hollenbach, *The Common Good*, p. 120.

reflections on Aquinas' influence suggests that the social functions of natural law, 'obliges us to look around at what is happening to others'.[40]

The issues raised here are complex and my purpose is not to provide a comprehensive elaboration of the difficulties raised. The thrust of my argument throughout this thesis and in this section, is simply to note that there are pragmatic and historical reasons why Christians who believe that human dignity derives from God might willingly engage in human rights language in order to defend that dignity and to work collaboratively for the common good. In the previous chapter I argued that the image of God in the Genesis account implicates human behaviour in community and involves accountability. In this thesis I have avoided the debate about the 'image' and 'likeness' of God. However, as I will now consider, implicit in this debate and in humanity's status as God's representatives is the idea that human beings have moral choice that involves accountability.

8.3.2 Human dignity and the freedom to choose

Although I offer basic biblical reminders that choice in action emerges from our likeness with God, it will also become evident that choice as a theological principle has as many inherent difficulties as does political choice. From the biblical witness however, choice also carries responsibilities.

As Wolterstorff asserts, the Christian idea of inherent rights grounded in human dignity and the *imago dei* did not enjoy political or ideological consensus during the drafting process. [41]

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[40] C. Fred Alford, *Narrative, Nature and the Natural Law: From Aquinas to International Human Rights* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), p. 37.
[41] Wolterstorff, *Journey Towards Justice,* p. 47.

The dignity of choice is integral to the Genesis account (Genesis 2. 15-17) and relates to ideas of natural law covered in chapter six. Beyond the arguments concerning the historicity of the Genesis passages, what remains clear from the narrative is that the Fall was the outcome of a critical human faculty: the power and freedom to choose.

The inherent ability to choose reappears throughout the scriptures. Hence, Joshua offered a choice between God and other gods,[42] and Elijah provides a dramatic option between Yahweh and Baal.[43] A clear and fatal choice was extended to the people of Nineveh.[44] In the New Testament disciples are chosen[45] but equally, chose to follow or reject Jesus[46] including the wealthy man whom Jesus loved.[47] Paul lamented the fact that Demas left the faith.[48]

These texts offer a wide overview of freedom of choice. Christian teaching on choice remains problematical and a catalogue of biblical texts ostensibly overrules the notion that God respects alternatives to Christian monotheism.[49] In these texts the option to worship Yahweh is often accompanied by serious disapproval or even judgement when such choices lead to idolatry. God's active 'hardening' of the human heart is disconcertingly frequent in Scripture.[50] Romans 9.18 is particularly explicit in this regard. Setting aside those passages in which God rejected his people as a direct consequence of their sins, God himself preemptively chose Jacob and rejected Esau.[51] On this basis the gulf between Reformed

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[42] Joshua 24. 15.
[43] I Kings 18. 16-39
[44] Jonah 3. 1-6.
[45] John 6. 70; 13. 18
[46] Luke 18. 28; John 6. 68.
[47] John 6. 66; Mark 10. 17-31.
[48] II Timothy. 4. 10.
[49] Exodus 20. 3; 23. 13; 34. 14; Deuteronomy 4. 35; 7. 7; Judges 10. 13; I Kings 9. 6; Psalm 81. 9; Acts 17. 30, 31.
[50] Exodus. 4. 21; 7. 3; 8. 15, 32; 9. 12; 10. 20; 11. 10; 14. 4, 8; Joshua. 11. 20; Isaiah. 63. 17, Ezekiel. 3. 8; John 12. 40; Romans. 9. 18; 11. 25.
[51] Malachi 1. 2; Romans. 9. 13.

teaching about the 'elect'[52] and an approach to free will reflects the nature of this theological impasse.

Theologically, much of this difficulty arises from the complex image-likeness debate about human capacity for moral choice that has persisted throughout Christian history.[53] In addition, the concept of freedom which I have not explored in this thesis introduces new layers of political and philosophical complications. Katrin Flikschuh's study for example, concludes that as a metaphysical concept, a definition of freedom is an ever-changing concept which 'constitutively eludes us'.[54]

However, as demonstrated in chapters six and seven the issue of non-coercion has been a foundational feature of Christian teaching and engagement in religious freedom for everyone. Without setting aside the complexities raised therefore, what remains important for this thesis is the recognition that throughout the scriptures the principle of non-coercion lies at the heart of the Christian faith. The mission of God is characterised by a God who deals with the inner working of the human heart, [55] the father who awaits the return of his wayward son,[56] and an appeal to accept God's work of reconciliation.[57]

Given the complexities associated with the biblical ideas of choice Christians should approach the subject with caution and humility. Nevertheless, as an invitational faith, moral

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[52] Matthew 24. 22, 24; Mark 13. 20; Romans. 9. 11; 11. 7, 28; II Tim. 2. 10.
[53] See, for example, Anthony Hoekema, *Created in God's Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986); J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005); Michael T. Burns, *John Wesley's Doctrine of Perfect Love as a Theological Mandate for Inclusion and Diversity*, PhD thesis, University of Manchester, 2012.
[54] Katrin Flikschuh, *Freedom: Contemporary Liberal Perspectives* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p.11.
[55] Ezekiel 11. 19; 36. 26; Luke 8. 11-15; Romans 10. 9-10.
[56] Luke 15. 11-24.
[57] 2 Corinthians 5. 20.

choice with responsibility remains central to the Christian faith and is also a basis on which to advocate for the religious freedom of all people.

I argue then, that from a Christian perspective moral choice remains important to the realization of human dignity and the pursuit of FoRB. As Malik insisted, 'whatever human dignity and worth may mean […] they certainly mean the possibility of choice'.

Christian insights regarding choice remain critical as theological and political concepts for only then can individuals and nation-states be held accountable for their actions with regard to human dignity with which the mission of God is concerned.

8.3.3 Human dignity and the mission of God

I argue here that the mission of God is universal in its scope and that everyone is entitled to participate in the benefits of this kingdom that is as much concerned with world peace and human flourishing as it is with personal redemption.

Behind the notion of a universal mission of God is the biblical idea of God as Creator and sustainer of all that exists.[58] Christian theology is therefore inconceivable apart from the belief that God is a universal liberator and redeemer even when he addresses people of other cultures and religious traditions.[59]

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[58] Genesis 1.1; John 1. 1-4; Acts 17. 22-31; Hebrews 1. 1-4.
[59] This is the presumption in cases such as Moses in Egypt (Exodus 9. 16;) Jonah' mission to Nineveh, (Jonah 1. 9) and Paul on Mars Hill (Acts 17. 22-31).

God's universal call made initially to one man was followed by covenant relationship to a

people group called to be a light to the world and to prepare the way for a Messiah whose

kingdom would be without rivalry or limitation.[60] Through the Messiah's life, death and

resurrection, all nations would find the ultimate experience of salvation, entrance to God's

kingdom and endless life in the presence of God who fills everything.[61] In that confidence his

disciples would become the custodians of a mission to the entire world.[62] Robert Wilken

claims therefore, that Christians were uniquely placed as early forerunners of universalism

because their call to discipleship in the ancient world went beyond the customary confines of

cultic faiths.[63]

Consequently, the resurgence of the idea of the *missio dei* between 1932 and 1952 was an

important watershed. First coined in 1934, the concept became more pronounced at the 1952

International Missionary Conference in Willingen that repositioned mission as God's

Trinitarian activity in the world. As David Bosch put it, mission 'was thus put in the context

of the doctrine of the Trinity, not of ecclesiology or soteriology'.[64] Mission was reimagined

not as an activity of the church or limited to matters of personal salvation: it was understood

as something God himself was doing in human relationships.

The *missio dei* therefore involves the church and the world in which 'the church may be

privileged to participate'.[65] It describes a Christian universalism that regards people of all

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[60] Isaiah 9. 7; Daniel 2. 44; 6. 26.
[61] Ephesians 1. 23; Colossians 1. 15-20.
[62] Matthew 28. 16-20; Acts 1. 8.
[63] Robert Louis Wilken, 'Christian Roots of Religious Freedom' in *Christianity & Freedom*, Vol 1. ed. by Timothy Samuel Shah, Allen D. Hertzke (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2016), p. 65.
[64] David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 390.
[65] Ibid., p. 391.

faiths and none as objects of God's mission in promoting human flourishing. In the *missio dei*

God's activity in the world has been carried out through Israel, in Jesus and through the

church that is invited to participate in the *missio dei*.

This concept briefly identified here provides an important theological orientation for this

thesis and the framework in which the universal scope of the biblical mission is assumed. In

what follows I will attempt to demonstrate how this inclusive approach may be applied to the

concept of a fellowship of suffering.

8.3.4 Dignity and a fellowship of suffering

I have argued that God's mission includes God's activity to promote the flourishing of all

human beings. I now suggest that this involves God's concern with all that undermines

human flourishing and that he responds to this through the idea of a 'fellowship of suffering'

in which God suffers with all who suffer.

My reflections on a fellowship of suffering emerged from the empirical material. This

concept has implications for the relationship between Christ's redemptive and non-saving

work as much as the idea of impassibility that I do not discuss here.

Two respondents suggested that Christians were uniquely placed to understand suffering

precisely as a result of sharing the suffering of Jesus. Asked for a comparison between

Christian and non-Christian agencies addressing human rights victims, Assid said:

> I don't know. I can't comment on that but as for Christians as I said we are
> called and its part of our calling that the Lord wants us to stand with those
> who are suffering. First, I believe that as Christians because they are brother
> and sisters we are the body of Christ and then other people who suffer because

> we are told to stand with those who suffer […] Because God suffered for us. First, he suffered for our iniquities and that's a model for us, so we need to stand for others.[66]

It was clear from our discussion that Assid, himself a victim of FoRB abuse, was evaluating the proposition as it emerged in his own thinking during the interview.

Cynthia was unambiguous. Her initial response was that, 'as a Christian, suffering is never something that I've really focussed on: it's more love.' Meandering through her own thoughts she concluded,

> we can relate to the persecuted church, [it] gives us a direct relation so we share a faith with these people that are being persecuted and I think that that should foster a human link [in] our direct empathy for these people who share our faith and aren't necessarily allowed to practise it in the same way and suffer. That [also] happens to people of Islamic faith, of Hindu faith and I think that our common human link there […] is what helps us to understand human rights in general and any violation of those human rights. And having experienced it or knowing people that have experienced it ourselves [we] have a kind of obligation to help others. [67]

Typical across the interviews was this sense of discovery and an understanding of their own hitherto unexplored praxis. While Assid's response was influenced by his own experience it was evident that he also reflected on the suffering of Christ from his experience as a Bible teacher. Cynthia's response suggested the need for deeper reflection based on the nature of suffering which Christians and non-Christians shared in common. Cynthia's important

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[66] Assid, 27 April 2016.
[67] Cynthia, 15 December 2015.

comments prompted my interest in exploring, more deeply, a fellowship of suffering as an evangelical framework for freedom of religion or belief.

A common community of suffering does not imply that human suffering in any way brings freedom from sin. As Schillebeeckx states 'the one who brings salvation is the suffering witness, the crucified one'.[68] In discussing such a unity of suffering this thesis is committed to the conviction that the suffering of God in the world remains most comprehensively expressed in the Cross of Christ.

However, the soteriological bond between the atoning and non-redemptive dynamic of the Cross converge at this point. If indeed all suffering, for all people, is summarised in the suffering of Isaiah's Servant, how might such a union take place?

A model is offered through the Eucharist in which all suffering is mediated through the church. Moltmann for example, sees a confluence between both ideas so that on the Cross, God 'enters into the situation of man's godforsakeness'[69] and in the Lord's Supper a 'messianic fellowship' overcomes 'all tendencies towards alienation' and 'the fellowship of the table is open to the world'.[70] In John Paul II's *Salvific Dorloris*, it is in the church that the salvation is mediated.[71] In this 'Pascal Mystery' Christ unites with humankind 'in the

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[68] Edward Schillebeeckx, The Experience of Jesus as Lord (New York: Crossroad, 1990), p. 18.
[69] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), p. 276
[70] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (Bristol: SCM Press, 1977), p. 258.
[71] John Paul II, *Salvifici Doloris: On the Christian Meaning of Human Suffering* (1984) < http://w2.vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/apost_letters/1984/documents/hf_jp-ii_apl_11021984_salvifici-doloris.html>, V.24 [accessed 27 March 2019].

community of the church'[72] and God 'wishes to penetrate the soul of every sufferer through the heart of his holy Mother, the first and the most exalted of all the redeemed'.[73]

However, this church-centric, Eucharistic response is problematic. Firstly, whilst recognising that the passion of Christ includes all human suffering, locating the church as God's catalyst for the indiscriminate inclusion of all suffering is eminently suited to Catholic ecclesiology but is perhaps less attuned to an evangelical framework from where this thesis makes its case for an inclusive fellowship of suffering. Such a church-centric approach rightly signals the church's active involvement in the mission of God but is also in danger of reverting to a pre-Willingen approach to the mission of God, which potentially risks making entry into the church the precondition for experiencing God's fellowship with one's suffering.

From the perspective of this thesis, Jesus' statement, 'whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me'[74] approaches a more appropriate Christological foundation for an inclusive fellowship of suffering. The all-encompassing and all-sufficient nature of the Servant's suffering explored in Motyer's commentary in chapter seven offers a suitable Christological response that presents a narrative in which personal salvation and the non-atoning work of Christ coexists. While the former recognises that people are called to personal faith in Christ and included in the life of the church, the latter pursues the common good for people of all faiths and none. All of this is harmonised in the Cross and expressed in the *missio dei* of which the church is a participant and not the initiator.

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[72] Ibid., V. 24.
[73] Ibid., VI.26.
[74] Matthew 25. 40.

The idea of a fellowship of suffering is dependent neither on an overemphasis of the church's mediation of the Eucharist or on the call to personal salvation. It is the product of God's care for people made in his image and the inclusive work of the Cross.

In keeping with this Christological focus Wheeler Robinson, whose sub-heading specifically introduces a 'fellowship of suffering human & divine', suggests that in God the passion of Christ elevates the experience of human suffering to 'a new level'.[75] His insights, set against World War II, are both poignant and time-sensitive to events between 1947-1948. Robinson's proposal that 'God suffers in us, with us and for us',[76] contextualises suffering in the societal realities at work during the formation of the instruments designed to protect human dignity. Acknowledging the uniquely redemptive suffering of Jesus, Robinson declined to confine such suffering 'to those which are incurred directly through "taking up the cross" in the path of Christian obedience' and extends Paul's enigmatic statement about suffering in Colossians 1.24 to include societal issues beyond the immediate Christian community.[77]

In this section then, I propose that the concept of a generic fellowship of suffering located in Christ calls for solidarity against 'gratuitous' suffering, 'relieving suffering and changing those conditions that bring about such suffering'.[78]

Such affinity with the panoply of human suffering is important for Christian faith because it elevates participation from the singularity of individual kindness to the church's corporate

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[75] H. Wheeler Robinson, *Suffering Human & Divine* (London: SCM Press, 1940), p. 210.
[76] Ibid., p. 6.
[77] Ibid., p. 210.
[78] Edward Long, 'Suffering and Transcendence', *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion,* 60 (2006), pp.139-148 (p. 140).

task in the mission of God. As members of the church incorporated in the suffering of Christ, Moltmann says that individual Christians participate in 'solidarity in suffering' and so rediscover the task of the church.[79]

In this sense Moltmann's positioning of believers in the world's suffering aligns more comfortably with this thesis. This is because suffering in 'fellowship' with the world positions the individual Christian beyond personal altruism to a profound understanding of the role and nature of the church in relation to human suffering powerfully grasped in Paul's vision of creation groaning in anticipatory redemption with the creation.[80] As Bonhoeffer suggests, 'It is not the religious act that makes the Christian, but participation in the suffering of God in the secular world'.[81]

This approach, I suggest, places the church as that body of believers who suffer in conjunction with all who suffer, without potentially conflating the Cross with the church or the Eucharist. Defending the rights of an individual whose worldview is diametrically opposed to the Christian faith - or even spiritually dangerous - necessarily demands a degree of empathy that goes beyond emotional or material support. It involves an ontological alignment with *another* made in the image of God.

Beyond human empathy or political expedience, Christian engagement in FoRB is a recognition that people made in God's image and who suffer for exercising the sanctity of choice have been injured spiritually and are therefore at one with Christians in such suffering.

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[79] Moltmann, *The Church in the Power,* p.167.
[80] Romans 8. 22.
[81] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. Eberhard Bethge (London: The Folio Society, 1971), p. 323.

God's mission I argue, extends to everyone, responding both to human sin and to human suffering. This fellowship of suffering in which the church has a key role to play, results exclusively from the Passion of Christ and embraces all human suffering equally.

Such an approach arises from an appreciation of the mission of God at work in the world and the place of common grace.

8.3.5 Human dignity and common grace

In this section I will offer a brief biblical review of the idea of grace. As I will show here, Richard Mouw and Abraham Kuyper suggest that common grace performs a function of inclusivity in which the 'unredeemed' may claim shelter from indignity and indeed participate in the mission of God.

Christians rightly approach 'grace' reverentially as the soteriological explanation for personal salvation.[82] Noah who 'found favour in the eyes of the Lord' provides an Old Testament example of such grace.[83] In the aftermath of the deluge, this promise became the first universal oath to 'all life on the earth'.[84] Noah was thence destined to become the covenantal fore-runner to Abram.[85] This covenant of grace in the promise to Abram marked a new landmark of covenant relationships in which all families of the earth would be blessed.[86]

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[82] Ephesians 2. 8.
[83] Genesis. 6. 8.
[84] Genesis 9. 8-17.
[85] Genesis 11. 10-27.
[86] Genesis 12. 1-3.

In the covenant with Noah, God's care for all humanity and creation is expressed: in Abram we have an early illustration of the relationship between grace and personal faith. In both instances grace is at work preserving the dignity inherent in the divine image.

A missiological question may then be advanced: do the 'unredeemed' have any relationship with God's grace? In response it would seem that a commonwealth within which the just and unjust[87] become beneficiaries of God's goodness is only feasible within the remit of God's grace.

In response Mouw explores what Christians have in common 'with people who have not experienced the saving grace that draws a sinner into a restored relationship with God'.[88] Without compromising the 'deep dividing line between two actual groups of people, the believing community and the rest of humankind',[89] Mouw suspects that 'God takes delight in the various *human* states of affairs, even when they are displayed in the lives of non-elect human beings'.[90]

By way of example, he reviews the interconnectedness between nature and grace in Kuyper's theology which rejects as 'untenable' the proposition that 'grace is and has been extended exclusively to God's elect'.[91] Kuyper's distinction between God's 'interior' grace and the 'exterior' work of common grace[92] expressed in art, science and benevolence is not without

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[87] Matthew 5. 45.
[88] Richard J. Mouw, *He Shines in All That's Fair: Culture and Common Grace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), p. 3.
[89] Ibid., p. 26.
[90] Ibid., p. 35.
[91] *Abraham Kuyper: A Centennial Reader*, ed. by James Bratt (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1998), p. 173.
[92] Ibid., pp. 179-182.

its theological ambiguities, but as Mouw suggests those who reject any element of interior grace in the non-elect 'would seem to have the more challenging explanatory task'.[93]

Kuyper's Reformed thinking demonstrates that through love, God's 'common grace', available to everyone, co-exists with God's 'special' saving grace. Common grace is, therefore, not necessarily a prelude to saving grace and is experienced independent of it. Restricting grace to saving works alone, Kuyper contends, would reduce the lordship of Jesus to an unbiblical dualism.[94] In the Sermon on the Mount, God's generosity to everyone demonstrates 'God's dispositions toward human beings, both redeemed and unredeemed'[95] and shows the value of deeds that are 'morally laudable without meriting salvation'.[96]

As I have argued here, grace which affects personal salvation is also actively involved in the lives of people who do not profess faith in Christ. Whilst acknowledging the potential syncretism inherent in the generosity of common grace, I suggest that there is a biblical approach that avoids a binary response to 'common' and 'saving' grace and preserves the integrity of grace as it contributes both to personal salvation and to the preservation of all human dignity.

I propose then, that common grace may be regarded as that agency which binds people together in what Locke described as a 'the commonwealth' of humanity[97] from which,

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[93] Mouw, *He Shines in All That's fair*, p. 43.
[94] Bratt, *Abraham Kuyper*, p. 172.
[95] Mauw, *He Shines in All That's Fair*, p. 33.
[96] Ibid., p. 38.
[97] John Locke, *Two Treaties of Government & A Letter Concerning Toleration*, (Stilwell, KS: Digireads.com Publishing, 2005), p. 152.

'neither Pagan nor Mohametan, nor Jew, ought to be excluded from the civil rights of the commonwealth because of his religion'.[98]

The generosity associated with God's grace provides a dimension of social proximity between God and people made in his image with the freedom to worship without coercion. Indeed, through love and grace God identifies himself in human sin, suffering and gifts. As a result of this proximity I now consider the idea of friendship with God as an expression of his universal care for humankind.

8.3.6 Human dignity and friendship

Both concepts of friendship and brotherhood were important in the formation of the UDHR. Here I will limit my comments to ideas of friendship.

In this section I suggest that the biblical idea of friendship was also exemplified in the missionary work of individuals like Las Casas and Roger Williams, both of whom I have already considered.

Hans George Gadamer suggests that the idea of friendship, traceable to Plato and Aristotle, promotes ideas of a universal characteristic that is experienced as individuals develop a sense of self-love and an awareness of transcendence.[99] Through social interaction, friendship, sustained by transcendence, corrects and affirms the other so that 'we draw nearer to the divine, which possesses continually what is possible for us humans only intermittently'.[100]

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[98] Ibid., p. 174.
[99] Hans George Gadamer, *Hermeneutics, Religion & Ethics*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer (London: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 134.
[100] Ibid., p. 140.

Gadamer's view is that in this way friendship was taken up by the Christian doctrine of love and overflowed into social relationships 'among all nations and states'.[101]

Ostensibly the idea of non-Christians as 'friends' of God is contestable. Overwhelmingly, 'friend' is used strictly for fellow Christians[102] and friendship with the world order generally means opposition to God.[103] However, this view is not conclusive, and the New Testament presents a more fluid picture. Jesus himself testified that there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends.[104] No one else in the Bible has a social profile as the 'friend (φίλος) of tax collectors and sinners'.[105]

As shown earlier, Las Casas promoted outrageous ideas about extending 'Christian friendship and mutual love' to pagans.[106] Maritain made much of the concept of 'civic friendship' as a basis for civil peace.[107] The task of politics, he believed, was to build civilization through 'the friendship to be founded at the core of a civilization'[108] and human dignity demonstrated in 'love and friendliness'.[109]

Christians facing the new challenges and demands of the human rights debate in 1948 already found themselves with a vocabulary of friendship consistent with their Christian faith. In Wolterstorff's words God desires 'friendship or fellowship with each and every human

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[101] Ibid., p. 141.
[102] For example: Luke 12. 4; John 15. 14, 15, 21. 5; Acts 15. 25; I Corinthians. 10. 14; II Corinthians. 7. 1; Philippians. 4. 1.
[103] James 4. 4.
[104] John 15. 13.
[105] Matthew. 11. 19; Luke 7. 34.
[106] Stafford Poole, *Bartolome de Las Casas: In Defense of the Indians* (Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1992), p. 93.
[107] Jacques Maritain, *The Rights of Man*, p. 23.
[108] Ibid., p. 29.
[109] *Gaudium et Spes*, 28, in *Vatican II: The Essential Texts*, ed. by. Norman Tanner, SJ, trans. by John Mahoney (New York: Image, 2012) p. 220.

being'.[110] This love directed through grace is the basis on which Christians are satisfied that questions about 'image' and 'likeness' are subsumed by love, and friendship with God was extended to everyone bearing the image of God. Ideas of friendship then, open gateways to shared dignity for everyone.

The kind of fellowship I have described may also be regarded as a form of universal friendship. It is rooted in the understanding that everyone shares the image of God and is therefore worthy of dignity in which everyone should enjoy the freedom to worship and express that humanity without coercion. Equally, God's concern for human suffering includes everyone in a fellowship of suffering which derives from the Christ's work on the Cross.

I suggested then, that the mission of God exerts its universal influence through grace which brings people to a personal knowledge of Christ, but which is still at work in engaging all people to work in friendship for human flourishing.

Having considered this first overarching idea that human dignity is owed to everyone made in God's image, I will further explore a theme which I have mentioned several times and which remains critical to this thesis: the notion that God's mission, which includes freedom from sin, also involves freedom from all kinds of oppression.

8.4 The mission of God and freedom from oppression

In this section I begin with the assertion that freedom from personal sin is normative to a Christian understanding of human freedom. As discussed in chapter three, conversion is of

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[110] Wolterstorff, *Journey Towards Justice*, p. 137.

cardinal importance for CSW as an evangelical organisation [111] and my framework assumes freedom from personal sin as integral to the mission of God.

I also argue, however, that the mission of God calls us to engage in God's kingdom of justice as it responds to all types of oppression and that this anticipates the 'secular' aspirations of freedom from coercion embedded in the UDHR. Consequently, it follows that by definition, the mission of God stands in condemnation against all oppression.

8.4.1 Freedom from the oppression of sin

This thesis is predicated on an evangelical soteriology premised on the reality of personal sin, forgiveness and conversion. As an overtly Christian organisation, this remains critical to CSW's theological posture.

The charity aligns itself within contemporary evangelicalism and the Apostle's Creed. Whilst the CEO was clear that, 'Jesus Christ is the only way to God the Father,' he was also 'paranoid' that people would dismiss him as syncretic.[112] Nevertheless, as he also asserted, 'I believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the answer to everything. I want to see the gospel be allowed to be freely proclaimed anywhere and everywhere, and freely lived out'.[113]

A soteriology sympathetic to a universal understanding of freedom could be construed as antithetical to a traditional view of salvation. This would be a critical misreading of this thesis and the empirical evidence. Indeed, the tension between conversionism and political

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[111] CSW Organisational Strategy 2015-2017, Appendix 1: CSW Identity and Vision Statement, Vivid Description.
[112] CEO, 1 July 2015.
[113] CEO, 19 August 2015.

advocacy accurately reflects the tensions and ambiguities experienced by CSW and accounts for the specific interest in this study.

I suggest here then, that the unique contribution offered by a Christian charity engaged in FoRB is dependent precisely on its ability to synthesise a commitment to the idea of personal sin with professionalism in the sphere of human rights.

Clearly, a broad approach to freedom has inherent dangers of presenting the mission as social or political freedom that loses sight of the 'cure of sin and victory over death'[114] that Vigan Guroian is concerned about. This is a charge Tim Chester brings against Jürgen Moltmann's approach that avoids an elaborate theology of repentance.[115]

Nevertheless, what I argue here is that the consciousness of sin is consistent with Christian engagement in FoRB. Christian activists who influenced the formulation of FoRB remained committed to such a position articulated in a paper prepared by the WCC study department in 1947 which states:

> The Christian recognises the commission to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the uttermost parts of the world. This commission can, and if there is no other way, must be obeyed in the face of opposition and persecution. Nevertheless, when conditions favourable to the exercise of human rights

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[114] Vigen Guroian, 'Human Rights and Modern Western Faith: An Orthodox Christian Assessment', in *The Journal of Religious Ethics*, 26:2 (1998), p. 247.
[115] Tim Chester, *Mission and the Coming of God: Eschatology, Trinity and Mission in the Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), pp. 37-40.

exist, men are in a better position to hear the Gospel and freely to decide what their response shall be.[116]

I aim to demonstrate therefore, that the consciousness of sin and the need for forgiveness is entirely consistent with the broader engagement in FoRB and is in fact, demanded by such a biblical understanding of freedom. This position defends the hard-fought realization of a missiology that was recovered in Lausanne 1974, reiterated in a number of contentious debates[117] and defended by a host of writers such as Stephen Bevan and Roger Schroeder,[118] René Padilla,[119] and Chris Wright.[120]

Harmonising the concept of sin with social engagement is important. This is because the Genesis narrative identifies the locus of human dignity in the image of God that was tarnished by sin and resulted in a fundamental dislocation of human relationship from God and from fellow-human beings. It follows, therefore, that a mission to repair this rupture must necessarily include reconciliation in human relationships as well as relationship with God, so that in Padilla's words, the Bible 'knows nothing of a gospel that makes a divorce between soteriology and ethics, between communion with God and communion with one's neighbor, between faith and works'.[121]

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[116] O. Frederick Nolde, 'Man's Disorder and God's Design: Human Rights and Religious Liberty' (Geneva: Assembly The Church and International Affairs, 1948), Study 47E/404 A Comm. IV. This was a study from the WCC Study Dept., written in June 1947 to be presented to CCIA, Amsterdam Conference.

[117] The issues here were rehearsed in a number of publications such as *Transformation: The Church in Response to Human Need: Texts on Evangelical Social Ethics 3*, ed. by the Training Unit of the Evangelical Fellowship of India Commission on Relief, Grove Ethics 62 (Bramcote: Grove, 1986); *Texts on Evangelical Social Ethics 1974–1983 (i)*, ed. by Rene Padilla and Chris Sugden, Grove Ethics 58 (Bramcote: Grove, 1985).

[118] Stephen B. Bevans and Roger P. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (New York: ORBIS, 2004).

[119] C. René Padilla, *Mission Between the Times: Essays on the Kingdom* (Cumbria: Langham Monographs, 2010).

[120] Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Hyderabad: Authentic, 2009).

[121] Padilla, *Mission Between the Times*, p. 47.

This leads us to consider how the biblical response to sin may involve a wider soteriological remit beyond the individualistic perspective of human sin. Here I suggest that such a reaction to human sin and the erosion of dignity associated with this malaise involves a view of 'salvation' that addresses the unjust social conditions in which the fruit of human sinfulness abounds.

It is this response to human sinfulness and injustice with which the kingdom of justice is concerned.

8.4.2 Freedom and social suffering

I begin here by stating my own perspective on the social implications of Christian ministry and a recognition that this has been and remains contentious. I briefly discuss some of the points of contention and conclude with a biblical rationale for Christian response to all social suffering and by implication engagement in FoRB as integral to the mission of God.

The idea that the mission of God is directed toward all forms of freedom has been central to this thesis. From this biblical perspective, freedom, rooted in redemption from moral sin and located in the person and work of Christ, is therefore inalienable from wider concepts of freedom.

A theological framework for engagement in FoRB is consistent with and fulfils the aspirations of human rights which agree what God is already doing to alleviate suffering and promote human flourishing.

This means that eventual freedom that culminates in a world free from tears is the current business of Jesus' kingdom in which justice and the alleviation of human suffering are hallmarks of his reign. Mission as the pursuit of freedom from suffering necessarily includes the possibility of personal salvation. But as I have already noted, the mission of God is also concerned with the end of all forms of suffering when death and tears are vanquished in the presence of God.[122] Without this reality of non-redeeming freedom, the mission of God remains incomplete. This means, as Bauckham suggests, that salvation understood 'primarily as forgiveness and correspondingly of sin as guilt' reflects only 'one aspect of the human plight'.[123]

A biblical response to the abuse of human freedom therefore demands a missional reaction especially where, as Tim Chester observes, suffering is inflicted upon individuals against their will. In such cases 'suffering is always to be worked against'.[124] This position is not endorsed with any degree of unanimity amongst evangelicals and the debate about the theological status of social action in the mission of God is unlikely to be harmonised in the foreseeable future.

Studies from Chester, as well as Bevan and Schroeder,[125] have provided helpful synopses of the varying perspectives to this debate. Bevan and Schroeder, who speak as Catholics, based their research on three theological 'types' of students. The three categories were then tested

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[122] Revelation 21. 3.
[123] Richard Buckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom: Biblical and Contemporary Perspectives*, (Louisville & London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), p. 17.
[124] Chester, *Mission and the Coming of God*, p. 216.
[125] Bevans & Roger S. Schroeder, *Constants in Context: A Theology of Mission for Today* (New York: ORBIS, 2004).

against six themes such as, eschatology, Christology, culture and salvation. The study then traced various scholars whose work influenced the respective student types.

The responses from each type demonstrate a relationship between their theological influences and their attitudes to Christian mission in relation to human freedoms. These ranged from a strong view of sin and individual salvation in which social action, 'had nothing to do with […] bringing in God's salvation into the world' (type A), to mission as, 'an invitation to discover the Truth' already hidden in the culture and community, [126] (type B), and mission which 'integrated economic and political liberation, human rights and equal dignity'[127] (type C).

Despite significant debates that have affirmed the legitimacy of social freedoms as integral to the mission of God, significant and respected voices within evangelical scholarship have been cautious on the issue.

Oliver Barclay, for example, claims a distinction between the reign of God and the messianic kingdom of Jesus (which he regards as a conceptual idea), and concludes that Jesus' task was to clarify the distinction between the two entities.[128] Whilst acknowledging that the eschatological kingdom 'both *inform[s]* social action and inspire[s] enthusiasm for what is good',[129] Barclay is concerned that reducing the kingdom to social justice 'destroys the personal challenge […] to live in a righteousness that is not only outward acts, but inward

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[126] Ibid., p. 61.
[127] Ibid., p. 64.
[128] Oliver Barclay, 'Creation and Providence', in *Kingdom and Creation in Social Ethics*, Grove Ethical Studies No.79 (Nottingham: Grove Books Ltd., 1990), p. 9.
[129] Ibid., p. 9.

attitudes'.[130] Barclay's argument is in fact premised on a conviction that righteousness and justice are different concepts, 'particularly in the Old Testament where most teaching on social justice is located'.[131] As we will discuss in the following section this view is at variance with this thesis.

The reluctance of scholars such as Barclay, Stanley Hauerwas and James Davidson Hunter to promote political engagement is driven by the conviction that the demands of biblical ethics run counter to the nature of modern political advocacy and offers an alternative model of transformative engagement which does not rely on political tools.[132]

Such reservations provide important theological resistance to an erosion in concepts of atonement. Equally, I argue here that an over-cautious response to the social impact of God's mission is in danger of constricting the scope of God's concern for human suffering and the missiological obligation inherent in Christian discipleship.

Firstly, the danger of this theological passivity is that it immunises Christians from what Villa-Vincencio describes 'the most ineradicable craving of human nature': the desire for freedom.[133] It is this 'craving' at the centre of the *imago dei* that makes freedom in its broadest sense an insignia of the *missio dei*. Thus, according to Bauckham, biblical freedom is characterised by its opposition to 'the concrete evils of oppression - intolerably hard labor, enforced infanticide (Exodus 1:11-16) - that distress the people and evoke God's concern and

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[130] Ibid., p. 10.
[131] Ibid., p. 11.
[132] See, for example, Stanley Hauerwas, *In Good Company: The Church as Polis* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995); Stanley Hauerwas, *Vision and Virtue: Essays in Christian Ethical Reflection* (Notre Dame: Fides Publishers, 1974); James Davidson Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[133] Villa-Vicencio, *A Theology of Reconstruction*, p. 127.

redemptive action'.[134] *Salvation* expressed in the mission of God through Moses, became,

says Terence Fretheim, 'constitutive for all [Israel's] subsequent reflections upon God'.[135]

Secondly, as Schillebeeckx's study of suffering suggests, being human has to do with

experiencing the happiness of 'salvation' and, 'being saved in a truly human and free way is

in fact the theme of the whole of human history'[136] in which 'Christian faith *presupposes*

freedom and discloses freedom'.[137]

Schillebeeckx believes that the New Testament concept of *sōtèria* describes a salvation

involving protection from demonic dangers and was influenced by pagan rituals.[138] Instead,

he suggests that *sōzein* which remained true to its Hebrew roots, describes redemption more

accurately as liberation 'in the sense of escaping from danger or oppression'.[139] This reaction

to the etymology of two well-known biblical ideas does not warrant Schillebeeckx's

conclusion. Given the New Testament's ability to adopt ideas such as *ekklesia* for Christian

use, the allegation of pagan adaptation is a poor basis for neglecting *sōtèria* as a complement

to *sōzein.* However, Schillebeeckx also suggests that 'salvation' has a breadth of meaning

that incorporates non-saving redemption that amounts to 'the completion of God's plan of

salvation in the world'.[140]

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[134] Richard Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom: Biblical and Contemporary Perspectives*
(Louisville & London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), p. 9.
[135] Terence E. Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (USA: Fortress Press, 1984),
p.128.
[136] Schillebeeckx, *Christ,* p. 732.
[137] Ibid., p. 745.
[138] Ibid., p. 478.
[139] Ibid., p. 479.
[140] Schillebeeckx, *The Mission of the Church* London: Sheed and Ward, 1973), p. 44.

Thirdly, in the prototype freedom of the Exodus event, freedom, which is linked to the

forgiveness of sin, is also rooted in social, economic and political realities. The absence of

Pharaoh's workforce, for example, would have been devastating for Egypt's economy.

Repeatedly, the Old Testament message of liberation incorporated geopolitical and economic

factors. This would have been true of Isaiah's acceptable form of fasting,[141] and the Year of

Jubilee[142] with its 'freedom for the captives'[143] which Jesus himself regarded as the

imprimatur of his mission.[144]

To claim, as Bauckham does, that the early church did not attempt to abolish the 'structures

of political and social subjection in their contemporary society' but rather sought

transformation through personal voluntary and mutual subjection[145] is only partially correct

in its biblical context. This approach underestimates the subversive attitudes of the early

Christians to temporal powers[146] and Paul's reappraisal of gender relationships in a

misogynistic culture is another such example.[147] The difficulty in applying this hermeneutic

to our current political contexts is that it fails to transpose the biblical response to the abuse

of power from the dictatorial settings of the Old Testament to our liberal democracies where

citizens have many more options by which to challenge systems which oppress people and

for which the instrument of the UDHR have been designed.

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[141] Isaiah 58. 6-11.
[142] Leviticus 25.
[143] Isaiah 61. 1-3.
[144] Luke 4. 14-20.
[145] Richard Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom: Biblical and Contemporary Perspectives*
(Louisville & London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), p. 24.
[146] Acts 5. 29.
[147] Ephesians 5. 25; Colossians 3. 19; I Corinthians 7. 3, 4.

Fourthly, the relevance of a Christian freedom is precisely that it is committed to personal freedom in community. Consequently, the summary of the commandment is to love one's self, one's neighbour and God.[148] This means that whilst liberation from personal sin is never accomplished by political action, Moltmann believes that liberation 'calls for something to correspond to it in political life so that liberations from the prisons of capitalism, racism and technocracy must be understood as parables of the freedom of faith'[149] and experienced as freedom in community.[150] The church is therefore called to 'the tradition of the messianic liberation and eschatological renewal of the world'[151] in a mission that means 'taking sides with the oppressed and humiliated'.[152] This mission therefore includes, 'the hope of world religions, the hope of human society and the hope of nature'.[153]

Fifthly, a theological position wary of social action does not reflect the theological strides taken to harmonise the call to personal regeneration and Christian response to human suffering since the 1910 Edinburgh Conference.[154] In the progressive revision of the *missio dei* as Bosch observed, *salvation* became understood 'in a wide spectrum of human circumstances - the termination of poverty, discrimination, illness, demon possession, sin'[155] and as a quest for justice.[156] As Bauckham suggests, where individual, spiritual freedom 'happily coexists with structural oppression merely compensating for it rather than reacting against it, it is to that extent inauthentic'.[157]

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[148] Deuteronomy. 6. 4-6; Leviticus 19. 18; Luke 10. 25-27.
[149] Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p. 321.
[150] Ibid., p. 317-318.
[151] Ibid., p. 3.
[152] Ibid., p. 17.
[153] Ibid., p. 135.
[154] Bevans & Schroeder. *Constants in Context,* pp. 281-337.
[155] Bosch, *Transforming Mission,* p. 393.
[156] Ibid., p. 400.
[157] Bauckham, *God and the Crisis of Freedom,* p. 24.

Similarly, Wright's concept of the victory of God fulfilled in Christ is entirely premised on the reality of Christ's call to repentance, understood politically as 'an eschatological call'[158] in which Jesus summoned his followers from individual morality to a new world order which included 'the true and final forgiveness of sins' with no contradiction between the personal and the corporate accountability.[159]

God's mission is therefore to free people from sin but also to liberate them from the oppression of injustice. In viewing mission as freedom, a setting is created in which theology engages in the dialogue about personal and communal dysfunctionality whilst imagining eschatological solutions in the present.

A Christian response to FoRB is therefore more than a political exercise. Rather, God's salvation pre-empts human aspirations so that 'human rights mirror the right of the coming God and the future of humanity'.[160] As John Stott suggested, the kind of work undertaken by agencies like Amnesty International 'is consistent with biblical precedents, and with the recognition that with God "there is no favouritism". Human rights are equal rights'.[161]

In presenting a theological legitimation for freedom from social oppression it has been important here to recognise a sample of the legitimate concerns of an over-emphasis on social action in the mission of the church.

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[158] N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996), p. 251.
[159] Ibid., p. 272.
[160] Ibid., p. 17.
[161] John Stott, *Issue Facing Christians Today* (Basingstoke: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1984), p. 149.

I have suggested however, that such concerns should not immunise Christians from the pain of social suffering and have argued for a theological posture that harmonises personal salvation with political engagement that thereby legitimises Christian engagement in FoRB. This, I suggest is the hallmark of Jesus' kingdom of justice which I will now explore.

8.4.3 Freedom and the kingdom of justice

My key focus here, is to consider the implications of how the biblical idea of justice (*dikaiosunē*) contributes to our understanding of the kingdom's commitment to alleviate human suffering as well as personal sin.

As shown in the previous chapter, the 'kingdom of justice' theme derives directly from the empirical evidence in which interviewees themselves identified a relationship between concepts of 'the kingdom' and the justice of God. This has been the intuitive theological impetus driving the work of staff and colleagues of CSW who clearly regard their work with non-Christian agencies as entirely in keeping with God's mission in which they are engaged.

It is also the intuitive hermeneutical key by which they prayerfully defend human rights lawyers in China, conduct sensitive human rights training for Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist human rights defenders, stand with persecuted Baha'i's in Iran and campaign for children of all faiths or none who have been denied education simply because of their faith. In this sense their biblical intuition would seem to correlate with Jesus' understanding of what it means to be a good neighbour.

Coupling the kingdom with justice, so pervasive throughout Scripture,[162] emerged unsolicited during the interviews. Of the twenty-nine interviewees, seventeen made mention of 'the kingdom of God' or 'the kingdom' and twenty-one referenced 'justice'. As with other unsolicited concepts, 'the kingdom' was to be expected from Christian respondents and given that most interviewees were directly engaged FoRB, the subject was a natural reference point. Notably, a number of references to 'justice' appeared in relation to their professional context of human rights, righting 'injustice', promoting 'social justice' or confronting 'unjust' behaviour. On occasions however, respondents clearly identified justice in more theological terms. The CEO, for example spoke of 'God's justice'.[163]

More significantly, four individuals coupled the kingdom of God specifically with the concept of justice, elevating justice to levels of transcendence. Crystal who was reluctant to describe CSW's work as 'mission' said,

> I believe that the kingdom of God [in] my understanding through the words of Jesus are that that is about justice and fairness and the way that we treat other people, that those things are very central to building the kingdom of God on earth. I don't think that our job is to convert as many people as possible before the Second Coming. I think our role is, as far as possible [to] bring the present reality in line with the kingdom of God.[164]

Either through intuitive theological conviction or inductive reflexivity interviewees had clearly imbibed a hermeneutic of the kingdom of justice as a firm basis for praxis and associated their work with the kingdom of God.

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[162] See for example: Isa. 5. 16; 16. 5; Ps. 45. 6; 89. 14, 97. 2.
[163] CEO, 1 July 2015.
[164] Crystal, 23 July 2015.

I do not propose to rehearse the debates concerning the nature and scope of the kingdom's eschatological presence to affect social conditions. However, Oliver Barclay's views provide a snapshot of a position that runs contrary to the approach adopted in this thesis.

Barclay's creation and providential theology rightly, shuns an 'activistic' and 'functional' understanding of the kingdom.[165] He suggests that 'the "ontological" question of the *nature* of Christian ethics' is foundational before moving to consider the epistemological questions and addressing 'the matter of their *shape* and *practical* demands'.[166] Creation ethics, he says, include God's post-Fall ideals for human living and avoids the ambiguities of natural law and common grace. Moreover, he suggests, the New Testament ethic is based on the Beatitudes, the image of God, and Christ-likeness, and is wary of a misuse of a kingdom of God narrative.[167] This is because Barclay distinguishes between the sovereignty or rule of God found in the Old Testament, and the messianic kingdom which is 'a Christological concept and a matter of the heart' which (presumably) gives meaning to any idea of the kingdom of God.[168] He castigates the use of the kingdom as a 'catch-all phrase to cover anything that is pleasing to God'. Indeed, any notion of the kingdom that includes Cyrus or non-Christian altruism 'is not Christ-centred'.[169]

This raises a number of views that are discordant with this thesis such as the restricted view of the Beatitudes and partnership with non-Christians. Barclay's views on natural law and

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[165] Oliver Barclay, 'Creation and Providence', p. 4.
[166] Ibid., p. 4.
[167] Ibid., pp. 6-7.
[168] Ibid., p. 9.
[169] Ibid., p. 10.

common grace, similarly refutes the significance of ideas of common grace and natural law principles.

Here the objection is that the position represented by Barclay falls short on a number of points.

Firstly, it dichotomises the kingdom in ways that ignore the biblical evidence. Such a view fails to acknowledge the fact that Jesus positions himself completely with a liberating message of the Old Testament prophet.[170] Secondly, it is difficult to understand the nature of Jesus' miracles that so widely ministered to people's social and material needs across ethnic and religious boundaries.[171] Implicit in these miracles of physical healing was social and economic liberation in which the blind became employable and lepers were socially restored.

Sugden's response to Barclay posits a wider understanding of the kingdom that resists this dichotomy so that, Jesus 'does not act in a Kingdom way among his people and a non-Kingdom way among others'.[172] The continuity between an Old and New Testament ethic demonstrates what Mott describes as a 'deep concern for the social order, for justice, for the economic and social relationship of the powerful and the weak'.[173]

Thirdly, it follows that, according to Padilla, a kingdom of justice is concerned with 'the goal of transformation' which 'brings peace among individuals, races and nations by overcoming

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[170] For example, Luke 4. 14-21, Jesus deliberately implicates himself as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 61) and invokes the Jubilee motif.
[171] For example, Jesus reached out to a Roman centurion (Matthew 8. 5-13) and a Canaanite woman (Matthew 15. 21-28).
[172] Chris Sugden, 'A Presentation of the Concern for Kingdom Ethics' in *Kingdom and Creation in Social Ethics*, Grove Ethical Studies No. 79 (Nottingham: Grove Books Ltd., 1990), p. 15.
[173] Stephen Mott, *Jesus and Social Ethics*, Grove Ethics No. 55 (Nottingham: Grove Books, 1984), p. 5.

prejudices'.[174] Consequently, economics and political advocacy becomes inseparable from evangelism.[175]

The theological rift between the Old and New Testament understanding of the kingdom presented in Barclay's argument reveals an unhelpful textual misrepresentation of the kingdom ethic which was addressed in the previous chapter and which is relevant for an understanding of God's response to universal injustice.

As suggested earlier, Jesus' apocalyptic teaching in Matthew 25.31-46 offers a way of reading Jesus' approach to the kingdom that included the acts of mercy, peace-making and a thirst for righteousness shown to everyone. The Matthean apocalypse presents us with an important insight into the relationship between the kingdom of justice and final rewards. In this disturbing text it is the response to basic human needs, rather than theological orthodoxy, that acts as performance indicators of the kingdom in which the king decides who enters his kingdom.

Like the Beatitudes, the kingdom is typified in this passage by generous acts of kindness that reflect the justice Jesus inaugurated in Nazareth and which also reflected the prophetic tradition.[176] These features suggest a Jewish understanding of justice (*mishpat)* which includes our response to fellow humans as directed by God.

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[174] Transformation: The Church Response to Human Need.) ed. The EFICOUR Training Unit, Texts on Evangelical Social Ethics (iii) (Nottingham: Grove Books, 1986),)11.13.

[175] Texts on Evangelical Social Ethics 1974-1983, eds. by René Padilla, Chris Sugden, Grove Booklet on Ethics No. 58 (Nottingham: Grove Books Ltd., 1985), p. 9.

[176] Luke 4. 14-21; Isaiah 58. 1-14; 61. 1-4.

As I will now argue, biblical justice pursued in human affairs is both inclusive and transcendent because it combines ideas of righteousness before God with our responsibilities for preserving human dignity.

The association between *mishpat* and *tsedeqah* is a significant study in its own right.[177] Variants of *mishpat* (justice) appear some 422 times in the Old Testament and *tsedeqah* (righteousness) 157 times. Less frequently, 'justice', 'righteousness' and 'holiness' appear together.[178] Wolterstorff argues that in the process of translation, the complex etymology of *mishpat* and *tsedeqah* resulted in LXX and the New Testament rendering both words imprecisely as *dikaiosunē* (righteousness).[179]

Consequently, in the linguistic transition from Hebrew to LXX, the New Testament and English translations have resulted in a number of exegetical shortcomings. As a result, 'justice' became conflated into an individualistic righteousness that disregards the obligations of justice, mercy and love.[180]

What remains critical in our understanding of *mishpat* and its New Testament equivalent, *dikaiosunē*, is that their original judicial overtones should not be limited to the forensic meaning of justification but should retain the features of a kingdom in which opposing institutional injustices remain central to the business of the kingdom. Of equal importance is the fact that this call to justice expressing itself in the righteousness of communal

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[177] Job 29. 12-17; Psalm 72. 1-4; 45. 6; 89. 14; 97. 2. 1 Kings 10. 9; Isaiah 11. 4.
[178] Isaiah 5. 16.
[179] See *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. by Colin Brown (Cumbria: Paternoster, 1992), 3 Vols. pp. 358–362; Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Justice: Rights and Wrongs* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 110–115.
[180] Micah 6. 8.

relationships is universal in its application[181] and is linked to the institutional duties of the king.

The kingdom in which God as supreme monarch exercises justice[182] and delegates this order of justice to leaders[183] is ultimately expressed through the coming Messiah. As Ronald Sider asserts here, 'The messianic passages of Isaiah 9 and 11 promises that the Messiah will bring righteousness and justice to all'.[184] In Jesus' kingdom of justice then, Timothy Keller says '*mishpat* means more than just the punishment of wrongdoing. It also means to give people their rights'[185] and 'righteousness is inevitably "social" because it is about relationships'.[186]

Biblical justice calls for public responsibilities; it is never privatised to religious behaviour. As Mott says, 'the justice that characterises God's defense of the poor is the justice that is demanded of humanity'.[187] This means that justice 'is not a mere *mitigation* of suffering in oppression. Justice is deliverance'.[188]

The inference in all of this is that this kingdom of justice suggests a pervasive concern for the social and economic conditions in which people often experience the abuse of their human dignity.

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[181] Micah 6. 8; Deuteronomy 10. 14-20; 16. 19; 24. 14-19; 27. 19; Proverbs 31. 8; Isaiah 58. 6, 7.
[182] Psalm 89. 14; 97. 2.
[183] Genesis 49. 16; Deuteronomy 16. 2; Micah 3. 1; Proverbs 13. 34.
[184] Ronald J. Sider, *The Scandal of Evangelical Politics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2008), p. 108.
[185] Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2010), p. 3.
[186] Ibid., p. 10.
[187] Stephen Charles Mott, *A Christian Perspective on Political Thought* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 79.
[188] Ibid., p. 80.

In summary, I have argued that a theological exploration of FoRB is concerned about all freedoms as a quintessential feature of the mission of God. The focus on the kingdom emerged from the empirical material and brings with it an understanding of a just kingdom that is concerned with the alleviation of material suffering.

This narrative begins however, with the concept of human sin as an essential feature of an evangelical soteriology that also reflects the ethos of CSW as a human rights Christian agency. I have suggested consistently that beyond the work of personal salvation the mission of God is attentive to all suffering.

Consequently, the kingdom of justice identified in the empirical material is concerned about a righteousness that addresses social and economic injustices as a theological continuum from the forgiveness of sin.

My critique of Barclay's position highlighted a number of objections to the dichotomy between an Old and New Testament view of the kingdom of justice that he proposes. These included reference to the material nature of Jesus' work as much as the etymological transition which took place in our understanding of justice.

Having argued that the kingdom of justice and the mission of God respond to the entire range of human oppression, it follows that a pathway is open for shared partnership in the restoration of human dignity.

This is required by two theological assumptions for which I have argued throughout this thesis: everyone shares the image of God and everyone is therefore implicated in the mission of God.

8.5 Partnership and the mission of God

I begin here by reviewing the empirical evidence which itself unveils something of the complexities involved in Christian and non-Christian agencies working for common purpose.

I will then outline biblical models of partnership and explore some additional theological paradigms for comment. Finally, I explore a number of theological strands that may give us foundations on which to build partnerships for engagement in FoRB.

Asked whether they understood non-Christian human rights agencies to be engaged in God's mission, respondents were united in their belief that this was the case. Sonnie cited Cyrus as an example.[189] There was unanimous agreement with Sylvia's sentiment that non-Christians 'can be instrumentalised in the mission of God' and Cynthia's view that they were 'unwittingly guided' to fulfil God's purposes. From the leader interviewees Rex articulated the common agreement that everyone made in the image of God were potential partners.

Barry defended CSW's visit to an atheist prisoner in Indonesia and Kathy cited CSW's partnership with a non-Christian ambassador whose work in Africa 'put some of us to shame.' Paul mused about a distinction between non-Christians 'helping the mission of God' as opposed to being 'involved in the mission of God'.

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[189] II Chronicles 36. 22; Ezra 1. 1-8; Isaiah 44. 28.

There was however a distinct lack of theological dogmatism from respondents who generally expressed ambivalence in their personal opinions in the interview setting. It was strikingly clear that all respondents - particularly CSW staff - approached the issues from the perspective of 'kingdom' rather than a distinctly 'mission' or 'Christianese' sub-culture - a term I encountered on two occasions.

Seemingly, a 'kingdom' orientation provided a perspective through which respondents were able to embrace partnerships beyond the church in more radically inclusive terms. On reflection, this appeared to be yet another illustration of their intuitive ability to capture and replay the unexplored theological consensus at large in the organisation. Seemingly, the intersection between mission, kingdom and church remained unresolved at the point of praxis and it appeared that the interviews provided an opportunity for more conscious reflection.

Gloria suggested that God uses other agencies and, 'if Muslims feel, "I'm doing the work of Allah" - so be it. The semantics will fall away before the throne of God and the kingdom of God'. As the work of the kingdom is setting people free, she believed that, 'God provides the church with allies along the way'.[190] As Diane from Sri Lanka put it,

> I see more work done by civil society than the church […] I believe that God will ask one day whether you have been with the people, not with the church or mosque. I always see Jesus in suffering people.[191]

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[190] Gloria, 22 July 2015.
[191] Diane, 11 August 2015.

It was evident from the responses that whilst they were not always able to distinguish any functional differences between their own work and that of 'secular' agencies in the same field, they were equally clear that substantive differences existed between the charity's Christian ethos and non-Christian agencies.

These included the power of prayer, an empathetic understanding of faith, the Lordship of Christ and the fact that according to Gloria, 'God would be more mad at CSW than Amnesty if we walked past a Christian in a jail cell'.[192]

The complex nature of Christian-non-Christian partnership is also present in the biblical evidence.

Barth identifies non-Israelites who were 'accommodated' in God's salvation history.[193] As this history develops we have brief glimpses of the mixed group which left Egypt,[194] the Jericho drama with Rahab's participation 'in the camp of Israel'[195] and Naaman the leper.[196] Even though no evidence exists suggesting that Cyrus saw himself in this light, the pagan king of Syria was designated as God's shepherd,[197] 'his anointed'[198] raised up 'in my righteousness'.[199]

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[192] Gloria, 22 July 2015.
[193] Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics IV.2: The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, ed. by G.W. Bromiley & T. F. Torrence (Edinburgh: T&T Clarke, 1962), p. 488.
[194] Exodus 12. 48, 49.
[195] Joshua 6. 23-25; Heb. 11. 31.
[196] II Kings 5. 1-19.
[197] Isaiah 44. 28.
[198] Isaiah 45. 1.
[199] Isaiah 45. 13.

Admittedly, this approach to partnership in the mission of God stretches theological imagination and may extend the parameters of evangelical praxis. As has been evident, this tension lay at the heart of CSW ambivalence and two brief illustrations demonstrate the theological challenges involved.

Firstly, Thomas Thangaraj suggests 'the starting point [of mission] cannot be the Bible'.[200] Rather, he goes beyond 'the historical horizon' to ask the contextual questions which Christians share with everyone else in order to present biblical claims more relevantly. Thangaraj therefore begins with the *missio humanitatis* of *responsibility, solidarity* and *mutuality*.[201] Here, 'human salvation is expressed through Christ's life of solidarity with sinful humans'.[202] Even where he concedes that this mission is associated with God,[203] the dangers of a relativised mission are clear to see.

Secondly, the depth of identification with suffering and, indeed the very idea of a 'fellowship of suffering' may prove problematical. For example, Moltmann's eschatological vision proposes a levelling of all religious dogma in which world religions surrender 'particularist claims to truth'[204] uniting in the Lord's Supper 'in messianic fellowship'.[205] Through his Trinitarian and eschatological lens Moltmann sees the need to build mission-partnerships with unbelievers so that 'We shall no longer be able to see cooperation between Christians

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[200] Thomas M. Thangaraj, *The Common Task: A Theology of Christian Mission* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), p. 36.
[201] Ibid., p. 57.
[202] Ibid., p. 69.
[203] Ibid., p. 61-62.
[204] Jürgen Moltmann, *God for a Secular Society*: *The Public Relevance of Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1999), p. 133.
[205] Moltmann, *The Church in the Power*, p. 257.

and non-Christians in their endeavours to free the world from misery, violence and despair as purely fortuitous and without theological significance'.[206]

Schillebeeckx, like Moltmann, presents salvation history as a joint enterprise between Christians and non-Christians in which 'grace is concealed but active in the whole of human life, in everything we call human'. [207] This partnership 'will be a synthesis in which the church and the world no longer confront each other as strangers'.[208]

This approach opens a wider understanding of the mission of God in which Schillebeeckx envisions 'an emancipatory process of liberation' which is still essentially Christian even when the church is not directly involved and in which human rights presses for 'a minimum of human salvation'.[209] By this reckoning freedom includes people 'beyond the Christian awareness to become a part of this work of salvation'.[210]

The Eucharistic mysticism in Moltmann and Schillebeeckx elevates partnerships with non-Christians to a level that potentially strains the particularity of the Passion beyond the support of the biblical evidence. Whilst Schillebeeckx argues for the language of 'conversion', missiological partnership in Eucharist confuses the exclusive bond between Christ and the church[211] and undermines the idea of the ontological community of suffering which has more plausible support in the scriptures.

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[206] Ibid., p. 192.
[207] Ibid., pp. 74, 75.
[208] Schillebeeckx, *The Mission of the Church*, p. 48.
[209] Schillebeeckx, *Christ,* p. 768.
[210] Ibid., p. 791.
[211] Romans 8. 17, 18; II Corinthians 1. 6, 7; Colossians 1. 24; I Peter 4. 13; 5. 1.

Such ideas fail to distinguish between the unique calling and character of the church and would become a theological obstacle to CSW's ethos.

Conversely, I would argue for an approach to partnership that is enjoined, as Hollenbach suggests, where the church with its traditional beliefs has 'a strong understanding of the civic good' and retains 'full commitment to Christian faith'.[212] What Hollenbach proposes here preserves a full commitment to an understanding of the mission of God in which both the forgiveness of sin and a response to human suffering are held in a theological tension.

I have argued therefore, that in Isaiah's Servant both personal salvation and non-redemptive action are harmonised in the Cross. Crucially, this responds to Barclay's concern for an ontological reason for Christian social action. In the Servant's death, the universal nature of God's cure for soul and body is enacted by the one who 'took our infirmities and carried our sorrows'.[213]

I argue then, that partnership with non-Christian organisations and institutions fall within the parameters of the mission of God. This was the unarticulated discernment identifiable in the empirical evidence and for which I have offered a number of textual readings which arguably supports their understanding.

In presenting a case for Christian co-belligerence with non-Christian entities, I have argued for a form of Christian universalism that roots human dignity in the image of God and offers a theological explanation for the human propensity to partner in the *missio dei*. This

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[212] Hollenbach, *The Common Good*, p. 113.
[213] Isaiah 53.4.

partnership emerges not from political pragmatism or even Christian activism, but from a profoundly theological understanding of the harmonizing work of the Cross within which both the saving and non-saving work of God is enacted. That said, our understanding of common grace and the history of the church also offers historic precedence for collaboration for the common good.

8.6 Conclusion

This chapter does not claim to provide a definitive theology of FoRB, or an unqualified defence of the human rights instruments and language in which it is couched. Rather, I have outlined an initial framework for Christian engagement in FoRB. This suggests that God's mission protects the dignity which God gives to everyone, including their freedom of religion or belief. I have advocated that this mission involves freedom from all forms of coercion as well as freedom from the penalty of personal sin. Given that everyone bears the responsibilities which come with possessing God's image, I also suggest that this should involve Christians collaborating with everyone who is responding to human suffering and the violation of their religious freedom.

I have provided a series of overlapping theological arguments in response to some of the questions which arise from the discussion. In doing so I suggest that the value of this framework is not entirely dependent on the individual strength of each of argument I have proposed. However, I believe that the ideas and insights offered here will enrich the understanding of Christians who are already engaged in the pursuit of FoRB.

My final chapter will assume this theological journey and offer some concluding thoughts on practical responses for Christian engagement in FoRB.

Chapter Nine

FoRB as a Call to Mission

Having presented a theological case for Christian engagement in FoRB this final chapter responds to my research question by providing a summary of the challenges and opportunities for Christian engagement in FoRB that arise from the research. Here I offer some practical responses to these questions drawing on the insights of interviewees whose perspectives also shaped the theological material in the two previous chapters.

I identify two prevailing challenges facing these practitioners engaged in the pursuit of FoRB. The first is the global erosion in FoRB - despite seven decades of human rights instruments. The second is the sustained ambivalence about broader human rights engagement that still exists amongst Christians.

I will argue however, that in spite of these obstacles, engagement in FoRB still offers positive opportunities. I will suggest that CSW's engagement in FoRB precipitated an important theological journey that clarified the organisation's identity. Secondly, I suggest that despite the increasing tensions between religious freedom and individual rights claims, religious freedom and FoRB may still be defended as critical first generation rights. Thirdly, as stated earlier, human rights continue to provide a dialogical context for Christian engagement for the common good.

Finally, I argue that through involvement in FoRB, Christian witness may be enhanced by an evident commitment to the wellbeing of everyone who shares the image and likeness of God. This I suggest becomes achievable as Christians engage in the defence of FoRB as a foundational, rather than an alien right and consider opportunities for productive partnerships for the common good.

9.1 Existing challenges for engagement in FoRB

As CSW develops its commitment to FoRB, I identify here two key challenges which exist both for them as a Christian charity working in this area and, by extension, for other Christian religious freedom organisations who share their ethos. The first has to do with the erosion of FoRB. The second flows from this and relates to Christian ambiguities about engagement in this field of work. I suggest that these two provide substantial challenges but also pose important opportunities that I will also mention.

9.1.1 Erosion of FoRB

The future of religious freedom is bleak. In its first major report the UK's All Party Parliamentary Group for International Freedom of Religion or Belief (APPGFoRB) described FoRB as a non-enforceable 'orphaned covenant'.[1] Drawing from Pew Research Center's survey of global trends between 2013 and 2015, the APPG report of 2017 suggested that, nearly 80% of the world's population experienced FoRB abuses compared with the earlier finding of 77% in its 2015 report.[2]

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[1] APPGFORB, 'News' (no date) < https://appgfreedomofreligionorbelief.org/media/Article-18-An-Orphaned-Right.pdf> [accessed 1 April 2019].
[2] Pew Research Center, 'Global Restrictions on Religion Rise Modestly in 2015, Reversing Downward Trend', 11 Apr. 2017, http://www.pewforum.org/2017/04/11/global-restrictions-on-religion-rise-modestly-in-2015-

In 2017 the UN Special Rapporteur for FoRB, Dr Amhed Shaheed, noted that the APPGs

Report was published 'at a time when acts of intolerance involving religion or belief are on

the rise globally' and that few states were implementing FoRB despite 'the proliferation of

internationally-agreed guidelines, toolkits and frameworks'.[3]

In 2018, similar views were echoed by the chair of the APPG, Jim Shannon MP, in a

prominent Parliamentary debate[4] and reflected by Mary Ann Glendon who said, 'the world is

an increasingly hostile place for all religions'.[5] In a BBC Radio 4 interview the UN Secretary

General conceded that nationalism and political trends were eroding democracy and the UN's

work.[6]

These pronouncements and the proliferation of FoRB abuses have seemingly vindicated

Boyd-MacMillan's evaluation of the UN's impotence to respond effectively to the

persecution of Christians.[7]

However, over the past decade this pessimistic outlook has provoked robust responses from

the human rights community. For example, the Oslo Charter signed by thirty

parliamentarians in 2014 birthed the International Panel of Parliamentarians for Freedom of

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reversing-downward-trend/; cited in APPG for International Freedom of Religion or Belief, *Article 18: From Rhetoric to Reality* (2017), <https://appgfreedomofreligionorbelief.org/media/Article-18-report-1710.pdf> [accessed 27 April 2018].

[3] APPGFORB, Article 18: *From Rhetoric to Reality* (2017).

[4] House of Commons, *House of Commons Debate* (26 October 2017, vol. 630, cols 197WHff) <http://bit.ly/2uSDfEl> [Accessed 27 April 2018].

[5] Mary Ann Glendon, 'Is Religious Freedom Under Threat?', A Forum for Atlantic Dialogue, McDonald Centre Conference, Christ Church Oxford, 23 May 2018. Glendon was reflecting on the 2017 USCIRF report on Religious Freedom.

[6] Radio 4 Today, 3, May 2018, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0b0lzk5> [accessed 10 May 2018].

[7] Ronald Boyd-MacMillan, *Faith that Endures: The Essential Guide to the Persecuted Church* (Lancaster: Sovereign World, 2006), p.100.

Religion or Belief (IPPFoRB) - an informal network established to advance fundamental freedoms.

Similarly, government bodies such as the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom, (USCIRF) have intensified their responses.[8] In July 2018 an unprecedented Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom was convened by Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and issued a Potomac Declaration and Potomac Action Plan consisting of guidelines for the pursuit of FoRB.[9] In July 2018 the UK government appointed Lord Ahmad as its first Envoy on FoRB[10] and in January 2019 the UK Foreign Secretary launched a global enquiry on Christian persecution.[11]

Other important responses include the FoRB Learning Platform,[12] the International Institute on Religion Freedom (IIRF),[13] The Religious Freedom Institute (RFI)[14] and the Stefanus Alliance.[15] Strategic responses to FoRB abuses and developments are being monitored through regional bodies such as the South East Asia Network (SEANFoRB) Conference attended by delegates from politics, business, human rights organisations and religious

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[8] USCIRF, 'About us' (no date), <https://www.uscirf.gov/> [accessed 7 September 2018].
[9] Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom, 'Potomac Declaration' (24-26 July, 2018) <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/irf/religiousfreedom/284555.htm> [accessed 5 December 2018].
[10] Prime Minister's Office et al., 'Lord Ahmad appointed as PM's Special Envoy to promote religious freedom', 4 July 2018 <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/lord-ahmad-appointed-as-pms-special-envoy-to-promote-religious-freedom> [accessed 25 November 2018].
[11] Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 'Foreign Secretary announces global review into persecution of Christians', (26 December 2018) <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/foreign-secretary-announces-global-review-into-persecution-of-christians> [accessed 21 February 2019].
[12] FORB Learning Platform, 'About' (no date), <https://www.forb-learning.org/about.html> [accessed 2 November 2018].
[13] IIRF, 'Religious Freedom Series' (no date) <https://www.iirf.eu/journal-books/religious-freedom-series/> [accessed 7 September 2018].
[14] RFI, 'About' (no date), <https://www.religiousfreedominstitute.org/mission/> [accessed 7 September 2018].
[15] See Ed Brown, Kristink Storaker, Lisa Winther, *Freedom of Religion or Belief for Everyone*, 4th edn (Stefanus Alliance International, 2017).

groups. Each year Open Doors publishes its World Watch List on the persecution of Christians.[16]

These developments demonstrate resilience. However, even where Christian communities agree that the pursuit of FoRB is consistent with the mission of God, these trends may be debilitating.

9.1.2 FoRB and Christian ambivalence

The empirical material indicated that Christian leaders remain conflicted about engagement in FoRB. As I will show this ambiguity exists globally even where Christian organisations have expertise in religious liberty.

Whilst church leaders in Group B affirmed engagement in FoRB, the rise in global atrocities appeared to influence their own perceptions of Christians in Europe being increasingly marginalised. There was a view that, in comparison to other groups, Christian persecution was not taken seriously in the media or by human rights agencies.[17]

Rex said,

> here in Switzerland, if some unjust thing happens to a Muslim the TV is there. If some unjust thing happens to a Christian, it's played down, so I somehow feel […] that the real suffering of Christians is not upheld enough when we

[16] Open Doors, World Watch List, (no date) <https://www.opendoorsuk.org> [accessed 21 February 2019].
[17] This point was also supported by Glendon who suggested that in 2017 approximately 170 million Christians suffered abuse and that these incidents were under-reported by news agencies. Glendon cited Human Rights Watch who had mentioned only eight FoRB cases in three hundred and twenty-three reports over a five-year period. 'Is Religious Freedom Under Threat?'

consider that it is said between 100 and 200 million Christians suffer under persecution and Amnesty is not making this one of their main subjects.[18]

Jonathan was concerned that public opinion, institutions and media outlets, including the BBC, allow 'far more latitude' to other faiths and were less sympathetic to Christian persecution so that, 'the perception however among many Christians […] is that the beheading of Christians and the complete obliteration of the church from known parts of the world is completely veiled over'.[19]

The escalation of violations against Christians has led to renewed reflections on persecution and martyrdom that present new challenges and continue to reflect a cautious attitude towards deeper engagement in FoRB. For example, the Bad Urach consultation that gathered twenty-four participants in 2009 to reflect on Christian persecution acknowledged that 'suffering in the world calls every Christian to the task of seeking to alleviate suffering […] both individually and socially'.[20] However it made no significant reference to FoRB, nor does Sauer and Howell's compendium of writers on the subject of persecution.[21]

Evangelical charities committed to the defence of persecuted Christians tend to promote prayer and practical support rather than human rights advocacy. In such instances, press releases use familiar Christian language in the absence of a human rights vocabulary.[22]

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[18] Rex, 4 February 2016.

[19] Jonathan, 12 February 2016.

[20] *Bad Urach Statement: Towards an Evangelical Theology of Suffering, Persecution and Martyrdom for the Global Church in Mission,* The WEA Global Series Issue Series 9, ed. by Christof Sauer (Bonn: VKKW, 2012), p. 22-23.

[21] IIRF, 'Religious Freedom Series Suffering', in *Persecution and Martyrdom: Theological Reflections*, ed. by Christof Sauer and Richard Howell (Bonn: Acad SA and VKW, 2010).

[22] For example, Churches Together in England, 'UK Orthodox and Pentecostal leaders in solidarity with The Persecuted Church', 30 November 2017 < https://ctbi.org.uk/uk-orthodox-and-pentecostal-leaders-in-solidarity-with-the-persecuted-church/> [accessed 27 March 2019]. *WEA Religious Liberty Prayer News*, 30 November 2017, identified Hindu persecutions against Christians in India and Muslim persecution in Nigeria with prayer

For example, the WEA, which has held active UN observer status for a number of years, typically focuses on Christian persecution as opposed to FoRB. Until recently, this resulted in a muting of human rights language.[23] Consequently, their ability to provide confident education in the mediating conversations described in chapter eight is weakened.[24]

Similarly, the World Summit in Defence of Persecuted Christians convened by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association in 2017 specifically pledged to stand with persecuted Christians and to pray for fellow believers, 'wherever they may be found [claiming] the Lordship of Christ […] as King of Kings forever'.[25] This focused theologising of Christian persecution was also a feature of the ecumenical Global Christian Forum (GCF). Whilst recognising persecution 'among Christians and people of other faiths in the contemporary world' the statement from the historic forum of eminent Christian leaders in 2015 focused exclusively on global Christian persecution.[26] Philpott and Shah's extensive study of Christian persecution justified the absence of a focus on other religions on the basis that Christians suffer more persecution than other faiths and that strategies of multi-faith association were evidence enough of its collaborative approach with other agencies. What

points < https://www.worldea.org/prayer/2866/religious-liberty-prayer-news-india-uganda-nigeria> [accessed 27 March 2019]. Neither accompany such atrocities with the language of FoRB.

[23] A December 2018 member newsletter, 'WEA Advocating for Freedom of Religion or Belief' made extensive use of the language of FoRB. However, this information was not detectable on WEA's website. [accessed 5 December 2018].

[24] Ethna Regan, *Theology and the Boundary Discourse of Human Rights* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2010).

[25] Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, *Final Declaration: World Summit In Defense of Persecuted Christians*, (May 10-13, 2017), <https://billygraham.org/press-release/final-declaration-presented-world-summit-defense-persecuted-christians/ > [accessed 1 January 2018].

[26] Global Christian Forum, *Consultation Message, 4 November 2015: Discrimination, Persecution, Martyrdom: Following Christ Together,* Tirana, Albania, Global Consultation, (1-5 November 2015).

appeared to be an argument by numbers omitted the religious persecution experienced by people of other faiths.[27]

Whilst Christian persecution deserves priority in Christian advocacy as a result of its 'share of the overall quantum of religion-related persecution and discrimination in the world,'[28] the reality is that,

> Western [Christians] have little direct experience of the intense religious repression that increasingly engulfs their fellow Christians […] as well as the sometimes more horrific persecution that non-Christian communities such as Yazidis, Baha'is, and Ahmadis face in many parts of the globe.[29]

By its own account, this extensive and important study recognises the shared experience of suffering between all faiths whilst prioritising attention to Christian persecution. This important alert on behalf of fellow Christians stops short of the more radical and missional response of engagement in FoRB.

I argue, however, that neither the reality of Christian persecution nor the prevailing institutional or state lethargy regarding FoRB abuses absolves Christian communities from deeper engagement. The single, most significant reason for such engagement in FoRB should be the degree to which Christians are satisfied that working for FoRB is consistent with the mission of God. This remains a largely unheard call to action that I will now discuss.

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[27] Daniel Philpot and Timothy Samuel Shah, 'Introduction' in *Under Caesar's Sword: How Christians Respond to Persecution*, ed. by Philpot and Shah (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), pp. 1–29 (p. 4).
[28] Ibid., p. 10.
[29] Ibid., p. 10.

9.2   FoRB as a call to mission

The prevailing levels of persecution against Christians clearly has a dissuasive impact on deepening engagement in FoRB and adds to an environment in which church leaders may be anxious about it even where they recognise its biblical foundations. This incongruity was evident from one interviewee who had experienced FoRB abuses.[30]

In this section I suggest that the challenges inherent in the pursuit of FoRB offer opportunities for organisational and missional development. This was displayed in CSW's journey as it came to terms with the implications of being a Christian organisation engaged in religious freedom for everyone.

Four key opportunities became evident in the charity's response to the challenges it faced: clarifying its identity, recognising FoRB as a first right, engaging in the global conversation of FoRB and pursing opportunities for global and transformational partnerships.

9.2.1 Identity

CSW courageously came to identify itself more clearly with the pursuit of FoRB. Its principal response was to sharpen its identity as a Christian agency specializing in the pursuit of FoRB and launching a dedicated blog, 'FoRB in Full'[31] during the rebranding period.

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[30] See Assid's interview in chapter four.
[31] CSW, *FoRB in Full*: *A Blog by CSW* (7 January 2016), <https://forbinfull.org/category/forb-on-the-frontlines/> [accessed 1 December 2018].

Given the interface between CSW's Christian support base and its wider civic engagement, the process of introspection was deeply influenced, not only by its own evangelical support base, but also by the secular environment in which it advocates.

CSW's struggle with this tension was symbolised by the two references prominently displayed in its new office: Article 18 and Micah 6.8. The synergy between these two texts became more evident in the aftermath of the branding process and offered a conscious resolution to the earlier ambiguities. Paul, a senior church leader and victim of FoRB violations harmonised the two concepts. He said, 'I have two documents. The first is the Bible and then the second is the constitution or the different charters on human rights'.[32]

CSW's new brand became a formal confirmation of its self-portrait as a Christian charity with a theological commitment to FoRB and coincided with two campaigns launched in March 2018: Faith and a Future,[33] which defended the educational right of children of all faiths, and Defending the Defenders,[34] offering training for Christian and non-Christian human rights defenders.

After a protracted period of reflection, its brand and promotional strapline became 'CSW: Everyone free to believe'. Even so, it has been evident that the transition has been approached with considerable caution: at the time of completing this thesis CSW's most recent caseload did not appear to reflect a level of religious diversity commensurate with its aspirations as a FoRB organisation.[35]

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[32] Paul. 15 March 2016.
[33] CSW, 'Faith and a Future', (no date) <https://www.csw.org.uk/faithandafuture> [accessed 8 October 2018].
[34] CSW, 'Defending the Defenders' (12 October 2017)
<https://www.csw.org.uk/2017/10/12/feature/3746/article.htm> [accessed 8 October 2018].
[35] CSW, 'Media Centre', (no date), <https://www.csw.org.uk/media_centre.htm> [accessed 20 March 2019].

Whilst CSW is committed to a trajectory of inclusion, its cultural default is for the prioritisation of persecuted Christians.[36] Such a preferential approach may be defended on the weight of global Christian persecution and the preferential licence offered by the studies from Galatians and Hebrews in chapters seven and eight.

Understood in this way I do not regard such a policy as illegitimate prioritisation which runs contrary to the theological posture of this thesis. However, if it is to avoid future ambivalence and the default position of exclusive Christian protectionism, CSW faces the challenge of an intentional strategy for the pursuit of FoRB accompanied by an internal dialogical process of evaluation.

From its current posture as a Christian organisation committed to human rights, the organisation positioned itself to defend religious liberty as a first right. This is the second opportunity I will now briefly explore.

9.2.2 FoRB as a first right

In partnership with the Swiss religious freedom Christian agency, Stefanus, CSW has been a key sponsor for a strategic South East Asia Network consultation on FoRB (SEANFoRB). The consultation which hosts faith organisations, politicians and human rights specialists across the region defended the concept of religious freedom as a core freedom during its 2018 meeting.

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[36] See CSW Identity and Vision Statement, Core Principles, Appendix I, p.281

As special guest, Jan Figel, EU's Special Envoy for FoRB, claimed 'FoRB is the issue and the deepest expression of human dignity'. All other freedoms, he claimed, flow from Article 1 of the UDHR.[37] Indeed, as a Stefanus publication claims, 'FoRB is not only a fundamental individual right, but also important for the democratic and economic situation of a state, the wellbeing of its citizens, and the stability and peace among its inhabitants'.[38] Rather than defending religious systems or ideologies, 'FoRB protects human beings'.[39]

Christian engagement in FoRB may thus be regarded as active resistance to state control over individual conscience and a vote of confidence in our democratic freedoms. This is because it preserves the aspirations of the UDHR drafters who promoted individual freedoms above state control and the sanctity of conscience and individual choice along with freedom of assembly and freedom of speech.

Claiming religious freedom as a democratic cornerstone of first generation rights which are identified with the basic rights of life, freedom of thought, conscience and expression contained in the 1948 UDHR provisions[40] does not evade the political complexities of the secular approach to rights and, as Roger Trigg reminds us, a contemporary understanding of dignity has become complicated in the philosophical intersection between dignity, rights and equalities.[41]

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[37] Jan Figel, 'Advancing Religious Freedom in the Context of Defending Human Dignity' (Bangkok, 4th Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief in South East Asia, 17 August 2018).
[38] Brown, Storaker and Winther, *Freedom of Religion or Belief for Everyone*, p. 8.
[39] Ibid., p. 15.
[40] See, Thomas K. Johnson, 'Human Rights a Christian Primer' in *WEA Global Issues Series 1* (Bonn:, Verlag Für Kuttur und Wissenschaft, 2008), p. 17.
[41] Trigg, *Equality, Freedom & Religion* (Oxford: OUP, 2012), pp.69-83.

I argue here that whilst human rights remain an imperfect and contentious issue there is little scope for a withdrawal from this arena if human dignity across the world is to be defended within the context of current international agreements. Whilst Christian activism has an important role of interpreting and bringing fresh insights to the discourse on rights this may be done most effectively by reclaiming the legacy and legitimacy of religious rights within the existing human rights fora.

What became clear during the SEANFoRB consultation was that CSW – along with a number of other Christian agencies - saw its role in this light. In this regional consultation Christian agencies which embraced the challenges inherent in the pursuit of FoRB were clearly well placed to endorse the primacy of religious freedom and also to participate as co-equals in the discourse about human dignity.

9.2.3 FoRB as a global conversation

Christian engagement in FoRB is therefore inevitably involved in juggling the secular vocabulary of rights along with the language of Christian faith that is premised on the ideas of revelation and the sovereignty of God.

In an extensive commentary, Jonathan offered a nuanced view on the apparent impasse.

> When people get bogged down literally in debate and discussion they say it's the premise we're working on that's causing it to be bogged down. It's our political different views; it's our different cultures. Well, that may or may not be true but very often that's an excuse for the fact that we don't have a basic template of relationship that gives us a way forward.[42]

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[42] Jonathan, 12 February 2016.

What is often overlooked in this wider debate, as Gadamer reminds us, is the fact that even though the formal instruments of FoRB do not use the language of Christian faith, in the USA and Europe this language has been deeply influenced by 'Western Christianity and its spiritual history'.[43] Indeed, as Jonathan Chaplin and Gary Wilton show, the Christian legacy in the birthing of the European Union[44] is usually neglected along with 'the theologically inspired struggle for freedom by minority churches' against the Christian establishment that lay at the heart of religious freedom in Europe.[45]

As Jonathan argued, progress in Christian engagement in human rights depended on the two very different worldviews, 'creating a cohesion that comes with mutual respect for one another before we apply ourselves to the issue of moving something forward'.[46]

The issues associated with human rights language raised by interviewees have already been explored at length in chapters three and eight. Given FoRB's inherent contribution to international peacekeeping, Christian reticence to engage in the discourse on FoRB may therefore be regarded as theologically unjustified and politically negligent. As Rowan Williams suggests, it should not be treated as a secular matter 'potentially at odds with the morality and spirituality of believers'.[47]

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[43] Hans-George Gadamer, *Religion and Ethics,* trans. by Joel Weinsheimer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), p. 4.

[44] Gary Wilton, 'Christianity at the Founding: The Legacy of Robert Schuman', in *God and the EU: Faith in the European Project*, ed. by Jonathan Chaplin and Gary Wilton (New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. 13-28.

[45] Thomas Schirrmacher and Jonathan Chaplin, 'European religious freedom and the EU', in *God and the EU*, p. 154.

[46] Jonathan, 12 February 2016.

[47] Rowan Williams, *Human Rights and Religious Faith* (Geneva, Ecumenical Centre, 28 February 2012).

This debate on human dignity is a global conversation in which participants from powerful as well as poor nations have equal claim, even when such claims are not always realised in practice. Conflict between religious convictions and secular values pose real challenges to Christian values and traditions that have endured for over a millennium. In such instances, the legal and cultural conflicts which have erupted around public services and freedom of speech, (such as those identified in chapter one), whilst highly disruptive for the individuals concerned and symptomatic of a dominant, post-Christian worldview, have not been matters of life or death. This is in stark contrast to the FoRB abuses that caused serious hardship, incarcerations and even death in many non-Western contexts. As the Pew research has demonstrated, experiences of FoRB abuse in Western societies represent the least hostile examples of such incidents.[48]

Whilst acknowledging that the complexity of human rights may further disenfranchise powerless communities, it is through this discourse that the preservation of human dignity is championed and brought to the attention of institutional arbitrators such as the UN. In spite of the political prevarications that take place at gatherings such as the Human Rights Council or the UN Security Council, these fora represent the only agreed settings in which global accountability for the denial of human dignity may eventually be agreed. It is here that the Christian message of reconciliation[49] and dignity needs to be translated into the vernacular of the human rights discourse. In so doing we stand in solidarity with victims of FoRB abuses who have been silenced by repressive regimes. This is particularly pertinent because FoRB protects human dignity rather than ideologies and allows freedom of speech whilst seeking to preserve the dignity of choice.

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[48] Pew Research Center, 'Global Restrictions on Religion'.
[49] II Corinthian 5. 15-18.

Indeed, it is as Christians engage in this dialogue that further opportunities for creative and transformational partnerships become apparent. This is the fourth issue to which I will now turn.

9.2.4 FoRB, transformation and partnership

The church's potential for social transformation in mission has been evidenced by scholars such Robert Woodberry.[50] Increasingly, Christians are viewing the work of cultural and political transformation in a more collaborative light.

Consequently, Christian communities have an obligation to maximise their role in serving society. Jonathan's views are relevant here:

> If I was an atheist […] I would say, "But wait a minute: the money that you're getting back on your tax rebate on giving to your church would have been spent on hospitals, roads and schools". I would probably be putting that proposition myself and I think it actually rightly sharpens the work of the Charity Commissioners [and] cause Christians to evaluate their purpose in the world.[51]

As CSW has demonstrated, within civil society credible partnerships emerge, as a result of the charity's ethos and commitment 'to the realization of human rights'[52] rather than its doctrinal position. This was the basis on which the charity eventually secured ECOSOC

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[50] See for example Robert Woodberry, 'The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy', in *The American Political Science Review,* 106 (2012), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41495078> [accessed 27 September 2018].
[51] Jonathan, 12 February 2016.
[52] Jürgen Moltmann, *On Human Dignity* (London: SCM Press, 1984), p. 10.

consultative status.[53] Building partnership, as David Hollenbach suggests, is therefore 'a high-stakes affair', which inevitably 'makes significant demands on both Christians and non-Christians'.[54]

Thomas Berg argues, then, that the credibility of evangelical Christians is precariously balanced at this point because '[d]efending the religious freedom of others is crucial to having the moral credibility to say that we contribute to the common good'.[55] Indeed, the APPG argues that FoRB abuses affect societal development and trace an identifiable link between security, peace-building and democratisation.[56]

It is reasonable to argue, then, that the pursuit of FoRB should be regarded as normative as is the indiscriminate support shown by Christian relief and development agencies. As the political, social and economic value of religious freedom is increasingly linked to domestic and foreign policy[57] and rigorously monitored,[58] Christian engagement in FoRB should be located on the continuum of a mission by which Christian ethics and hospitality is recognised as integral to its proclamation of good news.

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[53] CSW, 'Dignitaries Support CSW at UN' (2017), <http://www.csw.org.uk/2017/04/11/news/3517/article.htm> [accessed 1 Nov 2017].

[54] David Hollenbach, S. J. *The Common Good & Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 113.

[55] Thomas Berg, 'Religious Freedom and the Common Good: A Symposium of the Religious Freedom Project', Berkley Center, Georgetown University, (15 November 2016), p. 1-71 (p.11) 161115RFPReligiousFreedomCommonGood

[56] APPGIFORB, *Article 18: An Orphaned Right* (no date) < https://appgfreedomofreligionorbelief.org/media/Article-18-An-Orphaned-Right.pdf> [accessed 27 March 2019]*, p. 38.

[57] APPGIFORB, *From Rhetoric to Reality*, pp. 31-36.

[58] Ibid. p. 33. See Brian Grim, 'Religious Freedom and Business is a leading example of this research (no date), <https://religiousfreedomandbusiness.org/brian-j-grim> [accesses 3 May 2018].

This was clearly Rex's understanding of the biblical prayer for peaceful order and 'quiet lives'.[59] As he suggests,

> there is a [provision] in the state where the […] gospel can be freely preached. This includes also other religions [who] should have the same freedom. If not, we create a wrong understanding and we prioritise one religion and this is always wrong.[60]

As respondents evidenced, the church is not readily identifiable as a support base for transformational partnership. Nevertheless, Andreas was clear that the church is called to go beyond theological differences and to 'speak up for Christian freedom and […] freedom of religion as a whole because I really do feel that's our calling as Christians'.

In spite of his deep reservations, Patrick suggested that when the 'People of God cooperate with the people of goodwill the kingdom of God comes'.[61] Jonathan identified areas for collaboration where he would not 'ask people to go through the shibboleths of where they stand theologically before I say, "here is an horrendous human problem, can we lift this great weight together?"'[62]

What crystallised from these leaders in Group B was the degree to which an authentic church is defined by its ability to forge partnership beyond its own liturgy and culture.

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[59] I Timothy 2. 2.
[60] Rex, 4 February 2016.
[61] Here Patrick borrowed a statement from the late Rev. George McCloud (no reference).
[62] Jonathan, 12 February 2016.

Although church leaders remained conflicted on this issue, in their own espoused theology, they recognised the church's ability to enter into what Moltmann describes as 'relationships with partners in history who are not the church and will never be the church'.[63] Rex suggested that whilst it was not possible for the church to unilaterally eliminate injustice before the *eschaton*, 'non-Church organisations help to reduce suffering and […] are also unconsciously working for something that is part of the agenda of the church so also helping to do something that is on God's mind'.[64]

Signs of a more collaborative attitude are growing on both sides. Andreas affirmed the need for the church to have 'a heart for the whole world' and was clearly 'more optimistic in some [civic] circles because there is a greater awareness that there is a need for faith to be brought into the equation'.[65]

In summary, the empirical evidence reflected the ambivalence that persisted throughout the research. Whilst CSW demonstrated a clear and anticipated preference toward further partnerships, they also acknowledged the reservations present for themselves as staff as well as their supporters.

As a participant observer what seemed equally apparent was the potential for deeper education in helping churches appreciate that through engagement in FoRB, Christians might validate Schwartzman's claim that the church is able to add value from the margins of popular culture.[66]

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[63] Jürgen Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (Bristol: SCM Press, 1977), p. 134.
[64] Rex, 4 February 2016.
[65] Andreas, 4 February 2016.
[66] Micah Schwartzman, 'The Relevance of Locke's Religious Arguments for Toleration', *Political Theory* 33 (2005), pp. 678-705 (p.678).

9.3 Conclusion

The focal point of this thesis has been to align Christian engagement in FoRB with a coherent theological framework and root this philosophical foundation in the confluence between the *imago dei* and human participation in the mission of God.

Everyone should therefore enjoy the freedom of 'thought and conscience and religion' prescribed by Article 18 of the UDHR, and that engagement in FoRB should be regarded as an articulation of a Christian theology of freedom. By creating an environment in which legitimate faith-sharing without coercion becomes viable, the pursuit of FoRB is consistent with a Christian mission which shows God's compassion for those who suffer. Advocates of FoRB will see no contradiction, therefore, in promoting the ethical standards in evangelism advocated by Elmer Theissen[67] whilst promoting their own invitational faith and challenging individuals, systems and states that supress legitimate proselytization.[68]

Laying a foundation in this area of research has necessarily covered a wide spectrum of historical and theological considerations. Methodologically, I set out to understand the hermeneutical drivers behind Christians involved in the unusual defence of FoRB and how their understanding of themselves as a Christian organisation informed their praxis.

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[67] See Elmer John Theissen, *The Ethics of Evangelism: A Philosophical Defense of Proselytizing and Persuasion* (Illinois: IVP Academic, 2011).

[68] Heiner Bielefeldt, 'Misperceptions of freedom of religion or belief', in *Human Rights Quarterly*, Volume 35, Number 1, February 2013, pp. 33-68.

Along with some initial thoughts about how I came to this study, chapter one laid out my method and identified the research question that guided the work. As a participant observer I became aware at an early stage that no extant history of CSW was available. Chapter two therefore offered a case study of the organisation and chapter three highlights a number of inherent, unresolved ambiguities within the charity.

Given the prevalence of Christian persecution within the spectrum of FoRB abuses, chapter four provides a dialogue on the subject and reveals some important comparisons between the three interview groups. As an integral part of the study these attitudes to persecution provided a critical evaluation of the respondents' views of engagement in FoRB.

These four chapters amount to a profile of CSW as a uniquely placed evangelical charity engaged in FoRB and offered insights into the organisation's cognitive trajectory from ambivalence to greater clarity of its identity as a Christian human rights charity.

What became evident from the formal interviews and primary material was the degree to which much of the ambivalence was generated by three important factors. Firstly, there was little appreciation of the extent to which Christian drafters of the UDHR brought Christian values to the process between 1946 and 1948. Secondly, the charity had no awareness of the precedents in Christian philosophical thought that acted as signposts to ideas of human rights and religious freedom throughout Christian history. Finally, and most significantly, there was a distinct absence of any accessible theological material on which to base their praxis. It was clear that the organisation was acutely aware of this gap and the synergy between my interest and that of the charity provided the basis for the research.

Chapter five, therefore, provided a brief analytical reflection of the influence that Christian thought exerted on shaping the UDHR, and chapter six examined some of the historic Christian ideas that flowed into the Declaration.

Both of these chapters introduced some important theological insights. In chapter seven I examined a limited number of biblical texts. Rather than a comprehensive biblical overview, the study has necessarily been a limited exploration of selected texts, offering relevant insights for my argument. The chapter argues that the Genesis narrative presents us with a Christian anthropology in which human dignity arises from *imago dei*. In addition, I consider how the Suffering Servant identifies with all human suffering. On this basis I suggest that the Old Testament points to a theological basis on which to consider the universal character of God's response to everyone made in his image. In identifying the universal character of the mission of God the chapter considers examples of Jesus' ethical teachings and the New Testament approach to hospitality.

Chapter eight offered a more detailed theological commentary that explored two overarching themes: a Christian approach to human dignity and universalism.

Firstly, I argue that because all people share God's image everyone is worthy of human freedoms and that the mission of God calls everyone to participate in and benefit from such freedoms. Secondly, I suggest a universal approach to God's mission that preserves the specific and redemptive work of the Cross.

In both chapters I have argued that from the Patristic period, traces of Christian reflection on religious freedom have been identifiable and that these have been consistent with the biblical

material. I argue therefore, that these insights legitimise Christian engagement in FoRB as entirely consistent with the mission of God. The purpose of these chapters has been to suggest that as a Christian human rights agency, CSW's intuitive pursuit of FoRB is supported by the biblical material and Christian thought.

My final chapter offers a survey of organisational attitudes to FoRB and reflects on the challenges and opportunities posed by Christian engagement in FoRB as set out in my research question.

What is evident from the study is the existing chasm between practitioners like CSW and what was described as 'the church'. The empirical material suggests that all respondents observed a gulf between their perception of engagement in FoRB as participation in the mission of God, and the church's response.

This research did not set out to establish definitive solutions to this inconsistency, which suggests the need for deeper education on these issues. In Rex's experience, this educational process begins when churches respond specifically to Christian persecution before realising that 'it has a connection with religious liberty and then to see that it has a connection with human rights'.[69]

There is, however, a genuine possibility that Christian charities engulfed in the demanding world, language and expectations of 'secular' advocacy may overlook the leverage available to them through closer links with church leaders, and so underinvest in the church's capacity

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[69] Rex, 4 February 2016

to be mobilised as agents of change in an area of injustice in which people of faith are both significantly over-represented and well-positioned to affect change.

Finally, the study aims to provide a reminder that the Christian task of talking about God in public discourse shares much in common with the challenges facing the UDHR Christian activists and Christian thinkers for over two millennia. Firstly, it is to resist the tendency to withdraw in the face of global and contentious ideas that appear to threaten the validity of faith in real time. Secondly, it is the recognition that this discourse will demand imaginative ways in which old Christian ideas are communicated in the political vernacular. Thirdly, it is to acknowledge that in the ideological warfare to which the mission of God inexorably leads, Christians may lose the ability to control all the political nuances of the discourse. Indeed, as the subsequent attitudes to the secularisation of rights has demonstrated, hard won victories may at best elude subsequent generation of Christians, and at worst be denounced by them.

Recognising all of these challenges, this thesis aims to provide a reflective contribution to further Christian engagement in FoRB as a critical and timely expression of God's mission in the world.

Appendix 1: Faith in FoRB?

PURPOSE

The aim of this process is to formulate a theological narrative which is true to our current identity and mission. While we have a number of biblical texts to support our work we want to do more.

Faith in FoRB aims to:
• Draw from our CSW Identity and Vision Statement and three-year organisational strategy
• Develop a coherent narrative and compelling story for our staff, board and stakeholders
• Promote an educational understanding of advocacy for religious freedom for all, which inspires and motivates the Church
• Provide a coherent communications 'story' which is also understood as a philosophy for human rights specialists beyond the Church
• Explore a theology to call our bluff: how serious are we about religious freedom for all and what are the implications of making such a bold statement?

PROCESS

The reflection will take place in three important steps.

1. **December-January** Initial consultation with a number of CSW staff and board members

2. **January-March** Three Bible study sessions, Faith in FORB?, which will be available to all staff and board members. We will facilitate the three one-hour studies, to be held on 12 January, 9 February and 1 March 2016 at the New Malden office. These sessions will be interactive, pulling on expertise from across the staff and board. We will also be keen for input from all CSW staff and board over this period. The idea is to feed some of these reflections into our staff and board retreat on 4 March.

3. **March-July** The initial feedback will be fed into our identity and strategy in the three-year organisational strategy. The idea will be to produce a nal biblical narrative on freedom of religion or belief in June/July, which will shape our internal and external communications.

Each session has a Group Task, to attempt to earth our biblical convictions into real application.

An 'Inside Voices' section reflects some stage-one comments from staff. These are not always quoted verbatim, but do carry helpful insights and key points raised by staff.

CHRISTIAN SOLIDARITY WORLDWIDE
VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS

(12 January)

Aim: CSW has an important history of advocacy for persecuted Christians, which remains an important foundation for our work and reflects the community we represent. Our aim is to sharpen our biblical mandate for working for persecuted Christians while claiming to represent freedom of religion for all as an overtly Christian charity.

It is clear that the persecution of Christians is now more widespread than ever. On the eve of 2000, John Paul II declared that, "At the end of the second Millennium, the Church has again become a Church of martyrs." In the 21st century this situation has escalated especially in Africa and the Middle East. In his own festive message, Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis acknowledged that "persecution of Christians persists in over a hundred countries, more than for any other religion." Archbishop Prof. Dr.Anastasios (Albania) describes the Church as "apostolic and martyric".

Many Bible texts remind us that persecution is inevitable (Matt. 5:11-12; 16:24; Jn. 15:20; 2 Cor. 6:4-10; 2 Cor. 4:8- 9; 2 Tim. 3:12)

Consequently, we are to remember those who suffer in fellowship with Christ (1 Cor. 12:26; Phil. 1:29; Col 1:24; Gal 6:10; Heb. 13:3)

In articulating our defence of Christians, two texts are worth exploring. What did they mean? How do they help us now?

'Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, *especially to those who belong to the family of believers*.' (Gal 6:10)

'Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.' (Heb. 13:3)

Group Task

How does CSW defend its high caseload of persecuted Christians to the UN Special Rapporteur for FoRB?

Inside Voices

"Is persecution of Christians different from other persecutions?"

"Doesn't CSW have a different mandate from the local church? The local church should prioritise Christians but CSW is not a church. Shouldn't we advocate for everyone in the same way that Tearfund or Christian Aid does with support from the local church?"

"I'm not sure that we should be 'a voice for the voiceless' any more. That is a victim narrative. Shouldn't we be about empowering or facilitating the people who suffer to speak for themselves?"

SESSION II: One for All (9 February)

Aim: This session aims to explore some broad issues, tensions and biblical ideas around supporting 'religious freedom for all'.

In the first place it's useful to explore why Christians are worried about it!

• There is good biblical evidence for strong opposition to the worship of other gods. (Exod. 20:3; Exod. 22:20; 23:13)

• We are conversionists (Exod. 18:9-12; John 4:7- 42; 43-53; Acts 16:29-34; 17:22-31)

• But there is also a biblical evidence of religious coexistence which did not lead to conversion (Luke 7:1-9; Acts 28:1-10)

More widely, an appreciation of religious freedom for all will lead us to an exploration of huge biblical themes such as imago dei, justice as worship, the kingdom of God, Shalom and peacemaking as well as biblical ideas of dignity and choice as a fundamental human possessions.

In articulating our defence of religious freedom for all, two texts are worth exploring. What did they mean? How do they help us now?

'Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.' (Gal. 6:10)

'Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.' (Heb. 13:3)

Group Task

Reimagine what doing 'good to all people' would have meant to 1st century Christians. How do those principles apply for CSW?

Inside Voices

"I don't necessarily want to endorse another religion but I do want to endorse their right to choose."

"We tell people that we endorse FoRB and we are an overtly Christian charity. But how do we get them to understand that we endorse religious freedom for all because we are an overtly Christian charity?"

"I see Jeremiah 29:7 as a "full-throated" call for FORB!"

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SESSION III: The New Neighbourhood

(1 March)

Aim: We will use the well-known story of the (Good) Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) as a foundation and apologetic for our 'religious freedom for all' advocacy. We see this as a possible CSW narrative with which to communicate our work.

Ideally, it would be good to use this story as a philosophy of the new FoRB neighbourhood. The idea of neighbourhood moves the story beyond individualistic social action to the much bigger issues Jesus had in mind.

We will look at the extent to which the story begins as a theological debate (10:25-37) possibly with a view to getting Jesus to commit apostasy! We will then consider the practical application that redefines the meaning of 'neighbour' (10:26-37).

Group Task

CSW is convinced that 'religious freedom for all' should have repercussion for its practice and strategy. It has made a decision to have a Muslim, Buddhist and Hindu consultants, identify 10% of its case loads as non- Christian victims, and allocated 10% of its budget to non-Christian issues.

Consider:

a. What might Jesus say about this policy?
b. What might CSW members say about this?
c. If there is a difference between A & B how does CSW reconcile this?

Inside Voices

"Our Christian identity is a strength, but the way it is communicated is schizophrenic. This is a challenge that needs to be overcome."

"What does Jesus' example show us about working with different people and the marginalised? We need a Christology on religious freedom. The narrative should make Jesus more central than religion."

"The neighbourhood idea is helpful. Human rights stories are often individual but not community. This could give us a more communal context for our work."

"Older members of CSW may not like the idea of FoRB but people I talk to like it. I don't think it's a financial risk!"

3

CSW Identity and Vision Statement

Core Principles

Who we are:
Christian Solidarity Worldwide is a human rights Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) which specialises in freedom of religion.

Core Purpose:
To be a voice for justice, pursuing religious freedom for all.

Our Remit:
We exist to redress injustice and stand in solidarity with those facing discrimination and/or persecution due to their religion.

Within this remit, we prioritise serving those persecuted for their Christian faith whilst upholding the right to freedom of religion for all peoples. Recognising the universality of human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), we also address wider human rights violations, prioritising those which complement our work for freedom of religion and/or where we can make a unique contribution.

Decision-making around the scope of our work and allocation of resources is prioritised according to this framework.

Note: As a corporate body we are transparent about our Christian heritage, core beliefs and values; however, as an organisation we do not proselytise, nor engage in evangelism or religious conversions.

APPENDIX II

CSW Organisational Strategy 2015 - 2017 Upholding the right to religious freedom for all Version: For Board Approval 30/6/15 1

We, Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), are a Christian organisation working for religious freedom through advocacy and human rights, in the pursuit of justice.

Our bedrock as an organisation is Jesus Christ and our Identity and Vision are described in the Vision Statement (February 2010). We seek to be the most reliable international voice for freedom of religion or belief, motivating, educating and equipping an active supporter base to stand in solidarity with us for those who suffer.

We comprise of three internal staff department groups; Communications & Fundraising, Support Services and Research & Advocacy. Monitoring and evaluation is a key principle of implementation, demonstrating evidence of progress towards achieving the expected outcomes, as detailed in the team sub-strategies which feed into the annual planning cycle and reporting to our audiences.

Appendix 2: Invitation to Participate

Invitation to Participate
DThM Durham
Joel Edwards

Thank you very much for agreeing to an interview.

I am currently a third year student with St John's College Durham. This year marks the start of a 4-year period in writing up my vocational doctoral dissertation on the DThM course.

RESEARCH THESIS & AIM

> *The missio dei and freedom from suffering: An exploration of Christian engagement in human rights.*

The research arises from my interest in human rights and poverty alleviation. At the heart of this study, I have been convinced that a crucial element of God's mission on earth has to do with freedom from suffering and that this is a powerful bridge in presenting God's work in the world. In this regard, I am particularly keen to explore the degree to which the complex struggle for human rights should be regarded as an essential part of the *missio dei*. The aim is to explore how far Christian involvement in human rights - and especially 'first generation' rights - is understood by Christian human rights groups as a missiological task and to what extent that mission informs the work.

The theological focus will explore the relationship between the biblical response to suffering and the 'mission' for human flourishing reflected in the 'first generation' human rights.

METHOD
This will be an *interpretative qualitative research* based on a *hermeneutical approach*. It will include ethnographic study through *particpant observation* in a Christian human rights/religious liberty organisation using semi-structured interviews and surveys. The research will work with one principal UK based Christian organisation - Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW). This principal focus will also be supplemented by engaging with a limited number of other Christian, human rights NGOs and missions agencies beyond CSW.

HOW THE INTERVIEW WILL WORK

I will aim to cover approximately 8-10 questions over 60 minutes. In some instances interviews may go slightly beyond the time slot but this will always be with your agreement.

Questions will be semi structured to give you an opportunity to bring your own insights to the issues raised. Bear in mind that there are no right or wrong answers for our time together! Your input will actually help shape the direction and outcomes of this study.

Interviews will be recorded and subsequently transcribed for further study. Ideally, I will aim to provide combined feedback on the key points raised from a number of interviews. *Throughout the research programme, all materials will be kept confidential and destroyed at the end of the process unless you give permission for it to be used for any further publication.*

Confidentiality

All answers will be treated in confidence and will only be used for the thesis dissertation unless permission is given below for further publications. Your contribution will be anonymised where this has been requested below.

For formal purposes I would be grateful if you indicated your agreement below. Feel free to print and return this to me before our interview but I will have printed copies with me if that is more convenient for you.

I am willing for my response to be used for further publications   YES   NO

I would like to be anonymous   YES   NO

Signed …………………………………………………. Date ………………..

Much thanks for your help

Rev Joel Edwards
ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, DURHAM

Appendix 3: Standard Questions

DThM Survey/Questionnaire
STANDARD

Title: The missio dei and freedom from suffering: An exploration of Christian engagement in human rights.

Aims: The study aims to make a meaningful contribution to Christian action against human suffering within a biblically informed human rights and religious freedom context. It will explore their perception of any missional relationship between religious freedom and human rights - both committed to human flourishing - as experienced by Christian practitioners. In doing so it will explore the current relationship between theological reflection and praxis.

1. Describe your journey into Christian faith

2. What led you to work with CSW?

3. What connection, if any, do you think there is between Christian organisations involvement in human rights work, and God's mission?"

4. Does the church understand this?

5. How would you describe the relationship between:
    a. defending the persecuted church
    b. defending Religious Freedom
    c. working to promote Human Rights

6. If it is true that the church grows when it is persecuted, is seeking for religious liberty/human rights still valid?

7. In what way does a biblical/theological framework guide your work?

8. How does your Christian ethos inform your relationship with other FoRB agencies?

9. Can you describe any differences between your involvement in freedom from suffering and the approach of non-Christian agencies?

10. Is there a difference from God's perspective?

11. What connection, if any, do you think there is between non-Christian organisations involvement in human rights work, and God's mission?"

12. Any other reflections

Appendix 4: Confidentiality Agreement

DThM Durham
Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement

Dear

Thanks you for agreeing to transcribe the interviews over the coming 12-18 months. The expectation is that I will be conducting between 30-40 interviews over this period. Each interview will be approximately one hour and will be uploaded electronically to a confidential drop box which will be limited exclusively for our use.

Interviews will be posted, transcribed and reposted on line for me to access electronically.

As you know the material will be held confidentially. Interviewees will be made aware that their interviews will be transcribed by a third party and stored confidentially.

In order to safeguard this confidentiality please agree to the following conditions:

1. All communications will be limited to the agreed secured drop box arrangement unless otherwise agreed
2. No details are to be discussed with individuals apart from myself
3. No materials will be stored in any other place or passed on to any other party at any time without the direct consent of the interviewer or interviewee.
4. All materials will be disposed of when the study is concluded.

I agree to the above conditions

Signed ……………………………………………. Date ………………..

Much thanks

Rev Joel Edwards
ST JOHN'S COLLEGE, DURHAM

Appendix 5: Co-missionary Questions

Durham University

DThM Survey/Questionnaire
CO-MISSIONERS

Title: The missio dei and freedom from suffering: An exploration of Christian engagement in human rights.

Aims: The study aims to make a meaningful contribution to Christian action against human suffering within a biblically informed human rights and religious freedom context. It will explore their perception of any missional relationship between religious freedom and human rights – both committed to human flourishing – as experienced by Christian practitioners. In doing so it will explore the current relationship between theological reflection and praxis.

1. What led you to your ministry?

2. Is Christian ministry the same as 'mission'?

3. What connection, if any, do you think there is between Christian organisations involvement in human rights work, and God's mission?"

4. Does the Church understand this?

5. How would you describe the relationship between:
    d. defending the persecuted church
    e. defending Religious Freedom
    f. working to promote Human Rights

6. If t is true that the church grows when it is persecuted is religious freedom still valid?

7. In what ways does a biblical/theological framework guide your views on religious freedom or human rights?

8. How does your theology inform your relationship with the issue of religious freedom or human rights?

9. Can you describe any difference between Christian and non-Christian involvement in human rights?

10. Is there a difference from God's perspective?

11. What connection, if any, do you think there is between non-Christian organisations involvement in human rights work, and God's mission?"

Appendix 6: Staff responses to Q5

'Question formation' below indicates the variety of terms I used in Q5.

'Response' shows the response from interviewees.

My terminology demonstrates my own erratic use of words and the degree to which both my written question and its verbalization reflected and received from the ambiguity I was also experiencing. Of the seventeen staff respondents, eight responded using Forb-specific language.

Question formation	Response	Number
FoRB	FoRB	5
FoRB	religious freedom	2
religious freedom	religious freedom	3
religious freedom	FoRB	3
freedom of religion	freedom of religion	1
religious freedom	freedom of religion	1
FoRB	no reference	1
freedom of religion	no reference	1

Appendix 7: Church Leaders' response to Q5

'Question formation' below indicates the variety of terms I used in Q5.

'Response' shows the response from interviewees.

The chart demonstrates my own assumptions about Group B's attitude to the language of

FoRB as well as my own ambiguity on the issue.

Question formation	Response	Number
freedom of religion	religious freedom	1
freedom of religion	no response	1
FoRB	FoRB	1
Religious freedom for all	religious freedom	1
Religious freedom for all	no response	1

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