

No Longer a Christian Country? - Religious Demographic Change in New Zealand 1966 – 2006

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Abstract

This paper documents 40 years of religious affiliation professions in New Zealand census data between the period 1966 and 2006. It examines ten significant demographic shifts in New Zealand religious affiliation over this period. Five of these shifts occur within the changing nature of Christian affiliation in New Zealand. Christian affiliation has pluralised, experienced a surge in Maori Christianity and declined in overall numeric identification in relation to the growth of the total New Zealand population. The final five shifts demonstrate an increasing pluralisation of all religious affiliation professions in New Zealand. These include a growth of other major world religions, the emergence of new forms of religious identification and a dramatic increase in professions of ‘no religion’. This paper argues that over 40 years these ten demographic shifts have evolved New Zealand from being a country characterised as ‘Christian’ to today being understood as a ‘religiously diverse’ country.

In 2007, the New Zealand Human Rights Commission released its ‘Statement on Religious Diversity in New Zealand.’ This statement provided protection and recognition for the changing nature of religious beliefs held by New Zealanders. It recognised that, while New Zealand religious belief had been traditionally dominated by the Christian religion, the population has become increasingly religiously pluralistic. Christian groups such as the Salvation Army, the Exclusive Brethren and Elim have in the last few years had strong public presence for various reasons. The political movements of the Destiny Church/Party and the Christian members of United Future have shown the willingness of both Evangelical and traditional Christians to actively enter the politics of the country. Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist and Hare Krishna New Zealanders are plainly evident in Queen Street, Manners Mall, or Cathedral Square.

Driving out into the rural centres or up around the East Coast of the North Island the Churches of the Latter Day Saints and Jehovah Witnesses are often the newest off-cream coloured buildings in town. Maori Christianity is strong in some of the rural towns of the North Island, particularly in the form of the Ratana and Ringatu faiths. A strong tradition of unbelief is also evident with a great many New Zealanders (the late Sir Edmund Hillary and the Rt. Hon. Helen Clark included) making active statements of atheism, agnosticism or the more irreligious profession of 'No Religion'. This article examines ten major shifts in New Zealand religious affiliation in forty years of census data from 1966 – 2006. The purpose of this article is to show how, and suggest why, New Zealand demographics of religious identification have changed from being 'Christian' to 'Religiously Diverse' over this period.

Definition of the term 'Christian' is always problematic and requires clarification. Many definitions and usages are either too exclusive or inclusive. The term Christian certainly means different things depending on who is using it. For example, in 2007, there was a series of exchanges on the National Radio Programme between Head of Religious Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, Professor Paul Morris and the leader of the Destiny Church, Bishop Brian Tamaki discussing whether New Zealand should be considered a Christian country? During these discussions it became apparent that Bishop Tamaki meant something quite different in his use of the term Christian to what Professor Morris did, making even the possibility of meaningful dialogue difficult. This tricky definitional ground is why pluralistic terms such as religious diversity are increasingly being used to define religious identification. This paper uses an inclusive and generalised broad categorisation of Christian, including *all* groups reported by New Zealand census material to follow any form of Christianity, and this includes forms of Maori Christianity and the Church of the Latter Day Saints (see Appendix Two). Thus when examining the issue of whether New Zealand is a Christian country it addresses the question in the broadest manner.

The very fact that New Zealand's status as a Christian country has been questioned, signals that there has been significant change in the religious identification of New Zealanders in the last forty years. At first glance, this debate appears to be centred on the decline in the

predominance of traditional Christianity. However, a general decline in overall Christian identification is only a partial explanation of why we are being characterised as 'religiously diverse'. Further questions are required such as why, how and to where has the population changed its religious identification. In setting out to answer these questions it becomes apparent is that the decline in identification with traditional forms of Christian religion in New Zealand has been combined with the emergence of a series of newer categories of religious identification. This demographic change is graphed and discussed in this paper.

We begin by reviewing the first article inside *Landfall* 77 'Special Edition on Religion' which was entitled '*Christianity among the New Zealanders*' written by William Oliver. Oliver (Oliver, 1966) used New Zealand census and yearbook data as the basis of his discussion noting that, at the time of writing, approximately 80% of New Zealanders identified with some form of Christianity. Through his study of over 100 years of census information he showed New Zealanders' religious identification was dominated by the Anglican, Presbyterian, Catholic and Methodist churches. Oliver further investigated these four denominations and his statistics and analysis described a gradual decline in Christian adherence from 91.9%¹ of the total population in 1851 to 79.2%² in 1961.

Oliver points out that identification with a Christian denomination did not necessarily reflect actual practice. He was suspicious of the 1961 statistics suspecting that this New Zealand identification with Christianity had more to do with tradition, public morality and social expectations rather than actual belief or practice itself (Oliver, 1966, p.5). Oliver was also highly doubtful that a public New Zealand Christianity had a great cohesive impact on our political and social history. He suggested the place to look for the effect of religion on New Zealand society (outside the actions of certain individuals) is when a minority of Christians have combined together in an act of protest and pointed to examples such as the Education Act of 1877, prohibition and the actions of the Pai Marire movement, Parihaka and later groups such as Ratana and Ringatu. Through revisiting Oliver's statistics of 1961, we have the luxury of

¹ Maori were not included in Census data until 1921, the earlier data is a guide and not accurate.

² Maori were included in this figure.

viewing New Zealand at the cusp of the social revolutions of that time. The issues of Feminist, Sexual, Racial freedoms and equality are battles yet to be fought and it is a time where atheistic communism is perceived as the great enemy of the Western world. This is a period of time where New Zealand is still dominated culturally by the British colonial experience and the Maori Renaissance and revisionist histories of New Zealand are yet to occur. These are all necessary reminders when considering why New Zealanders identified so pervasively as Christian (specific to four denominations) in Census material up until 1961. Oliver's analysis of census and yearbook data is the departure point from which this article initiates its examination on the following forty years of New Zealand census data 1966 - 2006.

Forty Years of New Zealand Census Data 1966 - 2006

In the 'NZ Census, 1996' we see a country dominated by the four main Christian denominations of Anglican, Presbyterian, Catholic and Methodist supported by large and growing Christian groups such as Baptists, Mormons, Ratana and the Salvation Army. The 'NZ Census, 1966' demonstrated a growing diversity within Christian belief in New Zealand before the growth of evangelical forms of Christianity. There is a lack of strong identification with other world religions or unbelief. In 1966, the largest minority religion was Judaism (4136 professions) and Hindus (3,599 professions) formed the second largest minority. 'Object to State' measured 210,851 people while 32,780 professed 'No Religion'. The 'NZ Census 1971' continued this trend with the Religious Profession section headed '*Pattern Maintained for 100 years*'. In 1973, Mol and Ready (1973) noted the Christian continuity in Religious professions in New Zealand.

In the 'NZ Census 1976', it was noted for the first time that the four major Christian denominations had been experiencing a steady decline in adherents. In 1976, the four main denominations consisted of 68.19% of the total population compared with 78.31% in 1966. In every census from 1976 the four major Christian affiliations would decline both in total number and as a percentage of the total population. The very early 1980's New Zealand academic literature of this period was concerned with secularisation and the decline in Christian identification in New

Zealand. It was not particularly concerned with religious diversity. Hill (1981) pointed to parts of the secularisation thesis which were evident in New Zealand including the growth of irreligion, the decreasing social influence of religion and an increase in religious pluralism. Mol (1982) focused on a 'clash' between Christian beliefs and unbelief in New Zealand.

The period between 1976 and 1981 showed four major changes occurring in religious affiliation outside of the decline of the main denominations. First, two new minor religions show nascent growth with Buddhist and Muslim populations establishing themselves firmly in the New Zealand census data for the first time³. Second, this period demonstrates the growth of the alternative religions in the 'Other religion' category. Third, there is the beginning of growth in the no religion and object to state categories. Fourth, the 'NZ Census, 1981' demonstrated the first strong growth in Evangelical, Born Again and Fundamentalist (Evan/BA/Fund, see Appendix Three) category of Christian identification. In 1981, the Evan/BA/Fund category numbered 31,296 religious professions more than doubling the 15,301 professions in 1976. Colless (1996) provided commentary on the growth of these new forms of New Zealand Christian groups in the 1980s noting that these new forms of Christianity found origin in forms of American Christianity. Donovan and Colless (1985) acknowledged that other religions that were emerging within New Zealand but retained their primary focus on the spread of Christian Sectarianism (see Hill, 1985) and secularisation in New Zealand census material. Geering (1985) analysed the census material up to 1981 and announced the imminent death of the main denominations and that New Zealand would become increasingly religiously pluralistic.

The 'NZ Census 1986' changed the criteria for reporting religious professions. The first change was made in the method of recording religious profession. Until 1986, The Department of Statistics stated that it was an expression of religious freedom for each individual to answer the profession of religious belief as they saw fit. The 1986 census form itemised the Religious Belief question with six categories of Anglican,

³ Part of this growth is attributable to refugee immigration from wars in Asia and the Middle East.

Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, and 'No Religion' whilst still including a blank 'Other' category. The second change made in the 'NZ Census 1986', was the inclusion of the 'No Religion' field. Prior to 1986 people the box where people filled in their religious profession was an empty field with the following statement beside it. From 1986 a field was made available which stated 'No Religion'. Wilson (1993) commented that this additional category led to a large one-off jump in professions of 'No Religion', between 1981 and 1986.

Peter Donovan (1996) provided some reservations regarding the analysis of New Zealand census data. He was concerned that purely quantitative analysis of census results may miss important points. He points to the quantitatively insignificant growth of minor religions in New Zealand during the 1980's but the importance of the total whole growth of these populations. He also suggests that quantitative analysis is extremely focused on growth and decline not age, gender or the fact that certain religious groups (such as Judaism) may not be concerned with growth at all. He concludes his analysis of census data by asserting that the New Zealand mainstream is apathetic when it comes to matters of religion but that there is an increasingly amount of zealous religious minorities in the country. Donovan does not quite promote a religiously diverse New Zealand but his description shows that New Zealand's religious landscape had shifted significantly from 1966.

Religious pluralisation became particularly evident in the 'NZ Census 1991', when religious professions identifying with Buddhism, Hinduism, Muslim and Sikh in New Zealand doubled from the previous census. In the 'NZ Census, 1996' these four professions doubled their total numbers again. This was in part due to the review of the Immigration Act in 1987. In 1996, the number of New Zealanders identifying as Muslim reached 10,000+. Professions of 'Other' also doubled from the 1991 census reflecting the rapid growth of the New Age movements such as Wicca, Spiritualist and Nature and Earth based religions. Peculiar to the 'NZ Census 1991' was a one-off growth in the Christian NFD category. This is difficult to clearly explain but is likely to be related to the trends already mentioned with the movement away from traditional Christian and the increasing popularity of Pentecostal Christianity likely coinciding to fuel this growth. Pentecostal Christianity

increased in the period with 70,578 professions in 1996 compared to 53,832 professions in 1991. These two censuses continued the secularising trend, the decline of the mainstream denominations whilst also highlighting the rapid growth of other world and alternative religion professions in New Zealand.

In the 'NZ Census, 2001', the Catholic Church became the second largest profession of religious identification in New Zealand. The Presbyterian Church settled to being the third largest profession of belief. 2001 saw strong growth in identification with Maori Christianity with Ringatu with it exceeding 10,000+ members. The global religions are still in rapid expansion with both Hindu and Buddhist professions each representing over 1% of the total population. Crothers (Crothers, 2005) provided an in-depth analysis of the changes in religious profession between the 'NZ Census 1991' and the 'NZ census 2001'. His data affirmed that 'New Zealand retains only the barest Christian majority' and that there are now substantial religious minorities present in the Census data. He notes the most significant features of the data are the continuation of secularisation, the decline of the major denominations and the changing ethnic identification of religious affiliation in New Zealand. In broader discussions describing the New Zealand religious landscape in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Elsmore, 2005) we see further academic recognition of the increasing pluralisation of New Zealand religious affiliation.

The 'NZ Census 2006' maintained the four trends noted in 1976 and the decline of the major Christian denominations. While the four main Christian denominations remain the single largest religious groups they only constitute 37.44% of the overall New Zealand population in 2006 compared to 78.31% in 1966. Growth is still evident in the minor religions with the Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh populations growing. These four populations when combined together with Judaism form 4.05% of New Zealander's religious professions in 2006. The largest growing category is still 'No Religion' with 1,297,105 identifications of unbelief in 2006. When we turn to the wide definition, we can see that 54.21% of the New Zealand population identify with some form of Christianity in 2006. The New Zealand religious affiliation data of 2006 indicates that in future census' there will no longer be a

Christian majority of the population. It appears that alongside the secularising trend religious affiliations in New Zealand are becoming increasingly diverse rather than Christian focused.

Major Changes in Religious Identification 1966 - 2006

This section highlights ten major changes in religious profession in New Zealand evident in the period 1966 - 2006. Five changes are specifically concerned with movement within Christian identification. These five changes provide an explanation of how Christianity in New Zealand has pluralised and seen an overall decline in identification. An exception is found with total numbers of New Zealanders identifying with Catholicism growing in despite belief in Catholicism declining in relation to the overall population. A shift away from organised Christianity is evident, with many New Zealanders preferring to identify simply as 'Christian NFD' (No Further Definition). Another contributing factor to the growth of the Christian NFD category is the simple profession of 'Christian' favoured by some members of rapidly growing evangelical, born again and fundamentalist forms of Christianity in New Zealand. Maori Christianity, in the forms of the Ratana and Ringatu churches, is also rapidly growing. Overall there has been in a rapid decline in the number of New Zealanders identifying as Christian as an overall percentage of total population with just over 50% of the total population in 2006 identifying as Christian.

The other five changes discussed represent other factors outside Christianity which have impacted Religious profession over the period 1966-2006. The first of these is the growth of other religions in New Zealand. New Zealand's Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh populations have grown markedly since 1986 with an influx of immigration from around the world. The religious diversity of New Zealand has been further extended by the growth of the 'Other Religions' Category. Other religions shows the strong growth in groups such as Wicca, Nature & Earth based religions and Spiritualism combined with a small amount of interest in other minor religions such as Baha'i, Zoroastrianism, Chinese and Japanese religions. The profession of No Religion in the census is the fastest growing religious profession and reflects a large secularised section of the New Zealand population. No religion as a percentage of

population is the single largest contributing percentage to a purely statistical argument that New Zealand is no longer a Christian country. Another factor contributing to changes in religious identification is that through the period 1966 – 2006 there have been a number of changes in how we record our religious professions in the census itself. The final change addresses the religions in New Zealand with over 10,000 members in from 1966 – 2006.

1. The four major Christian denominations still predominate despite steady decline.

In 1966, the census noted that since colonisation, religion in New Zealand has been dominated by the Anglican, Presbyterian, Catholic and Methodist churches. In 1966, these four denominations claimed identifying followers from 78.31 % of New Zealand's population. Over the forty years from 1966 – 2006 they still remain the four largest religious professions made by New Zealanders. However, they have all been in rapid decline both in total number of members and as a percentage of the total population. A partial exception is found in Catholic identification which while declining as a percentage of total population is still growing in overall numbers of adherents becoming the second biggest religious profession in New Zealand in 1996. The decline of traditional Christianity is first noted in the 'NZ Census, 1976' which declares '*50 years of decline*'. It points out in that in the 1926 census (the first to include Maori) 86% of the population identified with these denominations as opposed to 68.2% in 1976. In 2006, these four denominations are no longer in the majority. The traditional definition of New Zealand as a Christian country dominated by these four denominations has become problematic.

2. Growth of the Christian NFD category.

In 2006, 186,234 people simply wrote in the Census that they were 'Christian NFD' or Christian no further definition. In 1966, the amount of people who filed this response numbered 21,549. This category is unsettling because it is difficult to penetrate. It offers some explanation for the present adherence of certain former members (or their descendants) as a shift away from the four main denominations. One can point to factors which are contributing to this large undefined category. A) People simply identify as ethnically or culturally Christian without necessarily possessing any

form of faith. Thus some New Zealanders may just feel 'Christian'

B) It indicates the existence of individualised forms of non-doctrinal Christian belief and practice. Thus evidencing a number of people who think about the Christian God, Jesus and religious practice in their own non-doctrinal way. C) It includes certain forms of Christians (perhaps Pentecostals) who prefer to identify themselves simply as 'Christian' rather than as adherents to a particular church.

3. Growth of Evangelical, Pentecostal and Fundamentalist Christianity.

In 1966, the article identifies the existence of approximately 7,103 Evangelical / Pentecostal / Fundamentalist Christians in New Zealand (see Appendix Three). In 2006, this article estimates the number to nominally be 93,372. Although the actual numbers of this group could potentially be as high as 200,000 if one was able to ascertain how many of these individuals returned professions of Christian NFD. The majority of these figures are constituted by Pentecostal groups. Some churches, such as Destiny Church, cannot be specifically located within the census data, making it difficult to determine where their members have made their religious profession. This problem is further exacerbated by the inability of census statistics to measure the evangelical strains of other Christian denominations which effectively practice these forms of Christianity. These groups of Christians have shown strong and continued growth over the last 20 years and are being further supported by an influx of young people. This category demonstrates growth from 1981 when the Assemblies of God became the 12th religion in New Zealand to have over 10,000 members. In 2006 they are the 13th largest religious profession in New Zealand with 15,300 members.

4. Growth of Maori Christianity.

The Ratana and Ringatu identifications have grown significantly. Ratana adherence doubles over the forty year period and Ringatu adherence triples. Growth in the Ratana church is steady over this forty year period and, in 2006, it is the 8th largest religious profession in New Zealand possessing over 50,000 adherents (Newman, 2006). Professions of Ringatu adherence number 5,605 in 1966, increasing to 16,419 in 2006. Between the 1996 census (8,271) and the 2001 (15,288) census professions of Ringatu adherence doubled. In 2001, Ringatu becomes the 16th faith in New Zealand with over 10,000 identifications. In 2006, Ringatu has the 12th largest profession of Religious adherence in New Zealand.

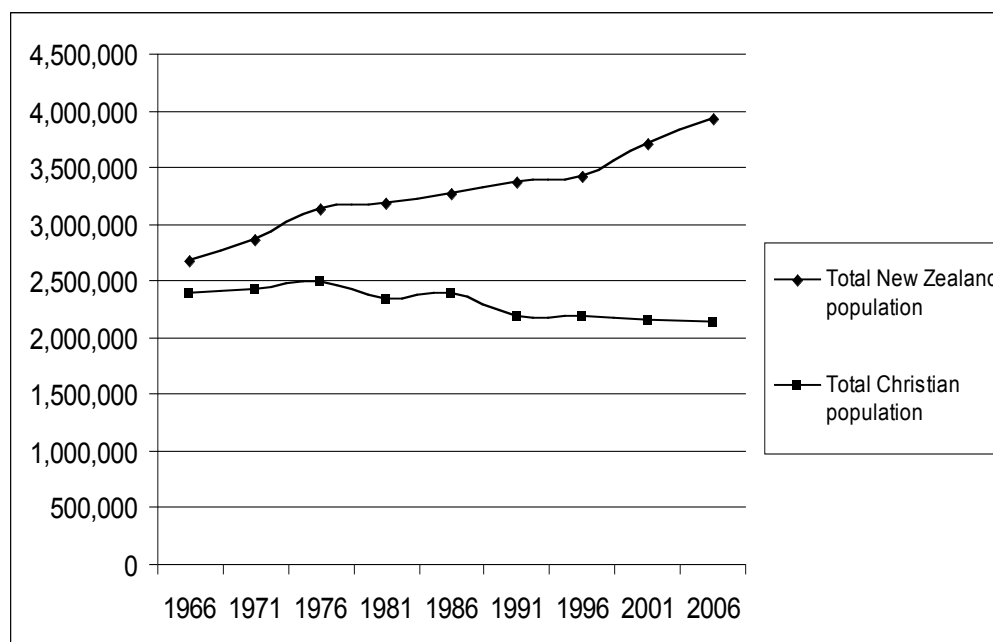
Some explanation of this growth can be related to the Maori Renaissance in New Zealand from the 1970s and the renewed interest in Maori spiritual resistance to colonialism (Morris, 2001). Other explanations suggest that there has been growing interest in all expressions of Maori religion (Elsmore, 1999). A final explanation for the growth of Maori religion can be found in the growth of the Maori population as a whole over this forty year period.

5. Decline of identifying Christians as the majority of the New Zealand population.

The 'Christian' population in New Zealand has stayed reasonably constant as the total population has grown. In 1966, there were 2,386,331 New Zealanders who identified as 'Christian', in the broadest sense, out of a total population of 2,676,919. In 2006, there were 2,130,924 people who identified as some form of Christian out of a total population of 3,931,221. Over the forty year period there has been a constant population of some 2 million people identifying as Christian in New Zealand. This is consistent with Church Life surveys⁴. However over this period, the total population has increased while the total Christian population has not. This is a major contributing factor to the debate concerning whether we are still a Christian country. Christian identification is not maintaining growth relative to population growth. Statistically in 1966, 89.14% of the population identified with some form of Christianity whereas in 2006 the percentage is 54.21% of the population. If this trend is to continue through to the 2016 census, even with a broad definition of Christian, the total Christian population of New Zealand will be less than 50% of the total population.

⁴ See *Shaping A Future*. Adelaide : Openbook, 1998 (Includes Church Life Survey Zealand , "Lifting the Lid on New Zealand Churches).

Total Christian Population of New Zealand compared to overall population 1966 – 2006.



For a definition of Total Christian See Appendix Two

6. Explosion of Hinduism, Buddhism, Muslim, Jewish and Sikh identifications.

Migration from Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Pacific has contributed to a major growth in these five religions. It has further fuelled the need for New Zealand to acknowledge itself as ‘religiously diverse’. In 1966 these religions made up approximately 0.31% of the population in New Zealand. From the period 1966 to 1986 these religions were to grow at a steady rate to consist of 0.64% of the population. In the 20 years between 1986 and 2006 these populations were to explode to consist of 4.12% of our total population in 2006.

Table 1: Growth in Minor World Religions Identification in New Zealand 1966 – 2006.

	1966	1986	1991	2006
Buddhist	652	6,516	12,765	52,392
Hindu	3,599	8,148	17,661	63,891
Muslim	551	2,544	5,772	36,120
Jewish	4,136	3,084	3,126	6,858
Sikh	295	768	2,058	9,507

Hinduism with 63,891 identifications is the fifth largest religion in New Zealand and the largest non-Christian religion. Only the four main tradition Christian religions have more professions of adherence. In 2006 the professions numbered 52,392 making Buddhism the 7th largest religious profession in New Zealand. In 1966, there were 551 professions of adherence to a form of Muslim faith in New Zealand. In 2006, they number 36,120 and are the 10th largest religion in New Zealand. The Sikh population in New Zealand has also grown significantly from 295 professions in 1966 to 9,507 in 2006. The Jewish population in New Zealand was in slow decline between 1966 and 1986, but has been growing again since the 1991 census to number 6,858 in 2006.

The *Statement on Religious Diversity in New Zealand* specifically focuses on the growth of these non-Christian religious professions of New Zealanders. Questions regarding the religious rights of New Zealanders are now unmistakably pluralistic. No where is this more evident than in developing dialogue between Muslim New Zealanders and the rest of the national community (Kolig, 216) as recent global politics have simultaneously increased immigration from Muslim countries and a popular distrust of the Muslim religion. Questions of toleration, freedom and equality of religion are not just important internally but also internationally. The statement of religious diversity notes that we live in the Asia Pacific region which itself is characterised by the need to create dialogue between the different people of the region. Acknowledgement of religious diversity for New Zealand is then both an internal and external matter of political expediency.

7. Growth of the 'Other Religion' Category.

Ellwood (1993) noted that aside from the traditions of Theosophy, Spirituality and the Golden Dawn all identifications with alternative spiritualities and religions in New Zealand are products of the 1960s 'Spiritual Revolution'. In 2006, the 'Other Religion' category includes a variety of Religious Professions ranging from the new age religions of Wicca, Nature & Earth Based Religion and Spiritualism to minor world religions such as Baha'i, Zoroastrianism, Chinese and Japanese religions (See Appendix Four). In 1966, the 'Other Religion' category numbered 7,231 and in 2006, the category numbered 45,915. In 1966, the 'Other Religion' category was dominated by Rationalists, and Spiritualists. It included, the no longer identifiable indigenous religious movements, such as the Absolute Maori Established Church, the Church of Te Kooti

Rikirangi and Radiant Living. In 2006, the Spiritualism category is the largest (7,743) and there is evidence of the growing popularity of Earth and Nature based religions (3,756) and Wicca (2,082). Satanists (1,167), Rastafarians (1,383), Baha'i (2,772), Theists (2,202) and Zoroastrians (1,071) all have over 1000 identifications. Specific forms of Maori religion have been compiled into a Maori Religion NFD category (1,689 identifications). Professions of various Chinese and Japanese religions significantly widen the number of religions contained within the category but outside Taoism (756 professions) have combined under 1,000 professions. In 2006, the 'Other Religion' category numbers 1.17% of the total New Zealand population. These religions find most of their representation in the major cities further supplying religious diversity in urban areas.

8. Growth of the 'No Religion' category.

The rapid growth of this profession explains much of the shift of religious profession in New Zealand over the last forty years. In 1966, there were 32,780 or 1.22% of the total population stated that they possessed 'No Religion'. In 2006, 1,297,104 people or 32.99% of the total population people identify as 'No Religion'. One third of the New Zealand population identify as holding no form of religious belief or practice.

Table 2: No Religion and Object to State Categories 1966 -2006.

	No Religion	Object to state
1966	32,780	210,851
1981	167,817	473,115
1986	533,790	244,863
2006	1,297,104	242,610

It can be suggested that prior to 1986 people possessing no religious belief may have objected to professing any form of religious adherence. Certainly we can see a marked change between the categories of 'No Religion' and 'Object to State' between 1981 and 1986. From this time onwards the numbers of people objecting to state their religion has stayed relatively constant. We can assume that with the change of format, a certain percentage of New Zealanders have shifted their religious profession from 'Object to State' to answering 'No Religion'.

From 1986, the profession of 'No Religion' has grown markedly. In 1986, 16.36% of the total New Zealand population professed 'No Religion' and in 2006 32.99%. This is the largest growing religious profession compared to the growth in population. This is the largest single contributing factor to a statistical argument that New Zealand is no longer a Christian country. For example, it is the largest profession of religious belief (or lack thereof) since the 1996 census. In 2006, this growing segment of 'No Religion' in the New Zealand population when combined with both the "Object to State" and 'Not Stated' categories could suggest that approximately 45% of the New Zealanders do not identify with any religious profession.

One final qualifier is required regarding the 'No Religion' profession. It is a difficult profession to unravel. A profession of 'No religion' is not the same as atheism or agnostic. Those identifying with 'No Religion' may still retain belief in a god, religious practice or a form of spirituality. They may just *choose* to record their non allegiance to a religious group as 'No Religion'. An investigation of this issue is outside the scope of any investigation into census data.

9. Change/s in recording professions of religious adherence.

It is difficult to discern what effect, if any, this change in reporting may have had on the census data outside of giving people stronger guidelines on what to answer. Wilson's (1993) analysis suggests that this change in questioning did not alter general population trends over time. One could speculate that it may have contributed (albeit sparingly) to a slight increase of people defining themselves as Christian NFD as these ambiguous religious professions were made more available for people to choose this profession. It is difficult to ascertain whether these changes have affected the religious freedom as to how New Zealanders *choose* to record their religious profession. A series of available fields may indeed be helpful but may potentially restrict freedom of religious expression, especially in the case of people who are just not sure how to respond. We can be sure that these changes have forced New Zealanders to be more specific in their recording of religious profession.

10. Religions with 10,000+ members in New Zealand 1966 - 2006.

This final record of changes in religious demographics measures the growth in large religious identifications in New Zealand between 1966 and 2006. In the period between 1966 and 2006, this number has grown to include 16 Religious professions with over 10,000

adherents. The table below represents how New Zealand has changed from being a predominantly Christian country to being characterised as ‘Religiously diverse’.

Table 3: Religions with over 10,000 Members in New Zealand.

1966		2006	
Anglican	901,701	Anglican	554,925
Presbyterian	582,976	Catholic	508,812
Catholic	425,280	Presbyterian	385,350
Methodist	186,260	Methodist	122,076
Baptist	46,748	Hindu	63,891
Ratana	27,570	Baptist	56,919
Mormon	25,716	Buddhist	52,392
Brethren	23,139	Ratana	50,565
Salvation Army	17,737	Mormon	43,536
Congregational	12,101	Muslim	36,120
Church of Christ	10,301	Jehovah’s Witnesses	17,910
		Ringatu	16,419
		Assemblies of God	15,300
		7 th Day Adventist	11,520
		Salvation Army	11,490
		Open Brethren	10,134

The table shows the decline but remaining predominance of the traditional four Christian denominations (excepting Catholic identifications). Hinduism is the largest non Christian profession and the 5th largest religious profession in New Zealand. Buddhist and Muslim professions have also grown. The growing popularity of newer forms of Christianity includes the Latter Day Saints, 7th Day Adventists, Open Brethren, Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Assemblies of God. Two Christian denominations no longer have 10,000+ members. The Congregational church has 6,192 professions and the Church of Christ 2,154. The figures need to be qualified as some of those identifying as Christian NFD may belong to certain churches not recorded here. For instance Destiny Church could possibly have over 10,000 identifying members but they are not specifically recognised in these census figures. Another issue is that the sectarian

nature of Christianity is being compared with more generalised groupings of other world Religions in this tabulation.

Is New Zealand a Christian Country?

Beginning with W.H. Oliver's analysis of Christianity in New Zealand, this essay has set out to show how New Zealand has become increasingly religiously diverse by employing analysis of forty years of census data from 1966 - 2006. Recognising that the New Zealand population is not static we can suggest that two generations of New Zealanders have passed on (to their respective afterlives) and that change in religious identification is a natural part of societal evolution of the modern world. The continued effects of globalisation include a pervasive concentration on economic rationalism which simultaneously and paradoxically fuels the growth of both evangelical Christianity and through a rationalisation of the world the 'No Religion' category. Globalisation has also provided access to supermarket of new faiths and opened up New Zealand to immigration from other cultures and religions.

Since 1966 the total New Zealand Christian population has approximated two million affiliations every census. However, as a percentage, Christianity has undergone rapid decline. The decline in the traditional denominations has been counter balanced, to some extent, by the growth of other forms of Christianity. Identification with categories such as Christian NFD, Baptist, the Latter Day Saints and Christian Orthodox groups have grown over the period. Maori Christianity, represented through identification Ratana and Ringatu, is a major Christian grouping within New Zealand. Evangelical, Born Again and Fundamentalist Christianity are a vibrant category of Christian belief. The question of whether New Zealand should be considered a Christian country remains difficult to answer. Using the wide definition of Christianity set out in the essay and following the census data we can state that, at present, more than 50% of New Zealanders identify with some form of Christianity.

Ahdar (2006) states New Zealand experienced a pluralistic Christian history which through a pragmatic secularism has, mostly, provided religious equality and a peaceful coexistence between different denominations. He argues that this history provides New Zealand State,

Legal and social institutions with a *de facto* Christianity which is being slowly eroded. This *de facto* Christianity is evident in the opening of Parliament with a prayer, the National Anthem, and the celebration of Christian public holidays. These examples indicate the presence of a Christian tradition in New Zealand which has been increasingly treated as secularised public traditions instead. Lineham (2000) argues that New Zealand Christians do have different values from other New Zealanders. These different values and perhaps an erosion of *defacto* Christianity appears to underlie two large Christian political protests since 1998. Mawson (2005) suggests in his discussion of the Anglican Church's 'Hikoi of Hope' and Destiny Church's 'Enough is Enough' protest that the separation between state and society in New Zealand has become more malleable in the last ten years. This malleability has seen the emergence of Christian political parties under MMP and the more recent contestation of the Destiny party in 2005 election. These overtly 'Christian' protests have been concerned with the moral degradation of society and Governmental policy. It appears Christian values and interest groups are increasingly becoming more vociferous in the New Zealand public sphere.

The characterisation of New Zealand as religiously diverse does provide a more accurate premise for understanding religious demographics in this country. The growing sectarian nature and variation of Christianity in New Zealand combined with the growth of other world religions, other minor religions and the 'No Religion' categories has created a religiously pluralistic environment. This trend has become increasingly evident since 1986 which saw the beginning of a large influx of non Christian beliefs into the country. In 2006, of the ten largest professions of religious belief, six are Christian (Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Mormon) one is Maori Christian (Ratana), and three are non-Christian religions (Buddhism, Hinduism and Muslim). In the period 1966 – 2006 New Zealand has become a religiously diverse country.

A qualification must be made regarding the difference between census identification and the nature of religious belief and practice. Census data provides a guide to individual's identification with a religion rather than their practice, adherence or attendance in worship. Religious

identification and census figures have little bearing on the nature of belief and religious practice. For more robust predictions concerning religious practice and future changes in religious demographics in New Zealand more work needs to be done and is outside the scope of this current investigation. An investigation into the correlations of ethnicity with professions of religious belief in New Zealand would provide insight into how culturally ingrained certain religions are in various ethnic groups over time. Future predictions would also be further supplemented by a breakdown in the ages of those professing religious identification over time.

Even with a wide definition of 'Christian' and growth in other forms of Christianity, it will not be long until the percentage of the religious profession of 'Christian' to the total population slips below 50%. A conservative estimate, following the trends charted over the last forty years, would suggest this is likely to occur in the New Zealand 2016 Census (outside of an act of God)⁵. Yet even this potential future percentage decline does not necessarily mean that New Zealand would cease to be a Christian country. Professions of Christian belief will still form the majority of religious belief within the country. Our history, traditions, values and indigenous religions will still draw on a Christian influenced history. The question of whether or not Christian influence on New Zealand culture becomes secularised into more general ideas of 'New Zealand Identity' is yet to be determined. What can be determined is that a variety of professions of Christian belief will continue to be strongly evident in a religiously diverse New Zealand.

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⁵ It is also likely in the 2016 Census of Population and Dwellings that identification with Catholic Christianity will become the single largest religious profession in New Zealand.

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Appendix One

Total Religious affiliation of all respondents: 1966 - 2006

Religion	1966	1971	1976	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>N</i>
Anglican	901,701	895,839	915,202	814,740	791,901	732,048	631,764	584,793	554,925
Catholic	425,280	449,974	478,530	456,858	496,389	498,612	473,079	486,015	508,812
Presbyterian	582,976	583,701	566,569	523,221	587,673	540,675	458,289	417,453	385,350
Christian	172,667	177,244	200,445	228,783	147,084	187,134	288,045	289,014	285,693
Methodist	186,260	182,727	173,526	148,512	153,249	138,705	121,650	120,705	122,076
Baptist	46,748	47,350	49,442	50,043	68,016	70,155	53,610	51,420	56,919
Mormons	25,716	29,853	36,261	37,761	37,143	48,009	41,166	39,915	43,536
Evan/BA/Fund	7,103	10,061	15,301	31,296	45,354	53,832	70,578	78,033	93,372
Orthodox	4,705	4,899	5,200	4,272	4,323	4,263	6,933	9,588	13,257
Ratana	27,570	30,156	35,082	35,781	39,729	47,592	36,450	48,975	50,565
Ringatu	5,605	5,635	6,230	6,117	7,332	8,052	8,271	15,288	16,419
Buddhist	652	1,424	2,618	4,314	6,516	12,765	28,125	41,621	52,392
Hindu	3,599	3,845	5,203	6,078	8,148	17,661	24,903	39,090	63,891
Muslim	551	779	1,415	2,004	2,544	5,772	13,389	23,439	36,120
Jewish	4,136	3,803	3,921	3,360	3,084	3,126	4,812	6,636	6,858
Sikh	295	382	545	606	768	2,058	2,817	5,199	9,507
Other	7,231	8,012	26,012	27,222	23,748	25,587	17,562	40,026	45,915
No Religion	32,780	57,485	101,211	167,817	533,790	666,609	867,264	1,028,052	1,297,104
Object	210851	247,019	438,511	473,115	244,863	251,706	256,593	239,241	242,610
Outside Scope								64,512	30,945
Not Stated	19,300	103,533	39,380	108,015	58,686	56,289	187,878	211,638	249,711
Total Christian	2,386,331	2,417,439	2,481,788	2,337,384	2,378,193	2,186,094	2,189,835	2,141,199	2,130,924
Total Respondents	2,676,919	2,862,631	3,129,383	3,175,737	3,263,283	3,373,926	3,418,461	3,711,107	3,931,221

Note. Total Christian Categories Includes; Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian, Christian, Methodist, Baptist, Mormons, Evan/BA/Fund, Orthodox, Ratana and Ringatu.

Religious affiliation of New Zealanders as a percentage: 1966 – 2006

Religion	1966	1971	1976	1981	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Anglican	33.68%	31.29%	29.25%	25.66%	24.27%	21.70%	18.48%	15.76%	14.12%
Catholic	15.89%	15.72%	15.29%	14.39%	15.21%	14.78%	13.84%	13.10%	12.94%
Presbyterian	21.78%	2.39%	18.10%	16.48%	18.01%	16.03%	13.41%	11.25%	9.80%
Christian	6.45%	6.19%	6.41%	7.20%	4.51%	5.55%	8.43%	7.79%	7.27%
Methodist	6.96%	6.38%	5.55%	4.68%	4.70%	4.11%	3.56%	3.25%	3.11%
Baptist	1.75%	1.65%	1.58%	1.58%	2.08%	2.08%	1.57%	1.39%	1.45%
Mormons	.96%	1.04%	1.16%	1.19%	1.14%	1.42%	1.20%	1.08%	1.11%
Evan/BA/Fund	.27%	.35%	.49%	.99%	1.39%	1.60%	2.06%	2.10%	2.38%
Orthodox	.18%	.17%	.17%	.13%	.13%	.13%	.20%	.26%	.34%
Ratana	1.03%	1.05%	1.12%	1.13%	1.22%	1.41%	1.07%	1.32%	1.29%
Ringatu	.21%	.20%	.20%	.19%	.22%	.24%	.24%	.41%	.42%
Buddhist	.02%	.05%	.08%	.14%	.20%	.38%	.82%	1.12%	1.33%
Hindu	.13%	.13%	.17%	.19%	.25%	.52%	.73%	1.05%	1.63%
Muslim	.02%	.03%	.05%	.06%	.08%	.17%	.39%	.63%	.92%
Jewish	.15%	.13%	.13%	.11%	.09%	.09%	.14%	.18%	.17%
Sikh	.01%	.01%	.02%	.02%	.02%	.06%	.08%	.14%	.24%
Other	.27%	.28%	.83%	.86%	.73%	.76%	.51%	1.08%	1.17%
No Religion	1.22%	2.01%	3.23%	5.28%	16.36%	19.76%	25.37%	27.70%	32.99%
Object	7.88%	8.63%	14.01%	14.90%	7.50%	7.46%	7.51%	6.45%	6.17%
Outside Scope								1.74%	.79%
Not Stated	.72%	3.62%	1.26%	3.40%	1.80%	1.67%	5.50%	5.70%	6.35%
Total Christian	89.14%	84.45%	79.31%	73.60%	72.88%	69.39%	64.06%	57.70%	54.21%

Note. Total Christian Categories Includes; Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian, Christian, Methodist, Baptist, Mormons, Evan/BA/Fund, Orthodox, Ratana and Ringatu.

Category Concatenation

Anglican	
Catholic:	Includes Catholic NFD, Roman Catholic, Catholic NEC
Presbyterian	
Christian	See Appendix Two
Methodist	Includes Methodist NFD, Tongan Methodist, Methodist NEC
Baptist	Includes Baptist NFD, Bible Baptist, Independent Baptist, Reformed Baptist, Baptist NEC.
Mormons	Includes Reorganised Church of the LDS
Evan/BA/Fund	See Appendix Three
Orthodox	Includes Eastern Orthodox Catholic, Orthodox Category, Orthodox NFD, Antiochian Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Assyrian Orthodox, Coptic Orthodox, Ethiopian Orthodox, Lebanese Orthodox, Macedonian Orthodox, Romanian Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Greek Orthodox, Russian Orthodox, Serbian Orthodox, Ukrainian Orthodox and Orthodox NEC.
Ratana	
Ringatu	
Buddhist	Includes Buddhist and Zen Buddhists
Hindu	Includes Hindu NFD and Hindu NEC
Muslim	Mohammedans, Islam (designation changed in 1971), 1996 Includes Shia and Suni; 2006 Islam/Muslim NFD, Islam/Muslim NEC
Jewish	Hebrew (1966), Liberal Jew (1966) and Hebrew Congregations (1971,1976,1981). From 1996: Judaism NFD, Liberal/Progressive & Orthodox.
Sikh	
Other	See Appendix Four

Appendix Two

Christian Category Breakdown

Christian NFD, Adventist NFD, Christadelphian, 7th Day Adventist, Worldwide Church of God, Adventist NEC, Chinese Christian, Korean Christian, Brethren NFD, Exclusive Brethren, Open Brethren, Plymouth Brethren, Brethren NEC, Church of Christ, Associated Church of Christ, Other Church of Christ, Jehovah's Witnesses, Lutheran, Christian Fellowship, Christian Outreach, Congregational, Cook Islands Congregational, Samoan Congregational, Reformed, Protestant NFD, Salvation Army, Uniting/Union Church, Ecumenical, Christian and Missionary Alliance, Christian Science, Church of God, Commonwealth Covenant Church, Liberal Catholic, Metropolitan, Nazarene, Religious Society of Friends, Unitarian, Christian NEC, Maori-Christian-NFD, Maori-Christian-NEC, Hauhau

Appendix Three

Evan/BA/Fund – Evangelical, Born Again and Fundamentalist Category Breakdown

Evangelical, Born Again, Fundamentalist, Independent Evangelical Church, Pentecostal NFD, Apostolic Church of New Zealand, Assemblies of God, Christian Revival Crusade, Elim, Full Gospel, Independent Pentecostal, New Life, Revival Centres, United Pentecostal, Vineyard Christian Fellowship, Pentecostal NEC

Appendix Four

Other Religion Category Breakdown.

Hare Krishna, Yoga, Sufi, New Age, Church of Scientology, Nature and Earth Based Religions NEC, Animist, Druid, Pantheist, Wiccan, Nature and Earth Based Religions NFD, Satanism, Spiritualist, Rastafarianism, Other New Age Religions, Other Religion NFD, Baha'I, Chinese Religions NFD, Confucianism, Taoism, Chinese Religions NEC, Jainism, Japanese Religion NFD, Mahikari, Shinto, Tenrikyo, Japanese Religion NEC, Maori Religion NFD, Maori Religion NEC, Theism, Zoroastrianism, Unification Church (Moonist), Other Religions NEC, Religion Unidentifiable

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