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'A many-headed hydra': New Zealand Baptists and the Gambling Monster, 1890-1940[1]

ABSTRACT

At the turn of the twentieth century New Zealand Baptists were at the forefront of a massive public campaign to suppress gambling. In alliance with other Protestant churches and women's groups, they achieved considerable legislative success. By 1911 bookmakers were condemned to legal exile and the totalisator very nearly followed. But those victories were short-lived. From World War One onwards the anti-gambling forces suffered one defeat after another as the state gradually dismantled what had become a very tight regulatory regime. This paper traces Baptist involvement in the debate and examines the reasons for both the early success and the ultimate failure of this campaign. It argues that Baptists and their allies were defeated by the state's reliance on the revenue it drew from gambling, by the patent failure of legislation to suppress the practice, and – perhaps most importantly of all – by the style of their campaign.

In his presidential address to the New Zealand Baptist Assembly in 1894 the Rev. Thomas Bray reported gravely, 'Bookmakers, blacklegs, gamblers are everywhere'. The 'awful vice', he warned, is saturating the minds of young and old. Like a 'monster' or a 'mighty giant', gambling stalks the land, defying 'the whole army of the living God'.[2] It is time, Bray thundered, for Baptists to arise and, in the power of God, slay the great monster. While gambling in New Zealand had long aroused concern among Baptists, and provoked widespread public concern from the 1870s, it was not until the 1890s that it became, within the

[1] This article is largely drawn from the author's doctoral thesis: John Tucker, 'A Braided River: New Zealand Baptists and Public Issues, 1882-2000' (PhD thesis, University of Otago, 2010).
[2] T. Bray, Presidential Address, *New Zealand Baptist* (*NZB*), December 1894, 177-181 at 178.

denomination, the focus of a sustained moral crusade.[3] For the next twenty years Baptists, along with other Protestant churches and women's groups were at the forefront of a massive public campaign to eliminate the evil in its various forms – gambling on games, horse racing, private sweepstakes and public lotteries. On one level, the emergence of this campaign in the 1890s was not surprising. In the late nineteenth century several powerful currents converged to push Baptists and other Evangelicals into the public domain and political activism.[4] A wider process of 'moral evangelism' was at work in New Zealand at the time.[5] But gambling, alongside drinking, was singled out for particular attention. In the minds of many Baptists, the 'gambling den' rivalled the 'tavern' as the greatest curse on the colony.

The Social Cost of Widespread Gambling

Baptist opposition was driven, in part, by a sense that widespread gambling was injurious to the social and economic welfare of the community.[6] Baptist spokesmen were quick to point this out. 'The evil is widespread', wrote the Rev. Charles Dallaston, 'and wherever it travels leaves behind it desolation and ruin. It blights the fairest of the fruits of the nation … It diverts energy from productive operation … and is answerable for not a little of the crime that now blots our once fair escutcheon.'[7] The leading general in the Baptist anti-gambling campaign was J.J. North. He was clearly driven by humanitarian concerns. In his valedictory address to the 1945 Baptist Assembly he explained how an incident early in his ministry profoundly shaped his attitude to gambling:

> The first visit I paid in my parish was to a tottering old woman, whom I can see as I write standing on the step of a very poor

[3] This was also true of British Baptists: David Bebbington, 'The Baptist Conscience in the Nineteenth Century', *Baptist Quarterly* 34 (January 1991): 13-24, 20. In New Zealand the sudden mobilisation was evident in the pages of the *NZB*. Between 1880 and 1889 there were only 28 references to 'gambling', compared to 194 references in the period 1890-1898.

[4] On some of these currents see 'A Braided River', 9-12, 16-20.

[5] See James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000* (Auckland: Penguin, 2001), 157-88.

[6] This was also true in Australia. See Ken R. Manley, *From Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity': A History of Australian Baptists*, vol. 1. *Growing an Australian Church 1831-1914* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2006), 370.

[7] *NZB*, August 1901, 114-5.

> cottage. This old woman had been robbed of the comforts that belonged to her by her son, an inveterate gambler, who sold her home over her head to cover his debts to 'bookies.' Anti-gambling, stimulated by that iniquity, became an obsession with me. [8]

According to North, gambling was 'the social dry rot of the world and the immediate cause of debauchery on the one hand and of hopeless poverty on the other.'[9]

Baptist spokesmen were sometimes prone to exaggeration, but widespread gambling was a common feature in colonial societies. And New Zealand was no exception. In the young colony gambling was particularly 'widespread' and 'exuberant'.[10] The early immigrants to New Zealand developed an enthusiastic sporting culture, of which gambling was an essential part. They gambled on cards, dice, billiards, running, 'pedestrianism'. 'In the goldfields, rough-and-tumble sports like boxing, wrestling, stone tossing, and tug-of-war dominated the miners' downtime, and gambling on them was prevalent.'[11] Later, bookies took bets in the shooting galleries and skittle alleys that were built alongside goldfield hotels.[12] Promoters pitted animals – from dogs to cockroaches – against each other, taking bets on the outcome.

Horse race gambling proved to be particularly attractive for many New Zealanders. From the earliest days there were concerns expressed about the grip it seemed to have on the colony. In December 1848, for example, the Rev. Richard Taylor of Wanganui was appalled when nearly the entire local European population of seven hundred attended the settlement's first race-meeting rather than celebrations of the Saviour's birth.[13] During the nineteenth century huge crowds flocked to major meetings. It became one of the country's most popular activities with men, women and children regularly attending race meetings held on weekends and during the week. Wednesday meetings were so popular

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[8] 'These Fifty Years: A Dose of Anecdotage', *NZB*, December 1945, 303.
[9] 'Conscience and the ticket', *NZB*, December 1935, 374.
[10] David Grant, *On a Roll: A History of Gambling and Lotteries in New Zealand* (Wellington: Victoria University Press: 1994), 12.
[11] David G. Schwartz, *Roll the Bones: The History of Gambling* (New York: Gotham Books, 2006), 235.
[12] David Grant, 'The Nature of Gambling in New Zealand: A Brief History', in *Gambling in New Zealand*, ed. Bruce Curtis (Palmerston North: Dunmore Press, 2002), 75-89 at 76.
[13] Grant, *On a Roll*, 51.

that schools even closed for the day.[14] A major catalyst for the growth in this form of gambling, both in New Zealand and Australia,[15] was the introduction in 1879 of the totalisator or the 'tote'. This was a machine which totalled up the money invested in a race and, after taking out a percentage for the operator, declared dividends by dividing the number of winning tickets into the remainder of the money. By giving the better honest odds, the tote proved to be extraordinarily popular. Horse race gambling boomed. Huge money was legally bet on races, whose popularity was phenomenal.[16]

Around this time there surfaced widespread public concern about the social effects of uncontrolled gambling. Only some provinces had anti-gambling ordinances and these were haphazardly enforced. In March 1874 the *Press* expressed concern about the Kaiapoi races where more than twenty spielers enticed boys and girls as young as eight to throw dice and gamble shillings and half-crowns on unders-and-overs.[17] In September 1879 the *New Zealand Herald* complained about the proliferation of spielers and touts in Queen Street who were 'forcing themselves' on innocent pedestrians and the *New Zealand Mail* condemned sweepstakes for the social harm they were causing.[18] The following year the *Otago Daily Times* observed that Dunedin was full of drinking, gambling and debauched youths.[19] Bookmakers and lottery promoters were all finding ready custom in streets, parks, hotels and workplaces. The *New Zealand Mail* was startled by 'the gambling mania now sweeping the country … its vice even exceeds that of drunkenness.'[20] Parliamentarians voiced similar concerns, with debates focusing on the problems of sweepstakes or 'consultations', Chinese gambling, bookmaker 'aggression', lotteries, and open gambling by youth.[21]

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[14] David Grant, *Thoroughbreds, Trainers, Toffs and Tic Tac Men: A Cartoon History of Horse Racing in New Zealand* (Palmerston North: Dunmore, 2001), 12.

[15] Manley, *Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity'*, vol. 1, 369.

[16] In 1880, for example, New Zealanders bet more than £500,000 on sweepstakes, bets and expenses at licensed meetings and more on unlicensed or 'tin kettle' meetings in remoter districts. Grant, 'Nature of Gambling', 79.

[17] *Press*, 6 April 1874, cited in Grant, *On a Roll*, 50.

[18] See Grant, *On a Roll*, 52.

[19] *Otago Daily Times* (ODT), 13 October 1880, 2.

[20] *New Zealand Mail*, 6 January 1880, as quoted in Grant, *On a Roll*, 54.

[21] Grant, *On a Roll*, 52.

In January 1881 a prominent sweepstake organiser, George North, absconded to the United States with £4,500 of punters' money bet on the Wellington Racing Cup. North's perfidy fuelled a growing public outcry against gambling.[22] In response to this growing public pressure for regulation, the government passed the Gaming and Lotteries Act in 1881. This legislation was piloted through the House by the Colonial Secretary, Hon Thomas Dick, a Baptist deacon and President of the Baptist Union in 1885. It banned all lotteries and sweepstakes, apart from those offering as prizes works of art, mechanical models or mineral specimens, to be held under strict conditions. It also banned off-track tote betting and public betting on sports contests, and made gaming and betting houses illegal. But bookmakers were not touched. The lawmakers predicted – incorrectly as it turned out – that they would be squeezed out by the competition of totalisators, which themselves were regulated, rather than banned.[23]

This, the first attempt to repress gambling nationally, was a resounding failure. Far from curbing the gambling evil, it had the opposite effect. The government's prohibition of local lotteries and sweepstakes seemed only to encourage New Zealand investment in Australian lotteries, the most popular of which was Tattersalls.[24] Similarly, the ban on betting on sports contests had little effect. Police lacked the numbers, and sometimes the will, to catch law-breakers.[25] Bookmakers thrived. Off course, thanks to the Act, they had little competition. While betting 'shops' had been banned as gaming houses, bookies simply replaced them with 'agencies' (usually private rooms), which were legitimate. By the early 1890s it was claimed that ten times as much money was being invested through bookmakers off-course as through the totalisator.[26] Horse racing also continued to burgeon in the 1880s, despite the deepening recession.

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[22] Ibid., 54.

[23] Thomas Dick later explained that he had expected that the totalisator 'would do away with bookmakers to a great extent': *NZB*, December 1898, 186.

[24] By 1885 between £50,000 and £60,000 was being spent annually on Australian sweepstakes, a massive amount in the context of the economic depression of the time.

[25] The report of the 1898 Royal Commission of Inquiry into the New Zealand Police Force supported this view: *Appendix to the Journals of the House of Representatives* (AJHR), 1898, H-2.

[26] New Zealand Parliamentary Debates (NZPD), 1894, vol. 83, 288.

As the practice continued to spread, so too did concern about its impact on society. Many working-class families, already struggling in the face of the economic depression, suffered at the hands of husbands and fathers who lost their earnings in gambling dens or on the turf. In 1890 the Christchurch *Press* was outraged by 'the frightful amount of gambling that is carried on, with no attempt to check it'. Gambling dens, it said, were 'doing the work of hell most effectively in the way of demoralising and impoverishing many hard-working young men … When are we to see some worthy effort made to suppress these abominations?'[27]

A number of leading politicians also voiced these kinds of concerns. In 1885 Sir William Fox contended that horse racing demoralised, pauperised and ruined 'thousands who might be our best colonists'.[28] Prompted by the effect of gambling on their working class constituents, the Christchurch Liberal MPs Harry Ell and Tommy Taylor sought legislative reform.[29] Their call for reform was echoed elsewhere. In their report on the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the New Zealand Police Force, the commissioners suggested that the practice of betting as an occupation, or in connection with any other business, be made illegal.[30] In 1901 Police Commissioner J.B. Turnbridge described the growing number of street betters as 'pests to society', and implicitly criticised the government's failure to amend the law so that they could be arrested.[31] Baptists, it seems, were not too far off the mark in their estimation of gambling as a leading source of social misery.

The Evangelical Impulse to Eradicate Sin

While compassionate humanitarianism drove many Baptists into the political fray, their battle against the gambling monster – as with the demon drink – was motivated by deeper theological convictions. For Evangelical Baptists 'there was little reason for engaging in public life unless some outright evil had been identified, but once discovered it had to be eliminated.'[32] By the 1890s New Zealand Baptists had clearly identified gambling as 'something inherently wicked', something condemned by Scripture. In 1892 Alfred North declared:

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[27] Quoted in *NZB*, April 1890, 49.
[28] Sir William Fox, *The Political Crisis* (Marton: Rangitikei Advocate, 1887), 6.
[29] Grant, *On a Roll*, 74, 83.
[30] AJHR, 1898, H-2, xxv.
[31] AJHR, 1901, H-16, 2.
[32] Bebbington, 'The Baptist Conscience', 22.

> True, there was no command 'Thou shalt not bet', but there was one, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself', and there was another, 'Thou shalt not covet'; and both of these involved the condemnation of betting. What did a man do when he made a bet? He tried to make money out of his neighbour, without rendering any advantage to his neighbour – he tried to enrich himself to his neighbour's loss.[33]

Among Baptists, gambling came to be seen as 'the purest expression there is of covetousness'.[34] It was 'a form of theft by consent'.[35] It was a denial of Christian stewardship because it squandered God's gifts in a selfish and harmful way.[36] Gambling led to idleness and 'an atheistic reliance on luck and chance'.[37] Even worse, it was closely entwined with the evil of alcohol. Drinking and gambling were 'twin devils',[38] an unholy sisterhood'.[39] Baptist discourse on the issue repeatedly stressed the 'essentially immoral' character of gambling.[40] It was 'absolutely indefensible on moral grounds'.[41] A minister who was reported as attending race-meetings had 'rubbed out the line which should ever separate Church and world.'[42]

Baptist spokesmen frequently argued that gambling was tainted by the sins of 'falsehood, fraud and extortion'.[43] There was some justification for these claims. Scams were not uncommon. Matches and races were frequently fixed. In rugby, for instance, there was skulduggery among club rugby players who put money on the opposition to win. In 1891 the game became embroiled in a betting and corruption scandal. The well-known half-back, Patrick Keogh, who had been a star of the 'Native' tour to Great Britain in 1888-1889, played such a poor game for

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33 *NZB*, July 1892, 98-100.
34 *NZB*, September 1935, 287-9.
35 *NZB*, August 1901, 114-15; September 1921, 101; August 1923, 145-6; September 1931, 277; March 1936, 67. Australian Baptists also opposed gambling as a symbol of greed and a form of stealing: Manley, *Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity',* vol. 1, 368.
36 *NZB*, September 1935, 287-9.
37 H.H. Driver, *NZB*, December 1899, 177-82 at 180.
38 T. Bray, Presidential Address, *NZB*, December 1894, 177-81 at 178.
39 C. Dallaston, 'The Gambling Evil', *NZB*, August 1901, 114-15.
40 *NZB*, August 1923, 145-6.
41 *NZB*, September 1898, 129. See also William H. Edgar, *Auckland Baptist Association: One Hundred Years 1892-1992* (Auckland: NZ Baptist Historical Society, 1993), 54.
42 *NZB*, February 1914, 21.
43 *NZB*, August 1891, 118.

his Dunedin club that some spectators assumed he had money invested on the opposition to win. The Otago Rugby Football Union investigated. Keogh, the 'artful dodger', resigned after threatening to name other players who had bet money on the match. Other club players who admitted gambling on the opposition to win were banned. But reports of players deliberately trying to lose their games continued to surface.[44]

The primary reason, however, for Baptist agitation against gambling was the government's legalization of the totalisator in 1881. It had the effect, in the eyes of many, of condoning gambling. By its 'legal endorsement' the Gaming and Lotteries Act, gave it 'a certain seductive appearance of respectability.'[45] According to the Rev. T.A. Williams, 'the existence of the totalisator, with its State patronage and control, is a reproach to every Christian in the colony.'[46] Like slavery, it was an appalling blot on national life.[47] It had to be erased. With universal suffrage, it became the solemn duty of every Christian to press for abolition. So Baptists, along with other Evangelicals, called for a nationwide 'crusade' against the iniquitous 'vice' of gambling.[48] Successive Assemblies passed solemn resolutions urging 'all who aim at the moral uplifting of the people to employ their fullest resources in combating this elusive and insidious vice.'[49] The *Baptist* magazine called for every pulpit and platform in the Dominion to denounce this 'huge iniquity'.[50] It was 'the most devastating enemy that religion has,'[51] 'an enemy of the kingdom of God'.[52]

Not surprisingly, Baptists concentrated their energies on abolishing the totalisator. The central focus of their campaign was legislation to destroy 'the gambling machine'. Nearly every year the

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[44] Sean O'Hagan, *The Pride of Southern Rebels: The History of Otago Rugby* (Dunedin: Pilgrims South Press, 1981), 52-54.
[45] 'Betting and Gambling', *NZB*, July 1892, 98-100 at 100.
[46] 'The Gambling Evil', *NZB*, September 1898, 141.
[47] 'We believe', wrote J.J. North in 1935, 'that a day is coming … when it will be seen that betting involves as real a dishonour to the idea for humanity as slavery itself.' *NZB*, September 1935, 287-9.
[48] E.g. *NZB*, April 1890, 49; July 1892, 98-100; September 1898, 129; November 1921, 130.
[49] *NZB*, December 1893, 189; Baptist Yearbook, 1904-1905, 45.
[50] *NZB*, December 1913, 226.
[51] *NZB*, March 1936, 67.
[52] *NZB*, January 1941, 10.

Baptist Assembly passed a resolution calling for its abolition.[53] Baptist leaders repeatedly launched petitions demanding its abolition.[54] But while the focus of their attention around the turn of the century was the totalisator, Baptists recognised that gambling took many forms, and its growth could be attributed to several factors. It was, in the words of one minister, 'a many-headed Hydra. … Against the evil, in all its forms, the Church of God must vigorously protest.'[55] Protest they did. In church meetings, in assemblies, and in print, Baptists made vigorous appeals to government to prohibit the publication of odds and betting details in newspapers, to isolate racecourses from telephone and telegraphic communication, and to give police sufficient powers to suppress street-betting. They protested against state permits granted to art unions, the transmission through the post of Tattersall's correspondence, and the persistent advertisement by newspapers of prizes drawn through 'Tatts', as it was 'constantly inflaming this destructive passion'.[56]

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, with the 'marked increase' in gambling – signalled by the large sums of money passing annually through the totalisator and the increasing numbers of bookmakers and 'tote' shops – Baptists were gripped by a sharpened sense of urgency. 'Every thoughtful man in the community', wrote J.J. North, 'is alarmed at the spread of that Egyptian plague, the gaming mania.'[57] Baptist Sunday Schools and Bands of Hope adopted a pledge against gambling, similar to that used in the temperance campaign.[58] Baptists helped form Anti-Gambling Leagues in cities throughout the colony.[59] Their campaign to slay the 'many-headed Hydra' became increasingly intense.

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[53] See, for example, *NZB*, December 1892, 183; December 1893, 189; December 1895, 188; December 1898, 186; December 1899, 188; December 1900, 191.
[54] E.g. *NZB*, December 1898, 186; December 1901, 189; January 1902, 11; May 1902, 74; Supplement, January 1903, 8.
[55] C. Dallaston, 'The Gambling Evil', *NZB*, August 1901, 114-5.
[56] *NZB*, July 1892, 98-100; January 1893, 9; February 1894, 17; September 1898, 129; December 1900, 190; August 1901, 114-5. See also Baptist Yearbook, 1905-1905, 45; 1906-1907, 36-37.
[57] *NZB*, July 1898, 103.
[58] *NZB*, December 1898, 183.
[59] 'Waking up', *NZB*, September 1898, 129.

The Catholic Lotteries Controversy

Around this time several other Protestant denominations also mobilised their forces against gambling, particularly the Presbyterians, the Methodists and the Salvation Army.[60] But while most Protestant churches were united in their opposition to gambling, Roman Catholics were decidedly indifferent towards this campaign. While they sometimes expressed concern about the social impact of uncontrolled gambling,[61] their experience of Protestant hostility caused them to have, at best, a lukewarm attitude towards Protestant reform movements. Their higher levels of working class representation also made them more strongly inclined to gamble. And their schools tended to rely on fundraising by means of lotteries at church bazaars.

This conflict between Catholic and Protestant attitudes towards lotteries became a flashpoint of controversy in 1906. In early May, having discovered that the Catholic Church had applied for 53 art union permits, J.J. North and the Presbyterian Minister James Gibb criticised the Church for identifying with the gambling community. Speaking for the Council of Churches, an umbrella Protestant public pressure group concerned with social issues, they urged the Catholic Church, in the public interest, to renounce the use of gambling for religious ends.[62]

North was 'the engineer and prime mover' in the Council's attack on Catholic lotteries.[63] As the Council's 'press-champion', he argued in the Wellington press on 9 May that gambling is wrong *in toto*, that is in everything.[64] The editor of the *Tablet*, H.W. Cleary, took issue with this very bold claim, and challenged the Council to both demonstrate by reference to Scripture – the primary authority for evangelical Protestants – why gambling was inherently sinful, and then to reconcile this claim with the fact that in the biblical record God himself commanded and permitted the use of the lot. Cleary admitted that lotteries were sometimes abused, but argued that that was no reason to abolish them altogether: 'Does the Council of the Churches stand for the principle of the abolition, as a 'vicious practice,' of everything that has been, or is

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[60] There were exceptions, most notably the Anglican Church.

[61] *Freeman's Journal*, 5 February 1887, 9.

[62] For an excellent summary of the ensuing controversy from a Catholic perspective, see H.W. Cleary, *Catholic Church Lotteries: A Controversy between the Wellington (N.Z.) Council of the Churches and the Rev. H.W. Cleary, Editor of the 'New Zealand Tablet'* (Dunedin: NZ Tablet Printing and Publishing Co., 1906).

[63] Cleary, *Catholic Church Lotteries*, 31.

[64] Ibid., 25.

liable to be, abused? Well, what gift of God has been more grossly abused by many ill-conditioned persons … than the Bible? Is the Bible, then, to be abolished?' Cleary concluded: 'There is no divine law to stop anybody from making an unconditional gift of a coin to the art union. It is hard to imagine a person speculating in raffle tickets at a bazaar with the mercenary spirit of making gain; it is done to help the object in view, or to oblige a friend.'[65]

In the absence of a reply from the Council, Cleary again challenged North to prove his claim that lotteries are sinful in themselves and under all circumstances by appeal to the ultimate authority for Baptists, Scripture.[66] Possibly because of the absence of any explicit universal prohibition of gambling in Scripture, North – unusually for him – held back. In his reply on 18 May he did not answer Cleary's primary challenge to supply Scriptural evidence for his claim that church lotteries are intrinsically sinful. Instead, he excused the use of the lot in the Old Testament on the grounds that 'the Old Testament is the record of a progressive revelation; it sanctions polygamy and slavery.'[67] Cleary subsequently accused the Council of 'palpably shirking the very issue which they themselves and their champion have raised.'[68] He also picked apart North's mode of accounting for the Biblical use of lots:

> When the Creator ordered the Jewish land-lottery, He either knew, or did not know, that all lotteries are sinful 'in-toto' … If He did not know, He is to be graciously excused – and let off with a caution – on the plea of ignorance! If He did know, then He sinned by ordering the performance of an act which under no conceivable circumstances could be other than sinful! For Catholics, either of these two alternatives is simply too horrible to contemplate.[69]

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[65] H.W. Cleary, 'Church Lotteries and Gambling: A Reply to the Wellington Council of Churches', *New Zealand Tablet* (NZT), 10 May 1906, published in full on 12 May in two Wellington daily newspapers, the *NZ Times* and the *Evening Post*.

[66] Cleary's letter appeared in the *NZ Times* and *Evening Post* (EP) on 17 May 1906. He agreed that the abuse of gambling was wrong, but insisted that Catholics were 'too sane to accept the extraordinary and fantastic consequences that would follow the adoption of the principle of the total abolition of innocent and legitimate use because of the abuse of some.' Cleary, *Catholic Church Lotteries*, 25-30.

[67] See Cleary, *Catholic Church Lotteries*, 31-32.

[68] Ibid, 33.

[69] NZT, 24 May 1906, 19.

Cleary's challenges goaded the Council of Churches into publishing a manifesto in which the Council officially adopted North's view as to the total immorality of the resort to games of chance. Gambling is wrong, it argued rather obscurely, because it is based on chance, 'and chance is a false thing which it is the whole aim of civilisation to destroy … In a gamble reason is shown to the door and the will and affections operate unhealthily. Gambling is therefore essentially unmanly. To engage in it is degrading.'[70] On 22 May Cleary's response was published in the Wellington daily papers. He observed acerbically that in the manifesto 'the Sacred Writings are not so much as hinted at'. The document was 'a salmagundi of unproved or ambiguous assertions' and 'question-begging epithets'. Teasing out the principles embedded in the Council's statement, he argued forcefully that those principles effectively undermined the Council's indictment against Catholic Church lotteries as inherently sinful. For example, the Council argued that lotteries were wrong because they were based on chance – 'intelligence is barred out'. But Cleary pointed out that the moment 'intelligence is barred out' of an act, that act is no longer a morally responsible one.[71]

Eventually North responded to Cleary's challenge by providing Scriptural principles that he said condemned gambling. It was condemned, he said, by the law of love, the command against coveting, and Paul's principle that 'if meat make [sic] my brother stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore…'[72] Cleary was unconvinced. Gambling did not *always* violate the law of love or the command against coveting: 'the vast bulk of those attending Catholic bazaars give their coins for the cause, and do not care a brass button whether they win or lose'. And Paul's words did not prohibit gambling in every situation. For one thing, he was not condemning anything that was 'in toto' sinful, and nor was Paul encouraging believers to forego the *right* use of something in order to avoid *abuse*.[73] In Cleary's opinion North's attempts to justify his claim that all lotteries were violations of the moral law had led 'to a lawyer-vine tangle of contradictions and absurdities'. The whole controversy has been 'a public exposure of the low educational level – the 'tea-meeting intellect' – of the Council of the Churches.' North and his colleagues had

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[70] *Evening Post* (EP), 19 May 1906; *NZ Times*, 22 May 1906. Reprinted in Cleary, *Catholic Church Lotteries*, 37-38.
[71] Cleary, *Catholic Church Lotteries*, 39-42.
[72] North's letter appeared in the *NZ Times* on 26 May 1906. See Cleary, *Catholic Church Lotteries*, 43-44.
[73] Cleary, *Catholic Church Lotteries*, 44-49.

'hung out false lights along the shores of life, where Revelation marks no reef or shoal.'[74]

Except in the minds of his devoted supporters, North came off second best in the debate. He asserted more than he was able to prove and, in the process, alienated a number of moderate observers. This, at least, was how the secular press saw it. In a leading article on the controversy the *New Zealand Times* concluded that Cleary had resoundingly defeated North:

> In the field of practical aspiration it may be well to 'aim at the moon,' in the hope of 'hitting the steeple'; but in the realm of morals it is a grave error to indulge in absolute denunciation or propose drastic suppression, as such tactics invariably defeat the object of those who employ them. This was the mistake committed by the Council of the Churches in its crusade against gambling; it asserted more than it was able to prove, and its extreme attitude aroused the antagonism of moderate people.[75]

The *Free Lance* agreed that in the debate the honours rested with Cleary: 'You see the priest had just taken the trouble to know what he was writing about.' Napier's *Daily Telegraph*, while viewing gambling as a 'grave moral evil', rejoiced that the *Tablet* editor had given the Council of Churches 'a deserved scourging'.[76] One correspondent declared that as Father Cleary had 'walked rings around Mr North', it was the duty of Mr North to write one more letter to the press, apologise to Father Cleary, and make an honourable exit from the arena. 'Failing that', he wrote, 'I will put the following to music and have it sung in the music halls':

> Sweet Rev North and dear Doctor Gibb,
> Both very voluble and both very glib,
> Muling and puling weak infants are they
> Thrashed by the priest on the 'Tablet' today.[77]

The Climax of the Anti-Gambling Campaign

In spite of his defeat in this skirmish, North and his supporters did not slacken their efforts. The totalisator's ever-increasing profit[78] added bite

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[74] NZT, 6 June 1906, 17.
[75] Cleary, *Catholic Church Lotteries*, 49.
[76] Ibid., 56.
[77] *NZ Times*, 26 May 1906. Reprinted in Cleary, *Catholic Church Lotteries*, 49-50.

to the anti-gambling cause, as did headline news that a defaulting bookmaker had been kicked to death by angry punters at Sydney's Flemington racecourse in August 1906.[79] Widespread public gambling continued unabated. 'Bookmakers were by now no longer confining their activities to public places. Their touts were knocking on the doors of residents in hotels, boarding houses, businesses and even private homes looking for custom.'[80] In light of this, both the judiciary and the police called for tighter legislation.[81] So the anti-totalisator campaign continued to gather momentum.

When the anti-gambling lobby in parliament introduced their annual bill to abolish the totalisator, a number of Protestant church leaders did their utmost to arouse support for the bill. J.J. North was particularly active. In support of the Anti-Gambling League he addressed meetings in and around Wellington. In September, with Dr James Gibb, Agnes Macalister, Wellington mayor T.W. Hislop and Harry Ell, he helped lead a delegation of over 60 religious and political leaders to the Prime Minister, Joseph Ward. They brought three specific demands: that the totalisator be banned, that racecourses be isolated from telephone and telegraph communication so that betting could occur on-course only, and that newspapers be prohibited from publishing racehorse betting information.[82] North wrote frequently to the newspapers. His letters were of 'such vigour and moment' that they attracted considerable attention and were widely printed.[83] One Wellington paper observed that in the anti-gambling agitation, a battle 'led largely by Christian ministers and laymen', J.J. North was clearly 'a leader of leaders'.[84]

As it turned out, the Abolition of the Totalisator Bill – always defeated by the powerful pro-gambling lobby in parliament – very nearly passed into law. It lost by only six votes. It had never before been so strongly supported in the house. This was, the *Baptist* joyously declared, 'a moral victory' that would cause the racing magnates to be 'greatly

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[78] During the 1906-1907 racing season the totalisator made a pre-tax profit of more than £1.8 million: Grant, 'Nature of Gambling', 80.
[79] L.H. Barber, 'The Social Crusader: James Gibb at the Australasian Pastoral Frontier' (PhD thesis, Massey University, 1975), 139.
[80] Grant, *On a Roll*, 83.
[81] Ibid.
[82] EP, 10 September 1906, 5.
[83] *NZB*, June 1906, 294.
[84] E.W. Batts & A.H. MacLeod, *J.J. North: The Story of a Great New Zealander* (Auckland: N.Z. Baptist Historical Society, n.d.), 7.

disquieted'.[85] Baptist Assembly that year 'placed on record its joy at the awakening of the public conscience' and reaffirmed its commitment to abolish the totalisator which, more than anything else, had 'made a vice legal and respectable and…increased the volume and area of gambling.'[86]

Emboldened by this result, anti-gambling forces redoubled their efforts. In May 1907 North and Gibb led another delegation to the Prime Minister, urging the jailing of bookmakers with no right of appeal. Ward rejected the proposal. By August 1907 the WCTU had gathered 36,471 signatures on its petitions. But Parliament also received 311 other petitions with 36,219 signatures advocating retention of the totalisator.[87] Ward faced an awkward dilemma. He had spoken out in the past against gambling and could not ignore the growing strength of the anti-gambling lobby. But he was also conscious of the political risks of upsetting the powerful horse-racing lobby and of the financial benefits which accrued from the ever-rising income from the totalisator tax. With the country equally divided, Ward sought a compromise. Rather than ban gambling, he would confine it to the racecourse.

So control, not prohibition, was the object of the Gaming and Lotteries Amendment Bill he introduced in November 1907. Under the Bill tote shops were to be closed and sanctions against street and sports ground gambling toughened. Gaming houses – now defined to include clubs and premises where lotteries were held – were to be banned. Racing clubs were barred from accepting bets by telephone or telegraph, and newspapers would not be permitted to publish race dividends. And to eliminate large pay outs, recently introduced doubles totalisators would be banned. These proposals were restrictive, but the totalisator was allowed to survive. So were bookmakers, whose legal status was confirmed for the first time since 1881. Ward argued that reputable bookmakers should be licensed to work on-course 'under well defined conditions'.[88]

The new Gaming and Lotteries Amendment Act, the most significant gaming law since 1881, came into force on 25 November 1907. For Baptists and other Christian reformers these reforms did not go far enough. J.J. North in the *Baptist* and Assembly delegates lambasted the proposals as lame and insufficient. What was needed was the

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[85] *NZB*, October 1906, 373.
[86] Baptist Yearbook, 1906-1907, 36-37.
[87] *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 2 May 1908, 4.
[88] NZPD, 1907, vol. 142, 1163.

complete abolition of the 'tote' and the 'bookie'.[89] Their convictions were reinforced by the obvious failure of Ward's compromise solution. The law required that all bookmakers be licensed. But within months Police Commissioner Dinnie was complaining that clubs were not being scrupulous enough in checking the character or fitness of bookmakers applying to hold their licences, with the result that there were too many of them, mostly 'totally unfit'.[90] In the absence of competition from legal off-course betting, unlicensed bookmakers positively thrived. Avoiding licence fees, they could beat both the 'tote' and their licensed counterparts by offering better odds.

Initially, Ward was reluctant to take further action. But his inaction was challenged dramatically in June 1910. When sentencing two men for stealing from their employers to pay gambling debts, Auckland Supreme Court judge, Sir Frederick Chapman, described bookmakers as 'very close to the criminal class', criticised the government's refusal to outlaw bookmaking as 'one of the gravest mistakes the legislators of this Dominion have made', and called on the government to tighten the law 'for the sake of honesty and morality.'[91] This kind of judicial criticism of government policy was highly unusual. It provoked considerable excitement in the press and prompted renewed protests by opponents of gambling. The Wellington Citizens' Anti-Gambling League held rallies and distributed literature. On 19 July 1910 North, along with the Anglican Archbishop of Wellington (Bishop Wallis), Dr James Gibb, and Wellington mayor, T.W. Hislop, led a deputation of 300 to press Ward for the banning of bookmakers.[92] The Prime Minister admitted his 1907 legislation had failed to restrict bookmaking operations, and that the calling was now 'tarnished by rogues'.[93] Ward offered to put the issue to Parliament on a conscience vote, which he did on 21 July. Parliament voted by a massive 69 votes to four to end bookmaking.[94]

After further lobbying from North and the churches,[95] parliament passed the new Gaming Amendment Act in December 1910.

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[89] *NZB*, January 1908, 2; Baptist Yearbook, 1907-1908, 36.
[90] AJHR, 1909, H-16, 5.
[91] *Colonist*, 15 July 1910, 2.
[92] Michael Bassett, *Sir Joseph Ward: A Political Biography* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1993), 185; *NZB*, August 1910, 149.
[93] *Lyttelton Times* (LT), 19 July 1910, cited in Grant, *On a Roll*, 89.
[94] Bassett, *Ward*, 185.
[95] On behalf of the Wellington Anti-Gambling League, North issued a memo on the Premier's promised amendments to the Gaming Laws: *NZB*, September 1910, 168. At the annual Baptist Assembly in October he moved

Bookmaking became an offence on the racetrack as well as everywhere else. The new law also reduced the number of days a totalisator could operate annually to 250. Ward subsequently sought to have the totalisator banned as well. In the House he argued:

> It [horse racing] has without a doubt run riot, and in doing so has given increased opportunities for the misspending of money by individuals who cannot afford to spend the money they have, and, who in many cases, rob their employers … the whole matter calls for the interference of Parliament, in order that many of our women and young people may be saved from themselves.

Ward lost on a reasonably close conscience vote, the totalisator surviving by 40 votes to 32.[96] This was as close as the government ever came to outlawing the 'tote'. It was the high point for the anti-gambling movement in New Zealand. By 1911 gambling, if still widespread, was subjected to very tight regulation. Bookmakers were outlawed, other forms of public gambling were banned, and the totalisator, while it had survived – just – was now restricted. For Baptists and most Protestant churches, this represented a quite significant achievement against powerful vested interests.

The legislative success of the anti-gambling campaign can be attributed to several factors. For one thing, the cultural climate of the time was peculiarly hospitable to this sort of campaign. Widespread conceptions of New Zealand as a 'Better Britain' characterised by moral purity produced a press and parliament relatively receptive to anti-gambling advocates. Moreover, the Anglican Church excepted, the campaign was characterised by considerable unity of cause among the major Protestant denominations. In 1900, when the Presbyterian Church wrote to the Baptist Union suggesting united action against gambling, the Baptist Union President (Joseph Clark) and Secretary (A.H. Collins) both 'warmly commended' the proposal.[97] Baptists joined forced with other denominations in organising Anti-Gambling Leagues[98] and in the work of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU), which from 1902 took a leading role in the push to ban the totalisator.[99] Baptist

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a resolution reminding the government of the extreme urgency for anti-gambling legislation in the current parliamentary session: *NZB*, November 1910, 204; Baptist Yearbook, 1910-1911, 20.

[96] NZPD, 1910, vol. 149, 812.

[97] *NZB*, September 1900, 135.

[98] Grant, *On a Roll*, 78; *NZB*, September 1898, 129.

[99] In 1902 the WCTU established a special Anti-Gambling Department, with Agnes Macalister as its first superintendent.

ministers shared platforms with other ministers on public platforms, in compiling petitions, and in leading protest delegations.[100] In 1905, for example, the Baptist Union Executive obtained unanimous support from other evangelical churches for representations to the Press Association and the Newspaper Proprietors' Association regarding the need to suppress the publication of Tattersall's results and betting odds. In the face of this united protest a number of proprietors acceded to their request.[101]

In addition to this, the anti-gambling movement was blessed with some remarkably driven and capable leaders in the likes of Rutherford Waddell, James Gibb, Agnes Macalister and – among the Baptists – J.J. North. When, in 1901, Charles Dallaston declared in the *Baptist* that gambling 'is a many-headed Hydra' he went on to say that 'some Hercules is needed to cut off its ever-growing heads'.[102] In North the Baptists found their Hercules. On completion of his ministry in Wellington in 1913, the city's Anti-Gambling League pronounced that he 'had done more than any other man to bring about legislation for the suppression of the gambling evil.'[103] On platforms, from pulpits, in the press and before parliamentary representatives, North proved himself a truculent, articulate, courageous and energetic opponent of gambling. His fiery polemics and popular, pungent style of preaching and writing attracted a loyal audience.[104] It is no coincidence that Wellington and Christchurch both became centres of anti-gambling agitation during his pastorates in those cities.[105] He is, said Archdeacon P.B. Haggitt of Christchurch, 'a very efficient watchdog in our city. He has a very effective bark…and a bite! He can't help it. He's a sort of Christian Elijah.'[106]

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[100] E.g. *NZB*, December 1898, 186.
[101] Baptist Yearbook, 1904-1905, 45; 1905-1906, 32.
[102] 'The Gambling Evil', *NZB*, August 1901, 114-15.
[103] *NZB*, March 1913, 46.
[104] The Wellington Ministers' Association recognised North's public influence: 'Eager and alert in the vindication of all that makes for righteousness, fearless in the condemnation of all occasions of public sin and shame, he has with virile speech and facile pen acquitted himself as a man valiant for the truth, and again and again laid the community under a debt of gratitude for his timely and outspoken utterances.' *NZB*, January 1913, 6.
[105] Grant, *On a Roll*, 78-79.
[106] Batts and MacLeod, *J.J. North*, 47.

Martin Sutherland and Laurie Guy have commented, 'It is a feature of the history of New Zealand Baptists that dominant personalities have often had a determinant impact on the whole group. This is perhaps a natural outworking of being a denomination of small numbers and intimate relationships.'[107] North was certainly a dominant personality. As a successful and forceful minister, editor of the *Baptist* for thirty-three years (1916-1948) and first principal of the Baptist Theological College (1924-1945), he was the most prominent Baptist in the first part of the century,[108] and arguably the most influential leader in the history of the Baptist churches in New Zealand.[109] On this issue of gambling he had a 'determinant impact' on Baptist attitudes. He wrote articles in the *Baptist* magazine. He engineered petitions. He led delegations. He moved most Assembly resolutions against gambling. Within the Baptist movement North played a key role in mobilising its members against gambling.

Fighting a Losing Battle

But 1910 proved to be a watershed, the end of an era. If the preceding decades had witnessed a vigorous evangelical offensive against gambling, the succeeding years were marked more by desperate defence. From the First World War onwards Protestants fought a losing battle as the government progressively untightened what had become a very strict regulatory regime.

There were several reasons for this shift in government attitude. One major factor in the liberalisation of gambling laws after 1910 was the acute need for funds during the military and economic crises that subsequently engulfed the nation. After the outbreak of World War One in August 1914, the number of lotteries, both legal and illegal, increased dramatically as people sought to raise money quickly for the war effort and for the families of war victims. The police tended not to prosecute

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[107] Laurie Guy and Martin Sutherland, 'Leadership: The New Zealand Experience since the 1960s', in *Leadership and Baptist Church Governance*, ed. Graeme Chatfield (Eastwood NSW: Morling Press, 2005), 134-46 at 140.
[108] Brian Smith, 'New Zealand Baptists and the "Labour Question"', *New Zealand Journal of Baptist Research* (NZJBR) 4 (October 1999): 23-40 at 33.
[109] Barry Gustafson, 'Intervention in the Public Square: Baptists and Politics in New Zealand 1916-1919', *Bulletin of the New Zealand Baptist Historical Society* 8 (1980): 2-7 at 4.

these lottery operators.[110] In October 1915 the government passed legislation which dispensed with the prize restrictions for lotteries that were organised to raise 'patriotic funds'. This simply regularised what was happening. But Baptists strongly denounced the raising of public money by lottery.[111] It was a 'great folly' to permit evil 'to be built into the fabric of a young and growing State'.[112]

The government's decision during the war to open the door to big prize lotteries for charitable purposes had ongoing repercussions after the war. Sports associations began to see the value of 'art unions' as quick and profitable money-earners. In 1924, for example, the Otago Rugby Football Union organised a lottery with £2000 in prizes which raised a then massive £30,000. Later, Canterbury's cricket and tennis associations combined to organise a Gigantic Art Union for a prize of £4000, the largest in the country so far.[113] Wartime lotteries for injured servicemen and their families might be one thing, but peacetime lotteries to enable sports – and racing – clubs to improve their facilities were quite another. The day after the tickets for the Gigantic Art Union went on sale in Christchurch, J.J. North and Bishop Julius led a deputation from the Council of Christian Congregations to the City Council to request a ban on the sale of lottery tickets on the streets. They failed, but their initiative hailed the beginning of a more widespread resistance.[114] When the Minister of Internal Affairs indicated his intention to limit the amounts that may be offered in future lottery prizes, Baptist Assembly expressed begrudging approval but urged that the best interests of the community would be served if the government stopped issuing permits for lotteries altogether.[115]

The government did not, however, comply. On 16 May 1929 Cabinet revoked the ban on the bigger 'gold nugget' art unions and, as a consequence, the £500 prize restriction for that kind of lottery.[116] North castigated the government for letting loose on the community again the plague of art unions for gold nuggets.[117] By choosing to license large scale lotteries the Minister of Internal Affairs had 'pointed … a dagger at

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[110] Grant, *On a Roll,* 172.
[111] *NZB*, November 1915, 204.
[112] *NZB*, October 1916, 181-2.
[113] Grant, *On a Roll,* 176.
[114] Ibid., 176-7.
[115] *NZB*, November 1925, 291.
[116] Grant, *On a Roll*, 180.
[117] *NZB*, August 1929, 226-7.

the heart of his own nation'.[118] North was resolutely opposed to lotteries in any form, even to fund charitable purposes during the Great Depression.[119] According to him the doctors who launched a public lottery to aid cancer research had 'betrayed the nation'.[120] His fellow Baptists, it seemed, agreed. The 1931 Assembly protested 'unanimously and emphatically' against the government's increasing use of lotteries. They were a 'wanton extravagance' economically and a grave 'menace' morally. Indeed, 'the better the object of a lottery, the worse was its effect on the community.'[121]

As the Depression deepened, an increasing number of politicians advocated a state lottery comparable to those run overseas. Proponents cited four main advantages. A state lottery would increase national revenue through taxation. It would fund public institutions like hospitals, and put the funding of relief for the distressed and of charitable and philanthropic organizations on a sounder footing. It would act as a disincentive for New Zealanders to participate in overseas lotteries, particularly if the rewards were comparable. And, finally, it would be a counter-attraction to the bookmaker.[122] In 1932 the government chose to formalize a New Zealand 'Art Union' lottery, with a single contractor running it on behalf of the state. 'The subtext was: if you can't beat it, nationalise it.'[123]

Predictably, the Baptist Union expressed 'its deep sense of the peril threatening the nation through the spread of the gambling habit … The licensing of lotteries is a retrograde step that impoverishes the nation.'[124] Indeed, the 1934 Assembly was 'convinced that the economic ills under which society groans are largely occasioned by the lust for unearned money,' a lust fed by lotteries.[125] When in April 1936 the Minister of Internal Affairs, Bill Parry, informed North, who was leading yet another Protestant deputation, that he planned to run a bigger state-run lottery to fund improvements to the health of the country's youth, the indefatigable North was outraged.[126] He roundly condemned Parry as

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[118] *NZB*, January 1931, 2; September 1931, 262.
[119] Andrew Picard, 'Church Responses to Social Issues in Depression New Zealand, 1933', NZJBR 9 (2004): 24-48 at 35.
[120] *NZB*, January 1931, 2; October 1931, 293.
[121] *NZB*, November 1931, 338.
[122] Grant, *On a Roll,* 199-200.
[123] Belich, *Paradise Reforged*, 317.
[124] *NZB*, November 1933, 335.
[125] *NZB*, November 1934, 340.
[126] *Press*, 13 April 1936, cited in Grant, *On a Roll,* 201.

the 'most dangerous man in New Zealand politics'.[127] The proposal would have, he warned, 'volcanic' consequences.[128] Freedom would die.[129] This kind of emotional, inflated rhetoric might catch headlines, but it was hardly persuasive.

The Second World War witnessed a further expansion in the use of lotteries to raise funds for the war. The *Baptist* warned that this fresh spate of gambling represented a dangerous 'enemy within our gates'.[130] The New Zealand government was 'betraying' its own people.[131] The 1941 Assembly protested against the 'present orgy of gambling', and demanded the abolition of all art unions and lotteries.[132] But these protests were to no avail. 'Lethargy', wrote J.J. North, 'lies like a fog about Parliament House'.[133] The liberalisation of gambling laws after 1910 was, then, partly due to the state's acute need for funds during times of economic and military crisis. Through the 'fog', parliament came to see the gambling industry as less a 'giant monster', and more a 'golden goose'.

There was another, less selfish reason why the government progressively loosened the regulatory regime around gambling. The 1910 Act, like its predecessors in 1881 and 1907, had clearly failed to suppress gambling.[134] Indeed, it had the opposite effect. Restricting legal betting to the racecourse served only to encourage larger race attendances, which led to improved facilities and bigger stakes. This, in turn, led to an expanded horse-breeding industry, more intense racing competition, greater publicity for racing as a spectacle, and the 'alarming spread of gambling throughout the land'.[135]

Although from January 1911 'bookies' were formally excluded from New Zealand society, they did not disappear. Quite the contrary. In the absence of competition from legal off-course betting, 'bookies' positively thrived. The ban on publication of tips and dividends in newspapers only served to make bookmaking more attractive, as clients sought advice and information that was not otherwise available. The

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[127] *NZB*, December 1936, 366.
[128] *NZB*, April 1939, 98.
[129] *NZB*, January 1939, 2.
[130] L.A. North, 'An Enemy within our Gates: Our Legislators Impugned', *NZB*, January 1941, 10.
[131] *NZB*, April 1942, 98.
[132] *NZB*, November 1941, 339.
[133] *NZB*, June 1942, 161.
[134] Grant, *On a Roll,* 93.
[135] *NZB*, November 1921, 130.

police found that arresting bookmakers was barely worth the effort. Very few clients were prepared to testify against them. And very few juries were prepared to convict, no matter how compelling the evidence.[136] When Justice Chapman, for example, told a Wellington jury in May 1921 that there was very strong evidence that the accused was bookmaking, and 'that they must remember their oath and not their sympathies', they ignored him. The accused was acquitted.[137]

The government could see that restrictions on legal gambling were actually playing into the hands of bookmakers. Consequently, it chose to enlarge gambling facilities by extending the number of race days, clubs and totalisator permits. In the *Baptist* magazine and at Baptist assemblies, J.J. North led Baptists in vigorous protests against the government's 'wicked' proposals.[138] North was forthright in his criticism of the government: 'A materialistic blight seems to rest upon Parliament. Moral idealism has been abandoned for expediency.'[139] Perhaps, though, it was less materialism than realism.

Aware that the law was simply not working, private members also tried to make it easier for punters to bet legally. Twice – in 1927 and in 1930 – they introduced bills to allow off-course betting facilities, a doubles totalisator and the publication of dividends. Both bills failed, with Baptist Assemblies protesting vigorously against these initiatives.[140] In 1933 the government proposed to employ the post office as a licensed gambling medium.[141] And in 1935 it considered a proposal to license bookmakers. 'We wonder,' wrote North, 'whether the public spirit that demanded social reform in other days is doing anything worse than hibernating. If it still lives, it is time it awoke and roared lustily'.[142] But however much North and his supporters might roar, their protests increasingly fell on deaf ears. As with the prohibition of alcohol, it was a losing battle.[143]

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136 *NZB*, March 1921, 26.
137 *Press*, 7 May, 27 June 1921; cited in Grant, *On a Roll*, 101.
138 Baptist Yearbook, 1912-1913, 26; *NZB*, November 1913, 206; Baptist Yearbook, 1920-1921, 25; *NZB*, September 1921, 101; *NZB*, November 1923, 224; November 1924, 249.
139 *NZB*, September 1923, 166.
140 *NZB*, November 1927, 331; November 1928, 332.
141 *NZB*, November 1933, 335.
142 *NZB*, August 1935, 230.
143 In a national referendum in 1949 some 405,000 adults voted for an off-course totalisator and doubles-betting; less than 193,000 were opposed. The Totalisator Agency Board (TAB) was established the following year, the first

The Weakness of Evangelical 'Agitation'

A third factor in the ultimate failure of the anti-gambling campaign was the particular nature and approach of the campaign itself. Baptists and other evangelical Protestants employed a crusading technique – or 'agitation' – popular in Britain during the anti-slavery campaign of the 1830s. By tapping into evangelical hostility to sin they could mobilise mass support over a sustained period. By their outspoken, passionate and widespread protests, they could impress the authorities with the strength of their movement and shift political will considerably. However, this kind of shrill evangelical 'moral crusade' had its weaknesses.[144]

Firstly, because they identified sin as the enemy against which they fought, Evangelicals tended to be absolutist and intransigent in their stance, unwilling to compromise. 'What compromise could there be with wickedness?'[145] Nigel Wright has observed this of British Baptists.[146] The same could be said of New Zealand Baptists in this campaign against gambling. Their demands were not open to negotiation. The complete eradication of this vice was the only conceivable option. So when, for example, parliament decided in 1894 to restrict totalisator licences to two-thirds of the number issued previously, this was not enough. The only acceptable outcome was the complete abolition of the 'tote'.[147] But

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organisation of its type in the world. In regards lotteries, the national 'Art Union' was replaced in 1961 by a new £30,000 'Golden Kiwi' lottery, upgraded in 1964 to the 'Golden Kiwi Mammoth'. In 1973 the lottery chief was empowered to increase substantially the first prize. *Lotto* began in 1987 and in 1995 the government finally allowed casinos into New Zealand. According to some researchers, this massive liberalisation of gambling laws contributed to 'the social disorganisation and social deprivation of many communities'. See Lorna Dyall, 'Gambling, Social Disorganisation and Deprivation', *International Journal of Mental Health and Addiction* 5:4 (October 2007): 320-330; Peter Adams, 'The History of Gambling in New Zealand', *Journal of Gambling Issues* 12 (December 2004): 1-15. <http://www.camh.net/egambling/archivepdf/JGI-Issue12/JGI-Issue12-adams.pdf> (11 January 2010)

[144] See David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1992), 136.

[145] David Bebbington, 'Evangelicals, Theology and Social Transformation', in *Movement for Change: Evangelical Perspectives on Social Transformation*, ed. David Hilborn (Carlisle, Cumbria: Paternoster, 2004), 1-19 at 9.

[146] Nigel Wright, *Challenge to Change: A Radical Agenda for Baptists* (Eastbourne: Kingsway Publications, 1991), 199.

[147] *NZB*, December 1895, 188.

with this strict absolutist stance Baptists could come across as extreme and unreasonable. And their demand that all New Zealanders abstain completely from gambling alienated potential allies. This was obvious in the Catholic lotteries controversy of 1906. The editor of the *Tablet* indicated that Catholics were 'in full sympathy with any crusade, based on right principles and methods, against the sins and excesses of the gambling habit'.[148] But he was ultimately forced by North and his colleagues to resist their campaign as a hectoring 'busy-body attack' upon the Catholic Church. The 'extreme attitude' of Baptist anti-gambling campaigners 'aroused the antagonism of moderate people'.[149] It alienated potential allies.

A second weakness of evangelical mass movements was their tendency towards clamour and a bellicose tone. David Bebbington observes, 'There is a practical disadvantage in clamour, for it stiffens resistance among opponents. Denunciation is a poor way of making allies.'[150] Leading New Zealand Baptists, driven as they were by a powerful sense that they were fighting the very forces of wickedness, held nothing back in their criticism of opponents. The Catholic Church, in particular, came in for severe attack.[151] Baptist Assemblies[152] and leading Baptist spokesmen[153] frequently attacked the Catholic Church for encouraging the gambling spirit by its use of raffles and lotteries to raise funds. More often than not, North led the charge, as the Catholic lotteries controversy of 1906 demonstrated. He depicted the Roman Catholic Church as a shadowy accomplice standing behind or working in alliance with 'the gambling mania'.[154] It had 'taken this vicious misery under its official protection.'[155] For Baptists like North, Romanism was 'coupled' with gambling.[156] They were 'bedfellows'.[157] That church's policy on gambling showed how 'moribund' the Catholic conscience really was.[158] 'Rome … is everywhere a drag on social progress, an

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148 Cleary, *Catholic Church Lotteries*, 26-27.
149 Ibid., 49.
150 Bebbington, 'Evangelicals, Theology and Social Transformation', 10.
151 In Australia there was also a 'touch of sectarianism' to the Protestant campaign against gambling: Manley, *Woolloomooloo to 'Eternity'*, vol. 1, 368.
152 E.g. *NZB*, December 1890, 187.
153 E.g. *NZB*, January 1901, 10.
154 *NZB*, October 1916, 181-82; February 1917, 17; October 1925, 254.
155 *NZB*, December 1917, 177.
156 *NZB*, December 1945, 303.
157 *NZB*, November 1950, 322.
158 *NZB*, January 1920, 1; June 1931, 166.

incubus on the body politic.'[159] This scathing denunciation of Catholicism and Catholic attitudes to gambling might have aroused some Protestants, but it was ultimately counterproductive. It also aroused the hostility of Catholics, and 'helped to explain why Catholics were reluctant to condemn gambling.'[160]

Thirdly, the evangelical style of social crusade was often marked by 'inflated rhetoric and exaggerated charges'.[161] To arouse widespread and outspoken protest, and so convince authorities of the strength of their movement, Evangelicals often deployed emotional and extreme rhetoric. J.J. North and his fellow Baptists were no exception. 'No vice,' they said, 'is meaner or more debasing than the vice of gambling.'[162] It is 'the caterpillar pest of the world',[163] 'the codlin moth in New Zealand life'.[164] It 'undoes the sinews of the mind',[165] 'prostitutes reason', encourages 'worship of the goddess 'chance', and violates 'the sacred rights of property'.[166] Baptist spokesmen tended to exaggerate the perils of gambling. It 'cuts away the roots of good citizenship by creating in the hearts of its devotees a distaste, and in advanced cases, a disgust, for honest toil. … gambling is the arch-enemy of industry in every form – physical, intellectual, social. Cut the nerve of industry, you make all progress impossible, and all decadence inevitable.'[167] 'Rascality cannot be suppressed when the gambling fiend is abroad.'[168] 'Nothing,' insisted North, 'so slackens the nerve of life and so subtly destroys industry and honesty and reality as gambling does.'[169] In expressing alarm at the increase in permits for art union lotteries, the Auckland Association of Baptist churches solemnly warned: 'If our people are thus encouraged to bow down at the altar of luck, the moral fibre of the people will be weakened and the foundations of our civilisation threatened.'[170]

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[159] J.J. North, *Roman Catholicism: 'Roots and Fruits'* (Napier: n.pub., 1922), 148.
[160] Grant, *On a Roll*, 79.
[161] Bebbington, 'Evangelicals, Theology and Social Transformation', 10.
[162] *NZB*, December 1913, 226.
[163] *NZB*, November 1933, 325.
[164] *NZB*, May 1946, 126.
[165] *NZB*, May 1941, 134.
[166] *NZB*, January 1941, 10.
[167] *NZB*, April 1917, 58.
[168] *NZB*, September 1929, 258.
[169] *NZB*, November 1933, 335.
[170] Edgar, *Auckland Baptist Association*, 54.

This kind of apocalyptic language and argument was not ultimately persuasive. Hot-hearted passion was no substitute for cool-headed logic, as one Baptist layman subsequently recognised:

> Gambling may, or may not be wrong in itself, but if we Baptists think it is, then please let us put forward some valid, sensible arguments against it, instead of the 'airy fairy' platitudes we sometimes hear from the pulpit. How could any intelligent man really believe that the purchase of a 5 cent raffle ticket from a boy scout is the first step on a downward path to degradation? … We might easily convince an addict that moderation would be to his benefit – we will never convince a man who … sometimes buys a savings bond or a raffle ticket, that he is committing a sin by so doing.[171]

What Baptists needed to do was enter the public square with compelling arguments to win the debate about what was best for the common good. This they did not do. They tried, for the most part, to force their convictions on their fellow citizens through political clamour and experienced what their forbears – Radicals and Dissenters – had insisted: moral convictions could not be forced on people.

Perhaps, then, the main reason for the unraveling of regulation was the simple fact that the majority of the population – and their parliamentary representatives – were not ultimately persuaded that gambling was always and everywhere wrong – wrong 'in toto'. In 1946 the Royal Commission on Gaming and Racing recommended off-course totalisator betting and the raffling of any goods, provided it was not for private gain. The Commissioners reasoned that gambling was a matter of personal conscience and not the business of the state: 'History,' they said, 'is redolent with examples of the unwisdom of the State attempting to adopt repressive or coercive measures in respect of matters of private conduct in opposition to the personal convictions of numerous sections of the community.'[172]

Prior to World War One, however, the State was willing to attempt such coercive measures. On a legislative level, Protestant churches achieved remarkable success in their fight against gambling. United by powerful evangelical impulses, inspired – sometimes cajoled – by gifted leaders like J.J. North, and assisted by a cultural climate hospitable to this kind of campaign, Baptists fought a sustained and passionate battle against the 'many-headed Hydra'. But the evangelical

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[171] L.E. Treliving, *NZB*, December 1970, 6-7.
[172] Grant, *On a Roll*, 127.

style of crusade employed by many Baptists, while able to raise mass support and shift political will, was not effective in the long term. As often as heads were cut off, they seemed to grow back. Slowly policy makers embraced the view that careful regulation to protect the most vulnerable was a better strategy than absolute condemnation and blanket prohibitions.[173]

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[173] For discussion of a similar trajectory in Britain see Rachel Lampard, 'Church Responses to Gambling', *Political Theology* 5:2 (2004) 219-230 at 225.