THE POLITICS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

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ABSTRACT

The thesis analyses the development of religious education in South Australia. The analysis is political, historical and sociological. It is divided into three major chapters, one which covers the period up to the 1940 Education Act, the second which concentrates on the post-1940 changes leading to the introduction of religious education into South Australian schools in 1975, and a third which offers a theory with which to assess the significance of the legislative and educational changes. Two other short chapters provide an introduction, including a brief survey of the literature, and a conclusion.

The pre-1940 chapter introduces two arguments: firstly, that from its colonial beginning, the history of South Australian education has been overtly and closely tied to a Christian tradition of social morality and work ethics, and secondly, that while Christianity has provided a dominant source of social, occupational and educational theory, that dominance has not been attained without a struggle. Indeed, the sheer battle to survive as a significant influence has ensured that the various churches have had to modify some of their stands, seek unlikely alliances, defer some of their goals and re-orient some of their practice - in short, to play politics not only with the state but also amongst themselves.

These arguments summarise the development of religious education in this state - the stolid legislative progress, the intense inter-denominational conflicts (over such issues as, the use of the Bible as a text-book in schools, the involvement of the clergy in the school time-table) - and the precarious political balance in which the various churches co-existed, mindful of their role in helping to maintain 'order' and 'unity' in a state undergoing significant economic developments. The latter thesis is predicated on the theory that the production of a work-force willing and able to share and endorse the hegemonic values of the day is a function of education.

The post-1940 chapter extends the argument that while Christian ethics

remained at least the implicit basis of schooling, the explicit programmes of religious instruction continued to pose problems for the different denominations. It has three points of focus:

(a) the period 1940-1969, during which time church membership and attendance declined and religious instruction became unworkable,

(b) the strategy adopted in response to this by the protagonists of religious education, and

(c) the counter-strategy used during the same period by their opponents.

In tracing the story of the introduction of religious education, I note that its implementation was assisted by the composition of the Steinle Committee, the availability of interstate and overseas reports on religious education, the sympathetic stance of the Education Department, the Education Minister and the Premier, denominational unity on the question of religious education and, I shall argue, a concern amongst a significant proportion of people in this state that social morality (including the work ethic) was under some threat. In examining the strategy adopted by the opponents of religious education, I suggest that while they had limited overt backing, they were able to articulate the interests of a sizable minority and, in fact, provide an effective counter to the pro-religious position.

The essence of the argument in this chapter will be that the various denominations experienced difficulty in maintaining the struggle to influence social values and that, in order to survive, the Methodist Church especially (and the others, to a lesser extent) used whatever resources they could muster in an attempt to regain their influence. Those resources included some, which had been utilized prior to 1940, namely, public displays of political strength and clandestine schemes of political intrigue; as well, they sought to broaden their base of influence by getting the state and alternative socio-political movements to take up their causes.

The 'theory' chapter examines the role which christianity plays in an industrial, capitalist society; I note the limited work done in Australia

on this question and then compare the Marxist and pluralist theories of religious influence. My conclusion is that, taken alone, neither is an adequate explanation. Instead, I suggest that, while generally, christianity tends to work in favour of 'order' and 'unity' in an economic, political and social sense and that this tendency is of some advantage to the state, in detail, the various churches compete in educational, social and political conflicts and vary their strategies to suit the strength or weakness of their respective position in the denominational battle. I further argue that since both the 'state' and the 'churches' operate in a society in which economic and ideological factors tend to have a dominant influence, then both institutions use each other when it is expedient to do so; and, therefore, in essence, tend to rely on each other for their respective economic and ideological survival.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference has been made in the text itself.

Signed _____

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CHAPTER I

Religious education has been a political issue in South Australia since 1836. Indeed, the matter of religion in the colony was a significant factor in political discussion in Britain even before its establishment.[1] The South Australia Act of 1834, which formally established the colony, dealt with the Church-State debate raging in Britain at that time. That debate, of whether the Church should be subordinate to the State, was one of the major issues affecting the type of colony which would develop, while the interest which Non-conformists and evangelical dissenters displayed in founding the colony was largely born of the prospect of having no establishment church being given a privileged position. Thus, even though the Act did not reflect the views of the religious voluntaryists, in the sense that it legally recognised the Anglican Church as the expected pre-eminent Church in the colony[2], it did set the scene for a continuing political battle over the type of religious influence which should sustain educational ideology in the province. That battle had not ceased a century and a half later.

The specific themes which the religious education issue has thrown up can be divided into two broad categories, educational and administrative, both of which overlap and both of which represent arenas of political conflict.[3] The educational themes include - 'secular' education, especially its definitional nature; moral education, especially its identification with religion and religious claims; and indoctrination, both with regard

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(1) D. Pike, 'Social and Religious Background to the Foundation of South Australia', M.A. Thesis, University of Adelaide, 1950.

(2) The Act did not actually establish the Church of England in the colony but it did give the Governor power to "appoint ... chaplains and clergymen of the Established Church of England or Scotland ...", see R. Gouttman, 'The Moulding of a Society. A Plan for Schools', seminar paper (unpublished), 1967, p.3.

(3) This categorisation follows Almond and Woolcock in their preface to The Religious Education Controversy, South Australia, 1974-75, Murray Park Sources in the History of South Australian Education no.7, Murray Park College of Advanced Education, 1976.

to curricula content and teacher-neutrality. The administrative themes include - the broad question of the Church-State relationship including the link between law and religious education and its complimentary issue of conscientous objection; and curricula development, particularly in relation to the participatory role played by parents, politicians, academics, education department administrators, churches and other pressure groups. Out of a consideration of these themes emanate political questions of conspiracy, expediency, rhetoric and hegemony. To enable these political questions to be given both retrospective distance as well as analytical breadth, the issue of religious education in this thesis will be treated historically and sociologically. My aim is to preserve and illustrate the rich history which religious education in this state has endured as well as to unravel some of the contentious political struggles which have been a part of that history. While the major focus will be directed toward the 1975 introduction of a new 'Religious Education' course into state schools, this particular controversy can serve as a case-study for the broader issues mentioned above.

The controversial nature of religious education is well illustrated by the title given to a short article in a 1979 issue of the South Australian Teachers Journal.[4] Written by the Co-ordinator of the Religious Education Project Team, Alan Ninnes, the title asks 'Why religious education in schools?' That such a question is still being posed, five years after the course was introduced into state schools, almost 50 years after religious instruction was first formally provided within the state school time-table, and almost 150 years after the whole issue was raised with respect to South Australian schooling, is indicative of the rather precarious position which the course holds in the existing curriculum. Indeed, the whole article represents a very defensive and, at times, self-conscious plea to teachers on the value of the course: for example, the rather supplicating justification that

> "Religious education is a program, based on sound educational philosophy, directed toward specific educational needs and presented in an open, objective manner ... religious education as a program to enlighten rather than to instruct, to educate rather than indoctrinate, deserves consideration by all schools."[5]

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(4) A. Ninnes, 'Why religious education in schools?', South Australian Teachers Journal, February 14, 1979, p.16.

(5) ibid.

In addition, the broad definition of religion as

> "a system of beliefs, practices and experiences through which people find meaning and purpose for life"

tends to emphasize the retreat which defenders of the course have had to make to sustain as an educationally-important study. Who could argue that a subject so defined was not educationally essential?

The Ninnes article further indicates the contentious nature of religious education by reiterating the questions which have traditionally been aimed at it. Thus, the opening paragraph poses that

> "The title of this article can be interpreted in a number of ways. It might be a question of why religious education and not Christian education or more specifically denominational education? Or it might mean why religious education and why not religious instruction? Or it could simply be, why have religious education at all in a secular institution?"[6]

Perhaps these questions are perennial; certainly they have not been resolved during a century and a half of religious debate in South Australia.

The following chapters trace that debate, indicating its legislative ramifications (especially the 1940 and the 1972-74 Education Acts), its party-political utilization, its educational function and its economic-political context. Chapter Two covers the period up to 1940 when the clergy were first allowed to teach Religious Instruction during normal school-time in state schools. Chapter Three deals with the aftermath of that legislative change, culminating in the decision to introduce Religious Education into state schools by reforming the 1972-1974 Education Act. Both these chapters are historically orientated, concentrating on the conflicts over time which the issue of 'religious education' generated and, therefore, seeking to explain the political manoeuvres as more than just a development of ideas. The intellectual history is not ignored but it is grounded in the economic and social circumstances from which the political struggles emanated. Chapter Four, while not opting for a completely a-historical approach, offers a theoretical framework with which to explain and assess the educational and legislative changes

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(6) ibid..

associated with the 'religious education' issue. This theory draws heavily on a sociological treatment of the role of religion in a capitalist economy and aims to explain the conflicts in terms of a constant (though not even or regular) political struggle. In other words, I seek to avoid observing the battles surrounding the religious education issue as being isolated and insular and instead, attempt to place them within a broader rationale where their 'cut and thrust' does not ignore their social and political influences.

It is important to concentrate on a wider context if only to deal with the extravagent claims made on behalf of religious education. For example, T.A. Priest, in listing seven justifications for teaching religious instruction in state schools argued that, inter alia, religion provided social stability, moral training and personal life objectives as well as the basis for democracy, the brotherhood of man, international and intercultural understanding.[7] If religion is such a powerful cultural determinant then its degree of influence as well as its nature deserves to be assessed as a hegemonic force in our society. If it is not, then an explanation for the chasm between its rhetoric and its reality deserves equal assessment. In either case, religion does teach that certain social principles and goals should provide guidelines for justice and other political concepts and it is these political guidelines which form the interest of this thesis.

A second claim made on behalf of religious people also deserves attention.

> "It is sometimes naively assumed that organised interventions by Christians in politics are necessarily beneficial because they are Christian by intent"[8], (emphasis added)

wrote Leicester Webb indicating the critical stance that should be applied to any assessment of religious politics.

But it is not just the claims made by religious supporters which are

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(7) T.A. Priest, 'Religious instruction in state schools', The Forum of Education, Vol.15, April, 1957.

(8) L. Webb, 'Churches and the Australian community', Melbourne Studies in Education, 1958-1959, p.97.

extravagent or which invite broad analysis. The following provocative statements are examples.

> "Religion becomes the compensation for the disprivileged status one occupies in life or it is the construct of the socially weak who fight the strong by producing values such as humility and self-sacrifice."[9]
>
> "Religion has not taken a spectacular part in our past."[10]
>
> "...there have been two great and decisive ideological conflicts peculiar to Australian history, and both have centred on the role of religion - in education, and in politics. Other uniquely Australian issues have come and gone. Only these have endured, and only these can match the divisive power of the other great dispute, labour versus capital ... religion and anti-religion, sectarianism and denominationalism lie at the core of Australian life and provide a key vital to our historical understanding."[11]

Thus, by avoiding a narrow analysis of church politics, these often grand and occasionally damning claims can be more rigorously assessed. However, there are theoretical problems involved in treating religion broadly. One of the major difficulties is the extent to which any one sect or denomination can be classified as 'homogeneous'. Most religions, in fact, are quite heterogeneous both in a social and an ideological sense. For example, Roman Catholicism is, in reality, composed of a number of different 'religions': one which caters for intellectuals, another which caters for less-educated or un-educated people, another which caters for Catholics who rarely attend Mass, another for devout, practising Catholics etc. In other words, within the one religion there are distinct diversities which could be distinguished by their more-or-less adherence to 'popular' Catholicism, 'philosophical' Catholicism and 'strict' Catholicism. A further diversity

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(9) H. Mol, Christianity in Chains, Thomas Nelson (Aust) Ltd., Sydney, 1969, pp.41-42.

(10) Statement by J.D. Bollen made in 'Religion in Australian society. An historian's view', a Leigh College Open Lecture, 1973, quoted by Patrick O'Farrell, 'Writing the general history of Australian religion', Journal of Religious History, Vol.9, No.1, 1976, p.68.

(11) Patrick O'Farrell, ibid., pp.70-71.

can be observed regarding the political thrust of different groups of, say, Roman Catholics; the radical Catholics tend to hold quite contradictory attitudes towards theology as well as politics and, therefore, to lump both or all groups under the one faith in any theoretical sense, would be to ignore the complexity of the religion and to misjudge the political significance of much of its theological, social and educational work.

This thesis attempts to acknowledge the diversity which characterises the Australian religions by observing the role which factions have played in the struggle to teach religion in state schools. In particular, the progressive faction within the Methodist Church receives detailed observation since it was this group which was influential in re-directing the attention of the Methodists toward various social and educational issues during the late sixties and early seventies in South Australia.

A danger inherent in tracing the factional battles and indeed, in tracing any political struggle, is to resort to a raw theory of conspiracy to explain the successful manoeuvres of one particular protagonist. This thesis aims to avoid such a theory by deliberately focussing on the wider ramifications of struggle although without neglecting the specific aspects of intrigue which inevitably constitute such struggles.

I accept Laidler's definition of conspiracy -

> "conscious, co-ordinated, covert action with the intention of bringing about a mutually desired result"[12]

as applied to two groups and I note his other observation that

> "the purpose of collusion is to ensure that things do not 'just happen', but rather to give the course of events a kick in the right direction. Conspiratorial actions are facilitated both by informal networks and more formal organisations"[13]

However, as Laidler admits, conspiracies, by their secretive nature, are extremely difficult to explain in any concrete sense and, in any case,

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(12) Paul Laidler, 'The fall of Kelvin ... and the return of the conspiracy theory', Intervention, No.7, October, 1976, p.77.

(13) ibid., pp.80-81.

even if convincing evidence is unfolded one need not interpret specific cabalistic actions as being isolated or unrelated to a broader exercise of political pressure or influence. My view is that to treat certain 'underhand' behaviour as conspiratorial is to be too crude. Instead, I prefer to locate such behaviour within a total power struggle although, at the same time, to concede that certain networks do exist, whereby certain expressions of interest can be facilitated. In prefering a less crude approach I am intending to avoid giving the wrong emphasis to alleged conspiracies when they are used to explain controversial pieces of legislation, to the extent that they begin to look like 'under-world' aberrations and, therefore, quite apart from the normal workings of political organisation. In other words, I am conceding that conspiratorial behaviour occurs but that it is best analysed as an expression of hegemonic power rather than as an example of extra-ordinary, isolated politicking.[14] This approach will be adopted in my analysis of the legislative changes to the Education Acts of 1940 and 1972-1974.

A further problem for the student of religion and one which I have tended to ignore is the status of religion vis-a-vis knowledge. While this problem is largely an epistemological and philosophical one and does not often directly encroach upon the study of religious politics, never-the-less, it deserves at least brief consideration since it represents the basis of intellectual religious debate. The questions are easy to pose. If

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(14) C.F. Laidler who wrote

> "Conspiracies occur at all levels of capitalist rule. There is no single monolithic conspiracy. If an event appears to be the result of a conspiracy, it is necessary to locate the particular individuals and organisations behind it. A conspiracy theory should not attempt to replace a class analysis of power by going outside it and coming up with an external, isolated conspiracy. The conspiracies take place within the capitalist class and its state apparatus."

ibid., p.82, Laidler's article was a response to Kelvin Rowley, 'The fall of Labor ... and the return of the 1955 Chiko Roll', Intervention, No.6, June, 1976, in which Rowley explained the sacking of the Whitlam Government in 1975 in conspirational terms. Rowley answered Laidler in Intervention, No.8, March, 1977 in a short rejoinder, 'Marxism and conspiracy theories: a reply to Paul Laidler'.

religion is fundamentally to do with 'faith', then, in what sense can it be regarded as 'objective knowledge'? If religion assumes that 'scripture' is 'God's word', then does this introduce a notion of irrationality since, if there is no God then religious knowledge is simply faith and inspiration? This doubtful status which religious knowledge posesses also begs the question of indoctrination. While there is no doubt that religion has a long and sustained tradition of knowledge and that it has been and still is intellectually important to many people, there is legitimate suspicion about both the rationality of the methodology of understanding religion and about the intention and therefore the consequences of teaching it. Put differently, what are the methods for appraising the truth or falsity of religious claims? Is religion just re-interpreting secular knowledge or is there some area of understanding which is the sole preserve of religion?

The answers are difficult since a definitive analysis of the teaching of 'religious knowledge' ought to take in account both the moral acceptability of such education and also the rationality of its methodology and, for many people, that may present an un-easy contradiction. In any case, this thesis does not attempt to resolve the issue of the status of 'religious knowledge' although chapter four does 'dabble' with it.

As previously mentioned the thrust of this thesis is historical and sociological rather than philosophical although, of course, the deliniation of all three approaches cannot and should not be clearly or simply made in any political study. Sadly, the study of religion in Australia has tended to be very narrow. It has generally been purely educational or purely philosophical or purely sociological or purely historical and, where the theme has been political, the interest has tended to be party politics or internal church politics. Furthermore, all of the approaches, as well as being narrow have usually been characterised by a shallowness which has had the effect of denying both the complex development of religion in Australia and also the complex influence which people's religions have had on morality, education, work and politics in this country.

For example, the educationally-orientated studies have rarely broadened beyond the issues of whether there should be religious instruction in state schools, whether such courses indoctrinate or not and to what extent

such courses constitute moral education.[15] A deep examination of the extent to which 'christian' values permeate all school curricula has not occurred; an analysis of the role of churches and other religious pressure groups in influencing curricula has also been ignored; no work on the structural links between the 'christian' values taught at school and the job attitudes demanded by industry has been forthcoming. In fact the only political interest which religious education writers have shown has been in the area of public funding of private schools and colleges and much of that has been crude, partisan politicking.[16]

Amongst the literature which takes a philosophical approach, the attention tends to be concentrated around such issues as moral responsibility, indoctrination, the 'conscience' and free will. Australian debates rarely tackle such themes as the existence of 'God', truth, evil or justice and, therefore, the bulk of the intellectual input of religious philosophy has been from abroad: the fact that our religious philosophers have been rather parochical has probably led to the sparse development of religious studies faculties in Australian tertiary institutions.[17]

In the area of religious sociology, some very extensive work has been done by Mol.[18] He has attempted to cover the relation between religion and education and occupation in this country although his analysis is largely a statistical one.[19] The data which Mol and others have used either come from Census compilation, private surveys or opinion polls. The Census,

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(15) The Journal of Christian Education is a representative example.

(16) J.S. Gregory, Church and State, Cassell, Melbourne, 1973, is somewhat exceptional to this generalisation.

(17) R. Campbell, 'The character of Australian religion', Meanjin Quarterly, Winter Issue, Vol.36, No.2, March, 1974, p.179.

(18) See Bibliography, p.173for a list of his publications.

(19) His book, Christianity in Chains, attempts a broader analysis. Incidentally, this study, which was not published until 1969, was the first sociological interpretation of religion in Australia. It, and his later book, Religion in Australia: a sociological investigation, remain the only comprehensive sociological studies of religion in this country.
N.B. Data for the earlier book ~~was~~ were reproduced in the latter.

of course, merely asks the voluntary question of religious (or denominational) adherence and, consequently, provides no range of conviction. The opinion polls are almost as crude. For example, an AGE POLL taken in 1974 asked 2,000 respondents about the degree of "faith" that they had in the church, God and seven other institutions or concepts.[20] From the results, the following claims were made: that churches are less popular than God, that the medical profession is more popular than either, that women are more inclined than men to trust God and the church, that more highly educated people are more sceptical of both God and the church, that Liberal voters have a greater trust in God and the church than have Labor voters, that young people are more sceptical of both than are older people, that Catholics have a higher level of faith in God and the church than have other religious groups. Thus, only the most banal correlations and conclusions can be made. Private surveys can be more useful depending on the use for which it is intended and, obviously on the detail and extent of the questionnaire(s) and sample(s). Some which have been conducted by particular denominations to assess their own recruiting campaigns are of limited use[21] but others such as Mol's late 1960s study[22] invite wider application. Some surveys on religious education in schools have been useful, but naturally, only in a restricted sense.[23] In summary, the sociology of religion in Australia is a very new field of academic enquiry and still awaits an analysis of the Berger[24] or Weber[25] quality.

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(20) The Age, April 15, 1974. The nine "areas of belief" were, in order, the church, the medical profession, governments in general, the justice of the law, astrology, the honesty of the average person, newspapers, science and God.

(21) e.g. Uniting Church survey, The Advertiser, June 9, 1978, p.6.

(22) H. Mol, Religion in Australia: a sociological investigation, Nelson, Melbourne, 1971.

(23) e.g. A.W. Black, 'An investigation into pupil's attitudes to religious education in government schools', Journal of Christian Education, Vol.13, June, 1970, and J.F.C. Roulston, 'Attitudes of a sample of senior students to religious instruction in Queensland state high schools', Journal of Christian Education, Papers 53, September, 1975.

(24) Peter Berger, The Social Reality of Religion, Penguin Books, Great Britain, 1967, and The Noise of Solemn Assemblies, Christian Commitment and the Religious Establishment in America, Doubleday, New York, 1961.

(25) Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (translated by Talcott Parsons), Allen and Unwin, London, 1948 (reprint of 1930 edition).

Religious history falls into two categories. First, the centenary or other histories of specific churches and secondly, the broader documentation of religious establishment, growth, decline and influence. The former are always written by devotees and, therefore, suffer the absence of any external critique.[26] Amongst the latter, some very detailed work has been done, especially by Ely[27], Condon[28], and French[29]. While many of the good histories of religion in Australia tackle political themes, there has been no grappling with the political ideology of religion in their scholarship. This is not surprising since it has received attention in the United States[30] only very recently although not in any profound sense. The only other politico-religious studies have been of the influence which certain churches have had within political parties in Australia and these have tended to concentrate on the Catholic Church and the Australian Labor Party/Democratic Labor Party. While these issues are significant and the writers have generally covered them adequately[31], they are narrow in that they are almost entirely devoted to electoral

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(26) e.g. H.R. Taylor, The History of Churches of Christ in South Australia 1846-1959, The Church of Christ Evangelistic Union Inc., Adelaide, 1959.

(27) R. Ely, 'God, the Churches and the Making of the Australian Commonwealth', Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of Tasmania, 1975.

(28) B. Condon, 'Rhetoric and Reality; A Study of South Australia's Religious Instruction Act of 1940 and its Precursors', Unpublished Master of Education Thesis, Flinders University, 1978.

(29) M. French, 'Churches and Society in South Australia, 1890-1900; an exercise in reassurance', Unpublished M.A. Thesis, Flinders University, 1969.

(30) e.g. R. Craig, 'Ideology as United States religious history: the political economy of religion', Radical Religion, Vol.III, No.1, 1976, and L. Pritchard, 'Historiography of religion in the United States', Radical Religion, Vol.III, No.1, 1976.

(31) The definitive work on the A.L.P./D.L.P. links with the Catholic Church is Robert Murray, The Split Australian Labor in the Fifties, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1970, see also, P.L. Reynolds, The Democratic Labor Party, The Jacaranda Press, Queensland, 1974, pp.48-71.

and party politics.

While this political study of religious education attempts to avoid the narrow and shallow approaches which have tended to characterise previous literature on this theme, it does not aim to provide an adequate analysis of religion, per se, in Australia. However, within its modest terms of reference, it does seek to indicate a methodology which could be applied to a more ambitious study.

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces two arguments. The first is that from even its colonial beginning, the history of South Australian education has been overtly and closely tied to a christian tradition of social morality and work ethics. While this argument is unremarkable (since it is neither new nor amazing!) it is worth summarising the development of religious education to indicate that it was characterised by stolid legislative progress and by great inter-denominational conflict. In other words, in spite of the fundamental consensus surrounding the importance of a broadly christian approach to education, the specific use of the Bible as a text book and the involvement of the clergy in the state school time-table was the subject of immense debate.

I will suggest that the 1940 resolution of that conflict can be explained in terms of denominational politics and that the main reason why it took over half a century to resolve was that the absence of 'Religious Instruction' represented no major deficiency to the existing school curriculum. Because the state schools were already providing a basic christian education, the fact that no specific 'religion' was offered did not unduly alarm the legislators, employers and other 'moral guardians' of the state. Of course, individuals with a particular interest in religious teaching were forever ranting their anguish over the lack of an explicit 'religion' subject but their cries of lament tended to fall on unsympathetic ears since there was no threat to the basic christian ethos and, in addition, any alterations to the 'non-sectarian' nature of the existing curriculum would have necessarily produced a denominational advantage which could have upset the rather precarious balance which enabled the various churches to co-exist in relative harmony. To upset that political balance would have been to threaten the 'order' and 'unity' which was recognised as a pre-requisite to a state embarking on a program of economic development, of primary industry consolidation and secondary industry emergence. Implicit in this argument is that the production of a work-force willing and able to share and endorse the hegemonic values of the day is a function of education and that in South Australia, that education has been overtly christian.

The second argument of this chapter aims to qualify the first. While

christianity has provided a dominant source of social, occupational and educational theory, that dominance has not been attained without a struggle. Indeed, the sheer battle to survive as a significant influence has ensured that the various churches have had to modify some of their stands, seek unlikely alliances, defer some of their goals and re-orient some of their practice - in short, to play politics not only with the State but also amongst themselves.

Neither of the two arguments will be abandoned in subsequent chapters; in fact, the intention is that they will be substantiated. However, in this chapter they will be restricted to the period leading up to the 1940 Education Act when Religious Instruction was introduced. This legislation represents a significant educational and political climax since the issue of providing Religious Instruction in state schools had been canvassed in parliament, churches, schools, the press and at public meetings from the early colonial days.

While the Act itself, which gave clergy the right of entry to schools during normal school time, was the culmination of a long battle, it did not provide a resolution to the problem of declining church influence. That continuing problem is a subject of subsequent chapters.

However, in this chapter, I suggest why that problem could not be solved by a legislative change. Specifically, I outline the following argument. The colony was established as a 'paradise' for christian capitalists. To sustain that 'paradise', three areas of progress were identified as being essential and complementary; they were economic development (where individuals would be given the opportunity to own land and provide or gain employment), legislated freedoms (where the rights of religious and social dissent would be guarranteed) and educational facilities (where the skills and attitudes appropriate to working and living in a christian - capitalist society would be fostered). The maintenance of these three goals became an important function of the churches since they were able to provide much of the intellectual and emotional justification for insisting that only while all three goals were inextricably linked would the society maintain 'unity' and 'order' in its development. That being the scenario set by the 'founding fathers', I then argue that while the plans were, in their most general form, realized, in fact, the conflicts which

grew between the different denominations, coupled with the fluctuating fortunes of the State's economic development produced quite sharp divisions amongst legislators particularly in the matter of 'religion' in schools. I note that the established Anglican Church rapidly gained informal State dominance, that the Methodist dissenters were disproportionately able to influence educational and social legislation and that the Roman Catholics, even by the 1860s, felt alienated and under-represented amongst educational and parliamentary hierarchies. The balance between these three denominations became an important political factor both in the legislative process, in the industrial arena and in the education of the young. The Catholics, heavily out-numbered, chose to build their own schools, the Methodists concentrated their attention on Sunday Schools while the Anglicans tended to rely on the 'establishment', which was largely composed of their own flock. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the Methodists, especially, threw their weight against any relaxation of puritan social and moral legislation while the Catholics began to invest some representational energy into the Labour movement.

This jostling for political advantage kept the issue of 'religion in schools' a precarious parliamentary 'football' and it was not until 1940 when the Catholic Church had eventually gained substantial influence in the Labor Party and the Trade Union movement, and when the Methodists had consolidated some influence in the Education Department, that the Anglican 'establishment' were forced to concede that some legislative reform might serve the maintenance of 'order' and 'unity' in a society which was patently undergoing changes in moral standards, industrial requirements and political representation.

The end of this chapter does not mark the end of an era. The 1940 Education Act is certainly not the apex of the struggle. It simply denotes a stage of political harangueng which produced a significant legal alteration to a long-term source of debate and for that reason provides a convenient historical period with which a single chapter can deal. The struggle after 1940 continues in the following chapter.

While South Australia was founded expressly in terms of providing a haven for social and religious dissenters, there was never any doubt about the limits of dissension available to its settlers. Fundamentally, the dissent worked within the boundaries of Capitalism and Christianity and though debate, interpretation and confrontation over religion, work and education was continual and intense, it was always conducted within those two parameters. Indeed, the two were seen as necessarily linked and essential to the survival of the colony.[1] With commendable directness, the early planners and controllers of the colony wrote of the unique role which the religion-education-work axis would play in the development of their new, planned, 'utopian' society.[2] Education, as a formal process, was seen as the correct method of promoting both a Christian morality and a Capitalist morality amongst the poor and the rich in the colony. The poor would learn the appropriate social attitudes and the necessary behavioural skills to befit them for their place in the economic structure while the rich, also,

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(1) Of course, this link, in no way reflected a unique South Australian case: indeed it clearly represented a transplant of British experience. For the historical links between Capitalism and Christianity, see R.H. Tawney, Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: a historical study, (Murray, London, 1929). H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (ed) From Max Weber, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1948; esp. pp. 302-323; 331-340). Peter L. Berger, The Social Reality of Religion, (Penguin Books, Great Britain. 1967; esp. pp. 111-173). N.B. The latter two books deal with the United States but are not irrelevant.

(2) The term 'utopian' does not refer directly to the eighteenth century reformers, Robert Owen (1771-1858), Charles Fourier (1772-1837) and Etienne Cabet (1788-1858), who all planned socialist communities which would combine the facilities of urban life with the largely mythical idyllist features of a rural setting. The 'colonial paradise' in South Australia never even pretended to be socialist. Neither does the term refer to the anti-salvationist nature of Fourier's social experiment. The utopia which the early colonists perceived embraced the notions of egalitarianism and libertarianism which had underpinned the utopianism of Owen etc. but it removed them from a socialist framework and, instead, built them into a naive combination of liberal tolerance and puritan, parochial individualism. As Douglas Pike noted, their utopia was an "earthly paradise of perfected human nature" and while this remained no more than a dream, it did serve to direct the colonial society toward a limited utopia (if that is not a contradiction in terms) which applauded temperance, pity and thrift and which equated total moral fulfilment with ownership of land. See D. Pike, Paradise of Dissent; South Australia, 1829-1857, (Longmans, London, 1957; esp. pp. 494, 516).

had certain other manners, skills and attitudes to learn which would enable them to work within the defined political order as proposed by the colonial founders. Specifically, as the words of these men verify,

> "... A wise system of education beginning with infancy will tend in a high degree to promote domestic happiness among the poor in the colony: by this means habits of peace, order, industry and subordination, must be formed...."[3]

and further,

> "... It is extremely desirable that intelligence should be associated with wealth and its concomitant, power and influence. Ignorance in such connexions is not only an unseemly sight, but productive of extensive and profound evils of society...."[4]

the poor would learn to accept their lowly lot, their simple, disciplined position in an order based on harmony and cohesion while the rich would learn to accept their responsibilities of controlling the economic and social destiny of the colony, of owning its industry, of maintaining its stability, and of sustaining its intellectual and moral integrity. Thus, from the beginning, Christian education was established as one of the bases for the total development of South Australia.

Initially, the State did not provide money for education because, there was a certain lip service paid to the view that some dissenting religious sects might refuse to accept a state-funded education choice, and, more importantly, no money was available to be spent on education, anyway. However, by 1847, after early favourable economic development, the State was funding schools.[5]

Whether the State provided money for education was not significant as far

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(3) From A Plan for the Establishment of Schools in the New Colony of Australia, quoted by R. Gouttman in an unpublished seminar paper, "The Moulding of a Society: A Plan for Schools", p.12.

(4) Spoken by the Colonial Chaplain, Reverend Howard, at the first anniversary of the South Australian School Society in April, 1839, as quoted by R. Gouttman in an unpublished seminar paper, "The Politics of Education in South Australia, 1837-1847", p.19.

(5) See B. Condon, Rhetoric and Reality, A study of South Australia's Religious Instruction Act of 1940 and its precursors, Master of Education thesis, Flinders University, 1978, p.27.

as the kind of education was concerned. There was total agreement that education and religion and work were essentially linked and any school would teach the linked values of that 'trinity'. As George Fife Angus[6] stated, their virtues were beyond reproach;

> "To attempt in the present day to prove any lenghty or laboured arguments that an educated person is superior to any illiterate, a religious community more happy than a profane, or a virtuous society more esteemable than a vicious depraved one, would be to offer an unpardonable insult to the mind and judgement of any civilised audience."[7]

And he was only following the spirit of The Plan's aim,

> "To conduct Infant and British and Labour Schools in the Colony of South Australia and to render their influence to the advance of true religion, the promotion of civilisation and the general welfare of the inhabitants of the Colony... The whole of the schools to be conducted on the soundest principles of moral and religious education."[8]

Not the least way of providing a Christian education was the selection of teachers. They had to be of "good moral and religious principles"[9] to work alongside the Chaplain and other religious ministers in setting standards of morality and attitude. While there were problems of specific

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(6) Angus (1789-1879), usually regarded as one of the pioneering fathers of the colony, did in fact, provide most of the financial organisation which led to the settlement and in addition, invested a large amount of personal capital into its land and trade. He was inaugural chairman of the South Australian Company which was formed in 1835 to handle the land deals, shipping, agricultural and other industries in the early development of the colony. He had previously built a reputation as a shrewd businessman -a shipowner, a merchant, a banker (in 1833 he founded the National Provincial Bank of England)- and a devout Protestant (missionary and philanthrophic work in Honduras; he established the first Sunday School Union in the north of England). In 1850, he settled in South Australia having played a significant role in framing the colony's constitution before he migrated. Within months of arrival he had settled in Angaston and became a Legislative Councillor. He later formed the Bank of South Australia and the Union Bank of Australia. He retired from public life in 1866 and died in 1879. For details see E. Hodder, George Fife Angus - Father and Founder of South Australia,(Hodder and Stroughton, London, 1891), and A. Grenfell Price, Founders and Pioneers of South Australia, (Preece, Adelaide, 1929).

(7) Quoted by Gouttman, "The Moulding of a Society", p.11.

(8) Quoted from The Plan by Gouttman, ibid pp. 11-16.

(9) ibid., p.19.

interpretation, they were to use the Bible as part of their educational resources and to facilitate the acceptance of such 'Christian' norms as the value of hard work, stoicism, material success, tolerance, integration, ambition, individualism and enterprise. In this way, the schools were working towards the ideal of a unified society, one which was bound together by a common history, common needs and a common heritage and which saw progress in terms of individual endurance and happiness in terms of social harmony. To the extent that these concepts of progress and happiness were in any sense useful guide-lines for christian education, they were predicated more by a naive sincerity than any profound notion of social theory. It would perhaps be unfair to accuse the educational planners of purely vacuous idealizing but they could be criticized for having a quite inadequate view of how the rudimentary schooling which was being provided would actually cater for such lofty pretentions. For example, their reaction to any suggestion that the schools were failing would be that, more of the same was required, not that such attempts were based on a misplaced theory of education.

Regardless of how misplaced their theories might have been, their acceptance was widespread enough for the churches to provide virtually all the early teachers. The first Chief School Inspector, William Wyatt, himself a surgeon and a practising Anglican, appointed a former Anglican minister as his Assistant Inspector, recruited Anglican laymen for senior headmasters, and sent student teachers to a private Anglican school for training. Wyatt's successor, John Anderson Hartley, although making wholesale changes in denominational appointments, did nothing to lessen the influence of the 'religious' teacher. He merely replaced Anglican inspectors, senior heads and masters with Wesleyans and recruited student teachers and female assistants from Methodist Sunday Schools.[10]

If there was any confusion about what was meant by 'secular education' during the debates on the South Australian Education Acts, the 1851 South Australia Act provided ample clarity. It stated that government aid would be given only to those schools which provided,

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(10) D. Pike, "A society without grandparents", in Melbourne Studies in Education, 1957-1958, pp.62-63.

> "Good secular instruction, based on the Christian religion, apart from all theological and controversial difference on discipline and doctrine."[11]

In other words, while the schools were careful about the denominational interpretations of Christianity which they offered, there was never any doubt about their essential ethos. It is true that the problems of sectarian squabbles have occupied the minds of teachers and legislators throughout South Australia's history, but it bears repeating that, during that time, there has never been any substantive deviation from the central core of Christianity as the dominant determinant of the nature of education.

However, these sectarian squabbles do seem to have had some specific influence in delaying the introduction of religious instruction into state schools until 1940. Martin Bleby, has argued that with "persistant agitation of a minority of Church people, which gradually gained ground as sectarian jealousies diminished",[12] the schools eventually, in 1940, allowed denominational representatives to give religious instruction in schools during normal school hours. He paints this explanation onto a backdrop of "growing agnosticism, increasing secularism, and widespread religious indifference"[13] which, far from being a convincing justification for its introduction, in fact, makes the decision to allow religious instruction a most unexpected one.

The method adopted to prevent dogma being imparted in schools caused trouble because the Roman Catholics insisted that any reading of the Bible without comment or interpretation would necessarily result in a Protestant understanding of the scriptures. For this reason, in 1861, they decided to build their own schools where the Bible could be taught in a Catholic manner, and, by 1875, most Roman Catholic children were attending Roman Catholic schools.[14]

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(11) R. Ely, "The background to the 'Secular Instruction' Provisions in Australia and New Zealand", in Journal of the Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society, Vol.15, No.2, p.45.

(12) M. Bleby, The Struggle for Religious Education in South Australian State Schools, History Honours thesis, Adelaide University, 1967, p.1.

(13) ibid., p.2.

(14) A.G. Austin, Australian Education 1788-1900: Church, State and Public Education in Colonial Australia, (Pitman, Melbourne, 1961) see chapters 5/7 for details.

During the 1870's, the churches began a concerted push to have some form of religious education included in the school curriculum. 20,000 signatures appeared on a petition in 1872[15] but in 1875, the Education Act only stated that schools "may" read the Bible and only during the fifteen minutes prior to the start of the official school day: moreover, children were under no compulsion to attend these scriptual sessions. The then Minister for Education, Ebenezer Ward,[16] supported the Bible's use in schools but he did not want it to be compulsory. In other words, Bible reading was optional and it was to be held outside school hours; and this situation did not change for the next 65 years.[17]

Thus, the push was not very successful in any specific, concrete sense. The Bible was not widely read; in fact, in spite of the option, the Minister for Education reported that in 1878, it was read in less than 30 per cent of schools while in 1881, the per cent of schools using the Bible had fallen to below twenty. Only about ten per cent of schools read it daily.[18] But to maintain a clear perspective of the

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(15) M. Bleby, op. cit., p.8.

(16) Ward was Minister for Agriculture and Education in 1875- 1876 in the Boucaut Administration and, again, in 1876-1877 under John Colton. He had arrived in the colony in 1860 as an actor with a theatre troupe from Melbourne where he had worked for one year as a proof-reader and reporter on the Morning Herald. The son of a Baptist minister, born in 1837 in England, he first stood for Parliament in 1868 (in Gumeracha) but lost by a few votes. His rather volatile career was punctuated with a range of pursuits: He worked on the Hansard staff (1861-1863); on the Daily Telegraph as a sub-editor (1863); as chief clerk and accountant on the first government Northern Terrotory Expedition (1864); as editor of the Telegraph (1865); he wrote a book The South Eastern District of South Australia; its Resources and Requirements, in 1868; he published various rural newspapers -Gumeracha Guardian (1870) Guardian (in Clare), Farmers' Weekly Messenger (1874, Kapunda) and the Southern Argus (Pt. Elliott). In 1880, he was forced to resign from Parliament through being bankrupt but he returned in 1881 with the backing of the Farmers Mutual Association. For details of his life (including his "elopement", his "Northern Territory disgrace", his political battles etc.) see J.B. Hirst, Adelaide and the Country, 1870-1917, Melbourne University Press, 1973, pp. 51-54, 71-72, 82-95, 112-115, 142-143: see also George E. Loyau, Notable South Australians, published by author, Adelaide, 1885, pp. 83-84, and Register, 28 April to 6 May, 1880 for reports of libel case involving Ward.

(17) M. Bleby, op. cit., pp. 9-10.

(18) ibid., p.14.

struggle, it should be noted that the Bible was never condemned as a valuable resource in the education of the young. While Parliament opposed its compulsory use, there was never any likelihood that it would be banned. Indeed, an amendment to the 1875 Education Act calling for the banning of compulsory Bible reading was defeated 28 - 2.[19] The press also opposed any introduction of religious teaching to schools but again, this was not a call against Christianity - it was simply a way of dampening the denominational conflict and retaining a pluralistic notion of moral education.[20]

But the struggle was only dampened; it was never stopped. In 1880, a group calling themselves the Bible in State Schools Society, based on a similar London Society, conducted a survey covering 365 schools (i.e. over 90 per cent of schools) asking the question of parents - 'Do you want daily Bible readings and explanations of the scriptures?' Overwhelmingly, the answer was Yes.[21] 8,050 parents (i.e. 90 per cent of those asked) answered affirmatively but because the question did not ask whether the Bible should be read in or out of school hours, the politicians were able to argue that no legal change was necessary. This, of course, ignored the obvious preference for scriptural interpretation. However, they felt pressured to appear to be responding to this large survey and so, following the popular procedure of dealing with politically controversial issues, a Royal Commission was established to inquire into the Education Act. This Commission reported in 1883 and suggested no fundamental changes to the Act as far as Bible reading was concerned, on the grounds that the various denominations could not agree,[22] that individuals differed even within each denomination about what should be

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(19) ibid., p.10.

(20) ibid., p.14

(21) ibid., pp. 19-20.

(22) ibid., p.26... The Anglicans and Presbyterians wanted more Bible teaching; the Wesleyans wanted Bible reading in school hours without comment; the Bible Christians and Primitive Methodists were happy with the existing set-up; the Congregationalists and Baptists wanted strictly secular education; the Unitarians and the Jews wanted no Bible reading at all; the Roman Catholics and Lutherans wanted assistance for religious schools. These details provide an explanation of why politicians were reluctant to deal with the issue but there does, however, appear to be some discrepancy between the official church policies and the mass approval of Bible-reading.

done with the Bible in schools and, perhaps most interesting of all, it suggested that the decline in Bible reading in State schools was due to parental indifference which could be interpreted to suggest that no change from the status quo was desired.[23] The Inspector General of Schools, Hartley, agreed with the Commission's latter suggestion.[24]

And so the government was able to maintain its stand in spite of the 1881 poll. But the struggle did not end and the contradiction between apparent parental indifference and quite impressive parental mobilisation in the form of petitions, continued. For example, in 1886, 63 petitions from 2,600 parents were sent to the House of Assembly asking for the Bible to be read in schools,[25] while, in 1887, there were only 19 state schools, attended by only 380 children, which actually read the Bible.[26]

From 1883 to 1891, South Australia suffered an economic depression. In response to this disastrous downturn in the economy, school fees were abolished in 1891[27]. In 1883 the Royal Commission (mentioned above) had recommended that the State pay £1 per student subsidy to teachers (including those in private/religious schools) but in all four separate Education Bills from 1883 to 1891 the sections alluding to capitation grants were withdrawn.[28] While Bleby argues that the grants were unacceptable on the grounds that they were linked with the Religious Education issue, it is likely that sheer hardship was the over-riding factor in its rejection. Logically, as Bleby points out, if religious education was accepted then the State would appear to be supporting the teaching of Protestant Christianity in schools and, therefore, the Catholics could claim financial assistance to teach their religion in their schools.[29]

Throughout these depression years, the churches continued to actively recruit members and especially from the young. The concentrated much of their energy on the running of sunday schools to the extent that by

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(23) ibid., pp.23-29.

(24) ibid., p.24

(25) ibid., p.33.

(26) ibid., p.34.

(27) ibid., p.35.

(28) ibid., pp.41-42... the Bills were presented in 1883, 1884, 1889, 1891.

(29) ibid., p.42.

1888, there were 704 Sunday schools in the state, using 6,597 teachers to teach 55,286 students.[30] The Methodists, in particular, saw great value in this work and were proud of their own claim that students attending Wesleyan Methodist Sunday schools increased by 28 per cent from 1881 to 1891.[31] In their own words,

> "The Church of the future will be the Church that has paid attention to the young and gathered them within its tender embrace..."[32].

Part of this drive to influence the young, of course, was directed at the attempt to have 'religion' taught in schools.

Some concessions to the Religious Education lobby were granted: for example, in the 1892 Act, Regulation 317 was included whereby

> "Ministers of Religion or other approved persons wishing to give religious instruction out of school hours on week-days to children attending the school will be charged 1/- per annum for the use of the building, at times to be fixed by the Minister."[33].

In addition, the Inspector-General of Schools, J.A. Hartley (formerly Headmaster of Prince Alfred College) was sent in February 1893 to New South Wales to study and report on religious education in that state. He returned stating that both the general religious education and the special religious instruction courses were accepted by all the churches and the people without any evidence of conflict, but, that in his opinion, "wholesale reading of the Bible lessened the reverance and regard in which it should be held."[34] On this basis, the Downer government decided to ignore the whole subject of religious education in the 1893 elections. Hartley's attitude towards the Bible illustrates

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(30) The (Wesleyan) Christian Weekly and Methodist Journal, 26 October, 1888 in B. Condon (ed.), South Australian Methodists on Education and Social Issues 1888-1949, Murray Park Sources in the History of South Australian Education, No.2, 1972, Vol.1, p.18. (here-after cited as Condon (ed), S.A.M.)

(31) The Australian Christian Commonwealth, 7 June, 1901 in Condon (ed), S.A.M., Vol.II, p.3.

(32) CWMJ, 18 May 1888 in Condon (ed) S.A.M., Vol.I, p.x.

(33) South Australian Government Gazette, 1892, Vol.I, p.67.

(34) Bleby, op.cit., p.40.

the traditional pedestal on which the Bible was placed -it was seen as the highest code of morality, the basis of British law, the crowning achievement of English literature and the "secret of England's greatness".[35]

However, during the depression, people tended to lose faith in its apparently lofty greatness. As Taylor notes in his history of the Churches of Christ in South Australia,

> "economic pressure, accompanied by dire poverty, is not conducive to progressive religious work. Spiritual interests are pushed out of focus by anxiety caused by the lack of physical necessities."[36]

But the proponents of religious education battled on. A Sunday School Union "for the more effective instruction of children in the word of God and for the spread of improved literature"[37] was established in September, 1891. The successor to the Bible in State Schools Society (the National Scripture Education League)[38] conducted more polls and found that 80 per cent were in favour of the Bible being used in State schools.[39] In 1894, a Society for Promoting the Religious Education of the Young (SPREY)[40] was formed. It estimated that 30,000 children were not attending Sunday

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(35) ibid., pp. 56-57.

(36) H.R. Taylor, The History of Churches of Christ in South Australia 1846-1959, The Churches of Christ Evangelistic Union Inc., Adelaide, 1959, p.66. Taylor's argument does not apply to all cases of depression and hardship; sometimes people do turn to religion in those circumstances.

(37) ibid., p.64.

(38) NSEL was formed by Rev. Joseph Nicholson, a Wesleyan Methodist and was composed mainly of the Protestant members of the BSSS. The League was anti-Catholic and by, April, 1893, it boasted 44 branches throughout the colony, see Maurice French, Churches and Society in South Australia, 1890-1900: An Exercise in Reassurance, M.A. thesis, Flinders University, 1969, esp. Ch.2, pp.110-213.

(39) Bleby, op.cit., p.39... the polls were conducted in Hindmarsh, Upper Sturt, and Mt. Gambier and the results were:

	Yes	No
Hindmarsh	2,043	231
Upper Sturt	106	2
Mt. Gambier	847	89

(40) SPREY was formed by Hon. J. Warren, MLC and although it declared itself undenominational, in fact, it was made up of largely Anglican laity. After the 1896 Referendum, it became almost defunct -a fate similar to that which befell NSEL, see M. French, Churches and Society in South Australia, 1890-1900: an Exercise in Reassurance, op.cit., pp.174-175.

School and so it urged the introduction of the New South Wales religious education system.[41]

19 petitions of over 3,000 signatures asked for a referendum on the whole issue,[42] and in September 1895, the three questions to be put at the referendum were announced. They were:

(A) Do you favour continuance of the present system?

(B) Do you favour Scriptural Instruction in state schools during school hours?

(C) Do you favour payment of capitation grants to denominational schools for secular results?

The churches and the involved societies immediately campaigned. The Lutherans, (being opponents of State education and State aid) opposed all three: the Baptist Union supported (A) but not (B) or (C): the Roman Catholics wanted (B) and (C): the Adelaide Ministerial Association favoured (B) but not (C): the Wesleyans, while supporting free and compulsory education (which, of course, was cunningly implied in (A)) decided to push for a No/Yes/No vote: the Congregational Union took the same view as the Adelaide Minesterial Association: neither the Anglicans nor SPREY could accept capitation grants but later, under the influence of a new Bishop, the Right Reverend J.R. Harmer, the Anglicans changed their minds and supported (C).[43]

Alongside all these conflicting positions, the Press insisted that (A) had to be supported even if (B) was also supported, as otherwise "free education would be endangered."[44]

The Referendum was held on 25th April, 1896, on the same day as a general state election. 60 per cent of the eligible constituents[45] voted and the results were as follows:

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(41) Bleby, op.cit., p.40... New South Wales had been operating their system since 1866.

(42) ibid., p.43.

(43) ibid., pp.44-49, see also B. Condon, Rhetoric and Reality, op.cit., pp.34-42.

(44) Bleby, op.cit., p.50, for details see Advertiser, 22 April, 1896 and Register, 23 April, 1896.

(45) Adult suffrage existed for all people 21 years and over.

(A) - Yes 51,681
No 17,819, a resounding nod of approval for the existing system - almost 75 per cent expressing satisfaction.

(B) - Yes 19,280
No 34,834, a clear expression of opposition (almost 2/3) to Bible readings during school hours.

(C) - Yes 13,349
No 42,007, a strong vote of well over 75 per cent against capitation grants.[46]

Some observers, notably Bishop Harmer , saw the 'low' total vote (i.e. 60 per cent of eligibles, and less than 50 per cent for question (B)) as indicative of a widespread "religious apathy"[47] but this could equally and with more validity be noted as a vote of confidence in the status quo. It would be difficult to argue that it was a vote against Christianity and much easier to suggest that generally people were satisfied with the existing Christian influence in the schools and in the total society. In addition, one could insist that 60 per cent was a 'high' turn-out for a voluntary vote.

Naturally, over-all the Referendum was a huge set-back for the religious education protagonists and perhaps a surprising one since South Australia was the only state except for Queensland to exclude religious education from public schools. New South Wales had been teaching it since 1866, Tasmania since 1868, Western Australia since 1893, while, in Victoria, denomination teachers were allowed in schools during school hours for half an hour per week.[48] In addition, if Sunday school attendances were any gauge, then the churches' influence during the '90's was, at least, being maintained. From 1891 to 1901 while South Australia's population rose 13 per cent, the Sunday school population rose by 12 per cent.[49] The

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(46) Bleby, op.cit., p.50.

(47) Year Book of the Diacese of Adelaide, 1897, p.114.

(48) ibid., pp.53-54, see also B.Condon, op.cit., p.8.

(49) Australian Christian Commonwealth, Condon (ed.), S.A.M., op.cit., Vol.II, p.3, 7 June, 1901.

Methodists, in 1890, had urged that there was a "need for Christians to be politically active in order to advance Christian principles"[50] and this call referred to campaigns against gambling and drinking as well as for the inclusion of religion in the school curriculum. However, it was not until 1902 that the religious education protagonists came back pushing just as hard, although under a new banner, the Religious Education in State Schools League (RESSL). By July, 1902, they had 13,991 members, 12 months later, 20,700 members and by 1907, 23,000 members.[51] They peppered Parliament for another referendum but their motions presented on their behalf were always adjourned or defeated.[52]

During this period, the Press gradually changed its attitude toward the 1896 Referendum issues. While in 1899, the Advertiser was still saying NO to religious instruction, in 1901 it was saying PERHAPS and in 1903, it was saying YES.[53] The Register took longer to change its mind but by 1913, it was also saying YES.[54]

At this stage for the first time, organised opposition on anti-religious grounds entered the scriptural instruction fray. This opposition came from a group of rationalist sympathisers, the Moral Education League. Their defence of the existing law received support from some trade unions although the greatest opposition to the re-named Scriptural Instruction in State Schools League (re-named in 1911, although composed of roughly the same people and pressing the same demands as its predecessor the Religious Education in State Schools League) still came from Christians and especially the Catholics.[55]

During the early 1900s, the Churches appeared to experience mixed fortunes. Whilst the Methodists lamented their loss of 8,000 Sunday school students between 1901 and 1909,[56] they were pleased with the appointment

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(50) CWMJ, 21 February, 1890, in Condon (ed.) S.A.M., Vol.I, p.VII.

(51) Bleby, op.cit., p.60.

(52) ibid., p.60... the motions were presented in 1903, 1905, 1906.

(53) Advertiser, 2 May, 1899; 23 November, 1901; 20 December, 1901; 14 May, 1913.

(54) Register, 8 July, 1902; 23 July, 1903; 20 July, 1912; 14 May, 1913.

(55) and (56) see next page.

of Sir George Le Hunt as Governor of South Australia in 1903.[57] In contrast, the Churches of Christ claimed a 100 per cent increase in adult membership from 1902 to 1914.[58] But there was nothing mixed about the fortunes of the state schools in the first decade of the twentieth century. From 1901 to 1907 public school attendance dropped by 13.6 per cent.[59] Teachers' salaries were reduced; heads dropping 7 per cent from £450 to £420 and assistants dropping 20 per cent from £100 to £80.[60] Teachers were leaving the state, many of them going to Western Australia. Then in 1907 the Government established Secondary schools.[61] Previously, the State had run primary education only and secondary education had been left in the hands of the churches. The Protestants churches did not oppose the change but they wanted the new government schools to use the Bible as a text-book. In 1904, the Methodists had rather viciously castigated the Government for objecting to the use of the Bible in schools by referring to their argument as

> "a piece of that Politico-Religious Humbug and Jobbery which crouches in fear before the compact vote of the Catholic community".[62]

They outlined their rationale for supporting Bible reading in their church paper on September 29, 1905-

> "To sum up...
> 1. The state has undertaken the function of the primary education of its citizen.
> 2. The education for citizenship includes development of character.

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(57) ibid., 17 July, 1903 in Condon (ed.) S.A.M., Vol.II, p.25.

(58) J. Wiltshire, 'Flames of Zeal', in A.W. Stephenson (ed.) One Hundred Years, a statement of the development and accomplishments of Churches of Christ in Australia, (Austral Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd., Melbourne), 1946, p.43.

(59) ACC,30 April, 1909, in Condon (ed.), op.cit., S.A.M., Vol.II, p.93.

(60) ibid., 24 July, 1903, in Condon (ed.), S.A.M., Vol.II, p.25.

(61) J.B. Hirst, Adelaide and the Country 1870-1917: Their Social and Political Relationship, Melbourne University Press, 1973, p.36.

(62) ACC, 22 July, 1904, in Condon (ed.), op.cit., S.A.M., Vol.II, p.49.

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(55) Previous page, Bleby, op.cit., p.63.

(56) The Australian Christian Commonwealth, 2 April, 1909, in Condon (ed.) S.A.M., op.cit., Vol.II, p.92.

3. Character involves ethical conduct.
4. The only standard of ethics for the conduct of our national life and civilization is the Bible.
5. Therefore, the State cannot discharge its functions of education if it persistently excludes the Bible, as the only text-book of fundamental moral principles, from its educational code and curriculum." [63]

The churches generally and the Methodists in particular had always observed the importance of 'educating' the young.[64] They noted that the impressionable years offered the best opportunity to inculcate Christian doctrine and to win long-standing believers.[65] In 1910, they calculated that 78 per cent of Church membership was derived from those boys and girls who had attended Sunday school. Notwithstanding, they were alarmed that 80 per cent of all children who passed through Sunday school were lost to the church:[66] which rather suggests that their success fell well short of their hopes, so confidently expressed in 1914-

> "We have the children in our hands; we can teach them what we will. We can train them to hold our views and to copy our habits. Through them we can change public opinion and reform public manners. We have children at the age that teachers prize most. They are as clay in the hands of a potter."[67]

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(63) ibid., 29 September, 1905, in Condon (ed.), S.A.M., Vol.II, p.65.

(64) ibid., 6 November, 1903, in Condon (ed.), S.A.M., Vol.II, p.30, ..."School work is one of the practical ways of teaching Christianity". 25 December, 1908, Vol.II, p.90, ..."In no way can anyone to whom God has entrusted wealth do more permanent good with it... than by endowing a good school".
2 May, 1913, Vol.II, p.139, ..."The importance of religious work among the young can never be over-estimated".

(65) ibid., 17 February, 1911, in Condon (ed.), S.A.M., Vol.II, p.103, "The Sunday School is the standing army of the nations... because it teaches to the young purity of life, integrity of purpose, the patriotism of religion, and the religion of patriotism...".

(66) ibid., 15 July, 1910, in Condon (ed.), S.A.M., Vol.II, p.100.

(67) ibid., 15 May, 1914 in Condon (ed.), S.A.M., Vol.II, p.170

In 1912, a Royal Commission investigated Education in South Australia, but, curiously, did not inquire into religious education at all.[68] The 1915 Education Act, based largely on the Commission's recommendations, included technical education in the State school system. Now that a secondary school structure seemed firmly cemented the press saw no danger in actively supporting a new push for religious instruction. They referred, with regret, to a "prevalence of materialism" and a "growing indifference towards spiritual things".[69] Perhaps not incidentally, 1915 saw six o'clock closing introduced.[70] Meanwhile, in Europe, the German Empire seemed to be threatening the Christian way of life and Australian men and women were being called to defend the Empire against this new devil.

But in South Australia, the Christians could still not agree on the use of the Bible in schools. The Anglicans had re-examined their view and agreed with the Catholics that the Scriptures needed explanation and that some instruction in doctrine was necessary in religious education but the non-conformists were happy with straight Bible reading. In addition, Charles Darwin had raised some doubts about a literal acceptance of the Bible and his writings were, during this period, more widely distributed and read.[71] The Methodist Church was not blind to the diminishing influence of religion. They admitted,

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(68) Bleby, op.cit., p.64.

(69) ibid., p.53.

(70) W.H. Clay, 'Faith in Action' in A.W. Stephenson (ed.) One Hundred Years, p.145, Previously, 10 o'clock closing had existed. An interesting explanation for the legislative change suggests that the earlier closing was intended to reduce the possibility of large numbers of men spending the extra four hours discussing and planning street marches prior to the 1916 Conscription Referendum. See J.M. Main (ed.), Conscription: the Australian Debate, 1901-1970, Cassell Australia, North Melbourne, 1970.

(71) Bleby, op.cit., p.58.

> "Australia from the census point of view may be regarded as 'statistically' religious. The general position is not one of active opposition, but it is, rather, carelessness and indifference..."72.

and four years later in 1920,

> "The church is not keeping pace with the growth of population. There is a steady ebb away from organised religious life."73

Gambling, sexual promiscuity, drunkenness and other drug addictions were identified as the sad but popular pastimes of the young.[74] From 1916 to 1920, more petitions were sent to Parliament urging the introduction of religious education as one way of overcoming this moral decline.[75]

From 1921 to 1928, four Bills with Religion Education clauses all failed to be passed but the vote was close on every occasion. In 1921, it was defeated 20-15. In 1924, it was carried in the Council but adjourned in the Assembly. In 1927, it was defeated only on the Speaker's vote.[76] While in 1928, it was defeated on the last day of the session for that year.[77]

During this period, the Director of Education, W.T. McCoy supported

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(72) Australian Christian Commonwealth, 25 January, 1918, in Condon (ed.), S.A.M. , Vol.II, p.211.

(73) ibid., 2 July, 1920 in Condon (ed.) S.A.M., Vol.II, p.264.

(74) ibid., 8 April, 1921; 1 July, 1921; 15 July, 1921, in Condon (ed.) S.A.M., Vol.III, pp.4,7,8.

(75) Bleby, op.cit., p.65... The Legislative Council received 38,322 signatures FOR and 17,786 signatures AGAINST: The House of Assembly received 23 petitions FOR (one had 36,680 signatures) and 35 petitions AGAINST for a total of 16,548 signatures).

(76) ibid., p.71... Dr. Herbert Basedow (Hon. member for Barossa) who had signed a pledge to support Religious Education was absent from the chamber when the vote was taken. This left the voting even and so the Speaker, although he was personally in favour of it, was obliged to vote against it. Incidentally, Basedow's father had moved a motion in favour of Bible reading in schools in 1886. Basedow had been the defeated Country Party candidate for Barossa in 1924. He won the seat in 1927 but was again defeated in 1930, this time as an Independent. He was re-elected to the seat as an Independent in 1933 but died during that same year; see D. Jaensch, An Index to Parliamentary Candidates in South Australian Elections 1857-1973, an occasional monograph, Flinders University, 1975, p.12.

(77) ibid., p.65

religious education because, in his words, it "emphasizes the virtues of honesty, cleanliness, chivalry and patriotism".[78] The Teachers Union opposed it on five grounds: that it would force teachers to recognise sectarian differences amongst their pupils, that 'religious' teachers were not under the authority of the head as all other teachers were, that if 'religious' teachers were unskilled then discipline and the moral tone of the school would be adversely affected, that many country schools had only one room and so the different denominations would find it difficult to separate and, finally, that the routine of the school would be upset by 'religious' teachers coming into the classroom(s).[79] Most opposition, however, still came from Churches, notably the Seventh Day Adventists, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, and of course, the Roman Catholics.[80] The Labor Party were allowed a conscience vote in the Parliament and since increasingly its members and supporters were being drawn from the Catholic community, they voted against it.[81]

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(78) ibid., pp. 68-69, see South Australian Parliamentary Debates, 1927, p.714

(79) ibid., p.69.

(80) ibid., p.69.

(81) ibid., p.70, The Catholics were very self-conscious of their minority demographic position and so they concentrated their political efforts less with appealing to popular support and more with gaining influential representation through the State. For example, in 1899, in spite of being 16 per cent of the population, they held only eight per cent of parliamentary seats: then between 1905 and 1918, they made up ten per cent of the Labor parliamentary team; between 1918 and 1924, they had reached 20 per cent; from 1924 to 1933, they increased their representation to 26 per cent and by 1944, they had 40 per cent. In addition, in an organised attempt to maintain contact with the Catholic lay community, they had, in 1889, begun publishing the Southern Cross, a weekly paper which did not avoid political comment. See E. French, Churches and Society in South Australia, 1890-1900, esp. pp.454-456, and also J. Playford, Australian Labor Party Personnel in the South Australian Legislature 1891-1957 (compiled, 1957).

There were certain contradictions involved in State Parliament voting against the use of Bibles in schools; after-all, the State provided Bibles and Chaplains to prisoners and armies and the House opened with a prayer each day.[82]

From 1929 to 1945, depression and war dominated people's lives in South Australia and, not unexpectedly, it affected Church membership. The 1936 Census figures indicated that only 83 per cent of Australians were Christians whereas the 1921 Census had returned a 97 per cent Christian total.[84] The Methodist reaction to this was

> "I am confident that the greater portion of the people are influenced by Christian ideals and that their alienation from the Church was incidental rather than fundamental."[85]

I suspect that this interpretation was fairly shrewd. From 1921 to 1936, the number of children enrolled in Sunday schools had been maintained at around the 80,000 mark with a peak of 94,000 in 1931. However, during the same period the birth rate had dropped from 24.09 per 1,000 to 15.17 with a maximum low in 1935 of 14.14. In real numbers that meant about 3,000 less children per year. The number of children of Sunday school age (i.e. 5-14 years) also dropped, although only marginally from 111,891 in 1921 to 110,853 in 1936. It had peaked in 1926 at 119,010, predictably 5 years before the peak of Sunday school attendance. It is pertinent to compare Sunday school attendance with State school attendance which totalled 69,256 in 1921 (over 10,000 less than Sunday schools), peaked in 1924 at 74,269 (still over 8,000 less than Sunday schools) and had fallen to 68,506 in 1936 (over 12,000 less than Sunday schools).[86] Whatever can be said of the quality of Sunday school influence, it certainly maintained a high statistical membership and, at least nominally, was seen to be exerting a powerful influence

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(82) ibid., p.68.

(83) Australian Christian Commonwealth, 3 April, 1936, in Condon (ed.) S.A.M., op.cit., Vol.III, p.148.

(84) ibid., 11 June, 1926, in Condon (ed.), S.A.M., Vol.III, p.37

(85) ibid., 3 April, 1936, in Condon (ed.), S.A.M.,Vol.III, p.148.

(86) ibid., 29 January, 1937, South Australian Methodist, 22 February, 1946, in Condon (ed.), S.A.M., Vol.III, pp.163, 279.

on the young people of the State. But the Churches were not satisfied with their 'school' work. They were aware that they had very few well-qualified teaching staff, that parental and youth indifference was prevalent and that counter attractions on Sundays were proliferating:[87] and, therefore, their desire to have their work supplemented by the State schools remained a high priority.

The final thrust to have religious instruction introduced into schools began in 1932 when a Council for the Furtherance of Religious Instruction in State Schools was formed by the Scriptural Instruction in State Schools League in alliance with the Council of Churches of South Australia. This Council received support from the Church of England Synod, the Methodist Conference, the Presbyterian Church, the Congregational Union, the Conference of Churches of Christ, the Baptists Union, the Adelaide Society of the New Church, the Salvation Army and the Youth Departments of all those churches.[88] Claiming that they represented 78 per cent of all South Australian electors, the Council issued pamphlets advertising all the interstate religious instruction experiences.[89] The Catholics, Seventh Day Adventists, Jews and some of the Lutherans did not support the Council.[90]

In 1934, a motion calling for the introduction of Bible reading was defeated 15-11 in the House of Assembly.[91] Supporters of the motion argued that religious instruction would help rid selfishness and materialism and, therefore, work towards overcoming the depression. Taking a different perspective, opponent of the Bill, E.A. Oates,[92] said

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(87) ibid., ACC, 29 January, 1937, in Condon (ed.) S.A.H., Vol.III, p.164.

(88) Bleby, op.cit., p.75.

(89) ibid., p.53...Queensland had adopted the N.S.W. R.I. system in 1910.

(90) ibid., p.76.

(91) ibid., p.73.

(92) Edgar Alfred Oates was born in 1869. A former Waterside worker, he became a Member of the Legislative Council (Central District No.1) in 1933 and held that position until his death in 1951. He was a Protestant, according to John Playford in Australian Labor Party Personnel in the South Australian Legislature 1891-1957, p.6.

that he

> "would support the Bill if I thought it would place boots on the feet of the bootless children, clothes upon their half-naked bodies, and provide more sustenance."93

Craigie,[94] delivering the first athiest speech in the South Australian Parliament, said "I have no evidence of the existence of a Divine Person"[95] and argued that the Bill was an attempt by the clergy to regain their waning power.

After losing this Bill, the Council was forced to drop their 'Bible reading' clause and concentrate on their 'right of entry' clause. This demand, that the denominations be given access to schools, seemed the only way to accommodate the Catholics and Lutherans so that a united platform from the Christian Churches could be pursued.[96] Thus, in 1940, while a war was being fought in the name of Christianity against the 'Godless' Nazi's and the 'Heathen' Japanese, a Bill was presented to Parliament providing a half hour per week instruction time during school hours for every Christian religious organisation. It added that this provision applied to all primary, high and technical state schools and that state teachers were not allowed to take religious education. Further, it stated that the rest of education in schools was to be separate and remain secular and the conscientious objectors were not obliged to receive extra secular instruction if they opted out of religious instruction.[97] The Bill made no reference to the Bible, only to denominational teaching by Ministers of religion or their accredited

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(93) SAPD, 1934, p.529

(94) Edward John Craigie was the Independent member for Flinders. He had previously stood unsuccessfully in Wallaroo (1910 Single-Tax), Burra-Burra (1921) and Flinders in 1924 and 1927. He held Flinders from 1927 to 1941 when he was defeated. He attempted a 'comeback' in 1944, but lost again. See D. Jaensch, An Index to South Australian Parliamentary Candidates, 1857-1973, p.48.

(95) SAPD., 1934, p.1959.

(96) ibid., p.80.

(97) ibid., p.81.

representatives.[98]

The Bill was introduced not as an election promise - indeed, the 1933 elections had been won without religious instruction receiving much attention even though the Council had attempted to make it an issue - but quite unheralded, in the years before the next due election, by the Labor Opposition Leader, Richards.[99] Thomas Playford, the Premier, had voted against the 1934 Bill and had no intention of airing the matter again: he had, he thought, satisfied the church lobbies by introducing a programme of tighter controls on drinking and gambling. The Education Department had shown no support for such a Bill and although they were not hostile to the concept of religious instruction, the Acting-Director of Education, Charles Fenner, did indicate in 1936 that he saw no special value in Bible reading[100] and, in 1940, he wrote that religious instruction was

> "an interruption of school time... we must safeguard the main function of a teacher, which is to impart to his scholars the material contained in the syllabuses of instruction, and upon which his school is examined and his skill assessed."[101]

Nevertheless, on 18 September 1940, the Bill was presented; it received a second reading on 2 October when Richards and Jeffries (the Minister of Education) spoke; the following week, Macgillivray[102] spoke against it

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(98) ibid., p.73.

(99) Robert Stanley Richards was born in 1885. A former Methodist lay preacher, and miner, moulder and carpenter, he held the seat of Walloroo from 1918 to 1949, see Playford, A.L.P. Personnel in the South Australian Legislature, 1891-1957. He was also a prominent Rechabite (i.e., a total abstainer) who had been a leading activist in the Early Closing campaign prior to entering Parliament. See Condon, Rhetoric and Reality, p.125.

(100) Condon, Brian, Rhetoric and Reality, pp.167-170.

(101) ibid., p.170.

(102) William Macgillivray was elected as the Independent member for Chaffey in 1938 and held the seat until 1956. He twice (in 1956 and 1959) unsuccesfully attempted to regain the seat. Sir Shirley Williams Jeffries won the North Adelaide seat for the Liberal Party in 1933. In 1938, his seat became Torrens and he held the newly-named electorate untill 1944 when he was defeated. See D. Jaensch, An Index to Parliamentary Candidates in South Australian Elections, 1857-1973, pp.117, 159.

after which the debate was adjourned until 6 November, when it was passed. On that day there were only 2 speakers against it. Macgillivray referred briefly to South Australia's foundation principle of 'free faith' where all religious dissension was accommodated and where the State kept right out of any religious issue.[103] He also argued that the Bill was "not a religious but a political measure",[104] that it was simply a "vote-catching"[105] gimmick, that there was no public demand for it, that it flew directly in the face of arguments which the Labor Party had pursued for the previous twenty years, and that it reeked of suspicious horse-dealing.

A number of speeches in favour of the Bill followed, which mainly referred to declining church attendance, increasing materialism and a growing indifference to spiritual matters and they saw the 1930s as suffering because of it.[106] And then Craigie gave a four hour dissertation in which he offered four major reasons why the churches should be kept out of state schools. For a start, he noted that the clergy had admitted "that the future of religion is bound up with the clerical control of education... the capture of the child is the essential preliminary to the retention of the adult".[107] Therefore, he argued, this Bill was allowing and, indeed, encouraging the early indoctrination of children. Secondly, to teach religion to children and then to suggest that they can reject or retain it later is, he maintained, spurious, since being indoctrinated, they would be unable to make rational judgements. Thirdly,

> "All the time the religious teacher is pursuing his task he is haunted by the consciousness that what he is teaching as unquestionable truth is largely at variance with modern thought..."[108]

and finally,

> "...Religion is not interested in the establishment of truth, but only with the acceptance of what it believes to be true."[109]

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(103) S.A.P.D.,1940, p.1231.

(104) ibid., p.1232.

(105) ibid., p.1232

(106) Bleby, op.cit., p.74.

(107), (108) and (109) see next page.

Further, Craigie suggested that the Bill had been planned by stealth,[110] that its denominational emphasis was contrary to an historical Church-State separation in South Australia, that it was inconsistent, ambigious and did not have popular rank-and-file support.[111] Both his and Macgillivray's amendments were unacceptable to Richards, who, nevertheless, was unable to answer most of their accusations.

Despite its apparent anomalies the Bill was passed 27-3 and, as Bleby observed, "the whole matter was marked by a lack of public interest".[112] Certainly, there were no letters to the Editor in the press, no petitions and no public meetings but whether that indicates indifference, ignorance or satisfaction is not easy to ascertain. Bleby suggests that "perhaps the growth of religious indifference... was a necessary prelude to the introduction of religious instruction to the state schools."[113] If that is acceptable then the question ought to be asked - why the growing religious indifference? The churches were working hard in their parishes; people were being killed in a world war to defend Christianity; and economic prosperity was growing. Perhaps, in spite of all that, Patrick O'Farrell was right when he claimed that

> "In Australia... what is most significant historically about religion is its weakness, its efforts to achieve some strenghts, its teneous and intermittent hold on the minds and hearts of the Australian people, its peripheral or subordinate relation to their main concerns."114

And yet, the whole religious instruction issue was the subject of divisive debate and quite large-scale public involvement. As early as 1872,

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(107) S.A.P.D., 1940, p.1247.

(108) ibid., p.1249.

(109) ibid., p.1272.

(110) S.A.P.D., 1940, p.1247.

(111) Condon., op.cit., pp. 182-184.

(112) Bleby, op.cit., p.74.

(113) ibid., p.87.

(114) P. O'Farrell, 'Writing the general history of Australian religion', in The Journal of Religious History, Vol.9, No.1, 1976, p.67.

20,000 signatures appeared on a petition asking for religious instruction to be included in the school curriculum. Assuming that these names were not gathered by coercion or fraud or bribery, they surely indicate a strong mass support. Admittedly, the 1896 referendum was held on an election day but the referendum voting was not compulsory and it attracted 60 per cent of the constituency. In 1907, the Religious Education in State Schools League boasted 23,000 members and while most of them were in no doubt passive supporters, their sheer weight of numbers represented an impressive voting bloc.[115] The religious instruction issue continually attracted the press in the form of editorials, letters to the Editor and feature articles. Throughout this period, Sunday school and church attendance was an integral part of a normal week for the vast majority.[116] Religious instruction had been introduced into all the other States by 1910 (most of them had it in the nineteenth century) and, in fact, by 1924, "South Australia was the only state in the British Empire which had no provision for Religious Instruction in State schools."[117] The State Parliament throughout the whole period was composed almost entirely of Christians. The Inspectors-General of Education were all devout Christians. In other words, there seemed to exist enough mass support as well as enough support from people in administrative and legislative positions to suggest that religious instruction could have been introduced into South Australian state schools at any time after the 1870s and yet it did not eventuate until 1940 when the demand for the course, at least in terms of public involvement, seemed to be at its lowest ebb. There does appear to be a basic contradiction between the widespread religious indifference prevalent in 1940 and the decision by the South Australian government to legislate for a major educational and religious change which had been hotly resisted for seventy years. There also, in my view, is some doubt about whether the

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(115) There must remain, however, some doubt as to the interpretation of those large membership numbers. In the absence of information to the contrary, it could be reasonably assumed that groups (e.g. churches, societies, etc.) with large nominal and perhaps overlapping memberships might affiliate with the League and thus transfer their numbers to a rather generously calculated membership. Accurate information concerning the breakdown of RESSL membership would allow a more precise analysis of their support and, therefore, a less speculative assessment of their political influence.

(116) About 70 per cent of people were regular attenders.

(117) Australian Christian Commonwealth, 4 March, 1924, in Condon (ed.), S.A.H., Vol.III, p.25.

sectarian differences between the Christian churches was the major reason for the delay since the Catholic Church, which was certainly the major opponent to the legislation, was always much weaker, in both numbers and political influence, in this state than in eastern states (especially) where similar legislation had been passed thirty or more years previously. The whole issue seems enveloped by a curious mystery which defies orthodox analysis and begs some other explanation to clarify the confusion.

Was it the war which provided the final push? Paul Almond does not discount its influence: he wrote that it is

> "...when war heralds the proximity of death, that religious awareness or at least the need for religion, comes to the fore".118

But surely World War I was just as bloody and 'godless' and the churches and their religious instruction groups were much stronger prior to 1920 than they were 20 years later.

Was it part of a scheme to adjust the school curriculum to meet new economic and industrial needs? In South Australia immediately before 1940, major industrial development had begun to demand new jobs, new population concentrations, new labour skills and new social and economic aspirations. It is reasonable to assume that the State would make some attempt to co-ordinate their support for industry, education and religion, inter-alia, in such a way that, at the very least, they would not be in open conflict. As indicated above, the early founders of the colony gave this goal a high priority and throughout South Australia's history in both the nineteenth and twentieth century, churchmen, employers, educationalists and legislators frequently called for the school curriculum to provide a solid Christian morality for everyone and especially the children of the poor and the working class. And yet, in spite of the frequency of their calls, they seem more random and capricious than regular and predictable. From my reading, there is no direct correlation between, on the one hand, a substantial increase in attention to moral education and, on the other, increased prosperity. In addition, there is no consistent time-lag between economic fluctuations and moral thrusts. For example, whilst the 1940 religious instruction introduction occurred during a period

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(118) Almond, Paul, 'Religious Education - Why?' in Pivot, Vol.2, No.1, 1975, p.2.

of industrial expansion and not long after a long and severe depression, a similar economic pattern occurred prior to the 1875 Education Act (i.e., a recession from 1865-1870 followed by major economic (mainly agricultural and pastoral) expansion) and yet this Act, while fundamentally overhauling the existing educational set-up, rejected the most obvious method of indicating a strict moral standard and refused to provide religious instruction in spite of a substantial public demand. Likewise, the 1890s industrial development, which also followed a disastrous recession, was accompanied by some mass support for religious instruction and yet no legislative reaction was forthcoming. In contrast, during the mid-late-twenties, when there was neither a boom nor a depression affecting the economy and when public interest was much less vocal, religious instruction was very nearly introduced.

However, while no consistent, direct correlation appears to exist between economic fluctuations and changes to moral education legislation, that should not be taken to indicate that there is no political relationship between changes in the economic structure and changes in moral and social attitudes. I shall argue later that a complex and often contradictory relation exists, that it does not always manifest itself in legislation, that it is often revealed in educational practice (and theory) and that it can be interpreted as a part of a larger struggle between the defenders of existing political structures and those who commit themselves to progressive change. In the meantime, I intend to treat the general economic climate as a context in which to observe various educational and religious changes. That will serve three purposes - it foreshadows the later detailed theoretical discussion, it avoids the danger of isolating a series of events from their proper historical environment, and it enables specifically pertinent economic connections to be made without implying that they represent a causal aberration.

Noting the difficulty of explaining the passage of the 1940 Education Act, Brian Condon,[119] in an unpublished dissertation, unearthed previously undiscovered documents which, while not lending overt credence

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(119) Condon, Brian, Rhetoric and Reality, pp.149-199.

to the argument introduced above, did provide some evidence that lurking within the confusing battle over religious instruction, a bit of surreptitious intrigue, perhaps not unrelated to economic circumstances, was being played. He detailed some extra-parliamentary negotiations leading up to the presentation of the Bill in the House of Assembly which clearly demonstrate the existence of a politico-religious manoeuvre designed to facilitate the passage of the Bill. The details are worth recalling both for historical accuracy and also to indicate the sort of strategic liaison which can occur between well-placed individuals who represent specific interests in a matter involving legislative change.

As mentioned above, the religious instruction issue had to some extent, been canvassed at the 1938 State elections. The Religious Instruction in State Schools League had held public meetings, passed resolutions seeking the introduction of the New South Wales Religious Instruction system into South Australian state schools, had declared 6 March (just two weeks before the election) 'Religious Instruction in State Schools' Sunday and had put out a 'How To Vote' guide in the newspapers. While they did not have the support of the Catholics or Lutherans and, while, much of the church energy prior to the elections had been spent on demands for liquor and gambling controls, the religious instruction lobby was disappointed that their 1938 efforts had been in vain. Thomas Playford (later Sir Thomas) became Premier and, as in 1934 when he voted against the religious instruction Bill, neither he nor his government showed much sympathy for the religious instruction push. There was no mention of it in the Address-in-Reply debate except by the Liberal Whittle and the Independent Illingworth.[120] No Bills were forthcoming and so, late in 1939, the RESSL prepared for yet another election campaign, due in 1941.

However, on September 18, 1940, with no forewarning, Richards, a former Methodist lay preacher who had, however, opposed former Bills on religious

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(120) Elder George Whittle was the Liberal member for Prospect from 1938-1944, 1947-1953. George Walker Illingworth won the Goodwood seat in 1938 but held it only for one term. He had previously stood unsuccesfully for Sturt in 1918. See D. Jaensch, An Index to Parliamentary Candidates in South Australian Elections, 1857-1973, pp.115, 240.

instruction (as had his party) introduced, as a private member, (even though he was the Labor Leader), a Bill which was passed seven weeks later by 27 votes to three on 6 November at four o'clock in the morning. Previous religious instruction Bills had been given to the Education Department for comment prior to its introduction, but not the 1940 one - the Department received a copy on 30 September, two weeks after the first reading. The Acting-Director of Education, Charles Fenner,[121] who apparently knew nothing of the intended Bill during July and August, queried one section of the Bill[122] but his comments were ignored. Tom Stott[123] asked questions about the same aspect, namely that more than one half-hour period per week was being made available for religious instruction lessons. Craigie moved an amendment in line with Fenner's recommendation. Macgillivray in speaking against the Bill, presented a petition of opposition from the Seventh Day Adventists. But all was to no avail.

Craigie, during his long and penetrating speech perceptively hinted that he was aware of some backroom bargaining - he said,

> "Clergymen, too, were apparently better informed as to the movements in regard to this measure than were those associated with the Independents..."124

Condon divulged those bargains when he wrote that

> "The 1940 Bill succeeded because for the first time no major Christian denomination was opposed to the measure - including, for the first time, the Catholic Church... The Bill represented the lowest common denominator of agreement between the major Christian churches as the price of the inclusion of the Catholic Church... the Bill was in fact drafted by a Catholic lawyer and public figure in terms dictated by his new Archbishop, the Most Rev. Dr. Matthew Beovich, just lately arrived from Victoria."125

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(121) Adey, the Director, was on pre-retirement leave at the time.

(122) This section 62:5 allowed for more than one half-hour per week for religious instruction lessons.

(123) Tom Cleave Stott was the Independent member for Ridley from 1933-1968. In fact, he had represented his electorate since 1933, called Albert for those first five years.

(124) S.A.P.D., 1940, p.1247.

(125) Condon, op.cit., p.109.

The actual intrigue occurred thus: on 19 July, 1940 a letter, signed by Archdeacon Clampett, the Anglican Bishop of Adelaide and the President of the Council for Religious Instruction in State Schools, was published in the Advertiser.[126] This letter called for 'right of entry' by the clergy and for the right of teachers to also give instruction in religion. Beovich read the letter, and being disturbed by the latter suggestion, asked H.Alderman, a Catholic, prominent lawyer and member of the A.L.P.,[127] to draft a Bill allowing 'right of entry' but not allowing state teachers to take religious instruction. On 23 July, Clampett was invited to discuss the draft with Beovich who said, quite unequivocally, that he (and the Roman Catholic Church) would support a Religious Instruction Bill that included 'right of entry' but only as so long as state school teachers were prevented from taking scripture reading. On 4 September, Clampett moved a motion at the Adelaide Diocesan Synod meeting which deleted from their Religious Instruction policy the clause which referred to teachers taking religious instruction. On September 5, Alderman informed Beovich that Richards was happy to introduce the Bill in its revised form but that he (i.e., Richards) wanted Beovich's written support. On September 6, Beovich wrote in The Southern Cross that Catholics would support the 'right of entry' while still opposing teachers giving Bible lessons.[128] Just 12 days later, the Bill was presented to Parliament in exactly those terms on which Alderman and Beovich had insisted.

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(126) Advertiser, 19 July, 1940. Incidentally, five days later, The Advertiser published a commenting letter which said, in part, "To spread knowledge of the Bible is both patriotic and a religious service - a service to culture as well as a service to faith". Advertiser, 24 July, 1940.

(127) Alderman was later knighted and nominated to the High Court of Australia although he died before he took up the High Court appointment. See B. Condon, Rhetoric and Reality, op.cit., p.191.

(128) Catholics still insisted that only religios could teach religion; otherwise, in uncommitted hands, the constant danger that "mockery or distortion of the word of God" remained. See Condon, ibid., p.193.

Thus, the Education Act of 1940 was passed. It was a significant piece of legislation because it marked the culmination of a long struggle and because its passage was accompanied by suggestions of political intrigue. More-over, because it raised questions of expediency and conspiracy and the function of public rhetoric its impact both within the schools and in the wider community invites attention. This impact is examined in the next chapter.

In summary, the issues produced by which the religious education struggle hinged, ultimately, on the role played by religion in the development of the South Australian colony. It had been a significant element of the province's early attempts to provide a haven for religious dissenters, where a morally-strict education system was intended to produce attitudes toward work and human relationships which would facilitate an ordered and unified society. In spite of much denominational conflict, a basic religious consensus was achieved which provided a hegemonic framework within which the political battles between the churches was played. These battles did not end in 1940 although the successful passage of a Bill allowing clergy to enter schools during school hours represented a compromise which had ramifications extending to party politics and industrial politics as well as the politics of education. The fate of that compromise is the subject for analysis in chapter three.

CHAPTER III

INTRODUCTION

This chapter has three focal points. First, the period 1940-1969 during which time church membership and attendance declined and religious instruction in state schools became unworkable; secondly, the strategy adopted in response to this by the protagonists of religious education; and thirdly, the counter-strategy used during the same period by their opponents.

In dealing with all three areas, I extend the argument in the previous chapter, namely that while Christian ethics remained at least the implicit basis of schooling, the explicit programmes of religious instruction continued to pose problems for the different denominations. But, after 1940, the problems changed. While the struggle to retain public support and political influence defined the course of action for all the churches, they fared rather unequally.

The Roman Catholics, having played such a strategic role in the 1940 'Right of Entry' Act, consolidated their growing influence by having their numbers swelled through post-war immigration of large numbers of Italians. Their sheer size did not place them at any electoral disadvantage. However, they did not regard religious instruction in state schools as a vital part of their drive to reach young people since their pre-occupation was directed more toward their own convents and colleges and toward their Sunday Mass attendance.

But, for the Anglicans and the Methodists, the success of religious instruction was imperative. Thus, when it became clear, even by the mid 1940s, that religious instruction was not achieving its aim of winning converts, these two churches sought alternative methods of 'spreading the word'. They established joint denominational councils, embarked on evangelical and publicity campaigns and took up popular social and political rallying issues.

The Methodists, in particular, sought ways of tapping 'youth causes' which took them into social politics to a degree remeniscent of their work in the

early 1900s. There was a difference, however; this time a significant section of their church took a progressive stance, identifying themselves with, for example, the anti-war movement. They recognised that to survive in an increasingly agnostic society they would need to present themselves less as a stodgy, puritanical church obsessed with fundamentalist texts and appalled at changing standards of morality and, instead, show themselves to be open-minded, socially progressive and politically aware. Of course, this was not easy since the Methodists were composed of a range of adherents, many of whom were still steeped in the traditional role of the Church and who resisted any 'modernization' with solid resolve.

Aware of this rift amongst its supporters, but also aware that religious instruction was often worse than useless and that the Church lacked funds to expend on substantially upgrading its teaching facilities, the Methodist 'progressives' opted for 'religious education' as a tactic in their continuing quest for social and moral influence, especially amongst the young. They received support from various other denominations and, in 1969, they attempted some pilot religious education courses in individual schools. The limited success of this venture led them, in 1972, to utilise formal departmental channels for the introduction of religious education into all state schools. They found a sympathetic Minister for Education who appointed a committee (chaired by John Steinle) which recommended a 'Christianity' compromise, relevant changes to the 1972-1974 Education Act and the guide-line for such a course. In 1974, the legislative alterations were passed and a Project Team was appointed to prepare a curriculum for use in schools.

In tracing the story of the introduction of religious education, I note that its implementation was assisted by the composition of the Steinle Committee, the availability of interstate (especially, Tasmanian) and overseas (especially, British) reports on religious education, the sympathetic stance of the Education Department as well as the Education Minister and the Premier, denominational unity on the question of religious education and, I shall argue, a concern amongst a significant proportion of people in this State that social morality (including the work ethic) was under some threat.

Finally, in this chapter, I examine the strategy adopted by the opponents of religious education in state schools - the Humanists, some educationalists,

and some Labor Party members and others who supported KOSSS (Keep Our State Schools Secular) in its spirited campaign to prevent the introduction of the course. I argue that while they had limited overt backing, they were able to articulate the interests of a significant minority, and, in fact, to provide an effective counter to the pro-religious position.

The essence of the argument in this chapter will be that the various denominations experienced difficulty in maintaining the struggle to influence social values for the following reasons - a declining percentage of people showed a willingness to listen to the churches; young people, especially, increasingly sought answers and commitments outside the mainstream religious sects; educationalists tended to identify church dogma as indoctrination and to, therefore, question its status as an acceptable educational tool; and people with a genuine concern for political and social change tended to see the South Australian churches as being either irrelevent or an obstacle to such reform. Given these disadvantages, I will suggest that, in order to survive, the Methodist Church especially (and the others, to a lesser extent) used whatever resources they could muster in an attempt to regain their influence. These resources included some which had been utilized prior to 1940, namely, public displays of political strength and clandestine schemes of political intrigue: as well, they sought to broaden their base of influence by getting the State and alternative socio-political movements to take up some of their causes.

As previously mentioned Church and Sunday School attendances declined markedly after the introduction of religious instruction into State schools. In 1943, "Sir Edward Lucas suggested the churches appoint 'absentee visitors' to visit the homes of children who stayed away from Sunday school."[1] One year later, the Methodist Church lamentably announced that during the past five years, 50 Sunday schools had closed down and 3,000 less children were attending the remaining Sunday schools.[2] Highlighting their feeling of desperation, a letter to the Methodist newspaper implored,

> "We need an education system which will compare with our rival, viz., one within financial reach of middle-class and lower-paid adherents ... The need is urgent; our rival does not 'let up', should we?"[3]

In addition to emphasizing the sectarian animosity which still existed between Protestants and Catholics, this short note also indicated the acute anxiety they felt over declining church support. In 1949, the Methodists rather bluntly admitted that

> "Religious Instruction in State schools offers us the only opportunity of Christianising the rising generation of South Australians. The idea of christianising the coming generation through Sunday schools and Churches is not practical."[4]

They were not misreading the trend. A 1950 Gallop Poll confirmed that only 19 per cent of Methodists went to Church every week. The Presbyterians (11 per cent) and Anglicans (six per cent) had even more cause for worry although the Catholics were able to boast a 62 per cent roll-up.[5]

A Gallop Poll in 1949, asking the question "what do you think is the main reason why more people don't go to church regularly?", received the following results. Sixteen per cent of the answers said that people were more interested in sport and other amusements, a further 16 per cent complained that religious services were too dull and old-fashioned

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(1) South Australian Methodist, 12 March, 1943 in Condon, (ed), S.A.M., Vol.III, p.249.

(2) ibid., 14 July, 1944, in Condon, (ed), S.A.M., Vol.III, p.259.

(3) ibid., 13 October, 1944, in Condon, (ed), S.A.M., Vol.III, p.263.

(4) ibid., 1April, 1949, in Condon, (ed), S.A.M., Vol.III, p.302.

(5) J.J. Mol, 'The social relevance of the Australian churches', Journal of Christian Education, Vol.8, No.3, December 1965, p.159.

while another 15 per cent suggested that people were simply indifferent to religion. These were the only answers on which more than 10 per cent of the respondents agreed.[6]

In 1948, the General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia, observing the very trend which the 1950 Poll confirmed, attempted to arrest the declining fortunes of their denomination by launching a three-stage operation which they sloganised as 'Crusade for Christ'. The first stage involved raising membership, which initially failed; secondly, they aimed to strengthen Sunday schools and other religious agencies; finally, they decided that the church needed to confront society in a 'Mission to the Nation'. This third stage was modelled on the United States evangelical campaigns which had sprung up immediately after World War II and was introduced in 1953 by the Rev. Alan Walker who presented a series of commercial radio programmes called 'Drama with a Challenge'.[7]

The Anglicans took up a similar campaign and, in June 1957, the diocese of Adelaide created a Department of Promotion which, after only six months, had increased five-fold the income of one parish whereupon the Department advertised for an assistant controller of canvasses who would be paid between £1500 and £1700 per annum.[8]

Not surprisingly, therefore, Graeme Speedy was able to write that the churches went through a "boom period"[9] during the late 50s and then into the 60s.

Certainly the Anglicans (over 100 per cent increase in weekly church attendance), the Methodists (60 per cent increase), the Churches of Christ (33 per cent increase)[10] and the Presbyterians (27 per cent increase) multiplied their flock; however, the Catholic regular

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(6) J.L.J.Wilson, (ed), 'Churchgoing in Australia', Current Affairs Bulletin, Vol.22, No.4, 1958, p.61.

(7) ibid., p.61.

(8) ibid., p.62.

(9) G. Speedy, 'The contemporary crisis in human affairs', in Journal of Christian Education, Vol.13, No.3, December 1970, p.146.

(10) H.R. Taylor, op.cit., pp. 69-70.

attendance dropped, although only by 12 per cent.[11] Moreover, the so called 'boom' ought to be kept in perspective. Robert Banks referred to polls taken in 1960 which showed that although 91 per cent of people claimed that the Bible was their most important book, 40 per cent had not opened it during the past 12 months and only 20 per cent had opened it during the previous fortnight.[12] In addition, 33 per cent of people did not believe in God's existence although, curiously, only two per cent were prepared to label themselves atheists.[13] In stark contrast to this apparent indifference, Banks was able to report that 50 per cent of Catholics prayed daily.[14] This volatile religious behaviour can perhaps be partially explained by varying samples since a survey in 1966 indicated that the age differential was very significant. That survey found that 48 per cent of children 10-14 years attended church regularly, 40 per cent of children 15-19 years were regular attenders, while only 27 per cent of those people in their early 20s still attended at least three times per month (i.e. regularly).[15] There is no evidence that samples for church-going polls were evenly distributed across all variables - either for age, sex, class or area.[16]

The so-called boom came at the end of a long economic boom in South Australia which had, in fact, begun in the late 30s. While not wishing to draw any direct correlation between the two 'booms' (as I suggested in the previous chapter)[17] there is some advantage in noting the broader context in which religious history operates and, therefore, in observing the economic trends in post-war South Australia. The economic growth

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(11) J.J. Mol, op.cit., p.159.

(12) R. Banks, 'The 'Religion in Australia' survey: shifting attitudes towards christianity', Interchange, Vol.2, No.4, 1970, p.224.

(13) ibid., p.225.

(14) ibid., p.225: by contrast only 25 per cent Anglicans prayed daily.

(15) ibid., p.224.

(16) In addition, some of the evidence is quite contradictory. For example, the Current Affairs Bulletin Polls indicate quite a consistently high church attendance during the late 40s and up to the mid 50s. Current Affairs Bulletin, op.cit., pp.51-2: the results were:-

1947	35% of people attended church	in the previous fortnight
1950	23% " " "	" " " week
1954	26% " " "	" " " "
1955	33% " " "	regularly
1956	32% " " "	in the previous fortnight

(17) see p. 42

rate was second only to Victoria from 1938 to 1965 while, concurrently, the population increase was the greatest of all states. "The rural community enjoyed unparalleled prosperity through most of the Playford years",[18] wrote Blewett and Jaensch, but in 1961-62, a recession struck and by 1966, South Australia had the second highest rate of unemployment in Australia (Queensland was higher). It remained high throughout 1967-68[19] as over 10,000 people moved interstate.[20] Immigration numbers fell, and in 1968 the state was plunged into a widespread drought.[21]

However, throughout neither the slumps nor the boom had the Religious Instruction System been working effectively. In an effort to overcome the problems, a sub-committee of the South Australian Council of Churches attempted, in 1945, to introduce non-segregated instruction but this failed. A further attempt in 1949 met the same fate.[22] In 1956, a number of state school teachers who were active church members were successful in persuading Adelaide Teachers College to introduce a series of optional lectures on the teaching of religious instruction. However, teachers were discouraged from taking religious instruction by being obliged to attend staff meetings which were commonly held during the period allocated for religious instruction.[23]

During the 60s slump, church attendances remained fairly steady, although the Methodist church, in particular, expressed dismay at their diminishing contact with nominal christians and especially the young.[24]

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(18) N. Blewett and D. Jaensch, Playford to Dunstan, The Politics of Transition, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1971, p.4.

(19) ibid., p.4... 3,500 employees in the building vehicle industry were sacked between 1965 and 1968: 2,000 motor vehicle employees were sacked between June 1965 and September 1966.

(20) ibid., p.5... 5,000 people went in 1966 and another 6,500 went in 1967: partly as a result of the Federal Government's decision to restrict credit, 1968 was a year of national economic recession.

(21) ibid., pp.46-48.

(22) P.N. Wellock 'The search for educational respectability: religious education in Australian government schools in the twentieth century', Journal of Christian Education, Papers 58, June, 1977, p.36.

(23) ibid., p.36.

(24) R.Banks, op.cit., p.224: In 1966, 27 per cent of Methodists attended church regularly, a drop of some four per cent from the early 60s. Figures were better for the Presbyterians (16 per cent, i.e. up two per cent) and Anglicans (11 per cent, i.e. down two per cent) while the Catholic Church had re-gained their minor loss and were back to a 60 per cent regular attendance (i.e. up 10 per cent).

Sunday school attendance however dropped dramatically during the late 60s.[25] And, in 1969, the Methodists withdrew from teaching religious instruction in the schools because they observed that it was either useless or counter-productive. An Australia-wide study by Graham Lehmann[26] found that religious instruction lessons suffered from large classes, irregular attendance by the instructors, student resentment or apathy, discipline difficulties and, generally, inadequate support from the school staff. The short weekly visit maintained the religious instructor's role as that of an outsider, quite separate from the school, and of course, familiarity with the students and the school was difficult to achieve in a half-hour session. In Victoria, and South Australia's experience was even more pronounced, the number of students taking religious instruction fell markedly from 1965 to 1973.[27]

The mess into which religious education had fallen provoked the churches to seek alternative ways of overcoming their declining influence. One alternative, through the Education Department, was to float the possibility of a State-run course on religion. In the retrospective words of the first Curriculum Co-ordinator of the religious education course,

> "During the '60s the churches approached the Director of Education to find a solution to the problems that were developing. The Director's response was along the following lines. 'When the churches can agree about what they want the Education Department will be willing to do something' ".[28]

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(25) David Dale, 'Sunday School is fun for some - but fewer children are attending', National Times, July 15-20, 1974, p.8.

(26) A.W. Black, 'Religious studies in Australian public schools: an overview and analysis', in Australian Education Review, Vol.7, No.3, 1975, p.3.

(27) ibid., p.3... 1965 - 76.8% secondary students took religious instruction
1973 - 22.6% " " " " "

(28) A. Ninnes, 'Religious education and the schools', Soundings: some views on religious education in South Australia, Religious Education Project, Education Department of South Australia, 1976, p.4.

Against that background of negotiation with the top level of the Education Department, the decision by the Methodists to dump religious instruction was made at their 1968 annual conference. A second resolution passed at this conference led to the formation of a Joint Council on Religious Education in schools by the six churches (i.e. Baptist, Church of Christ, Congregational, Presbyterian, Salvation Army and Methodists) which had decided to drop religious instruction.[29] In 1969, this Council commenced work on two experimental syllabus outlines, one for primary levels, the other for secondary. These were tested in 1970 at Westbourne Park Primary where Milton Hunkin was Head and at Elizabeth West High where Brian Hannaford was Head. Those two men, both lay Methodist preachers, were later appointed to the Steinle Committee to enquire into the possibility of teaching religious education in all State schools. By 1973, 33 primary schools and 25 high schools were using the new course materials called 'Understanding Religion'.[30] Thus, of their own initiative and without close scrutiny from any educational bodies, these protestant churches had gone ahead and developed an internal religious education course which was operating as a response to the growing criticism of religious instruction.

In fact, since the late 50s, Journals of 'Education'and 'Religion' were frequently dominated by articles attacking or defending the concept of religious instruction or the way in which it was being taught.[31] During

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(29) Wellock, op.cit., p.37. The Lutherans, Anglicans and Roman Catholics continued to take religious instruction classes.

(30) ibid., p.37.

(31) See especially T.A. Priest, 'Religious instruction in state schools' in The Forum of Education, Vol.15, April, 1957.
W.E. Anderson, 'Religious instruction in state schools: a reply to T.A. Priest', The Forum of Education, Vol.17, April, 1958.
W.E. Anderson, 'Religion in state secondary schools: The Issues', Journal of Christian Education, Vol.3, October, 1960.
Journal of Christian Education, Vol.7, October, 1964 ... four articles by Loy, Judge, Langdon and Russell.
Brian V. Hill, 'Must christians indoctrinate?', Journal of Christian Education, Vol.8, December, 1965.
Journal of Christian Education, Vol.11, August, 1968,... entirely devoted to moral education.
Brian S. Crittenden, 'Teaching, educating and indoctrinating', Educational Theory, Vol.18, Summer, 1968.
C.D. Hardie, 'Religion and education', Educational Theory, Vol.18, Summer, 1968.

the 60s, the view that moral education should be treated as a separate subject from religious education became more popular. This view, of course, represented an attack on the educational philosophy which had dominated the school's notion of morality since the colonial days, that is that religion and morality were one and the same. The new view was granted credence in 1964 by the New South Wales Minister of Education in his 'Wetherell Syllabus' when he recommended that a revised religious syllabus, which did not treat morality and religion as necessarily related, be adopted by primary schools in New South Wales. Interestingly, the syllabus was withdrawn a mere 15 days after publication, following church complaints.[32]

In 1969, the South Australian Karmel Enquiry received three proposals specifically related to religious instruction, all of which, in effect, recommended that the existing scheme as inaugurated in 1940 be replaced by a course on religious education, and be taught as a core subject in the normal time-table, thus giving it an integrity on a par with all other school subjects.[33] The change in name implied that the course would be less doctrinaire and more broad in its treatment of religion: this coincided with the developing attitude held by at least some members of the Methodist Church that the Church's concerns ought to be less toward the traditional, Bible-orientated, internal and spiritual issues and more toward social and political matters. Increasingly their attentions had been drawn toward various social and political issues including poverty, mental health, racism, old age and, especially the Vietnam war. A rift in the Church developed over 'Vietnam' with some traditionalists being reluctant to involve the Church in such 'nasty' affairs. However, the leadership of the early 70s represented the faction which had publicly opposed the war and it was under this leadership that the Methodist Church passed a motion at their 1972 annual

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(32) Brian V. Hill, Called to Teach: The Christian Perspective in Australian Education, Angus and Robertson, Brisbane, 1971, p.16.

(33) Karmel Report (Education in South Australia: Report of the Committee of Enquiry into Education in South Australia 1969-70), Adelaide, 1971, p.609.
The proposals were 1. "All pupils should have an opportunity to study the origin, history and development of the Christian faith as a general study in primary school, and as an elective at Leaving or Matriculation level."
2. "Comparative religion should be a topic of study... Instructors should be competent in religion and in teaching and should use a suitable syllabus."
3. "Religious teaching should be treated in a spirit of inquiry without dogma. Corporate acts of worship by schools should be omitted".

Conference calling on the State government to establish a religious education course in all state schools.[34]

While this was the first specific demand for religious education in South Australia, the ideas for such courses had been seriously floating in other places for well over ten years. In the United Kingdom during the 60s Ninian Smart and others had written concrete proposals for curricula,[35] and in 1970 the Durham Report[36] had recommended a course on religion for schools. In Australia, the 1957 Wyndham Report[37] recommended that religious education be a core subject for secondary students in New South Wales but this was never implemented: then in 1961 in Queensland, the Watkin Report[38] unsuccesfully suggested that religious education should be in the secondary curriculum: in 1968 the Hughes Report[39] in Tasmania said the same and met the same fate: in 1969 in Western Australia the Deltman Report[40] had been more succesful and an optional course on christian education was introduced although its initial year of operation did not suffer from an over-demand from students (211 students in 28 different high schools did the course)[41]: and in 1971, in Tasmania again, the Overton Report[42] argued persuasively enough to have a religious education course implemented.

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(34) Wellock, op.cit., p.37. The motion stated "That we request the South Australian Education Department to introduce a course of studies on religion into school curricula, and to make further provision for the training of teachers equipped to teach such a course".

(35) N.Smart and D.Horder (ed), New Movements in Religious Education, Oxford University Press, London, 1975.

(36) published as I.Ramsay (ed), The Fourth R, Oxford University Press, 1970.

(37) Report of the Committee appointed to survey Secondary Education in New South Wales, Sydney Government Printer, 1957.

(38) Interim Report of the Committee appointed to enquire into Secondary Education in Queensland, Education Department, Brisbane, 1961.

(39) The School in Society, Education Department, Hobart, 1968.

(40) Secondary Education in Western Australia, Education Department, Perth, 19

(41) A.W. Black, op.cit., p.8... in the following year it was even less popular, with only 172 students opting to take the course.

(42) Religious Education in State Schools, Education Department, Hobart, 1971.

Thus, the Methodist Church demand was not without overseas or interstate precedent. Displaying an astute political sense, however, they had previously approached the Minister of Education, Hugh Hudson,[43] about the difficulties which their clergy had been experiencing with the existing religious instruction system and, having been given an accommodating hearing, they confidently proceeded with their formal recommendation. A few months later Hudson obligingly appointed a committee to consider the proposed course and to prepare recommendations on how it should be established. The committee was chaired by John Steinle, an Education Departmental Head (now Director-General) and was composed of five representatives from the major Christian Churches,[44] four representatives from South Australian Institute of Teachers (one of whom did not attend), one representative from South Australian Association of State School Organizations (SAASSO),[45] one representative from the Colleges of Advanced Education (CAE) and one other departmental man.[46] All the members were practising Christians; there were no representatives from any of the minor Christian Churches, e.g. Jews, Mormans, Christian Scientists, Greek Orthodox etc. and no representatives from non-christian e.g. Aboriginals, Hindus, Moslims, Humanists etc.[47]

The Committee took three major initiatives as part of its task in developing a course on religion. ~~They~~ It sought a compromise position on Christianity which would be acceptable to all the main denominations, ~~they~~ it recommended changes to the Education Act so as to legally implant 'religion' as compulsory school subject, and ~~they~~ it provided the basic guidelines for the subsequent establishment and teaching of the course.

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(43) South Australian Teachers Journal, 12 February, 1975 in Almond and and Woolcock, op.cit., p.128.

(44) Roman Catholic - Gallagher, Anglican - Renfrey, Methodist - McArthur, who was later replaced by Waters, Lutheran - Koch, and Baptist - Webb.

(45) Hannaford, Hunkin, Coy (senior, Norwood Boys Technical), Allen, (assistant, Klemzig Infant Demonstration School), who became ill and was replaced by Morrison, who did not ever attend. Flannery represented SAASSO.

(46) CAE - Speedy; Education Department - Lawson.

(47) While no official reason was given for excluding representatives from these groups, it can be assumed that their minority status, in terms of numbers of adherents, made them, in the view of the Government, comparatively insignificant and, therefore, not worthy of formal representation.

All three deserve attention since they clearly indicate some of the methods used in resolving the conflicts which developed during the introduction of religious education.

Initially, the groups which most wanted 'religion' taught in schools (i.e. the churches) had to resolve their internal conflicts of Christian interpretation. As the Steinle Report states, "The Committee quickly decided that it should recommend that the present arrangements for Religious Instruction should be superseded."[48]

There was no disagreement that the teaching of religion had to be improved; there were, however, many questions concerning the nature of the new course. Religion, per se, was not an issue; but its specific content certainly was contentious. The Heads of Churches, having anticipated the opportunity to lobby for a course on Christianity, met on August 4, 1972 and agreed to submit to the first meeting of the Steinle Committee on October 19, 1972, a proposal which, in effect, recommended that the Tasmanian Religious Education Report (Overton Report) be used as the basis for the South Australian enquiry. That report, which had been largely written by Sister Valerie Burns, included 'The Assertions of the Christian Faith', a compromise set of statements which offended none of the Christian churches and which was intended to be used as the 'line' for any teaching of Christianity in the religion education course. The 'Assertion' itself was a remarkable achievement following a history of denominational conflict which had consistently been at the core of the problem of teaching 'religion' in state schools. However, regardless of that, the Steinle Committee recognised the

> "differences between current trends in education and the apparent requirement of Heads of Churches to have established in schools a single course based upon 'The Assertions of the Christian Faith'".[50]

Thus, it was intended that the formerly divided Christian churches and, as well, those educational pundits whose interest in curriculum development

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(48) (Steinle Report), Religious Education in State Schools, Education Department, Adelaide, 1973, p.8, emphasis added.

(49) ibid, p.8.

(50) ibid, p.8.

centred on that curious notion, objectivity,[51] would all be satisfied.

The second initiative regarding the revising of the Education Act was also a response to anticipated conflict between interest groups. Allan Ninnes explained the dilemma:

> The Committee obviously did not want a continuation of the right of entry system but they had varying ideas of what could happen. There was also the consideration of what was most likely to be accepted by Parliament. The churches had fought for a long time to obtain their niche in the system. At this time no agreement had been reached on what was to develop.

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(51) The term 'objectivity' has been used (and abused) to cover a range of meanings. It is sometimes equated with a stance of disinterested or impartial observation which assumes that a person can, in fact, hold such a position as long as they have cautiously and rationally distanced themselves from their subject and can demonstrate that they have no vested interest in holding an opinion one way or the other except in relation to the truth or actuality of the subject.

Alternatively, it is sometimes used to describe an evenhanded approach, a balanced weighing of both or all sides of a particular question so that no bias is evident and no 'correctness' is stated or implied. This meaning of objectivity infers that 'truth' is not the end result of a logical analysis but, rather, that, insofar as it is ever used, it is a matter of judgement or conjecture.

A third use of the concept objectivity involves the conscious avoidance of 'opinion' and, instead, a concentration on 'facts'. While the utilizers of this meaning often neglect the debate surrounding the difficulty of distinguishing between fact and opinion and, indeed, the epistemological problem of defining any statement, they use 'objectivity' to indicate a position of non-controversy and, therefore, on their terms, non-indoctrination. In other words, they are leaving the student to form an 'independent opinion' on the basis of the presented 'facts'.

There is no consensus amongst educationalists (or others) on the use of the term 'objectivity' but, when the Steinle committee members were preparing their recommendations, I suggest that they attempted to satisfy all these variants described above. The important point to note is that all three ignore the proposition that there is no such thing as objective knowledge. The quite fascinating debate on objectivity is perhaps best followed by beginning with Sir Karl Popper, Objective Knowledge, Clarenden Press, Oxford, 1974.

> It was very unlikely that an Act removing religion from schools would have passed both Houses before the churches had time to consider the situation. Thus a flexible section was put forward.
> (1) Regular provision shall be made for religious education at a government school under such conditions as may be prescribed at times during which the school is open for instruction.
> (2) The regulations shall include provisions for permission to be granted for exemption from religious education on conscientious grounds.
> (Education Act 1972-74, Section 102)[52]

He continued,

> "The purpose of this section of the new Act was to retain religion in the schools but remove all the machinery clauses of the old Act. It was a rewriting of the principle of the 1940 Amendment that religion has a place in the schools but without specifying how it was to be incorporated into the school programme".[53]

He then presented a case for the changes:

> "The Act has to be looked at in terms of our history. In many ways it represents a big step forward. It allows the churches to withdraw support from teaching yet maintains a distinct place for religion in schools. Secondly, it allows a course to be developed that deals with all religious beliefs and life philosophies. Thirdly, it establishes that what happens in schools should be sound educationally, that is, there is no longer a place for religious indoctrination in a sectarian manner. Thus the Act allows for the transition from religious (mainly Christian) instruction to religious education."[54]

Following that, he put a rather woolly claim that the changes to the Act had legally secularised the schools -

> "It can be argued that this section of the Act does in fact restore the secular nature of the schools as declared by the 1875 provision which established State education in South Australia. Some have interpreted secular to mean without religion. The Oxford Dictionary defines secular as meaning 'concerned with the affairs of this world, temporal, profane, lay, not distinctively sacred or ecclesiastical, not monastic'. Secular education is concerned with the affairs of the world and thus the study of religion has a place in a balanced secular education. For this reason the special section of the Act is not necessary but for political and historical reasons it is there. This

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(52) A. Ninnes, 'Religious education and the schools', Soundings, Some Views on Religious Education in South Australia, Religious Education Education Department of South Australia, 1976, p.4.

(53) ibid., p.5.

(54) ibid., p.5.

> should not affect the situation but should be seen simply as part of the transition."[55]

That argument exists on the most trite level: absolutely everything can be called one of the 'affairs of the world' and, therefore, on that score, anything could be included in a 'balanced secular education'. Certainly, there have been more sophisticated justifications for the legitimate inclusion of religion in a school curricula.[56]

The changes in the Education Act however can be seen more cynically. While Ninnes has suggested that the lack of parliamentary debate on the particular section of the Act relating to religious education "may reflect that most politicians considered the revised section satisfactory",[57] that interpretation may suffer from a rather naive understanding of a quite astute tactic of parliamentary organisation. It seems conceivable that at least some members may have debated the quite significant changes, if the Bill had been introduced at a more congenial time, if it had been presented as a separate issue, if members had been given more warning of the Bill or if there had been less party discipline on such controversial issues.

Instead, on August 17, 1974, during the last week of a parliamentary session, Hudson made available to other members of parliament the Bill to change the 1972-74 Education Act. Five days later, at 1.00 a.m., section 109 which contained the religious education amendment was passed with 19 other clauses, en bloc, without debate. This Bill reversed a century of 'secular' education by making religious education the only compulsory subject of the entire school curriculum. It contradicted the spirit of a section of the Karmel Report, which only three years previously had been presented as an exhaustive, two year enquiry into all aspects of education in South Australia.[58]

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(55) ibid., p.5.

(56) see for example, pp. 88-93 below.

(57) A. Ninnes, 'Religious education and the schools', op.cit., p.5.

(58) Karmel Report, Ch.3, Section 3:19 and 3:20, which stated,
"We want our children to be critically minded, to require evidence on important issues and to play their part when they are mature enough, in improving our social institutions, habits and customs... We cannot encourage the analytical and critical mind and deny it the right to criticise the existing social setting or the basis of its analyses... We believe that schools can be expected to help children to acquire the attitude of mind and the habits of thought and action that are part of a responsible citizenship which accepts evolutionary

(see next page)

It made suspect the previously long history of 'official' state neutrality in matters of religion without even an Investigation Committee being given the job of analysing the whole subject.

If the proposed changes had been publicly canvassed then the media debate emanating from the sort of objections which KOSSS [59] and other groups later raised, would doubtless have made the passage of the Bill less smooth and less swift. Indeed, it may have even been blocked given the reaction of the Labor Party rank and file members when they debated the whole religious education issue at their 1975 State Convention.[60] However, by somewhat clandestine methods all these potential bodies of opposition were thwarted and legal sanction for the teaching of religion in state schools was shrewdly secured.

The third initiative undertaken by the Steinle Committee concerned the path by which the religious education course would be actually introduced into schools. As indicated above, as early as 1970, an experimental syllabus on 'religion' had been developed by a "Committee representing a number of churches"[61] and was in operation in two schools.[62] By 1973 it was being used by 56 other schools. However, the course could still only be taught during religious instruction periods which was quite unsatisfactory as far as the churches were concerned. They wanted 'religion' to be a core subject in the school curricula, they wanted approved people teaching it and they wanted the course to be predominantly about Christianity. With these demands in mind, the Steinle Committee moved toward granting the first two while compromising the third so as to satisfy educationalists generally and the secularists especially. In fact,

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(58) (from previous page) ...change as natural... The sets of personal values that we referred to above may be derived from one or a number of sources. The plural society to which we belong has no single particular philosophy out of which these values flow automatically. For many people the particular religious heritage of the home has provided a basis upon which values have been built. For others there have been other bases. Increasingly we believe, as the accepted orthodoxies of other years are called into question individuals must develop and test their own set of values. Schools cannot assume now, if they ever could, that the homes from which their pupils come are necessarily all subscribersto a common code of personal and social behaviour, or that the reasons for any apparently common values governing their behaviour are the same. At least the schools of the State cannot generally appeal to the authority of religion as a reason for particular conduct." (my emphasis).

(59) Keep Our State Schools Secular.

(60) see p.67-9 below for details of the 1975 A.L.P. (S.A. Branch) Convention.

(61) and (62) see next page.

by April, 1973, the Heads of Churches and the Steinle Committee had come to the following agreements -

> "The responsibility for Christian Education rests with the Churches. The development and organisation of courses in Religious Education in State schools is the responsibility of the Education Department. The selection of the course to be followed in any one school should be a matter for local decision. The decision to adopt one or other of any of the suggested courses should be made by the Headmaster after having consulted representatives of the Churches, parents and teachers. Heads of Churches undertake to offer constructive assistance to the Education Department. Where any course deals with the Christian Faith, it must be consistent with 'The Assertions of the Christian Faith'".63

Thus the ground was laid to satisfy three recognised interest groups, the churches, the Education Department and the individual schools. Representatives from these three groups constituted the Steinle Committee itself, the Religious Education Standing Committee, the Project Team, the locally-based School Committees and the Accreditation Board.[64] While the Steinle Committee was anxious that the course should earn an adequate educational status, the sensitivity with which the Committee treated the churches is ample recognition of their concern that the new course was, inter alia, intended to replace the old religious instruction sessions.

Significantly, while much of the early time was spent pondering over how Christianity could be presented in such a way as to be acceptable to the major sectarian interests, no similar concern was shown for the presentation of Buddhism, Humanism, Hinduism etc.. This neglect was soon noted and, perhaps to the surprise of the Steinle Committee, they had no sooner

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(61) (from previous page)
Steinle Report, p.4.

(62) (from previous page)
Westbourne Park Primary and Elizabeth West High.

(63) Steinle Report, pp. 9-10.

(64) ibid., pp.28-30.

completed their 55 page, quite superficial[65] report[66], when organised opposition to their recommendation began to mobilise.

The most vocal was KOSSS which had been formed as CACTOR in October, 1974.[67] They wrote to Hudson imploring that the new legislation be repealed; they wrote to the Premier, the Ombudsman, the Director-General of Education and the Council for Civil Liberties seeking support for modification and the withdrawal of certain aspects of the course; they wrote letters to the Editor of the Advertiser and the Australian attacking the concept of the course and the details of the syllabus; they put out formal press releases; they wrote to SAIT, SAASSO and the Project Team; and, with the support of the Humanist Society, they campaigned in the schools. They urged teachers to not teach religious education on the grounds that the course was prescribed by an Act of Parliament and not freely chosen by educationalists; because it was biassed heavily in favour of religious belief and offered no fair account of alternative philosophies; because it had been introduced following an intensive campaign by committed christians, and because the advisory committees for the course were not ordinary educational bodies but instead were stacked with members of the clergy.[68] They argued forcefully that

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(65) The report was superficial in the sense that it devoted no detailed attention to the history of religious education (or instruction) in this state, or indeed, the existing provision of such instruction. It failed to provide a sustained argument in favour of the need for a course on religion, completely avoiding any refutation of the arguments against such a course. In other words, it assumed the necessity of a new religious education curriculum rather than arguing for it, which, in addition to ignoring its terms of reference, gave the report a shallow intellectual weight and, indeed, an air of fait accompli.

(66) It was completed in only 10 months, which included the Summer festive season.

(67) CACTOR ... Campaign Against Compulsory Teaching of Religion.

(68) Greg Smelters 'Double talk on religious education' in The Australian Humanist, No.34, Spring, 1975. p.24.

> "the decisive reason for the introduction of Religious Education (was) the perpetuation of the economic exploitation of false beliefs in the student population on behalf of the vested interest of the Churches that are supported (with a view to vote-catching !) by parliamentary parties." [69]

Stan Potter, their energetic and articulate President, debated the issue with Allen Ninnes on a Monday Conference[70] but, in spite of their constant activity, they made little headway against the introduction of the course although their efforts did have a substantial impact on the eventual content of the course.

The South Australian Branch of the Humanist Society passed a number of motions at their March 1975 Convention which opposed the existing religious education course. These motions made the following substantial statements,

> "Convention supports the teaching of comparative religion, as an elective subject in the senior years of high school, provided this is not done so as to promote one religion as better than another or to promote a religious view of the world as opposed to a non-religious view...
> Convention considers that in the junior years of high school, education about religion should be given as and where appropriate in the ordinary curriculum - as in History, Literature and Art - provided this is not done so as to promote one religion as better than another or to promote a religious view of the world as opposed to a non-religious view ...
> Wherever religious education occurs as a separate subject in Government schools at any level, it is to be optional, both for students to take and teachers to teach ...
> Convention views with alarm the tendency in recent years in most States towards curricula for compulsory religious education in Government schools in which Christian beliefs are presented as contrasting favourably with those of other religions and in which the impression is given that religious beliefs are a necessary component to a moral and full life ..."71

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(69) ibid., p.24. To what extent the exploitation was economic, remains implicit!

(70) P.C. Almond and P.G. Woolcock (ed.) The Religious Education Controversy S.A. 1974-75; a documentary collection, Murray Park Sources in the History of South Australian Education, No.7, M.P.C.A.E., 1976, pp.159-191.

(71) Smelters, op.cit., p.21.

The Australian Labor Party Annual State Convention in June, 1975 submitted sixteen motions on the religious education subject. Eventually, four of them were passed[72] although not without amendments which Hudson and Dunstan were able to procure. The motions which became government policy were, that the Education Department "work towards" (the amendment) the elimination of religious education as a separate Primary School subject and "work towards" making the course optional at the Secondary School; that the pilot curricula for religious education be "re-appraised"; that parents be allowed to take their children out of religious education and that suitable alternative study be made available for them, and that the schools adopt the 'Loveday Method'[73] of allowing parents, at the beginning of the year, to indicate whether or not they

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(72) Although only four motions were passed that does not mean that the other twelve were all lost. In fact, all sixteen motions were divided into seven groupings on the basis of their similarity and from those groups, one 'key' motion was selected to represent each group. Therefore, notwithstanding the amendments, because four were passed, in effect, most of the sixteen were accepted. Two observations concerning these motions should be made. Firstly, it is normal practice for the Agenda Committee to group similar motions to assist the speedy avenue of business at Convention and so the religious education motions were not being treated exclusively: secondly, the appearance of a large number of similar motions on the Convention agenda often indicates that a number of sub-branches have been involved in some collusion to ensure that a particular demand be granted reasonable debate - the religious education motions seem to have been presented with that intention.

(73) Named after Ronald Redvers Loveday, the former Labor Education Minister who represented the Whyalla electorate from 1956 to 1970.

wanted their children to study religious education.[74]

While the general attitude of the Trade Union and Sub-branch delegates at the Convention was that the method of introduction of religious education had been suspect, Dunstan asked that the government be given time to manoeuvre. He argued that the idea of the course would be met with wide public approval especially in some 'delicate' rural areas. He was thinking of examples of anti-Labor canvassing which had occurred in the Barossa Valley from the pulpits of the Lutheran Church following the recent passing of some 'social reform' legislation.[75] Hudson supported Dunstan's call to let the course go ahead for the time-being on the grounds that the government was about to contest an election which looked very difficult to win, and consequently, it could not afford

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(74) The four motions adopted at the Convention were:
"1. The Education Department work towards the elimination of religious education as a separate subject in infant and primary schools, and the establishment of religious education as an optional subject in secondary schools. The aim should be to establish any Religious Education courses in infant and primary schools as part of an integrated social studies course. Indoctrination is not to be permitted and the schools must be neutral in relation to all matters of religious belief or non-belief.

2. We call upon the Government to subject the pilot Religious Education curricula to fundamental re-appraisal, subject to the statutory primary and secondary curricula Boards.

3. Convention requests the Minister of Education to ensure that all parents have the right to refuse religious education of their children - further that alternative suitable studies be provided for those children who do not attend religious education. Students who opt out should also have the right to spend time in the library resource centre.

4. That this Convention resolve that the "Loveday Method" of asking parents to choose whether or not they wish their children to attend any courses on religion be adopted forthwith as a uniform procedure in government schools, and that this question be put to parents when courses of religious education are first introduced into a school and subsequently at the time of each student's enrolment."

(75) e.g. reforms included the legalisation of abortion, homosexuality, nude bathing, State run lotteries and off-course gambling and the liberalisation of drinking hours and censorship restrictions.

to run the risk of offending even a few of the huge majority of voting 'christians'.[76]

Just how many would have been offended is hard to ascertain. J.A. Barrie in 1975, estimated that only ten per cent of the Australian population were 'committed and practising members of the Christian Church'[77] and Dr. Norman Habel, on 'Crossways' on April 4, 1975, argued convincingly that Australians generally lack a religious dimension,[78] even though the 1971 Census indicated that 85 per cent of South Australians declared themselves 'Christians'.[79] A Gallop Poll taken in October, 1973, concluded that 61 per cent of South Australian parents wanted religious instruction in State schools[80] and, no doubt, the ALP leadership took that poll seriously. In spite of the results of that poll, there was no demand from

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(76) As it turned out less than one month later, the Labor Government was returned but only on the guaranteed support of the Independent Speaker, Ted Connolly.

(77) J.A. Barrie, 'The non-educational justification of religious education', Journal of Christian Education, September 1975, p.21.

(78) 'Crossways' transcript, entitled 'Teaching teachers to teach religion' in Almond and Woolcock, op.cit., pp.235-243.
'Crossways' is a religious programme on Sunday nights on the commercial radio station 5KA, in which, incidentally, the Methodist Church holds substantial shares.

(79) South Australian Year Book, 1974, p.159, quoted by R.Standfield in letter to Editor, Advertiser, 3 February, 1975: see Almond and Woolcock, op.cit., p.99.

(80) This Morgan Gallup Poll asked "Firstly, about Religious Instruction in State Schools, for one hour each week. In your opinion, should all State Schools have a one-hour class on religion each week or not". The number of respondents for South Australia was 877 of whom 61.3 per cent said "yes, should", 29.3 per cent said "should not" and 9.4 per cent had no opinion. That compares with a national average of 74.8 per cent yes, 19.1 per cent no, and 6.1 per cent no opinion. South Australia, in fact, had the lowest percentage of 'yes' respondents of all states. Interestingly, in September of the following year, in another Morgan Gallup Poll, when asked "Do you agree that religion is an important thing in life", 53.9 per cent of South Australians replied affirmatively, which was above the national average of 52.0 per cent.

parent associations although SAASSO certainly approved of the course.[81]

Amongst teachers, there was very little concern. A few individuals waved often paranoid flags about the dangers surrounding the whole issue but neither SAIT nor any of its associations had committed themselves one way or the other. From February to September 1975 the South Australian Teachers Journal ran a continuing debate on various aspects of religious education[82] and on March, 1975, SAIT Executive passed a motion asking the Education Minister to use the usual advisory Curriculum Board to assess the religious education curriculum rather than using a Special Board which had been recommended by the Steinle Committee.[83] In general, however, South Australian teacher reaction contrasted markedly with the firm stand taken by the Victorian Teachers Union when they rejected the Russell Committee's recommendation to establish a religious education course in that State.[84]

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(81) letter by SAASSO President to KOSSS President, dated 10 June, 1975 in Almond and Woolcock, op.cit., p.315.

(82) See February 12 (KOSSS): February 26 (KOSSS): March 12 (South Australian Religious Studies Lecturers); March 26 (Almond, Ninnes); April 9 (Religious Education Project Team, Joske); April 23 Religious Education Project Team, Golding, Richardson); May 28 (Chandler, Magor, Ninnes); June 11 (KOSSS, Richardson, P.T.A.): June 25 (SAASSO, Religious Education Project Team); July 9 (ALP, KOSSS, McArthur, Brice, Johnston); July 23 (KOSSS, Ninnes); September 10 (Bretting).

(83) The motion stated:
"That S.A.I.T. write to the Minister in the following terms:
(1) This Institute is concerned that the Minister has initiated courses outside the normal operations of the Advisory Curriculum Boards.
(2) This Institute asks therefore that the Minister desists from setting up committees on curriculum matters and allows the Advisory Curriculum Boards to function in the usual way by:
(i) setting up sub-committees;
(ii) vetting proposed courses;
(iii) recommending courses to the Director-General of Education who has the statutory responsibility for the introduction or modification of courses of instruction in schools."
quoted by L.E. Golding in a letter to South Australian Teachers Journal, 23 April, 1975.
The special Board subsequently resigned in June, 1975.

(84) see Religious Education in State Schools, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1974.

The media gave the issue only some special coverage. As mentioned above, the Australian Broadcasting Commission ran a 'Monday Conference'[85] on the subject, while radio 5AD gave access to the opposing protagonists on a 'Provocation' programme[86] and the Advertiser printed a fairly even number of 'for' and 'against' letters to the Editor,[87] but there was no editorial comment and no big headlines on the issue.

Apart from KOSSS and the ALP Convention, the only other public opposition came from local universities. On June 10, 1975, 21 senior academics including Emeritus Professor W.G.K. Duncan, Professor Graeme Duncan and others[88] wrote an open letter to Hudson calling for the withdrawal of the Primary School course. Professor Richardson (School of Education, Flinders

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(85) Broadcast on ABC Television on Monday, March 3, 1975: a transcript is included in the Almond and Woolcock collection pp.159-191. The major speakers were Alan Ninnes and Stan Potter while audience commentators included R. Standfield (Project Team), P. Woolcock (President Humanist Society) I. Wilson (President SAASSO), K. Barley (KOSSS), Mr. Sinclairman (a Bahai), J. Sulan (South Australian Jewish Board of Deputies), J. Daniels (KOSSS), Dr. N. Habel (Head of Religious Studies, Adelaide College of Advanced Education), Ms. A. Levy (later, ALP member of Legislative Council), Professor L. Paleg (Liberal Jewish Congregation in South Australia).

(86) Peter Woolcock V Father John Flemming, February, 1975 ... Almond and Woolcock, op.cit., pp.143-153.

(87)

Advertiser printed	14	For	the course
	12	Against	" "
Sunday Mail	2	For	" "
News	1	Against	" "
Australian	1	"	" "
National Times	1	"	" "

(88) The others were Professor R.G. Brown, Mrs. Sue Dixon, Ms. G. Dunstan, Mr. L.J. Elliott Q.C., Dr. Earle Hackett, Dr. Judith Hay, Mr. Max Kau, Professor Leon Mann, Dr. H. Medlin, Dr. James Melville, Mrs. Hans Mincham, Professor G.C. Nerlich, Dr. H.J. Rodda, Professor W.P. Rogers, Dr. Heide Taylor, Professor J.R. Trevaskis, Professor H.R. Wallace and Dr. Frank Weston.
Signatures to copies of the Open Letter were held by K.P. Barley, Secretary, KOSSS.

University) and Ian Brice (Department of Education, Adelaide University), among others, also publicly expressed strong critiques of the whole religious education course.[89]

While the overt opposition to the Report and to the 'Course' emanated from a relatively narrow political base, their criticisms were not ignored and certainly they can take some of the credit for the much broadened courses which were produced by the Christian-orientated Project Team[90] in 1975 and subsequent years. The two courses, one for years three and four at the Primary level and the other for year ten at the secondary level, were forced to deal much more with comparative religion, with other non-religious world beliefs and with morals and values in a more philosophical manner. In addition, the very early evaluation of the course which was instigated largely through pressure from some of the ALP sub-branches, also forced the Project Team to tread very carefully whenever they got close to what could be deemed imbalance or bias or indoctrination, especially with regard to Christianity. In fact, that evaluation occured before the course had really got off the ground, which underlined the degree of disquiet that was felt at least amongst some concerned educationalists and politicians and, even more significantly, highlighted the political strength which they were able to bring to bear upon the traditionally powerful religious lobby in South Australia.

The evaluation was carried out by a steering committee, co-ordinated through the Research and Planning Branch of the Education Department. Its composition reflected varying interests including primary, secondary and tertiary teachers, parents and the Education Department. The committee contained a mixture of committed christians and curriculum-research people whose religious leanings were less blatant. The terms of reference given this committee indicated the details of the opposition which the trial religious education course had provoked,

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(89) South Australian Teachers Journal, 23 April, 1975, and South Australian Teachers Journal, 9 July, 1975.

(90) Project Team leader, A. Ninnes, was a former Director of Youth Work with the Methodist Department of Christian Education; the other two members were R. Standfield and F. Drew.

namely (a) the stated aims and objectives of the syllabuses, (b) their achievement, (c) the tendencies toward indoctrination or bias and (d) the general suitability of the course for primary and secondary schools.[91]

The committee had, in fact, grown from two earlier committees which had been set up to evaluate separately the primary and secondary syllabuses for Years three and four and Year ten respectively. The evaluation used three different methods - (a) an empirical study over a two year period (1976-1977)[92] (b) reports from five interstate academics who were asked to

> "critically (analyse) and evaluate section 5 of Religious Education in State Schools (1973), the Steinle Report, and the Religious Education Syllabus for years one to twelve in the South Australian state schools system as produced by the Religious Education Project Team."[93]

and (c) submissions received from numerous individuals and groups.

Initially, the Evaluation Committee accepted the not uncontroversial

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(91) Evaluation of Religious Education 1976, Education Department Researching and Planning, 1977, p.6.
The Evaluation Committee was composed of: Mr. I.D. Brice, Lecturer, Department of Education, Adelaide University, Mr. A.G. Gale, Teacher, Taperoo High School, Mrs. C. Fehlberg, Principal, Modbury Primary School and member of the Primary Schools Curriculum Review Team, Miss J.A. Foord, Teacher, Elizabeth West High School, Mrs. Y. Harvie, nominated by the Combined Schools Welfare Clubs, Mr. B. Johnston, Research Officer in the Research and Planning Branch of the South Australian Education Department, Mrs. M. Lee, a parent, member of the Primary Schools Advisory Curriculum Board, Mr. R. Martin, Deputy Principal, Klemzig Primary School and member of the Primary Schools Advisory Curriculum Board, Mr. J. Norsworthy, Teacher, Mount Barker High School and Teacher of the Religious Education Programme at year ten (replaced A.G. Dale), Mr. M. Shange, Superintendent of Schools, Mr. L.W. Whalen, Superintendent of Schools (Chairman), Mr. M. Winter, Deputy Pricipal, Unley High School (replaced J.A. Foord), Mr. D. Hogben, Senior Lecturer, School of Education, Flinders University, who was unable to accept an invitation to be a member of the Committee, but who acted as an adviser.

(92) ibid., p.9. The aims of the empirical evaluation were - "1. To assess the suitability for the students of the aims, approaches and materials that are used in the courses. 2. To assess the suitability for the teachers of the curriculum materials, and to survey the needs for in-service training. 3. To survey possibilities and teachers' views concerning integration of religious education with other parts of the curriculum. 4. To provide an assessment of the degree to which indoctrination and bias are evident in what is covered, and the way it is covered."

(93) ibid., p.7.

claim that

> "discussion of religion has a valid place in a state school education"[94],

and that since

> "overtly religious phenomena, particularly those relating to religions other than Christianity, are often ignored in teaching at both primary and secondary levels",[95]

then some form of religious course was justified. Their first recommendation highlighted the trouble which the Project Team had experienced in balancing the treatment of different religious and other world views - it suggested that better public relations would help overcome the fears which many parents and teachers and others might hold.[96] The Committee took the pluralistic attitude that

> "there are good reasons, both cultural and pedagogical, for giving special attention to Christianity particularly when exploring the general nature and role of religion in human society. However, one of the most fundamental changes in Western culture in the present century is that for the first time there is a substantial number of people who seek to answer questions about ultimate meanings and values in ways that are not traditionally religious (e.g., humanism, existentialism, socialism). These should be major topics in the senior levels of the programme."[97]

Clearly, they were not entirely happy with the existing treatment, as their second recommendation requested that the concept 'the religious dimension of life and society' be discarded[98] and, in fact, they took quite a strong stand in stating that

> "Persistence with it (i.e. the term 'religious dimension of life') could reasonably be taken to imply that the reality of a supernatural dimension is assumed. Our conclusions are that the syllabus should make it clear that such an assumption is unacceptable in a state school education programme".[99]

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(94) ibid., p.11.

(95) ibid., p.11.

(96) ibid., p.12. Recommendation No.1. "The Committee recommends that the syllabus be improved by a more explicit communication to teachers and parents of criteria for determining what constitutes a balance in treatment of the different religions and world views."

(97) ibid., p.12.

(98) ibid.. pp.12-13

(99) ibid., p.13.

That statement stands uneasily with an earlier satisfaction that

> "there is no bias towards particular systems of religious beliefs, nor any explicit bias in favour of religious belief itself."[100]

The latter claim was also disputed by three of the academic evaluators. Bearlin suggested that

> "There would seem to be definite bias toward the importance of a religious position namely the Christian position in the Report's statement of aims... This bias is ameliorated in the syllabus statement where the bias in aims would seem to be toward taking seriously a belief position of some kind. The curriculum material would also seem orientated toward the achievement of such an aim. This would constitute a bias, but not toward a religious position so much as toward the ideological position which values coherent beliefs", 101 (emphasis added)

while Blaikie, noting a strong critical stand on religious beliefs in the syllabuses, felt that,

> "At worst the course will ultimately produce cynics, at best tolerant humanists. Whatever happens, the course should facilitate the development of some type of modern secularised (perhaps uncommitted) individual";[102]

and Crittenden, arriving at almost the opposite position, argued that while

> "it is certainly not the case that all morality must in some fashion, be religious... this is the view that the present programme, whatever the intentions of the designers, can hardly fail to inculcate... Thus, while a teacher is to be neutral in teaching about this or that religious belief or practice, he is presumably not to be neutral about the value of religion, or of being religious, as such. Obviously he cannot be neutral on the value of studying religion".[103]

The varying conclusions indicate that, above all else, any course on

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(100) ibid., p.12.

(101) ibid., pp.92-93, Margaret Bearlin is Senior Lecturer in Education at Canberra College of Advanced Education.

(102) ibid., p.102, Norman Blaikie works at Monash University.

(103) ibid., p.104, Brian Crittenden is Professor of Education at Latrobe University.

any subject will involve some form of bias and, depending on definitions, at least some implicit indoctrination, and so to pick religious education as a special case ignores every other course being offered in the school and, as such, can amount to little more than partisan nit-picking. In fact, the futility of that type of criticism is quite bluntly emphasized by a statement made by the Evaluation Committee when offering some assurance that the religious education syllabuses were not likely to indoctrinate: It wrote that

> "the orientation of the courses towards student recognition and acceptance of the differences between people is in line with the pluralistic nature of our society, and is likely, over a twelve year programme, to act as a safeguard against attempts at indoctrination." 104

In other words it would be acceptable largely because it was following a theory (that is, pluralism) which presumably was immune from any capacity to indoctrinate. Nowhere has a definition of indoctrination been more obviously tied to acceptable opinion or conventional thinking. Such a fickle definition obviously lacks both moral and intellectual integrity, but that does not solve the problem of using the concept 'indoctrination'.

It is prudent to remember that the word is usually used as a political weapon to question the credibility of a particular person or institution in their endeavours to transmit knowledge. I would argue that it is <u>not</u> an absolute concept; that its use is more often related to the degree of public acceptance of its context; for example, to be concrete, if most people agree that 'God exists', then to insist on the truth of that statement is not to indoctrinate and, alternatively, to insist that 'God does <u>not</u> exist' is, using the same consensus criteria, to indoctrinate. And further, I would suggest that it is usually used to discredit those theories which are not in accord and which, therefore, threaten mainstream morality or thought. If used in this way it can become a ploy to counter opposition rather than an 'objective criteria of truth'. To accept this argument, leads to a political responsibility - a responsibility to provide an intellectually and morally honest view - to offer an opposing position: a teacher who recognises the dominance of a particular piece of 'knowledge' ought to accept the obligation to counter it with a coherent,

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(104) ibid., p.13.

carefully selected, alternative argument.

If it is accepted that some form of censored selection is unavoidable in any transmission of information and, in addition, if it is accepted that certain powerful cultural institutions such as schools, universities, the press and other mass medias, public relations and advertising agencies, parliaments, courts and churches release 'knowledge' in a manner which tends to be biased in favour of a 'dominant' ideology (i.e. mainstream ideas) then the necessity for teachers, who feel strongly about that unbalanced control of information, to provide contrary ideas becomes important. However, that necessity poses a dilemma. If a strong, one-sided line is offered it may prove to be counter-productive in the sense that it will be ignored as sheer, 'subjective bias'; if both (or more) sides are given then the impression given may be that no one line is any better (i.e. 'true') than any other and, therefore, the criteria of 'truth' is a matter of opinion rather than judgement (i.e. the pluralist position). The following questions remain unanswered -should there be any obligation to provide information which is believed to be 'false'? Or should a person take the liberal stand which upholds the principle contained in the statement 'I disagree with your point of view but I will fight for your right to hold it and say it'? When is so-called 'indoctrination' not 'educational' (in its broad sense)? Does indoctrination necessarily imply irrationality? What is the intellectual status of an 'open mind'? To what extent, does a commitment imply indoctrination? Has indoctrination got anything to do with a lack of tolerance or a lack of sensitivity? How can indoctrination be gauged - as a method, as an intention, as an outcome?

The whole 'indoctrination' debate, perhaps appropriately defies consensus; however, KOSSS and others laid charges of indoctrination at the feet of the religious education course as part of their vitriolic and persistent attack on the course. The specific charge was that it was imbalanced in favour of Christianity - in the following ways; the content of the course,[105] its administrative structure in schools,[106] its administrative structure in

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(105) quantitatively, it dealt with 'christianity' in a most generous way.

(106) the local school committee was to be composed of up to four clergymen, up to two parents, up to two teachers and the school principal.

the department,[107] the legal enforcement of the course,[108] the motivations of the teachers of the course[109] - and that, therefore, the possibility of indoctrination was high.

Some humanist members of KOSSS might have argued that the 'religious' dimension of life was not a subject which deserved attention on the grounds that its claim and its theories were based on unsubstantiated premises or, indeed, on distortions and myths: however, KOSSS did not pursue that criticism and, instead, conceded that

> "religion is important historically, it's important culturally, it's a part of our tradition; there would be a tremendous gap in our children's education if they didn't know about religion"110

Perhaps they felt that to attack religion on its intrinsic logic and supernatural characteristics would be tactically naive given the fundamentally christian society in which they had to operate.

On the matter of specific bias, both KOSSS and the evaluators were on surer ground . The Evaluation Committee felt confident enough to recommend that 'critiques of religions and religious conflict' be added to the syllabus and that the name 'Religious Education' be replaced by some other title which more honestly identified the true nature of the course.

Of course, it could be argued, as the Evaluation Report mentioned, that the course intended to imply that the term 'religion' covered all the different values, attitudes, beliefs, life styles and cultures mentioned in the syllabus and that the broad definition was a deliberate attempt to render to religion a credibility and significance beyond what its

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(107) a special Advisory Curriculum Board, on which the heads of the five major christian churches in this state were members, was given the task of approving the course.

(108) The 1972- 74 Act states that "Regular provision shall be made for religious education in government schools..." (my emphasis). No other schools subject has that legal compulsion.

(109) It would not be unreasonable to assume that most people who elected to concentrate on teaching religious education would be committed christians.

(110) S. Potter, Monday Conference transcript, in Almond and Woolcock, op.cit., p.163.

existing image had been able to offer. If that was the case, and there were obviously sensible political reasons for such a plan, then countering that strategy would necessarily be in the interests of those people who objected to the proliferation of religious influence. Some of the other recommendations of the Evaluation Committee also tended to infer that the arguments of the religious protagonists were not accepted.

The sixth recommendation,[111] for example, seemed somewhat at odds with the justification for the inclusion of religious education in the school curriculum. Having accepted the argument that 'religion' was an important and useful study and that, at present, it was being neglected, to then suggest that it be left to individual schools to decide what it should offer was being slightly ambivalent.[112] Further indications that the Committee was unsure of the integrity of the course occurred later when, in what virtually amounted to contravention of the Education Act requirement, it recommended that religious education courses be offered on an elective basis at the secondary level.[113]

> "The Committee accepts the argument... that, although important, religious education should not be imposed as a core subject at all levels."[114]

That is not exactly a vote of confidence in the educational status of the course, especially the one which legally was the only compulsory subject in the whole curricula. To argue that making the course an elective was taking account of the paradox that existed when some student, on conscientious grounds, refused to study an otherwise compulsory subject was hardly preserving the spirit of the arguments (already accepted)

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(111) ibid., p.15, "The Committee recommends that individual schools be free to provide the religious education courses in the form, and at the standard level, they see as appropriate for their students."

(112) To be fair, any recommendations which made a particular programme compulsory and universal would have suffered the huge disadvantage of being directly at odds with contemporary departmental policy regarding school curriculum development and would, therefore, run the risk of being rejected almost out of hand.

(113) ibid., p.17.

(114) ibid., p.16.

that religious education had a valid place in the range of school subjects. Allowing an opt-out provision ensured that religious education, like its pre-decessor, religious instruction, continued to be treated as a special subject, quite different from all the other school subjects.

As the recommendations proceeded, the Committee continued to either undermine the credibility of the Project Team or to diminish the religiosity of their course. For example, Recommendation 13,[115] in a tone which could be interpreted as rather condescending, suggested that

> "The Project Team is to be congratulated on developing a religious education syllabus from scratch,"116

but then added that

> "The time has now arrived when a committee of persons from a wider variety of backgrounds should assume responsibility for further curriculum development. While a project team continues to exist, it should be responsible to this curriculum committee."117

In effect, the Project Team as constituted, was being declared redundant except, presumably, in the job of gathering 'religious' information which would, of course, still be vetted by the curriculum committee.

In the area of morals, the Project Team was also given scant praise even though the Evaluation Committee admitted candidly that

> "discussion of moral issues is an essential part of religious education and that the Religious Education Project Team's approach is an appropriate one as it does not rely upon acceptance of any particular religious position."118

To make such an admission and to then recommend that morals be taught quite separately underlines the dilemma which the Committee must have experienced in coming to terms with the conflict over whether the course

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(115) ibid., p.20. "the Committee recommends that a curriculum committee containing teachers from related subject areas and representatives of a wide range of religious and other beliefs be established."

(116) ibid., p.20.

(117) ibid., p.20.

(118) ibid., p.22.

should be emasculated, subtly re-orientated or left completely unchanged. To a large extent, they eventually opted for the second alternative and backed that decision with details from their empirical research which indicated a fairly unenthusiastic response to the pilot course from both students and teachers as well as from parents.

The comments made by the so-called[119] 'independent' evaluators also reinforced that middle position. They all noted that the Steinle Report had demonstrated a "bias towards Christianity and towards the importance of religious beliefs,"[120] and that such a predisposition had been partially balanced by the Project Team but that more work needed to be done to avoid future accusations of bias. They alluded to a more specific definition of the aims of the course, including its title; a broader treatment of the subject area; the problem of communicating complex concepts to young children; the distinction between religion and morality; the availability and training of religious education teachers; and the quite varied effects which such a course could have on students.[121]

The submissions received by the Committee also tended to push it into a central position and, given the pluralistic basis of the Committee's theory of curriculum development there was no other position which it could adopt. If 80 submissions were received (as there were), and both extremes were represented (as they were) then any conciliation would choose somewhere in the middle where it would be assumed that a compromise would make most people happy. Of the 80, nine wanted 'religion' kept right out of the state school curriculum; 30 (mostly from country people) wanted the syllabus to be available in all schools; most of them saw no problem with bias; while at the secondary level,

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(119) By 'so-called', I do not suggest that the evaluators were any less independent than either they could or should have been, or, than would have been any other evaluators. I am, rather, questioning the degree of independence which any evaluators can have in assessing a curriculum in which by virtue of their acquired expertise, they have an obvious interest and toward which they have a particularly developed disposition.

(120) ibid., p.23.

(121) ibid., pp.23-29.

> "the commonest recommendation was that religious education be offered as an elective subject either at all levels or at least at senior level".122

Here, as in other places in the Report, the term 'elective' was not defined - it could mean that it was an optional course outside the core areas of study, or it could refer to the options offered within a block of core subjects e.g. History/Art or Religion. The Evaluation Committee in fact, was at fault in not clarifying that notion.

The midpoint position referred to above also tended to be reinforced by the answers to the Empirical questions. While the survey result was only an interim study of a two year research programme, it, never-the-less, substantially covered most of the questions which had become the subject of vexed public debate. Most of the results of the empirical report could have been anticipated fairly accurately. For example, most teachers (76 per cent) had agreed that religious education was a suitable secondary course while only 18 per cent had indicated that they would be happy to teach it.[123] That statistical result seemed hardly surprising given the known national percentages of people who tacitly support our basic religious traditions (i.e. call themselves christians) and who take an active interest in church (i.e. attend regularly). Even less remarkable was the result that all the students taking Colleges of Advanced Education 'religious Studies' courses saw a place for the religious education subject in secondary schools[124] - one could assume that the students of such a course would support its inclusion; after all, they would be teaching it. The discovery that less than half of the 1,000 surveyed secondary school students were interested in religious education was equally unsurprising.[125] Given the nature of the religious instruction courses previously available in schools and the existing Social Studies/History courses, the fact that most students had never

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(122) ibid., p.42.

(123) ibid., p.49.

(124) ibid., p.50.

(125) ibid., p.51.

or had rarely studied

> "The Jewish religion, Humanism, Atheism, Australians' perceptions of religion, religion and conflict or such topics as 'Is organized religion a good thing?' 'Are religious people different from others?'"126

is, also, hardly unpredictable. And naturally, the only conclusion which could be made by a group which had already accepted the value of 'religion' as a school study would be that religious education could and should fill that gap. However, (the cynic could add) given the lack of specific staff or student interest perhaps it was not an essential course - hence, the compromise: make it an elective.

On the actual content of the course, the survey found that teachers and students were more concerned about 'depth' issues[127] than about historical, descriptive or phenomenological topics.[128] That would also surprise no-one! The mere titles would be crucial. For example, issues which have immediate and obvious relevance to students such as, parent-child relationships, would be much more likely to interest them than would more removed issues, such as, Judaism!

Perhaps one finding which could be rather alarming was that the students who had taken religious education overwhelmingly felt unaffected by the course. Whether that was because the survey was taken too early or whether a similar result would accrue from other subjects as well, would be hard to determine but one should be disturbed by the knowledge that the religious education syllabus was producing a seemingly inert reaction. That could indicate that either it was useless or that it was being taught badly or that the results were inaccurate - the latter could occur through the students anticipating, perhaps from the tenor of the question, that they were being asked to give an opinion on the degree of indoctrination

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(126) ibid., p.52-53.

(127) ibid., p.53-54, e.g., 'How should things be between teenagers and their parents?', ''how do we think we should behave?', 'What is important for people in our society?'.

(128) ibid., pp.54-56, e.g., 'The Jewish religion', 'The psychology of religion', 'Movements which are critical of traditional religions'.

which had gone on in the course and, being reluctant to show that they were, in any sense, being manipulated by their teachers, they may prefer to boldly insist that they had been swayed or affected neither one way nor the other. Whatever the reason, it would remain unsatisfactory and perhaps ominous that the syllabus was greeted with such bland nonchalance.

Protagonists of the course and others could also take cold comfort from the discovery that in all schools, including those where religious education was taught,

> "attitudes which are widely held by the students are that religion and in particular, Christianity, has little effect on the student's own life and that Eastern religions (e.g. Buddhism) are boring, stupid, out of date and primitive."129

Their concern can only be exacerbated by the report that 75 per cent of the year ten religious education students

> "disliked the course, that it was not a valuable or worthwhile subject and that if a few subjects had to be dropped from the school programme then religious education should be one of the first to be dropped."130

The question of course, was why? Was it unfairly associated with the old religious instruction? Was it just too new and not yet established? Was it resented because it was simply an extra subject? (Significantly Health Education, also a new and extra subject, was more popular!)[131] No clear answers have emerged but obviously the syllabus developers have some lost ground to gain if they are to have their energy, confidence and assertions vindicated.

The Primary School data revealed no fundamental variations from the Secondary School results. It seemed obvious that whether the empirical evaluation could be considered reliable or not, it would be unlikely to produce any unexpected results. The course had barely begun and the

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(129) ibid., p.62.

(130) ibid., p.66.

(131) The Health Education course does include a section on Sex Education.

questions were worded in a way which would provide for the usual cross-section of answers i.e. a few at both extremes and the bulk in the middle. Thus, it could hardly show any remarkable results and, in efffect, levered the Committee toward the conclusions that the course should be integrated at the primary level, made an elective at the secondary level and tidied up a little by changing its name, broadening its content, improving its public and professional presentation and maintaining its monitor research. That enabled them to give something to all the struggling groups - the fervid Christian lobby still had their course (even though it had been altered), the Humanists had seen its removal as a compulsory core subject and could sit back and watch its gradual demise, while the rest of the teachers, parents, students and minor protagonists could relax in the safe knowledge that nothing drastic had happened one way or the other - it was a perfect compromise.

The methodology of curriculum development was not the only clue to the political role which religious education would be likely to perform. The course itself, including the stated aims, provided useful evidence.

The Steinle Committee admitted their debt to the British religious education movement by adopting, as their general aim, virtually the same statement made by a 1971 Schools Council Working Paper.[132] They wrote

> "The aim of Religious Education is to enable children and young people to have a proper understanding of what is meant by a religious approach to life, and for most people in this country, the centre of this understanding will be the Christian approach. It is not the purpose of Religious Education to bring about a commitment to the Christian faith, but rather to create a sensitive understanding of the Christian faith and other beliefs by which people live."133

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(132) See Schools Council Working Paper 36 "Religious Education in Secondary Schools", Evans and Methuen, London, 1971, pp.17-18, (steinle Report p.16) see also aims of the Heads of Churches, Preamble of Appendix A, (Steinle Report, p.2).

(133) Steinle Report, p.16.

They then specified in more detail, eight integral aims.[134] Those aims candidly and unashamedly inferred that the course was intended to fulfill the function of transmitting a religious message, generally, and a Christian one in particular. The project team was forced to modify those aims as their blatant commitment to a narrow view of religion became an embarrassment and, as well, became the butt of wide public attack. They summarised their new aims as

> "an understanding of the religious dimension of life and society; a better understanding of themselves and their relations with others; a sensitive understanding of the religious beliefs (including Christian, non-Christian and non-religious beliefs) by which people live; a greater tolerance for the beliefs of others."135

Those aims, of course reflect what they perceive as the nature of religion itself. But the Steinle Committee spent very little space defining 'religion'. Indeed, a single sentence appeared in the main body of the report -

> "Religion is a complex phenomena which has been an integral part of the life of men throughout recorded history".136

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(134) ibid., pp.16-17: "Aims - 5.4.1. To create conditions in which students can develop an understanding of the religious dimension of life and its interpretation.
5.4.2. To assist students to develop a deeper understanding of themselves and others.
5.4.3. To assist students to develop good relations with other people and a concern for the world in which they live.
5.4.4. To enable students to appreciate the Judaeo-Christian heritage which has played such a powerful role in their culture.
5.4.5. To inform students about the life and teachings of Christ and growth of the Church to modern times.
5.4.6. To help provide students with an understanding of religious symbols and language.
5.4.7. To help provide students with an understanding of beliefs, other than Christianity, by which people live.
5.4.8. To help students to recognise the challenge and practical consequences of holding a particular religious belief."

(135) Religious Education Syllabus, Years one - twelve, second Draft, Education Department of South Australia, 1975, p.2.

(136) Steinle Report, p.14.

which was so vague as to be quite unsatisfactory. In an Appendix, they added a little more:

> "Although no single definition of religion is adequate - either the definitions are too broad and hence vague and meaningless, or they are too narrow and hence exclude some religious phenomena; still religion has to do basically with discernment and commitment. Religions claim to discern the meaning and purpose of life; they also commit their adherents to action appropriate to this discernment (usually this commitment involves a community of believers, ritual for the renewal of vision and commitment, and instruments for the proclamation and carrying out of its message). In brief, and greatly over-simplified, religion is that insight for which a person gives his life."137

That sort of definition still does not suffice, for to describe something as simply another, albeit a very "distinctive way of interpreting experience",[138] in no way justified it as a worthwhile subject for study. An adequate definition would need to say much more than "religion is .... a mode of understanding"[139] which, of course, while not being incorrect, does no more than assert its existence and fails to provide a reasonable case for its merit as a serious area of enquiry.

Interestingly, the Steinle Report included a series of statements which had been made by a number of different religious and education groups and reports: they were obviously meant to show the direction of the Steinle Committee's deliberations and they do just that. They all insisted on the value of religion, and indeed, they pleaded its necessity as part of a total education -

> "... anyone who grows up not seeing and feeling that there is such a thing as genuine religious belief is, to that extent, undeveloped and incomplete as a human being."140

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(137) ibid., Appendix C, pp.4-5.

(138) ibid., Appendix C, p.5.

(139) ibid., Appendix C, p.5.

(140) ibid., Appendix C. p.5.

The Steinle Committee certainly gave no evidence that they had even glanced at reports or articles which argued that religion was a 'doubtful' study or that it was unnecessary as part of a general education. They very firmly and carefully selected their information for the report which meant that the following rather one-sided lobbies dominated - Phillip Phenix, Realms of Meaning;[141] Christian Education Movement and British Council of Churches[142]; The Social Morality Council[143]; the religious and cultural panel of the Birmingham Community Relations Committee[144]; The Church of England Commission on Religious Education in Schools.[145] Culled sections of the Spens Report, Crowther Report

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(141) ibid., Appendix C, p.3. "Religion, therefore, in Phenix' view, is one of the characteristic ways in which man discovers meaning and therefore is an appropriate area for study in the curriculum of general education."

(142) ibid., p.7. "Religion in schools ... its comprehensive purpose ... to help children and young people to grow up into whole and mature people, with understanding of themselves, able to develop good relations with other people and the world around them, and capable of responding to God."

(143) ibid., p.8. "The aim of religious education in a county school is to enable a boy or girl to have proper understanding of what is meant by a religious approach to life, and for most children in this country the centre of this understanding will be the Christian approach."

(144) ibid., p.9."It should be part of an education for life in this country that children come to know something of the traditional religion of the land, namely Christianity. There is in general no conflict of interests at this point for it is noteworthy that Asian families, whilst holding firmly to their children should also be fully introduced to the 'British way of life', including its religious aspects."

(145) ibid., pp.10-11. "the aim of religious education should be to explore the place and significance of religion in human life and so to make a distinctive contribution to each pupil's search for a faith by which to live. To achieve this aim, the teacher will seek to introduce most pupils to that biblical, historical and theological knowledge which forms the cognitive basis of the Christian faith... to show his pupils the insights provided by Christian faith and experience into a wide range of personal, social and ethical problems... to discuss with his pupils the various answers and approaches provided by this faith to those basic questions of life and existence which perplex all thoughtful men. Where appropriate he will study other religions and belief systems. The teacher is thus seeking rather to initiate his pupils into knowledge which he encourages them to explore and appreciate, than into a system of

(Footnote 145 continued overleaf).

and Newsom Report[146] were also chosen.

The Project Team made a broader search but were still unable to find a suitable definition of religion.

> "Attempts at defining it are always unsatisfactory. One definition that has been offered is 'belief in a supreme Being or Beings', but that excludes Theravada Buddhism which is non-theistic and it would clearly be ridiculous to say that this form of Buddhism is not a religion. Another definition that has been tried is 'commitment to a set of beliefs by which one lives and for which one is prepared to make great sacrifices' but this would include Marxism and no Marxist would want his beliefs and life-style described as religious. Yet a third definition - 'that which is our deepest concern' or 'that which we value most' - embraces absolutely everyone, including the atheist. It makes religion synonymous with being human, and although it can be very useful within a religion for describing what a religious perspective on life involves, it fails as a general definition of religion because it evacuates the word of any distinctive meaning."147

That quotation came from Jean Holm who concluded that, while defining religion was impossible, it was obvious to everyone -

> "Although a satisfactory definition of religion eludes us we can recognise it and we can study it".[148]

She then proceeded, with rather misplaced confidence, to deal with what religion can do, ignoring the important qualifications that it neither necessarily nor exclusively does things. She claimed that

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(145 continued) belief which he requires them to accept. To press for acceptance of a particular faith or belief system is the duty and privilege of the Churches and other similar religious bodies. It is certainly not the task of a teacher in a county school. If the teacher is to press for any conversion, it is conversion from a shallow and unreflective attitude to life. If he is to press for commitment, it is commitment to the religious quest, to that search for meaning, purpose and value which is open to all men."

(146) ibid., p.6, Spens Report, 1938; Crowther Report, 1959; Newsom Report, 1963.

(147) Religious Education Syllabus, p.6.

(148) ibid., p.6.

> "A religion provides a coherent interpretation of the whole of human life and experience, and it also involves a way of life that is based on that interpretation. Religions suggest answers to the ultimate questions which man asks about his existence. Ultimate questions are the kind of questions to which there are no definitive answers in the human sciences, questions like 'Who am I?' 'What is man?' 'Who is my neighbour?' 'Is there any meaning in life?' 'Is death the end?' 'How do I come to terms with evil and suffering?' All these questions are about meaning. They are concerned with the meaning of man's existence, his relationship with others, his relationship with the natural world."149

The problem of definition deserves comment. It is precisely the political nature of religion which has made it so difficult to define. It has purposes for different groups - it could be a form of salvation, a moral guide, an eccentric explanation of the world, a perverted plot, a reactionary force etc.. Because it has always been used politically (often unconsciously) it cannot be defined in any one way which would be greeted with universal approval. Such concepts as democracy, revolution, peace or terrorism have been no easier to define; they are all words which have been used to justify or provoke certain actions or responses and their meanings vary with the particular interest of the respective group which has been engaged in the defence or attack of the actions. Religion ought to be acknowledged as having that important quality because only then people who use it and refer to it, can be clearly seen as acting politically. And if it is to be taught as a school subject then that aspect ought to be the basis of the study. There is a danger that, emerging from the discussion of the educational value of religion, it's major characteristic will be lost. The compromise syllabus, which tends to develop almost inevitably when a course such as religion attempts to satisfy all its definitions, is quite often articulated as a completely amoral, apolitical curriculum. As a reaction to charges of bias and indoctrination, it tends to retreat to a position which is then advertised as being fair, even, middle-of-the-road, inoffensive, objective and, therefore, of absolute educational integrity. That is an impossible position to hold realistically. It is a dishonest stand and should be exposed as such. It is a shrewd reaction to the criticism levelled at the 'old' justifications for religious study which were blatantly political and, therefore, simple to attack. A less dogmatic,

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(149) ibid., p.6.

less overtly partisan approach to religion exempts itself from the 'old' criticisms by virtue of its camouflage. While the political wisdom of such a stand if undeniable, it is not a satisfactory method of avoiding intellectual attacks. In that sense, it is naive to suggest that religious education is fundamentally different from religious instruction - though it is much more sophisticated. Religious instruction was intended to socialise children in a specific way so they were

> "incorporated into a particular religious sub-society. This may or may not have been successful.."150

That would seem a correct observation but when Crotty, a lecturer in Religious Studies at Salisbury College for Advanced Education, sees the intention of religious education as being to encourage children to

> "grasp the multiplicity of sub-societies that interlock and make it (i.e. the whole society) up... to emerge from school aware of self and others, tolerant of many views and free in the pursuance of his own".151

he seems on much shakier ground. He would be right if it were the case that all world-views were seriously and comprehensively presented as part of the total religious education course. However, it is empirically true that Christianity and its particular religious notions get preferential treatment which, in effect, amounts to aiming to produce in children a sympathetic disposition towards the basic Christian standards. That intention is not, in essence, unlike that of religious instruction: the major difference being, that instead of one particular denominational interpretation being offered, a broader, non-sectarian view emerges which is more educationally sophisticated and, I suspect, more culturally convincing.

That difference had been keenly noted by the Christian churches, who, worried by a declining attendance and a general rejection of the institutional aspects of religion (i.e. its ritual, creed and theology), were displaying an astute sense of judgement when they decided to move away from the 'Bible-bashing', doctrinaire method of preaching. If children could be taught that religion in general, was, firstly, a

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(150) Crotty R., 'Society, religion and religious education', Dialogue: a catholic journal of education, Vol.10, No.2, August, 1976, pp.12-13.

(151) ibid., p.13.

a world-wide phenomena, and that all countries had their own historically-related religions, then the sheer diversity of religious practice and religious thought could work towards restoring the credibility and integrity which the Australian churches had seemed to be losing. By being offered an immensely wide range of religious experiences, the student would be encouraged by the non-compulsory alternatives and impressed by the close connections between a person's religion, their social mores and their history. Logically, that would do no harm to the Christian tradition in Australia.

Alan Ninnes has scouted around that issue, admitting the strong influence which religion can have on a society, but denying that a course on religion would be aimed at encouraging a sympathetic and positive attitude towards our Christian cultural heritage.[152] He was, in fact, simply being devious because he later quoted from the Report of the Committee on Religious Education in Victoria which baldly stated that

> "Religious Education can develop in students the capacity to understand and assess religion as a major and continuing influence in human society, as a unique dimension of experience and meaning, and as a source of values in their own quest for a philosophy of life."152

Adrian S. Brown, a Project Team colleague of Ninnes, has been more direct. He wrote that

> "One function of education is to maintain, transform, augment and transmit culture from generation to generation. It is a process of social integration into a living culture. For the individual, it is also aimed at the growth and development of a person. In this context, religious education can serve a useful purpose."154

Indeed, Brown went on to state exactly how religious education could serve as a method of social control, of cultural appreciation and, therefore, of Christian understanding:

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(152) Ninnes, op.cit., p.7, "Religious Education is not an attempt to... pass on the tradition of our culture." from 'Religious Education - What and Why'.

(153) ibid., p.7.

(154) Brown, Adrian S., 'Religious Phenomena and Depth Issues', in Soundings, op.cit., p.11.

> "Social integration into a living culture and the growth and development of the individual person can only be realised if the necessary preparation takes place. The necessary preparation should include an understanding of those facets of society which are contributors, both historically and currently, to the contemporary expression of that living culture. Religious education in South Australia seeks to contribute to the laying of the proper foundations in two ways. Initially, in years one to six the syllabus places an emphasis on self awareness. Self awareness is a preparation for children to listen to other points of view; views about life which may or may not be familiar. If the acceptance of social diversity and tolerance of another's point of view is to become reality, then a child must be prepared for it. We already live in a pluralistic society and adjustments to living in that society call for such acceptance and tolerance. The presence of world views requires that they be accepted for what they are and not as one's cultural background might presuppose or imagine it to be. As the children are introduced to such phenomena as architecture, stories and traditions, arts and writings, it is hoped that these will be seen not so much as unnatural, foreign or unreal, but rather as experiences of the ways in which people seek to answer the question of 'Who am I?' What may once have seemed strange may still appear unusual but it is no longer considered ridiculous. The acceptance of cultural diversity can break down prejudice and improve communication between peoples of our society as well as with peoples of other societies.
>
> Years seven to twelve build on the foundations laid in the earlier years. At this stage the students are capable of looking at the phenomena through eyes which might be considered less prejudiced than otherwise might have been the case. At these levels there is more direct examination of the phenomena. The students also examine the impact which these phenomena might have in deciding the social and ethical understandings of the followers of various worlds of meaning."155

The religious education syllabus, as outlined in the Project Teams Second Draft booklet and as detailed in the Teachers Handbook, Running the Maze, follows the approach mentioned above by Brown. The aim clearly has been that in the early years at Primary school, by using concrete, explicit examples, it should be shown that most people are religious. That is achieved by using such a broad indicator that people who celebrate Christmas or love each other or are part of a happy family are implicated as being

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(155) ibid., pp. 11-12.

just as religious as those who believe that God exists or who attend church. By inferring that religion is concerned with all day-to-day things as well as 'depth' things, any religion, and especially Christianity in Australia, is given sanction as an appropriate and, indeed, preferable life-style. Only after that information and impression has been transmitted are the critical questions asked. 'Is there a God?' or 'Is Christianity good?' etc. are deemed to be appropriate questions only for older, secondary students who have already been encouraged to develop a positive tendency toward religion.

Blaikie, one of the academic evaluators of the course, agreed that the intention was clearly to produce a sympathy for Christianity although he felt that the opposite may well occur.

> "I suspect that behind the stated general aim for the course is the implication that if a well informed, mature and undistorted view of religion, particularly Christianity, is presented, the students may be attracted to a religious view of life. The chances are that if there is any change in students' beliefs and views, it may be different from that desired by all the religious interests in the community."156

Crittenden noted the same intention of the course but apparently saw no possibility of a back-lash when he commented that religion became, at least by implication if not by definition, linked with morality, culture, goodness, life itself: he concluded,

> "given their very broad interpretation of religion, it is perhaps one of their explicit objectives."157

There could be no denying that by including

> "physical, emotional and social make-up... sports, hobbies... food, chores, games, stories... home, class, club, community and school"158

as legitimate religious issues, the impression that religion was an essential and all-pervasive aspect of human existence would be portrayed: that, of course, is the impression only of believers and, as such, is quite unsympathetic toward 'non-believers'.

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(156) Evaluation Report, p.102.

(157) ibid., p.104.

(158) Religious Education Syllabus, p.17.

The subject matter topics for Depth Issues in Years four - six appear to be part of the same plan and are so broad as to be almost absurd. For example:

> "6. Responsibilities - To help children recognise what responsibilities are.
> 7. Physical environment - To enable children to be aware of the social influence of their physical environment.
> 8. Cultural diversity - To create in children an awareness of cultural diversity.
> 9. Social influences - To help children understand more about the interaction of people.
> 10. Communication - To show children the necessity of effective communication.
> 11. Social attitudes and qualities - To provide opportunities for children to clarify their values and understanding of various social attitudes
> 12. Friends and relations - To indicate to children the importance of their relationships with various people and groups.
> 13. Acceptance and rejection - To help children examine critically behaviours resulting in acceptance and rejection.
> 14. Competition and co-operation - To enable children to compare the resultant behaviours from competition and co-operation." 159

To treat those huge topics on the level of generality which would occur at years four - six would be to deny their very seriousness. Only if they were refined into manageable and less ambitious sub-topics could they be tackled usefully. I suspect that, in fact, their very breadth ensures that they are sifted for simplicity and, since they are part of a religious course, the intention would be that in the process of sifting, they would be handled as purely religious questions. Quite clearly, those areas of the human essence do not necessarily require, and would not necessarily benefit from being treated as, religious analysis. Indeed, the danger exists that such discussion could degenerate into flimsy, spiritual diatribe given the brief time allocated for consideration of those topics. On the other hand, the topics could usually be better handled in some other way since it would be hard to sustain a justification, except in the most esoteric or eccentric manner, that the religious aspect of all issues mentioned was vital or even, in many cases, significant.

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(159) ibid., pp.16-19.

but, the insistence by the curriculum authors that such education topics be treated as religious themes is indicative of the determined and persistent manner in which the protagonists for religious education pursued their cause. They had seen the demise of religious instruction during the fifties and sixties and they recognised that only by broadening their concepts of religious teaching would they be able to cope with the challenges of declining church involvement, rising 'religious' expenditure and a growing social interest in the politics of morality, challenges which became apparent during the 1960s.

The decisions to widen the notion of religion to appeal to more people, to induce the state to subsidise the teaching of religion in schools, and to involve the church in socially progressive and politically radical movements were not made without substantial internal opposition. Having coped with that opposition, however, the Churches still had to struggle against those groups who did not favour the teaching of religion in state schools. That struggle was highlighted by shrewd political administration and organisation from both sides. The outcome, which saw religious education taught in some state schools and which saw it taught as a very broadly-sweeping subject, was a compromise which assisted church survival, did not threaten the ideological boundaries of the state educational institutions and enabled the parameters of political struggle in South Australia to maintain their legitimacy. In other words, the framework provided by the state for ideological battles - the educational, judicial and electoral apparatuses - functioned as a mechanism by which organised movements could continue to represent opposing interests without undermining the hegemonic basis of a stable society.

The next chapter deals with the details of that framework and offers a theoretical analysis of the role played by religion, generally, and the churches, specifically, in a state where capitalism and christianity form the fundamental hegemonic structures of that society.

CHAPTER IV

INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the role which Christianity plays in an industrial, capitalist society. Having previously noted (in chapter one) the limited work done in Australia on this question, I turn to the Marxist and pluralist theories of religious influence which have been developed by American, European and British writers.

In analysing the Marxist (and neo-Marxist) perspective, I lament the lack of specific detail which usually characterises its treatment of religion although I acknowledge its broad thrust as providing a useful explanation of the function of religion in a society bearing the sociological and economic characteristics of Australia. By focusing on the concept of hegemony (as developed by Gramsci and Sallach in particular) I attempt to pin-point the social and political roles which Marx, Engels and the Christian Marxists (including Bonino, Gutierrez, Braaten, Craig and Pritchard) have credited to Christianity. My conclusion is that Marx and Engels tended to treat religion too much as a monolithic institution and therefore exaggerated its integrative function at the expense of giving credence to its potential for political 'dysfunction'; while, the Christian Marxists fail to appreciate the contradictions inherent within a theory of religion which insists that spiritual notions of heaven, sin and God are quite compatible with 'Marxist' notions of economic, social and political history. While Marx and Engels denied the possibility of religions being revolutionary, those Christians who have claimed to represent that very possibility tend to underestimate the fundamental role which Christianity has played in supporting the status quo in capitalist societies. In passing, I counter the argument put by Patience that religion is and has been a threat to capitalism by observing that, along with the Christian Marxists, he also misunderstands the way the 'capitalist' process works.

The pluralist theories of religion are presented by using, mainly, Weber and Berger, although I also refer to some Australian analysts who have written within that framework. I indicate the crude pluralistic position which is often used by Christians to describe society, to extol certain

virtues and condemn certain others, to offer social (and political and economic) goals and to recommend action, social or otherwise. By juxtaposing that set of quite banal arguments with the more sophisticated pluralist theory of religious influence as espoused by Berger, Merton and some of the Australian sociologist and historians who have written about Christianity, I conclude that all those writers who work within that theoretical framework which emphasises stability, equilibrium, consensus, integration (variously called a structural-functionalist approach, a positivist or systems approach, a pluralist approach etc.) tend to neglect conflict and dissent, to under-emphasise change and instead to concentrate on 'norms' which are presented as fairly static aspects of existing society. In fact, the tendency is for writers in this tradition to justify the status quo, to become apologists for the conservative function of religion in a capitalist society and therefore to ignore the political consequences of religious 'dysfunction'. Needless to say, the pluralists have no notion of the class role which religion might play, but even those who deal with religious conflict tend to explain it only in psychological or social terms. In other words, they fail to examine the relation between economic structural change and religious change.

In my examination of the pluralist approach to the political sociology of religion in Australia, I deal with the survey studies by Mol, Banks, Wilson, Black and Roulston, and by comparing them with American survey work, observe that they tend to provide a quite a-historical analysis. The historical perspective, however, when it has been attempted by such Australians as Campbell, Dickey, Hill and Burns, has also been inadequate since they have failed to place the religious changes into a politico-economic context. An exception is Hollingworth although his work, as yet, is restricted to one short article.

The last section of this chapter returns to the specific case of religious education and by relating it to its particular historical period, I attempt to avoid some of the deficiencies of former 'religious' studies. The struggle to introduce religious education to South Australian state schools is compared with similar attempts in the other states; the major protagonist church, the Methodist, is historically examined; and the

political implications of religious education vis-a-vis the state government are proposed.

My conclusion is that, theoretically, both the Marxist (or neo-Marxist) approach and the pluralist (or structural-functionalist) approach are deficient in explaining the particular function which the Christian churches in South Australia have performed especially with regard to the issue of religious education. The Marxists tend to ignore the conflicts between the churches in the area of politics as well as education while the pluralists tend to ignore the economic and ideological links which the churches have with the State and to avoid explaining those links in terms of the economic history of a society. I argue that since both the 'Churches' and the 'State' operate in South Australia (or any other society) where economic and ideological factors tend to have a dominant influence, then both institutions use each other when it is expedient to do so; and, therefore, in essence, tend to rely on each other for their respective economic and ideological survival.

Taken broadly, this theory provides the explanation for the introduction of religious education into state schools and sets the framework within which the specific aspects of political manoeuvre could occur.

Having indicated the quite transparent pre-occupations of the Religious Education course, having identified the groups involved in the struggle to replace Religious Instruction with Religious Education and having traced the roots of the struggle, the next task, of noting the broader aims which the religious education protagonists hold and of placing those aims in the total perspective which informs their political ineterests, should enable some assessment to be made of the victories, casualties, tactics and strategies pertinent to the religious education battle.

In order to locate this particular South Australian struggle in a theoretical context (i.e. to ask the question, why?) initially, a broad analysis of the political role which the Christian religion plays will be offered and then, using that backdrop, the local stage will be examined. This organization is not just a matter of conforming to an academic convention but is justifiable, rather, on the grounds that, first, South Australian christianity was derivative as was its opposition and, secondly, that religious education courses were being implemented in other Australian states as well as in Britain and the United States at around the same time - thus, to not slot the local struggle into its wider environment would incur the proper charges of naive parochialism (i.e. blindness) or blatant insularity (i.e. closing one's eyes).

However, a broad analysis, unless it is also precise, will not serve the purpose of accurately detailing the christian hegemony which I have argued above has been an imperious historical factor in the development of educational institutions in this state. Thus, while it is substantially true, it is useful only in a general sense to observe, as Miliband has, that Christianity serves to reinforce certain values, cognitions and symbols which are learned and internalised so that one accepts the capitalist social order and its values and thereby rejects alternatives to them.[1]

That broad view of religion as a tool of conservative social control could

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(1) Miliband R., The State in Capitalist Society, the analysis of the western system of power, Quartet Books, London, 1969, pp.179-184, 198-205.

be challenged by pointing to the political work of such Marxist Christians as Freire, Torres, Bonino, Gutierrez et al in South America and other places, who, clearly, have been involved in quite the opposite goal - that of revolutionising the existing social structure and of overtly encouraging alternative values and political systems.[2]

The revolutionary work of those religios should not be seen as an outright refutation of Miliband's thesis[3], but rather, should act as a reminder that any examination of christianity will need to include an awareness of the complex ambivalence which tends to become a functional characteristic of any church which is working to survive in a turbulent political arena. While the two roles, of being revolutionary on the one hand and being reactionary on the other, appear to be contradictory one must avoid the mistake of interpreting that paradox either as evidence that the church is necessarily split or that one or the other exclusively represents the 'real' faith. Instead, one must modify the black and white temptations (an unfortunate memorial of liberal pluralism) and observe the true nature of the church as being subject to the sort of conflict which makes it unsettled and unpredictable even while maintaining certain stead-fast goals and conceptions. Its role should be seen not as a static, rigid, ever-reliable fortress but instead as a resilient, mobile and malleable bastion, capable of political adjustment and forever mindful of survival. So long as that ductile quality inherent within

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(2) Merton also noted that religion, historically, has, at times, been 'dysfunctional' and 'non-integrative', see R.K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, 1965, pp.28ff.

(3) To be fair, Miliband did recognise that some church people had been influential in working towards radical political change. His essential point however, was that these progressive clerics tended to be the exception rather than the rule, see R. Miliband, op.cit., p.183,

> "Even so, clerical anti-conservatism, whether militant or moderate, has always and in all capitalist countries been a markedly minority attitude, which has to be set against a general pattern of pronounced conservatism, often of an exceedingly reactionary kind, regarding the political and moral questions at issue in society".

religious movements is recognised then there is less likelihood that one will fall into the trap of defining their functions in terms which inadequately account for their often intricate actions.

Even Marx and Engels, to whom Miliband acknowledged some debt in developing his theory of religious influence, were aware that religion could be used as a positive instrument of class struggle[4], even though they have been best remembered for their 'opiate of the masses' interpretation of the fundamental influence of religion.

To understand the role of christianity in a capitalist society, a general theory of hegemony needs to be constructed and then the particular ways in which religion works as part of that total structural dominance must be specified. While Marx never used the term 'hegemony', his theory of class struggle can provide a basis for building an explanation of how hegemony works. He argued that capitalist systems were maintained by the constant interaction of economic, political and ideological means.[5] The interaction functioned in the following way, he argued:

> "The ideas of the ruling class are, in every epoch, the ruling ideas i.e. the class which is the ruling material force in society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby generally speaking the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it."[6]

The important point which that passage makes and which seems to be fundamental to an understanding of hegemony is that, while the ideology of the capitalist class was the dominant ideology of any society, it was not so much an enforced dominance as one which achieved its ascendency by being actively accepted by the oppressed class. Gramsci, the Italian Marxist[7] who dealt more specifically with the concept of hegemony, argued

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(4) Bonino, Jose Miquez, Christians and Marxists: the mutual challenge to revolution, Hodder and Stroughton, London, 1976, p. 26.

(5) Marx, K., The German Ideology, International Publishers, New York, 1970, p. 64.

(6) ibid, p.61.

(7) Antonio Gramsci was born in 1891 in Sardinia. During the 1913-20 strikes and factory occupations in Turin he was involved both as a militant and a theoretician. He founded the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and was imprisoned by Mussolini from 1926 until his death in 1937.

that the consent which the oppressed class gave was a result of the hegemonic control which emanated from the position of power held by the ruling class. He wrote that,

> "a social group, which had its own conception of the world, even though embryonic (which shows itself in actions, and so only spasmodically, occasionally, that is, when such a group moves in an organic unity) has, as a result of intellectual subordination and submission, borrowed a conception which is not its own from another group, and this it affirms in words. And this borrowed conception it also believes it is following, because it follows it in 'normal' times, when its conduct is not independent and autonomous but precisely subordinate and submissive."8

By that process, in all the areas of taste, morality, custom, religious and political principles, social relations, and intellectual and moral relations, hegemony can be obtained

> "by virtue of its social and intellectual prestige and its supposedly superior function in the world of production."9

The precise mechanics of that process, however, remained problematical and one needs to go beyond Gramsci for some answers. David Sallach distinguished two separate explanations by which hegemonic development could be described. Those two explanations provide some basis for understanding the actual process of hegemony. The first one, called 'inculcation hegemony' argued that the

> "institutional propagation of bourgeois values shapes the consciousness (and sometimes even the need structure) of the 'masses'. Consequently, the exploited class (or classes) adopt and consciously accept bourgeois ideology, a process which creates a major prop of the bourgeois social order."10

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(8) Gramsci, A., The Modern Prince and Other Writings, International Publishers, New York, 1957, p. 61.

(9) Craig, R., 'Ideology as United States religious history: the political economy of religion', in Radical Religion, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1976, p. 8.

(10) Sallach, D., 'The meaning of hegemony', Australian Left Review, No. 41, 1973, p. 1.

He criticised that view because it implied a static picture of the class struggle. Certainly it does argue that the ideology of the ruling class is inculcated into everyone else's mind, that a one-way flow of ideology occurs and that, effectively, the ideology becomes pervasive. The assumption must be that there is no such thing as a working class consciousness, that there is no ideological struggle between classes and that, therefore, the bourgeois ideology becomes total, absolute and omnipresent. That, of course, is not true and represents a misreading of the notion 'dominant ideology' which, far from denying the existence of different ideologies, by definition, acknowledges the conflict and indicates the relative strength of the classes which are involved in political struggle.

Sallach supported the second explanation of hegemony, the 'institutional' interpretation, which stated that

> "ideological institutions impose parameters on the flow of ideas, debate, discourse etc.... The result is not an acceptance of a capitalist world view by the exploited classes but, rather the circumspection and repression of perspectives which are critical or revolutionary. Within the exploited classes (and within each member of such a class) ideologies and 'belief systems' are underdeveloped, fragmented, contradictory and internally inconsistent.... The ideological institutions operate in such a way as to forestall and prevent the articulation of class interests. Both within the working class and within individual members of the class bourgeois values and positions hostile to the capitalist order are held side-by-side (in a constantly changing mosaic) with little or no feeling of discomfort. In this view, ideological hegemony is less of domination and manipulation of the minds of the working class than it is a structural condition which inheres in the capitalist organisation of society."11

That explanation possesses the appealing claims that a person's consciousness develops in a very loose and contradictory way, that it is a function of a person's day-to-day experiences at work and at home, and most importantly, that it develops within very broad but strict boundaries which tend to be drawn by the ruling class, through their

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(11) ibid., pp. 1-2.

access to the State. When he referred to 'ideological institutions', Gallach showed his debt to Althusser's concept of state ideological apparatuses by which he meant the mass media, universities and schools as well as churches. The second explanation does seem more convincing, although it is still operating at the level of generality. However, at least he has gone beyond the superficial view that the whole hegemonic process works entirely by sly manipulation and planned control.

Dealing with specifics must be the next problem. A detailed look at religion may not only provide an understanding of its own perceived role but also, by example, could demonstrate the specific framework within which hegemony operates. This work has been attempted by such writers as Weber and Berger [12] who, because they were analysing Christianity, are relevant to the Australian context.

They both argued that one influence which religion tends to have is in acting as an agent of social control and, as a consequence, in legitimating economic and other exploitation. As a control agent, it can act to redirect anger, to produce resignation, or to sustain certain moral values. It can sanctify private property and economic competition by relating those potentially exploitative practices to civil liberty dogma and by linking economic success with virtue and superiority. In that way, it can provide a moral framework for equating wealth and social station with ability and conversely, condemning poverty as individual vice and poor people as morally deserving of their deprivation.

They concede, of course, that religious rhetoric has not been so damning, and, in fact, has often performed the role of giving capitalism a 'human' face, of camouflaging it's grossest inequalities, and especially, of calming the victims of exploitation into accepting the anaesthetic of spiritual comfort. The churches can, therefore, effectively stave off or re-direct personal anger which may have led to collective action

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(12) Berger, P.L., The Noise of Solemn Assemblies; christian commitment and the religious establishment in America, Doubleday & Co. Inc., 1961, p. 72. See also H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. (eds.), From Max Weber: essays in sociology, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., London, pp. 267-302, 331-3.

against the existing power mechanism.[13]

In that way, they argue, the churches have performed a function which has been complex but predominantly integrative. While there have been notable examples of rebellion and subversion, historically the churches have tended to defend the social order as a total system and insist that, while specific shortcomings may require reform, fundamentally the lot of the individual is to adapt and submit rather than to challenge the prevailing political regime. For example, while they might condemn a harsh attitude towards the unemployed, they would, nevertheless, tend to uphold the work ethic and job disciplines which have traditionally characterised the capitalist work-place: similarly, while extreme poverty would always be met with the utmost sympathy they would usually fall well short of recommending a massive redistribution of wealth as a method of alleviating widespread poverty - indeed, monetary gifts which may represent only a tiny fraction of a rich person's total wealth are often publicly applauded as significant and almost sacrifical displays of generosity. In other words, the churches have tended to render their social criticisms within very clearly defined parameters and, far from ever challenging the status quo, in fact, have reinforced the basic authority of the conservative forces of society.[14]

Logically, therefore, the churches and the state have had a common interest in fostering habits of stoic obedience and submissive tolerance and so they each developed reciprocal benefits in extolling the authority of the other for the preservation of their mutually-held code of morality. However, the phenomena of commonness should not be seen as the result of two separate bodies crudely forming an open alliance for their mutual strength nor should it be interpreted as some accidental or incidental union which fate had bequeathed. Instead, in the words of Linda Pritchard,

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(13) Berger, P.L., The Social Reality of Religion, Penguin Books, Great Britain, 1967, pp.150-1.

(14) ibid., pp.38-60.

> "Religion must be seen as a process whereby a wide range of attitudes, beliefs, rituals and structures which serve a mediating role between the individual and society interact with particular social, political and economic structures in order to form an ideology appropriate to that society. This definition emphasizes the dialectual relationship between collective world views and the material bases of society, where religion is conceived of as being rooted in the social structure rather than separate from or determined by the specific political or economic organization of the society".15

Australian religious writers have suggested that one of the methods by which christianity was able to build itself into the social structure was through its role as a "symbolic mouthpiece",[16] for the goals and strategies of the ruling class. By approving of reconciliation instead of confrontation, trust instead of suspicion, co-operation instead of rivalry and love instead of fear,[17] it tended to squash any class identification, hide any class antagonism, quell any conflict of interest and, in so doing, help to create, with considerable success, the visions of 'community interest' and 'national interest' as being the goals for which everyone should strive, regardless of their perceived status or class position. The churches have helped define what 'decent' people would think like, how they would act and who they would admire; they have helped define what 'reasonable' and 'mature' and 'sensible' people would be like. They have given those concepts credibility by referring to well-known commercial, legal, land-owning and 'security' individuals[18] who apparently exhibit those characteristics. They sell the concept by insisting that while those characteristics belong to special people, they are also available to 'ordinary' people to practice every day of the week. The 'average' person, the 'man-in-the-street', the 'silent majority' can, therefore, all be euphemistically defined as decent, reasonable, mature and sensible.

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(15) Pritchard, L., 'Historiography of religion in the United States', Radical Religion, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1976, p. 15.

(16) Dickey, B., 'Australian society in retrospect', Interchange, No.21,1977 p. 58.

(17) Hill, B., 'Teaching as reconciliation', Journal of Christian Education, Vol. 19, Dec.1976, pp. 6-10.

(18) e.g., managing directors, medical practitioners, judges, generals, police commissioners, presidents of R.S.L./Rotary/Lions/Apex Clubs/ employer associations tend to be lauded as paragons of virtue and wory of being set up as examples for lesser mortals to admire, respect and, if possible, ape.

And what specific characteristics have these 'average' but 'decent people exhibited? They have been stoic, battling, uncomplaining people (submissive?) who have worked hard over a long period and who have not begrudged their lot; while their rewards have seemed small and even unfair, they have accepted them because they 'know' that it has all been for 'the good of the country'. They have done it because, by definition, their mere doing it has ensured that they have been 'decent' - in short, the circular reinforcement provided by Christianity has been a substantial factor in the development of cultural goals, national identifications and ethical codes.

Peter Berger, in his non-Marxist sociological analysis of religion in the United States, also described the social adjustment values, which christians tend to hold as part of their commitment to what they regard as the national heritage.

> "Since one ought fundamentally to adjust to society, this means that society is fundamentally good ... the main approach to the social world is one of affirming the status quo and of seeking to harmonize whatever forces tend to disturb it. Thus..., one is opposed to conflict and in favour of peace on the social scene... this bias towards harmony operates regardless of what the situation may be,"[19]

for example, industrial, racial or any other conflict. Berger went on to argue that

> "the forces which seek to disrupt the system become seen as disturbers of that peace (as, naturally, they are). In other words, the value of social adjustment frequently involves an implicit conservative viewpoint. Social reality is seen as a harmonious equilibrium and social ethics is concentrated on the disturbance of that equilibrium."[20]

That latter comment by Berger introduces a second role which he sees Christianity as performing. It relates to a theory of pluralism. That theory as used by christians argues that everyone is an individual and is, therefore, different (i.e. unique). That has become useful

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(19) Berger P., op.cit., pp.46-47.

(20) ibid., p.47.

in justifying the status quo since it effectively has rejected any concept of class or consortium. It has regarded any common identity as being purely incidental. It then advises that each person's individuality should be respected because that is their real identity, their very essence, their sacredness. Thus, a person's foibles and eccentricities must be tolerated even if they seem unfortunate or unnecessary. But, and this is crucial to the theory, tolerance has its boundaries and these have been drawn around what are frequently referred to as the parameters of national interest and decency. Thus, absurd contradictions emanate where persons who have declared themselves to be homosexual may be declared intolerable because that would be seen as going beyond the bounds of decency, where-as people who have killed in a war may become national heroes. Similarly, people who make excessive profits from business deals may be acclaimed as being clever and admirable while a shop-lifter may be deemed to be a social outcast. Those contradictions of morality have been made possible because our tolerance levels have been determined by very specific, historically-developed boundaries of what constitutes a threat to the existing social order.

The theory of pluralism has thus been used very selectively and, often, with very sinister motives - certain individuals have been declared acceptable while certain others have not. In that way, all those individuals who have become unacceptable can then be labelled 'threats' or 'indecent'; they cease to become homosexuals or drunks or petty criminals or radicals or whatever - they, instead, are simply dangerous and undesirable.

By extending that theory, christianity can condone or condemn where appropriate. It can preach about behaviour and issue media statements in an attempt to influence public opinion through the articulations of certain well-placed individuals whose social status is regarded as impeccable e.g. governors, doctors, judges, parliamentarians and businessmen, not to mention members of the clergy.

Much of the spurious moralising is mouthed by people whose utterances may well wear the distinction born of social station, but which often sound hollow when matched against the active social morality of their class. It has, of course, been a great paradox that christianity has

been able to exist in highly secular societies and has often been lauded by the very paragons of secularism. But the paradox should not be regarded as accidental; it has been a factor of supreme ideological importance that the values of the church be seen to be similar to those of other social, economic and political institutions.[21] They can then all inter-connect, justify each other and have the ultimate effect of providing a structural description of the total society - in other words, they have worked to define what will be considered good and proper and what is bad and improper.

The spiritual concern which some religious intellectuals have, becomes a secondary consideration in a society whose churches have primarily provided a coherence of values and a method of identifying and judging those who are likely to be threats to the rulers of that society. Instead, the political function of integrating the value system has assumed a primary role. And yet, not all the churches have been integrative.

Quite often, they have espoused views which were seen by many as old-fashioned or unrealistic or wrong. They have frequently encountered antagonism in dealing with censorship, abortion, capital punishment, family life, artistic taste etc. but the usual outcome has been a compromise which will ensure their survival. Thus, the churches may positively take up, or acquiesce to, the prevailing view or it may provide a rearguard reaction against the new values which would, of course, satisfy a significant number of people who hide within their ally, the upholder of religious ethics. In other words, the churches

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(21) e.g. schools, courts, parliaments; often the pronouncement made at traditional commemorations such as Anzac Day, Australia Day (including the Honours List announcements), the Queens Birthday, as well as speeches delivered by employers regarding job applications, industrial relations or economic progress also tend to reinforce the values of the religious institutions. As Berger wrote,

> The religious institution does not (perhaps one should say "not any longer") generate its own values; instead, it ratifies and sanctifies the values prevalent in the general community. There is little if any difference between the values propogated by the religious institution and those of any secular institution of equivalent status in the community..."

ibid., pp.40-41.

have acted as a refuge for those who have found certain social changes deplorable and have effectively shielded these potentially hostile people from the habits which would have upset them and possibly even have pushed them towards disruptive tactics.[22]

In that sense, the churches have worked with the State to defuse potential disorder. Acceptance of religious ideology has usually been tantamount to accepting the dominant political ideology. For example, patriotism has ~~always~~ usually had religious overtones; a christian has rarely been deemed a political threat. However, that is not to suggest that the churches have constantly ridden an even wave or that they have always got State support. As mentioned above, they have often had to fight for their survival and in doing so they have been forced to play the same competitive game which characterises many other facets of capitalist society.[23] For example, they have had to fight amongst themselves (i.e. against each other's denomination or sect) for membership, money and media promotion; they have competed against various movements to win the addicts, the neurotics, the pacifists etc. and as part of that battle they have had to fight over new answers to the problems of alienation, guilt and tyranny. As well, they have had to battle over new fulfillments, self-realizations, loves and understandings to win that ever woo-able but often elusive clientele, the young. Those struggles have sometimes involved image changes (e.g. the Roman Catholic rock mass) which have been risky but which ultimately ensured survival

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(22) The possibility would exist, that if the churches abandoned their traditional views then the reactionary element within the churches would fight a rear-guard action outside the normal structures of the churches. For example, the Festival of Light, while being closely identified with the churches generally, has in fact, constituted a militant reaction against the progressive section of the christian denominations. It has been composed of those christians who feel that the churches have abandoned the fundamentalist teachings of the scriptures. Their political militancy has been a direct result of the failure of their church to provide them with an ally with which they can identify in their concern and even abhorence at what they recognise as moral decay. If the churches had been less progressive, then I am arguing that such movements as the Festival of Light or the Family Action Movement would not have developed.

(23) Hol J., 'Religion and competition', Interchange, No.11, 1972, pp.132-134.

and continued influence.

Essentially, the churches' survival has depended on their capacity to work within the changing economic structures of their society because unless it could provide, and be seen to be providing support - even if only tacit approval - for the existing work organisations, decision-making hierarchies, production routines and, most important, work relations, then it would be likely to find itself on a limb and unable to insist on its own relevance to that society. That does not mean that a church is utterly subordinate to the dominant social system and that it must follow every economic change. It can manoeuvre and modify but it could not easily confront the dominant ethos on any fundamental level. What it has tended to do whenever it has changed, is to re-direct its energy toward an avenue which it had perhaps not previously utilised but which would still be acceptable to the prevailing ideology.

I mentioned above that Berger's analysis of religion was sociological but not in the Marxist tradition. While he offered an illuminating thesis it tended to ignore the important political function which religion had performed in maintaining class divisions. For Marx, of course, that function was part of the essence of religion - he and Engels provided an analysis of how religion worked as a social force in the interest of the dominant ideology of a society. In the Communist Manifesto, Marx described religion as

> "one of the forms of social consciousness, one of the elements of the superstructure in class society".[24]

Engels argued that

> "religion depends on the development of the social relations, on the class structure of society ... the exploiting classes... (foster) religion as a means of blinding and curbing the popular masses."[25]

He referred, in the Introduction to the English Edition of Socialism: Utopian and Scientific, to historical examples of how the English

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(24) Marx K. and Engels F., On Religion, Second Impression, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow, 1957, p.8.

(25) ibid., p.9.

bourgeoisie used religion to keep the "lower orders"[26] in place. He saw religious ideas (as well as judical and philosophical ideas) as being

> "more or less remote offshoots of the economical relations prevailing in a given society".[27]

and therefore, as having no substantial existence apart from those relations. Marx, in a damning attack on Christianity in the Communism of the Paper Rhenischer Beobachter asserted that the social principles which the christian churches had defended throughout history simply justified and, indeed, heralded the ideas of the ruling class of each period and in no sense could survive on any other basis:

> "The social principles of Christianity justified the slavery of Antiquity, glorified the serfdom of the Middle Ages and equally know, when necessary, how to defend the oppression of the proletariat, although they make a pitiful face over it. The social principles of Christianity preach the necessity of a ruling and an oppressed class and all they have for the latter is the pious wish the former will be charitable..."[28]

Christianity was thus, for Marx, the 'opiate' of the proletariat and an integral part of the dominance maintained by the bourgeoisie. In explaining the rise of the Christian religion, Engels wrote

> "... in all classes there was necessarily a number of people who despairing of material salvation, sought in its stead a spiritual salvation, a consolation in their consciousness to save them from utter despair... We hardly need to note that the majority of those who were pining for such consolation of their consciousness, for this flight from the external world into the internal, were necessarily among the slaves. It was in the midst of this general economic, political, intellectual and moral decadence that Christianity appeared."[29]

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(26) ibid., p.303.
> "In short, the English bourgeoisie now had to take a part in keeping down the 'lower orders', the great producing mass of the nation, and one of the means employed for that purpose was the influence of religion"., and p.312 "Now, if ever, the people must be kept in order by moral means, and the first and foremost of all moral means, of action upon the masses is and remains - religion."

(27) ibid., p.313.

(28) ibid., p.83.

(29) ibid., p.202.

The use of religion as a sop to the poor, as a way of redirecting their despair so as to avoid overt class war was the basis for Marx and Engel's anti-church position and led them to the view that since religion was being used as a tool by the exploiting classes in the struggle against the working masses, then it must be destroyed. But its destruction was no simple task; on the contrary, its resilience was one of its major characteristics. Marx described it in the following way -

> "It is an old and historically established maxim that obsolete social forces, nominally still in possession of all the attributes of power and continuing to vegetate long after the basis of their existence has rotted away, inasmuch as the heirs are quarrelling among themselves over the inheritance even before the obituary notice has been printed and the testament read - that these forces once more summon all their strength before their agony of death, pass from the defensive to the offensive, challenge instead of giving way, and seek to draw the most extreme conclusions from premises which have only been put in question but already condemned."[30] not

In Marx and Engels' theory of the base and the superstructure, Christianity was part of the superstructure and could, therefore, only be changed as the economic base changed. In other words, until the class relations, which exist as part of the nature of the capitalist economic system, could be fundamentally altered, then religion, which can only act as an integral element of those relations, cannot disappear though it may vary its functions in detail. To prevent the accusation of narrow dogmatism, Engels qualified his concept of the base and the superstructure relation by stating that

> "if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the <u>only</u> determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure - political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc. judical forms and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brain of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas - also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their <u>form</u>. There is an interaction of all these elements in which ... the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary."[31]

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(30) ibid., p.127.

(31) ibid., pp.274-275.

The experience of the religious education issue in South Australia may fit into that framework, although to acknowledge the complex nature of the Christian churches, one would need to refine the specific characteristics of what goes to make up a total religious hegemony in a capitalist society.

Certain statistical and other evidence can be produced to show that different churches seem to suffer quite contrasting variations in church attendance, value adherence and attitude formation, and that those variations indicate that the 'christianity' of a country, far from being treated as a monolithic institution, needs to be seen as a fragmented, wavering, struggling group of separate and often antagonistic elements. If that assertion were to be wholly accepted then Marx's view of religion could be challenged on the basis that such a group of churches could never or rarely be involved in any collusion (be it intellectual, political or 'spiritual') and could not be described as a tool of exploitation against the 'working masses' and further, that its survival or destruction should not be seen as an essential aspect of the transition from a capitalist to a socialist society. That particular point has received plenty of debate especially amongst Christian Marxists and while those arguing for the compatability of Christianity and Marxism have been numerically strengthening, their case has not been intellectually convincing.

In order to test Marx's thesis on the function of religion and, in addition, to clarify the role christians perceive for themselves in a capitalist society, a brief examination of the case which the radical christians make for the compatability between their political theology and Marxism should be useful. W. Norman Potter, in a very cogent study of the claims of contemporary christian radicals,[32] identified their characteristics as

> a."a critical approach to existing Western institutions and values"

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(32) Porter W.N., Contemporary Christian Radicalism; A critical study study of the theologians of hope and liberation, unpublished Politics Honours thesis, Flinders University, 1976.

> b."an adherence to Christianity.... which is thought to be ultimately more radical than Marxism"
> c. a view that "Marxism cuts effectively to the root of political reality and uncovers a viable alternative" and finally
> d.that "Jesus' life and teaching, as depicted in the canonical gospels are sympathetic to radical politics and indeed, serve as a model for contemporary revolutionaries."[33]

In referring to specific political theologians such as Jurgen Moltmann, Gustaro Gutierrez, Jose Miguez Bonino, Rubenn Alves, Paul Lehmann and others, Porter defined political theology as being

> "critically aware of its social and political context. In particular, it is theology which accepts Marx's indictment of religion which serves as an opium of the people, and theology which attempts to counteract Marx's criticism by demonstrating the this-worldly, concrete thrust of Christianity".34

Moltmann insisted, quite correctly, that all theology was always political; that is, it either supported the status quo or it did not, and if it did not, then it was supporting change. However, he and other radical Christians have claimed that Christianity is politically biased towards change which seems a much more dubious assertion. If the brief of Christianity has been to change the world[35] then a lot of traditional theology has surely seemed less than committed to its duty. There is no

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(33) ibid., pp.87-88.

(34) ibid., p.11, "this worldly" refers to the world of here and now, as distinct from the world to come.

(35) ibid., p.13, "By his definition, Gutierrez, means that the task of theology is a concrete, active one designed to transform the world". Gutierrez's definition of theology was "critical reflection on historical praxis", see G. Gutierrez, A Theology of Liberation, Student Christian Movement Press, London, 1974, p.6.
see also, ibid., p.14, "Praxis...contains... the power of criticism at work in transforming human history and society in order to make human life more human.", see Braaten C., Eschatology and Ethics; essays on the theology and ethics of the Kingdom of God, Augsburg Press, Minesota, 1974, p.142,
see also, ibid., p.14, "Tying this term (i.e. praxis) into the very definition of theology strongly suggests that an interpretation of social reality is made prior to the use of any biblical analysis."

doubt that the liberation theologians have aimed to transform the existing order, but whether they are part of the mainstream history of theology seems doubtful since, not only has there been little evidence of such a radical history, but Jesus himself, while being a "political rebel"[36] of sorts, was not quite the radical which those contemporary rebels claim and can hardly be treated as a model for political action today.

Porter concluded that christian radicals ultimately fail to put a convincing case for the compatability between Christianity and Marxism because they have not recognised the differences between Marx and some recent Marxists on the role of christianity,[37] they have failed to adhere to a strict theological analysis of Christianity and they have misinterpreted Jesus' politics when they attempt to use him as a political model for a Christian-Marxist approach to social change.

As stated above, Marx saw religion as an indication that people were alienated and therefore unable to achieve a true consciousness. He argued that its essentially spiritual nature was simply a diversion from the reality of day-to-day life and that only when that reality was changed from its existing, exploitative role would people cease to

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(36) ibid., p.65, "...Jesus was a political rebel who challenged the authority of Roman rule. This was one of the reasons for his death.. Death by crucifixion was reserved for criminals and political revolutionaries... The view that Jesus was politically radical has some plausibility, although we need to recognise that his radicalism is significantly different from that of most contemporary revolutionaries. Indeed, one suspects that his radicalism is at odds with that of the Christian radicals. If we take Jesus seriously, he supplies criteria enabling us to evaluate contemporary political thought. He is also silent on many areas, and cannot be taken as a complete model."

(37) ibid., pp.84-85, e.g. Marx argued that Christianity was reactionary and therefore worked against revolutionising the proletariat, see Marx K., 'The Communism of Paper Rheinischer Beobachter', in Marx K. and Engels F., On Religion, p.84. On the other hand, many Christian-Marxists are much more sympathetic towards Christianity and, in fact, argue that it has made a positive and significant contribution to humanity, see Garaudy R., Marxism in the Twentieth Century, Collins Books, London, 1970, pp.162-163.

need religion.[38]

> "While Marx granted that religion had, on occasions, played a progressive role in human history and exposed the inadequacy of alienated society, it ultimately remained the 'opium of the people'. Above all, it deferred to an external Being, powers which belonged to man. That is to say, man, according to Marx, contained within himself the ability to convert his alienating environment into one where his human essence could express its creative potential, and make the formerly gruesome means of existence - which in this form caused man's religious quest - a rewarding experience - thus negating the need for a religious quest. On Marx's terms, socialism renders religion unnecessary".[39]

That view, of course, contrasts fundamentally with that of Christian radicals who argue that a

> "socialist order will.... guarantee the expression of social and economic justice and equality - imperatives for Christians. Further.... Christian participation in the envisaged new society will ensure that it remains human and attuned to liberating possibilities". 40

Thus, the paradox stands: Christians claiming to be Marxists but, in Marx's own words, being condemned for not being politically radical. Moreover, the christian notion that the kingdom of God marks the ultimate stage of human history is inconsistent with the Marxist view that people will strive for a 'man-made' perfect society. The christian idea of a 'paradise' is, of course, non-physical (i.e. not on this earth) whereas Marxists insist that their 'classless' society is a non-spiritual goal. The christian concept of original sin is also inconsistent with the Marxist claim that human problems can be solved by economic and related changes and not by divine intervention.

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(38) Marx and Engels, On Religion, op. cit., p.42.

(39) Porter, op. cit., p.85.

(40) ibid., p.84.

While Porter's analysis of the inadequacy of the radical Christian position remains convincing, the fact that growing numbers of theologians and other Christians have become actively involved in both short-term and long-term struggles against conservative and reactionary political regimes, then, whether they call themselves Marxists or not and whether their labelling is correct or not, does not hide their significance.

Porter also admits to their importance: thus, the following conclusions can be made - that traditional theology has been conservative and, by-and-large, the churches have, historically, been involved in defending the status quo; and that their traditional function has not been in the interests of the oppressed class. In other words, Marx's thesis was essentially correct. On the other hand, some church movements and some radical Christians have been overt participants in politically radical struggles and have been clearly working in the interests of the oppressed classes.

A curious though not convincing argument can be proposed that, far from being compatible with capitalism, religion has been and remains a direct threat to its survival and, instead, atheism serves as a necessary prop to the capitalist system. The argument can be advanced thus:

> "Capitalism is characterised by its dehumanising of people, by the ways in which it violates the integrity and depth of the human spirit and by the ways it brutalises the richness of human relationships... Capitalism cannot allow people to think too deeply about human nature and the human destiny. It needs facile minds and pliable people ..."[41]

On the other hand,

> "The religious mind is deeply reflective and aware of the ground of being. It delves beneath the surface trivialities ... seeks to replace the emptiness, the loneliness and the inhumanity of contemporary capitalism with the revolutionary notions of love and community, of

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(41) Patience A., 'Capitalism's Reliance on Atheism', unpublished paper, Flinders University, Adelaide, 1978.

> reconciliation and acceptance. It seeks tenderness and mercy in the face of violence and hatred. It plumbs the depth of the human experience in an urgent search for peace."[42]

The conclusion then proferred is that since the religious mind seems out of step with the nature of capital then it must pose a serious threat to the capitalist process. Further, capitalism must rely on atheism for the very reason that it is unconcerned with the human spirit and the deep human values and would, therefore, be able to discourage people from questioning the daily workings of capitalism.

The capital-athiest reliance thesis can be attacked at a number of points. It could be argued that athiests have not ceased to be essentially religious and that, therefore, they would be unlikely to pose any more of a threat to the existing social order than would their more overtly religious counterpart. Mircea Eliade, in a historical-philosophical study of the nature of religion, wrote that

> "the modern man who feels that he is non-religious still retains a large stock of camouflaged myths and degenerated rituals."[43]

By myths, he meant those which have been generated through movies, books, occults, psychoanalysis etc.[44] and by rituals, he was referring to marriage feasts, birthday parties, New Year festivals, job and house celebrations, wedding initiations etc.[45]

> "In short, the majority of men 'without religion' still hold to pseudo-religions and degenerated mythologies. There is nothing surprising in this, for, as we saw, profane man is the descendent of homo-religiosus and he cannot wipe out his own history - that is, the behaviour of his religious ancestors which has made him

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(42) ibid., p.1.

(43) Eliade M., The Sacred and the Profane; the nature of religion, a Harvest Book, New York, 1959, pp.204-205.

(44) ibid., pp.205-208.

(45) ibid., p.205.

> what he is today. This is all the more true because a great part of his existence is fed by impulses that come to him from the depths of his being, from the zone that has been called the 'unconscious'. A purely rational man is an abstraction; he is never found in real life. Every human being is made up at once of his conscious activity and his irrational experiences. Now, the contents and structures of the unconscious exhibit astonishing similarities to mythological images and figures ... the unconscious offers him (i.e. man) solutions for the difficulties of his own life, and in this way plays the role of religion, for before making an existence a creator of values, religion ensures its integrity."[46]

Whether that argument is credible or not, there are other more direct ways in which the 'capital-atheist reliance' theory can be exposed. It has misunderstood how capitalism works; it has a wrong conception of how people think and act; and it is badly informed about both the religious and the atheist mind.

Dealing with those points in order; it sees capitalism as being a system run by an all-powerful, utterly overwhelming ruling class which functions by using and abusing people in a process of absolute manipulation. That is an incorrect analysis of capitalism. Far from being absolute controllers, the ruling class has been constantly engaged in a struggle to maintain its position of influence and that struggle, in fact, has produced a demonstrably volatile history.

Coupled with that static, monolithic treatment of capitalism, it also propounds a view of people which denies them any authority or independence. While one may argue about the relative freedom and autonomy which people have, one can only blindly observe them as having none of either. People have not been as pliable and as facile as Patience asserts; they have been engaged in many battles on many levels in their life-time struggles to achieve various goals. It is too simplistic and glib to deny the realities of those battles which have neither been always won by the ruling class nor have they always been dehumanising.

So to the third point: it is superficial to regard the religious mind as a clearly definable entity. A religious mind does not necessarily do all that has been attributed to it - a person's religiosity is not a

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(46) ibid., p.209.

concise, common quality. It may be threatening to capitalism when it focuses on alternative systems of political organisation (as many of the marxist priests in the Third World have) but it can also be a great defender of capitalism when it supports the status quo, preaches the morality of the ruling class and concentrates only crudely (as it often has) on the deep issues of human existence. Put another way, it is shallow to insist that religion is incompatible with capitalism - clearly it can be supportive, though it, occasionally, has not been.

Fourthly, the atheism as described also suffers from being too banal to be capable of understanding the essence of its position. Atheists have been and still are concerned with deep human values; they do deal with the fundamental problems of our existence and to wipe them off as simply bearing "irreligious ideologies of the bourgeois order"[47] is to do them an injustice. They have sought answers to the same 'revolutionary notions' with which religios have grappled and their politics has often, indeed, usually been uncomfortable for the ruling class. Thus, in no sense, should atheism be seen as providing a necessary prop to the capitalist system.

The 'capital-atheist reliance' thesis flounders on its basic error of describing capitalism as an a-historical imposition, puppettered by the ruling class, and involved in the prime objective of debasing people so that they will be completely pre-occupied with the so-called "surface trivialities"[48] of life. As indicated above, that is a gross confusion of how capitalism works, and worse, it has ignored the single most vital activity of the capitalist process, class struggle - i.e. the day-to-day, 'surface' battles conducted at work and at home which have been integral to the total function of capitalism. When these fundamental aspects of the capitalist system are noted, there is no chance that judgements such as those made by Patience can be sustained. In fact, his dogmatic assertions are no more convincing than are those which the radical theologians make and indeed, both their erroneous arguments ought to remind the political analyst of the pitfalls involved in over-generalising about groups of people.

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(47) Patience, op.cit., p.1.

(48) ibid., p.1.

Therefore having accepted that christians cannot be exclusively mustered into either the radical or the conservative camp, one needs to treat the South Australian experience with more specificity. There is no doubt that our dominant theologians have been and are still being overwhelmingly traditional and that, as far as the churches involved in the religious education push were concerned, their major intent was conservative. And whilst there are obvious differences between the protagonist churches, those differences have tended to be peripheral rather than profound. They are the sort of variations which do not challenge Marx's basic thesis but simply indicate that religious institutions experience historical fluctuations in the same way that other social and political institutions also suffer varying minor influences over time.

Those changes have rarely been fundamental and while they may represent significant and even progressive change, they should be located firmly in the total history of a church and not be given the sort of distorted emphasis which propagates misleading views of the role which churches play. An example of this distortion, often born of a public relations exercise was a recent Gallup Opinion Poll on Religion in America[49] which attempted to demonstrate the breadth of a recent religious revival in the United States. While some public opinion surveys on religion have been conducted in Australia, they have tended to lack the detail which American surveys have had and, moreover, have lacked an historical dimension. The American surveys deal both with traditional religions and with the various experential 'sects'; they also compare religious affiliation and attitude over time. On the other hand, the Australian surveys have tended to be a mixture of 'Morgan Gallup' questions and Census statistics, which has meant that they concentrate mainly on regional variations and one-word/yes-no answers. Attempts have been made to analyse the Census information in greater depth (notably by Mol)[50] while some other surveys by Banks[51]

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(49) Religion in America, The Gallup Opinion Index, 1977-1978 Report No.145.,

(50) Mol H., 'Religion, occupation and education in Australia: an analysis of the 1966 census', Australian Quarterly, Vol.43, No.4, December, 1971.

(51) Banks R., 'The 'Religion in Australia' survey: shifting attitudes towards christianity', Interchange, Vol.2, No.4, 1970.

and Wilson [52] have been serious sociological studies but the rest have either been restricted to school children's attitudes to religious instruction (eg. Black,[53] Roulston[54]) or have been denominational exercises, usually conducted in times of membership decline (eg. Uniting Church, 1976).[55]

The American surveys, therefore, not only provide more comprehensive information but, in addition, enable some rough comparisons to be made between the two countries. The most recent such Poll, taken over the years 1977-8, made the following discoveries. Initially, it noted seasonal fluctuations in church attendance during 1977 and found that it varied by up to 7% from 41% in April.[56] The explanation was restricted to purely religious reasons - i.e. during Lent, attendances increased.[57] Later, annual percentages were calculated which led to the conclusion that "for the first time in nearly two decades, an upturn is recorded in church attendance".[58] Two other conclusions arrived at were that

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(52) Wilson J.L.J. (ed), 'Churchgoing in Australia', Current Affairs Bulletin, Vol.22, No.4, 1958.

(53) Black A.W., 'An investigation into pupil's attitudes to religious instruction in New South Wales secondary schools', Australian Journal of Education, Vol.13, June, 1970.

(54) Roulston J.F.C., 'Attitudes of a sample of senior students to religious instruction in Queensland state high schools', Journal of Christian Education, papers 53, September, 1975.

(55) see The Advertiser, June 9, 1978, p.8.

(56) Religion in America, op.cit., p.1, - hardly a significant variation!

(57) ibid., p.1.

% Attendance	41	47	47	43	44	44	43	42	43	46	43	45
Month	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May.	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.

(58) ibid., pp.2,22.

% Attendance	49	46	47	49	47	47	44	42	40	42
Year	1955	1956	1957	1958	1959	1960	1965	1970	1975	1976

> "the percent of Americans who believe religion is increasing its influence on American life continues to rise and has tripled since 1970."[59]

and that

> "confidence in the church/organised religion remains strong relative to seven other key institutions in American life."[60]

Based on surveys carried out during 1976-1977, five trends were noted as being characteristic of the late seventies - they were, that levels of belief and religious practice remained high; that interest in religion was growing sharply; that involvement in experimental religion was considerable; that the evangelical movement was having an increasingly powerful impact on religious life; and finally that religion was continuing to play a vital role in volunteerism and community service.[61]

The reasons offered to explain the increase in religious interest included, the influence of President Carter's overt religious commitment; the success of the campaigns by the clergy to recruit young people; the inward search by people for non-material values to offset everyday pressures and the fading 'American dream'; and the expected cycle of an 'up' after a 'down'. Those social, propagandish, psychological and cyclical explanations ignore any of the changes in the work routines, job expectations and labour

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(59) ibid., pp.2,19.

Year	'57	'62	'65	'67	'68	'69	'70	'74	'75	'76
% who felt that religious influence was declining	14	31	45	57	67	70	75	56	51	45
% who felt that religious influence was increasing	69	45	33	23	18	14	14	31	39	44
% who were unsure	17	14	22	10	15	16	11	13	10	11

(60) ibid., pp.11,14.

Institution	great deal of confidence(%)	quite a lot of confidence(%)	some confidence(%)
Medicine	39	34	16
Military	23	34	25
Public schools	22	32	25
Supreme Court	18	28	29
Organised labour	10	23	33
Congress	12	28	35
Big business	12	21	34
Church/organised religion	38	26	20

(61) ibid., p.1.

demands which had occurred and, also, many of the changes in the type of religion which had become popular. For example, the effect of high unemployment and especially youth unemployment, the increased mechanisation of job skills, and the greater educational levels attained by more and more people, may well be linked with the surge of interest in such religions as Faith Healing, Transcendental Meditation, Yoga, the Charismatic Movement, Mysticism and other Eastern Religions.[62] The 27 million people who participated in those experiential, fringe religious movements would undoubtedly be very different from the 36 million who were involved in the more traditional churches although no such distinction was attempted in the Gallup Survey.[63]

Instead, it noted that the people who attended church, who placed a greater importance on religion and who believed that its influence on American life was increasing, tended to be over-represented amongst non-whites, women, the old, the poor, those who lived in small and especially rural communities, and those in the Southern and Mid-West States.[64] There was no attempt to explain why those groups were disproportionately represented. Certainly, there are significant observations which could be made about those groups - they are, without exception, members of the oppressed class (in the Marxist sense) and, as well, their categories frequently overlap. For example, women tend to be, as a group, much poorer than men, as do non-whites when compared with whites. In addition, they all tend to represent those groups which have had the highest unemployment rate, the least amount of schooling and the most

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(62) ibid., p.2. 10 million people participate in Faith Healing
6 million people participate in Transcendental Meditation
4 million people participate in Yoga
3 million people participate in Charismatic Movements
3 million people participate in Mysticism
1 million people participate in Eastern Religions.

(63) ibid., p.2. One of the reasons for the upsurge in interest in these cults is that they have filled the gap, left by traditional sects, in concentrating on 'spiritual' matters. The traditional churches having become more intent on social matters in their attempt to win followers have, in fact, neglected what seems to be an important attraction especially for young people i.e. the 'inner peace', the mystery of the human essence, the 'what am I?' questions.
N.B. The Religious Education course has attempted to offer some satisfaction in that respect.

(64) ibid., pp.11-12,25.

menial jobs. While these were never canvassed as explanations for the higher interest in religion displayed by those groups, they do fit rather snugly with Marx's thesis that the oppressed class tend to rely on religion as a means of coping with their day-to-day, arduous, alienating tasks.

Thus, while the results of the survey did indicate minor seasonal fluctuations, some variations over time and some minor trends towards new and old religions, the analysis of the changes was quite inadequate. In addition, the results were also meant to imply that fundamental religious changes are happening in the United States right now. While that argument may be hard to sustain in any essential sense, nevertheless, it cannot be dismissed as insignificant.

Bearing in mind the in-built inaccuracies of that type of survey (e.g. sample size, method of questioning, interpretation of answers etc.), if the findings were to be accepted then the need remains to probe much deeper to discover just why people were turning toward religion. And that task would require an analysis more specific than was made by Marx although his lead in noting the link between the economic history of a people and their religious institutions could be followed. My immediate concern is not whether America has been experiencing a religious revival or not, but, how the existing state of religion in Australia can be explained in terms of our economic history and whether the census and survey statistics, legislative changes and educational and social developments which relate to religious politics could be analysed in a way which neither the above Gallup Opinion Index, nor, indeed, any of the Australian polls have yet been seriously examined.

One study which went close to analysing religion in economic terms in Australia was made by Mol in 1971 when he cross -tabulated religion, occupation and education by using data from the 1966 census.[65] But, while some of the findings make interesting reading, the analysis lacks any historical dimension and, therefore, it fails to provide any explanation of why certain denominations are over-represented in certain job categories

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(65) Mol H., opcit..

or whether the present imbalance always existed. No such historically-based research has been done in Australia. However, one Australian philosopher who did attempt to place Australian religion in some historical perspective, although he neither used statistical information nor an adequate economic analysis, was Richard Campbell. In a short article in 1977[66] he made ten observations of our religiosity. The first was that

> "Australian religion has not generated a substantial and continual intellectual tradition."[67]

The evidence that he offered was that no serious study of religion had ever been carried out in Australian Universities, that there had never been any great theological colleges but a concentration instead on the vocational training of the clergy, and that until recently the churches had been importing their theologians.

Secondly, our religion had always been "derivative".[68] For example, the Catholics had been dominated by an Irish influence (and more recently, influenced by the Italians), the Anglicans still operated under the label, 'Church of England', the Scottish influence was still strong amongst Presbyterians, all of Australia's fringe sects were imports, the recent evangelical Protestants had mimicked United States models and techniques while, significantly, we had largely ignored the Aboriginal religious tradition.

Thirdly, the churches in Australia have been notable for their sectarian nature.[69] There has been no one established church. Instead there has always been an official Church-State separation although, just as important, there has been

> "no missionary confrontation with a society owning a religious culture other than Christian".[70]

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(66) Campbell R., 'The character of Australian religion', Meanjin Quarterly, Winter issue, No.2, July, 1977, pp.178-188.

(67) ibid., p.179.

(68) ibid., p.179.

(69) ibid. p.180.

(70) ibid., p.182.

Fourthly,

> "the sectarianism of Australian religious life has, of course, had an enormous influence on social and political affairs. The centralised and bureaucratic shape of our education systems was the direct outcome of bitter religious rivalry and distrust last century; State aid for church schools remained the principal issue of religious-political interaction until the Whitlam government established the Schools Commission to defuse the issue."[71]

Expanding that same point, Campbell observed that politically the churches had tended to "reinforce our pervasive conservatism".[72] He identified that function as operating in two ways; firstly by

> "emphasizing their derivateness, the churches have provided symbols of familiar security in a strange, unsettling environment."[73]

and, secondly, by

> "underpinning a vague liberal-humanism the churches have provided a stable value-system within which personal and political questions can be discussed without serious clash between churches and state".[74]

Religion, for most Australians, has never been an indicator of nationalistic identity, nor has it been a director of public destiny and nor has it been culturally inherent, but, rather, it has been treated simply as an "individualistic ethic".[75]

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(71) ibid., p.182.

(72) ibid., p.182.

(73) ibid., p.182.

(74) ibid., p.182.

(75) ibid., p.182, I disagree with Campbell on this point and, instead, suggest that in a broad sense, religion in Australia <u>has</u> provided <u>a</u> basis for choosing and evaluating national goals, public initiatives and social responses. I do not deny that it has and still does act as an ethical barometer for <u>individuals</u> but I think that he underestimates the wide prevalence and historical acceptance of religion as a significant binding force in our <u>society</u> both in identifying Australia as a 'christian' country (c.f. its Asian and Pacific neighbours and its atheist, communist 'enemies'!) and in providing people with a cliche moral peg on which to hang their stock public responses to social and political occurances. While people's private reactions and attitudes often display a more utilitarian approach to personal or collective actions, I observe a tendency for public reaction to indicate a more religiously-based stand presumably because such a stand is judged to be fundamentally justifiable and generally acceptable. Campbell seems to have ignored or been unaware of that Australian trait.

His sixth observation is related to that that characteristically moral view of religion. He noted that both Catholics and Protestants have tended to concentrate on moral judgements rather than on larger theological and philosophical issues or on the broad social role of the church. For that reason, he argued, both churches have often reduced their communication to little more than a few, simplistic doctrines and practices which they have implied are the only basic necessities for salvation. In addition, their moralistic bent tended to be conservative, dogmatic, authoritarian and rather assertive, both in the sense that rarely was rational argument used to justify a particular edict and also, in the sense that religion was deemed to be something which, rather than being a natural, pervasive phenomena, needed to be asserted and, indeed, sold to otherwise 'wicked' people.

While he avoided explaining the regional variations of religious practice in Australia, Campbell did make the useful observation (his seventh) that those state differences did exist.[76] In South Australia, for example, there are more than the average percent of Methodists, Congregationalists and Lutherans.[77]

Finally, he treated the lay attitudes to religion by offering three historical explanations for Australia's peculiar religious character. The materialistic and pragmatic approach which Australians tend to have towards their religious institutions derived, he claimed, from our

> "very direct and unmediated relation to reality... we confront our situation very much as that which is directly present ... (it) confines our consciousness to the present, producing both our so-called pragmatism and the moralistic this-worldliness we tend to see as the sole effective content of the church's preaching."[78]

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(76) ibid., p.183.

(77) ibid., p.184, in addition Campbell noted that "Religious life in Melbourne has always been more urbane, more ecumenical, more catholic in its social vision, more Tory in its conservatism, whereas Sydney has been more assertive, more sectarian - fundamentalist in my special sense, a tendency which becomes stronger the further north one goes." By 'sectarian-fundamentalist', he meant that the interest of the church tended to be centred on a few, simple, pragmatic, moralistic statements which were designed to guide the lives of its flock.

(78) ibid., p.184.

Secondly,

> "we know too well how competitive is the struggle for survival, how equality is not a right received but a demand to be aggresively asserted, how when the crunch comes (as in November, 1975) the exercise of authority must be conformed to,"[79]

and, he goes on, that has led to less concern with doctrine, a more loosely structured church and a more sectarian evangelism.

Thirdly, because most 'Australians' have been (and still are) recent immigrants, we have developed an insecure and nihilistic feeling that our lives are inauthentic and that we do not really belong to Australia. That 'un-at-home-ness', Campbell suggested, allowed the churches to

> "provide rare havens of familiar security. Seen in this perspective, it is no longer surprising that the churches which are, by secular measures, most 'successful', are precisely those which appear aggressively old-fashioned, and offer simple assurance."[80]

That inability to feel completely comfortable because "our cultural heritage is not rooted here"[81] but only plastered on as a thin and very crude veneer also expresses itself, he argued, in our apparent fetish to 'hide' in insulated suburban houses and to gather material possessions rather than involve ourselves in public and communal life. Our cynicism for any community action was also a result of our fear. Indeed, our whole culture, he argued, was based on an ambiguous dichotomy between an inner apprehension and a rather self-conscious, callow boldness. For example, Campbell noted that we revile authority and yet conform to it, we exploit our land and yet we cannot really domesticate it, we look ahead yet we cling to old obsessions about thought and social action, we glorify our outback and yet avoid it, by clinging to our metropolitan havens, we advertise our 'Ockerism' and yet cringe with embarrassment when it exposes our international 'inferiority', and we assert, with obvious guilt, our "churchly behaviour"[82] when, in fact, we find it

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(79) ibid., pp.185-186.

(80) ibid., p.186.

(81) ibid., p.187.

(82) ibid., p.187.

unnatural, inappropriate and even offensive to our day-to-day habits.

While Campbell's thesis may provide some useful descriptive insight, he avoided tackling the important questions surrounding the development of the Australian work-force, its changing composition, its attitudes and expectations, its pressures and its special role in framing social and political parameters which have significantly characterised Australia's history. He neglected to tie the psychological attachments and religious commitments which he outlined with some perception, to the economic realities which christians in Australia were forced to endure. He failed to note the class nature of the workforce (he dealt only with race and nationality!) and the very profound technological changes that have underpinned the economic changes throughout the nineteenth century and especially during the twentieth century. It has been those factors which have been crucial in developing the total cultural hegemony within which the churches, in both a theological and lay sense, have acted. As illustration, one of the earliest examples of how the church played a significant part in assuming a political function occurred when priests were used to control Irish convicts.

> "It became the custom for Roman Catholic convicts to spend their first ten days ashore listening to spiritual and moral addresses from priests who told them, among other things, to obey their gaolers. Non-Catholic officials admitted freely that the moral authority of priests helped to keep Irish convicts docile."[83]

That link between religion and the workplace (albeit a prison) has always existed and while there has never been a strangle-hold link, its very ambivalence and tenuous tugging has gone a long way towards explaining the development of the religious nature of our society. We have not been great church-goers (rarely more than a third)[84] and yet",

> "abstinence from religious worship is not a positive gesture of protest but a life-long habit."[85]

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(83) Wilson J. (ed), 'Church-going in Australia', Current Affairs Bulletin, 1958, p.55.

(84) ibid., p.52.

(85) ibid., p.61.

And it has always been true that most people agree that the slogan 'the family that prays together stays together' has a valid and informed message even though the vast majority have never ever put it into practice. The church and especially the Sunday school has always been seen as a great moral bastion and one of the major ingredients of social and particularly familial cohesion.

The churches' concentration of energy in the area of social responsibility has focused essentially on the family and its individual members, e.g. gambling, divorce, drugs, censorship, abortion and alcoholism. Peter Hollingworth, the Associate Director of the Brotherhood of St. Laurence, in 1977 commented critically on that observation when he wrote that,

> "this has been shortsighted because the first set of factors (i.e. gambling, divorce, drugs etc.) are frequently the symptoms of broader structural illnesses".86

Those broader structural illnesses refer to the economic realities of employment and industrial change. Hollingworth noted that the 1950s and 1960s in Australia were characterised by economic growth, especially in the manufacturing area which produced a new level of rampant consumerism, by the development of new techniques which helped raise the living standards especially of Australian-born people, by a resources boom particularly in minerals and by a general mood of optimism and expansion which was assisted by the fact that almost all of the 'worst' jobs[87] were done by migrants.

His observation was accurate, for post-war Australia was characterised by high employment levels, high birth rates, high immigration levels and a massive influx of capital, all of which helped produce an economic boom. As the demand for cars, electrical appliances, houses, roads, education

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(86) Hollingworth, P., 'The Lucky Country in Trouble- a Christian Response', St. Marks Review, No. 89, March 1977, p.29.

(87) By 'worst', I mean the lowest pay, the worst conditions, the least security, the least chance for promotion, the longest hours, and the most supervised positions in the job market.

and communication services grew, then jobs became plentiful. The affluence which resulted from secure employment, high wage levels, rising living standards and low inflation rates produced an expanding domestic market, a quiescent workforce and a widespread acceptance of 'growth' as a socio-economic goal. Business confidence stayed high, buoyed up by direct control of imports (up to 1960), long standing tariffs, a growing export market and as well, the availability of a docile, compliant labour force.[88]

Hollingworth compared that economic era with the economy in 1977 which was sluggish and pervaded by a mood of uncertainty, which was characterised by the contrasting fate of large companies making record profits and small businesses closing down, by increased automated and computerised processes which tended to shrink the number of available jobs, by the breakdown of the apprenticeship system which resulted in a shortage of skilled tradesmen, by an increase in unemployable graduates and by an increase in the length of time that people stayed unemployed.[89] The wave of suburban and automobile expansion had eventually hit the rocks; our population rates had started to slow down, our overseas markets for manufactured goods had dropped off; the previously large and sustained inflow of foreign capital had declined; our high tariff protection levels were cut (by 25 per cent in 1973); our dollar was revaluated - in a word, the boom was over. And for Australia's workforce, high unemployment and declining living standards returned.[90]

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(88) Rowley, K., 'The political economy of Australia since the war', in Playford, J. and Kirsner, D., Australian Capitalism: towards a socialist critique, Penguin Books, Victoria, 1972.

(89) Hollingworth, op.cit., p.25. In 1959, 15% of the unemployed were unemployed for over 13 weeks, but in 1976, 33% of them were unemployed for at least 13 weeks. In 1978, the plight was still deteriorating - full-time work seekers were averaging six months (i.e. 26 weeks) on the dole. See, 'The Labour Force, Australia, July 1978', Australian Bureau of Statistics, Canberra, 1978, p.16.

(90) In fact, the period of high employment had been brief, since from 1890 to 1939, the unemployment rate had never fallen below 4.5 per cent and had reached levels of over 30 per cent during the depression in 1931. Prior to World War 1, unemployment rates averaged 6 per cent (and got as high as 10 per cent in 1896) while between the Wars, for Trade Unionists, it averaged 14 per cent and never got below 8 per cent. During the post-war boom, it averaged only 1.5 per cent and never got above 2.5 per cent (in 1962). Since 1972, the trend has been a return to the 'norm'. See, Windschuttle, K., Unemployment: a social and political analysis of the economic crisis in Australia, Penguin Books, Melbourne, 1979, pp.9-39.

Hollingworth was, in fact, calling on the churches to shift their concern towards those economic problems and work on ways of tackling them, rather than dispensing their energy on the more traditional areas of individualistic morality. He was suggesting that a christian response to economic plight was the obligation of churches and that during recessions they had a special role to play.

A.L. Burns, however, regards Hollingworth's plea as naive. He declared that the churches, by their very nature, were doomed to play a minor role in that area. He argued that the church had made itself insignificant by clinging to what he called an illusory belief in pluralism. He defined the fundamental tenet of pluralism as amounting to the following argument - "all moral judgement is subjective", "no subjective judgement can be other than mere opinion", "opinions can be held or not as a matter of taste" and, therefore "we ought not to dispute concerning matters of taste".[91] He then asserted that the churches were the great protagonists of this pluralistic view of the world. They

> "make pluralism, in theory and as an ideal, an illusion. They are its relativistic ethics, its positivistic political theory, and its moonshiny metaphysics of 'the quality of life' ".[92]

While that colourful description seems a rather large credit (blame!) to give to the churches it has certainly been true that they have built 'levels' of morality, that they have often taken very simplistic political stands and that their ultimate theoretical construction of the meaning of life has definitely been tied to a spiritual vision rather than to a material assessment of what affects people's lives in their day-to-day activities. However, the churches have not been alone in pushing a pluralistic interpretation of society: the State in our 'liberal democracies' has been very committed to that view and has expounded it through its educational, cultural and legal institutions. In addition, the rich have used it to explain their economic power and to justify the 'lowly' position of the poor; the 'left' have used it to

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(91) Burns A., 'The Church and the Illusion of Pluralism', St. Marks Review, No.78, June, 1974, p.8.

(92) ibid., p.7.

argue for civil liberties while the 'right' have used it to understand almost all political activity from elections to revolutions.

Nevertheless, to a significant extent, the churches have provided powerful support for the pluralistic theory of power by generating a constant stream of teaching which has conformed to its basic ethos and which, in the words of Burns, has been that

> "pluralism ... in the last resort ... invokes one absolute good and one irreducible unit of action. The irreducible unit in this case is the individual person, and the absolute good is the individual's making a free choice".[93]

The mistake which all pluralists, including the church, have made and which Burns also identified was that

> "free choice for the individual citizen is a very rare historical phenomenon."[94]

However, pluralists have not been alone in being unable to satisfactorily guarantee that individuals would be able to practise an acceptable freedom of choice and so, while Burns was correct to emphasize the 'illusion' which pluralists create one needs to admit that the problem cannot be solved by simply getting rid of the pluralists. In other words, it is not enough to howl down the churches' notion of individualistic morality and to insist that it turn its head to the economic realities of oppression and control. It would be naive, both to expect the churches in Australia to work against the interest of the dominant class and to expect that they could, in any real sense, lead a political change. As Burns wrote, "Churches can be politically effective but not politically creative",[95] by which he meant that they could play a significant part in supporting either a conservative or a progressive regime but that they could not <u>initiate</u> change in either a reactionary or revolutionary way.[96]

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(93) ibid., p.10.

(94) ibid., p.10.

(95) ibid., p.12.

(96) That may not be the case in some other, especially, South American countries, however. See Freire P., <u>Pedagogy of the Oppressed</u>, Penguin Books, Great Britain, 1972.

Most of the pluralist doctrine of the churches in Australia has worked in the interests of the status quo. Such preachings as 'turning the other cheek', being tolerant and accepting differences in attitude and moral code, sit very comfortably alongside other banal examples of 'pluralism in practice' as, for example, Monday Conference, 'Talk-back' radio and 'Public Opinion' polls. All those examples have been crudely pluralistic in the sense that they pride themselves on giving everyone (or both sides!) a fair go, on being impartial (either objective or even-handed!) and on attempting to not alter people's views. They all claim to not be in the business of changing people's minds on anything - they simply broaden one's attitudes in a non-indoctrinating manner (!) which because of its apparent 'laissez-faireness', in fact, allows people to go on believing their former prejudices. Because it is so intellectually loose, that method of political debate actively encourages the most inane, bigoted, unexamined opinions to pass as reasonable and justifiable. As an illustration, one could make the most crazy correlation between quite incidental events and be allowed to grant them a status of being 'scientific' or 'logical' simply by reinforcing historically-based prejudices, declaring oneself an 'expert' (or even a 'concerned citizen') and by prefacing the assertion with 'in my opinion'. This shallow treatment of democracy in the guise of trite pluralism allows such correlations as sexual crime and censorship laws, race and intelligence, unemployment and school discipline, and poverty and morality to be bandied about by intellectual dilettantes, or, worse, by political thugs whose treatment of quite sensitive and important correlative material has become unsophisticated, socially hostile or just plain gibberish.

One of the reasons why the churches have latched onto the pluralistic theory of social activity was partly provided, unwittingly, by Colin Clark in an article with a most misleading title 'The Political Economy of a Christian Society' where he stated that

> "In understanding polics and economics, Christians start with an immense, one might almost say an unfair advantage. We know about the fall of man and original sin ... We know the grim truth that there is in every man a strong inclination towards evil, and that this will continue to the end of the world."97

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(97) Clark C., 'The Political Economy of a Christian Society', Social Survey, Vol.23, No.2, March, 1974, p.53.

The view that people are all original sinners enables the churches to allocate different levels of moral uprightness to people, depending on how 'christian' they have become: thus, those who are lowest, deserve at least our sympathy since it is not their fault and, in any case, one measure of our superiority would be that we show them sympathy. From that starting point, no-one can be condemned and everyone must be be accorded due individual respect even if they seem to be evil. Therefore, to return to Burns' original point, the churches can and have played an important role in maintaining what he called the illusory fundamentals of pluralism and that, in doing so, they have helped construct the world-view framework perpetrated by the capitalist economic order. That world view has been based on the assumption that individual achievement largely depended on individual drive and that, therefore, people who failed usually had only themselves to blame. That allowed the intrisic exploitation of the market economy to be masked and, in fact, it gave overt approval to those individuals who had greatest personal success in the utilization of capital.

To broadly summarise this chapter thus far, I have argued that neither the Marxist nor the pluralist theories of religious influence, if taken alone, adequately explain the role which christianity plays in an industrial, capitalist society such as Australia. Rather, I suggest that, while in a general sense christianity does tend to work in favour of 'order' and 'unity' in an economic, political and social sense and that this tendency is of some advantage to the State, in detail, the various churches compete in educational, social and political conflicts and vary their strategies to suit the strength or weakness of their respective position in the denominational battle. However, neither the work done by Marxist writers on religion (including Marx himself, Engels, or the Christian-Marxists) nor the pluralist commentators, analysts and historians of religion (including Weber, Berger, Mol, Campbell and Burns) have, in any specific way, satisfactorily dealt with church struggles in their total, historical environment. Instead, I have indicated that most of the work done in Australia has been restricted to either statistical studies or to loosely grounded descriptions of religious attitude.

In order to place religious struggles in their economic and political context, a specific case-study is often the most convenient illustration.

For that purpose, I am using the particular example of 'religious education' in South Australia and having established the historical background leading up to the successful demand for an Education Department course and, further, having offered a theory to explain the political function which christian religions can perform and, therefore, to suggest why the churches in this state wanted such a course, I intend to return to the battle-scene (so to speak) and examine, in more detail, why the South Australian struggle was more successful than in other states and, yet, paradoxically perhaps, why the religious education course may not be a long survivor in the school curriculum.

If the churches were able to play some part in constructing and justifying a capitalist framework for peoples' attitudes (i.e. Burn's' argument) then, in South Australia, they would have gone some way towards offsetting some of the changes in the prevailing bourgeois hegemony which inevitably occured when the composition of the workforce changed. For example, as secondary industry expanded after the 1930s, it attracted an increasing number of working class people (especially migrants). Those people, between the 30s and the 60s, seemed docile, dutiful workers; they worked within very authoritarian work structures and they lived under a very conservative Playford government. But, as they increased their demands for higher wages, more social security, better housing and more education they began to break down the hegemonic influence of the old, conservative rulers. And because they were successful in winning many of their demands, the traditionally solid supports of the status quo were used by those who had some interest in working against the new demands of the working class. The church was one of those supports and so by increasing their efforts in the areas of denominational membership, Sunday school attendance, public advertising and finally religious education in State schools, they attempted to maintain some of the moral struts which had constituted the old bourgeois hegemony against its persistent attacks.

It was not a simple, one-way push - it was a long battle because the churches were suffering from those very changes which were occuring in the South Australian workforce. Their own members had been attacking the internal, antiquated structures, the traditional dogma and the often re-actionary moral and social pronouncements. They were being shunned by the young who were embarrassed to note that their church seemed to

be out of touch with the changing society. Their function both as worship havens and as social critics was under fire and their financial and human resources were at a rapidly declining ebb. Their reaction was to try and broaden their appeal by advertising to their 'lost sheep' while at the same time, not offending their traditional support. Thus they moved into such areas as denouncing Australia's involvement in Vietnam War, modernising their worship procedures by using rock bands instead of the traditional organ, using everyday language instead of 'thou' and 'thee', changing their image by having trendy-looking clergy make quite liberal statements about civil liberties and moral codes, and, into the area of state educational curricula. While not all of those changes have necessarily been successful, they indicate the continuing struggle which essentially conservative institutions have had in coping with the changing demands of capital, the rather ambivalent role of the State in a changing economy, and the functionally-important social changes which have been associated with such economic struggles.

By earlier noting some of the significant functions which religion has historically performed, some clarification of the position which the churches have held in the total hegemonic structure of a society, has been advanced. The particular struggle which the South Australian churches have had provides some understanding of why and how the religious education course was introduced into South Australian State schools. And yet, the religious education course seems to be already dying a slow death after only a very short and not very active life. To briefly recapitulate its demise, the Evaluation Report of February, 1977 recommended that, inter alia, at the primary level the course be integrated into the general curriculum and that at the secondary level, it be optional; that the syllabus include critiques of religions and also religious conflict; that the first aim of the course (i.e. introducing students to "the religious dimension of life")[98] be replaced; and that the title 'Religious Education' be abandoned in favour of 'What People Believe' or 'Beliefs of the World' or 'Religion and other Beliefs'.[99]

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(98) Evaluation Report, op.cit., p.12.

(99) ibid., p.14.

Among the submissions received by the Evaluation Committee included one from the Religious Studies Department at the Adelaide College of Advanced Education which said, in part, that

> "religion is by no means a significant factor in the day-to-day lives and decisions of the majority of people in our society".100

This view was confirmed by an empirical study made by the Evaluation Committee which found that, although most school teachers thought that religious education should be taught in schools, most did not wish to teach it and would not, even if they were asked.[101] In addition, most High School students were not interested in taking the course.[102] Another area which received only minimal interest was in the establishment of local religious education committees at schools. The Project Team had recommended that local school committees composed of up to four clergy, up to two parents and up to two teachers be set up to advise the principal on any aspect of the course within the school and to approve lay people or clergy to teach the course until there were sufficient teachers. A number of the schools had initially established these committees but most of them met only a couple of times a year and most were seen to be ineffective.[103]

Of course, the fate of the religious education initiative in South Australia was far from unique. All of the attempts in the other states to introduce religious education courses into state schools have failed. As mentioned above, all of the Government reports which recommended such implementation

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(100) ibid., p.39.

(101) ibid., p.49.
In High Schools, 76% thought it should be taught (350 teachers questioned)
61% did not want to teach it (21% were undecided)
48% would not teach it even if asked (19% were undecided)
Amongst Primary Schools, the teachers were slightly more keen.
ibid., p.68, 73% thought it should be taught (375 teachers questioned)
37% did not want to teach it (33% were undecided)
25% would not teach it even if asked (20% were undecided)

(102) ibid., p.51 ... Year 8 - 66% said No (1,000 students questioned)
" 10 - 61% " "
" 12 - 40% " "

(103) ibid., pp.85-87.

were singularly unsuccessful.[104] These thwarted plans deserve some examination.

In Tasmania, Sister Valerie Burns began planning the religious education courses in May, 1972. It was started in schools in February, 1974 and seven months later was suddenly terminated by the Minister of Education, Mr. N. Batt.[105] A June 1975 press statement indicated his reason for the unexpected action -

> "To continue with an integrated system which compels students to take the religious studies programme would be both offensive to the rights of parents and contrary to the wish of Parliament".106

This statement needs to be placed into the context of the history of religion in education with which Tasmanian legislation had been grappling especially since 1932. In that year, the Education Act had stated that all teaching was to be non-sectarian, that one hour per week was to be made available for religious instruction which would be taken by either the religious instruction teacher or a member of the clergy, and that students were not compelled to take religious instruction if their parents objected.[107] Thus, the Tasmanian religious instruction system was not unlike that in South Australia after 1940 and its success was also comparable. Accordingly, in 1968, a School in Society Report recommended that religious education replace religious instruction. In commenting on this report, Richard Ely wrote that it

> "reflected the thinking of certain groups in the community, namely:
> 1. Ecumenically-minded Christians (Protestant, Anglican, and sometimes Catholic) who often possessed fairly strong personal religious convictions, and who

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(104) see above, p. 97.

(105) Neil Batt campaigned as a christian in the 1966 federal election but declared himself an atheist prior to the 1972 state election. For details, see Launceston Examiner, 11 April, 1972.

(106) Wellock, op.cit., p.40.

(107) Ely R., 'God in Schools', The Australian Humanist, No.32, Summer 1974-1975.

> shared a concern to overcome the communication blockages which often resulted from conventional denominational methods of presenting religion in State schools. These 'Ecumenicals' believed that the religious perspective, and personalised spirituality were becoming increasingly remote from the secular thought-world of State school children.
>
> 2. Defenders - in a broad way - of the existing social and political order, who tended to see religion as a valuable prop for the moral rules and conventions underlying that order. These are those whom, perhaps perjoratively, but otherwise aptly, the historian C.M.H. Clark has termed the 'moral policemen' of Australian society.
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> 3. A group of educational theorists, often closely linked with the State Education Department. These supported a child-orientated and problem-orientated, rather than a subject-orientated approach to the education process. They regarded it as neutral (in the interests of educating the 'whole child') to include 'moral' and 'religious' problems within their inventory of educationally-challenging problems.
>
> 4. Educational administrators who regarded the existing system as often intolerably inefficient; and who hoped to remedy these inefficiencies by bringing Religious Instruction within the ambit of the Education Department's power to hire, fire, accredit and regularise."[108]

In 1969, the Overton Committee was set up to implement the proposals which emanated from the above groups. The Overton Committee met fourteen times between June 1969 and November 1971. Initially, the Catholics opposed the development of a religious education course but in June 1970 they gave their approval. Their change of heart was perhaps related to the appointment of Sister Burns as Curriculum Officer, the decision to appoint three church representatives onto the Selection Committee of five, the provision that two of the seven board members who would accredit teachers would be appointees of the Heads of Churches Commission,[109] and the appointment of Reverend Michael Webber (then the Anglican Dean of Hobart) as Senior Lecturer in Studies in Religion in the History of Ideas Department in the Tasmanian College of Advanced Education where the

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(108) ibid., p.13: the comparison with South Australia is fruitful, since there seemed to be very similar groups involved in pushing for the course.

(109) The other five board members were to be appointed by the Education Department and the Teachers Federation.

religious education teachers would be taught.[110] Given the clause in the 1973 Education Act, that,

> "Education in matters of religion shall form a part of the education provided in State schools, but no instruction shall be given in a State school that is distinctive of any particular denomination or sect",[111]

and the heavy representation which the major Christian denominations enjoyed in the establishment and operation of the religious education course, perhaps the Government had good reason to feel slightly embarrassed by the course.[112]

When contrasted with the Tasmanian axing of religious education the Queensland experience is particularly revealing. Their committee of enquiry, composed of Education Department personnel only and chaired by the Regional Director of Education at Rockhampton, Mr. E.F. Gutekunst, first met in November 1971.[113] Exactly three years later, Robert Fisher, in a letter to the Nation Review, wrote that

> "the report on religious education in Queensland schools ... although long since completed, has been neither tabled in parliament, nor its contents disclosed."[114]

According to the Australian Presbyterian Life newspaper of July 16, 1975, which claimed to have a copy, the Gutekunst Report stated that the existing system of religious instruction was "disruptive and unacceptable"[115] and could no longer be justified. Further, they quoted,

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(110) ibid., pp.14-16.

(111) ibid., p.12.

(112) A Tasmanian Education Next Decade (TEND) Committee of Enquiry, appointed in 1976, has tackled the issue of 'Studies in Religion' but its report has not yet been completed.

(113) Wellock, op.cit., p.42.

(114) Nation Review, November, 22-28, 1974, p.151.

(115) Wellock, op.cit., p.42.

> "It is evident from the large numbers of adverse comments by principals and students that their (religious instructors) well-meaning efforts sometimes do more harm than good, developing in some cases negative attitudes towards Religious Instruction, religion in general and Christianity in particular."[116]

An Anglican clergyman and ex-Director of the Council of Christian Education in Western Australia, commented,

> "If this is an accurate rendering of the spirit of the Report, it may be argued that the Queensland cabinet was reluctant to release the Report because of possible political repercussions, especially among church people."[117]

This view is supported by A.W. Black in a 1975 publication, Religious Studies in Australian Public Schools.[118] After shelving the Gutekunst Report, the Queensland State Cabinet, in 1975, established a religious education Curriculum Project with the job of developing a course not at odds with the religious instruction tradition. Four church people[119] were seconded to the Curriculum Branch to draw up a syllabus and to provide curriculum materials suitable for all denominations; to develop suitable in-service training courses for clergy, lay personnel and interested teachers; and to establish pilot projects in different parts of the State.[120] A further indication of the attitude of the Queensland Government towards the teaching of religion was boldly expressed by the Minister of Education, Mr. V.J. Bird, who said, on April 24, 1975,

> "The introduction of acceptable Religious Instruction programs in schools does not negate the responsibility of parents to provide basic training in a Christian Doctrine by making use of church services, Sunday schools and other such facilities now available in the community".[121]

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(116) ibid., p.42.

(117) ibid., p.42.

(118) published by the Australian Council of Educational Research, see especially pp.15-16.

(119) Rev. Dr. I. Mavor, Sr. C. Kelly, Rev. C. Read, Rev. Dr. J. Munro.

(120) Wellock, op.cit., p.42.

(121) The Australian Humanist, No.34, Spring, 1975, Front Cover.

These two states provide ample evidence of the various battles surrounding religious education and, without detailing the struggles, the other states have seen similar negative results. Victoria has been unable to develop a viable religious education course which was acceptable to all churches and teachers' organisations.[122] The Australian Capital Territory has opted for local and community based initiatives instead of a common, centralised syllabus,[123] while both New South Wales and Western Australia are still awaiting reports from their Ministerial Committees of Enquiry.[124] Indeed, so unsuccessful have been the struggles in the other states, that Wellock was able to claim that,

> "of all the Australian states, South Australia has undoubtedly made the most progress in recent years in establishing Religious Education as a regular and viable course of study with academic responsibility". 125

And yet, in this state, it has been met with enthusiasm by neither principals, teachers, students nor parents who either see it as potentially divisive or else simply unpopular. It has legal sanction but not overt public support. Why, then, was it introduced with such haste? Was it pushed through as part of a deal with the churches to keep them silent about the new sex education course?[126] Or was it a

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(122) Wellock, op.cit., pp.31-4. A Committee of Review is still sitting.

(123) ibid., pp43-4. Although the Australian Capital Territory Workshop Report of 1975 was endorsed by the A.C.T. Schools' Authority as a policy statement providing guidelines for its developing Religious Education programme, the religious provisions of the N.S.W. Act are still constitutionally applicable in the A.C.T..

(124) ibid., p.47. The N.S.W. Enquiry which began in April, 1975 is expected to be voluminous. The Committee has not only received public submissions but has also conducted surveys of large samples of parents, teachers, students, principals and visiting religious education teachers.

(125) ibid., p.38.

(126) At the 1973 ALP annual Convention, a Young Labor Association motion moved by Ann Pengelly was passed with an acceptable amendment, moved by Hugh Hudson, that parents have the ultimate right of withdrawal which stated "that sex education be taught in primary and secondary schools as an integral part of education in human relationships with emphasis being placed on both psychological and physiological aspects.... and on contraception and family planning techniques". This motion, of course, potentially represented a very controversial educational change. The Advertiser, June 12, 1973.

pay-off to the electorate to counter-balance what appeared to be a rather 'unchristian' government which advertised itself as supporting abortion, homosexuality and nude-bathing; which increased drinking hours and gambling facilities (State Lotteries and Totalisator Agency Board) and which encouraged 'controversial' theatrical performances (e.g., Oh! Calcutta!)? Or was it a more specific electorate appeal to the influential Lutheran voters in the marginal seat of Chaffey?[127] Or was it a successful push from ~~the~~ a 'Methodist cabal' in the Education Department hierarchy?[128]

No doubt each of these factors played their part in the introduction of the course although the task of qualitatively assessing their individual contribution is difficult. Perhaps they should be granted the status of 'telling part of the story' and then included in a broader explanation of how the 'religious community' (albeit a rather nebulous category) exert a political influence over government policy and legislation. However, to make sense of that influence, some details of the historical strength of the major protagonists are required.

The positive pressure for the religious education course came from the christian churches and, in particular, the Methodists but one could be excused for doubting that they could mount sufficient political pressure to have a one hundred year-old law changed and a one hundred year-old school curriculum changed. Certainly in South Australia the Methodist Church is much stronger than in other Australian states. From the 1976 Census figures, Methodists are over fifteen per cent of the total South Australian population but less than eight per cent of the total Australian population; thus, their numerical strength in this state is significant.[129] In addition, according to Encel, they tend to be "strongly represented"[130] in 'education' occupations. Moreover, during the ten years prior to the

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(127) See above (p.68) for details of Dunstan's speech at the 1975 State A.L.P. Convention.

(128) Encel S., Equality and Authority, 1970, p.166, "Methodists ... are strongly represented in occupations such as school teaching. Advancement in the administrative hierarchy of the New South Wales Education Department is traditionally dependent on Methodist affiliations." The South Australian Education Department may be similar.

(129) Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1976 Census of Population and Housing.

(130) Encel, op.cit., p.166

1976 Census, nationally, their nominal adherence dropped by twelve per cent (over 140,000 people) while in South Australia it dropped by a disturbingly high fourteen per cent.[131] Meanwhile, the total Christian percentage actually rose by four per cent.[132] The Methodists were not the only losers; from 1966 to 1971 the Congregationalists (sixteen per cent drop) and the Churches of Christ (ten per cent drop) were also going badly which makes more sense of their later move to form the Uniting Church.[133] Some of their sectarian opponents were, in comparison, doing better. From 1966 to 1976 the Lutherans were up by four per cent while the Anglicans and Baptists had dropped by four per cent and one per cent respectively, but the Roman Catholic flock, largely due to migrant additions, had increased by twelve per cent.[134] All these percentages, of course, need to be balanced against a total South Australian population increase of over thirteen per cent.[135]

From these figures, it is obvious that the Protestant churches generally were faring badly, and the non-conformists were doing extremely badly.[136] Their search for avenues of revival led them towards denominational unity, a greater interest in social issues and, concurrently, the attempt to hand over a large slice of their 'youth work' to the Education Department. They could not afford the resources of training specialist teachers or providing equipment and teaching aides and they could see that their religious instruction efforts were, at best, in vain. The New South Wales church had already spent $750,000 on a 'Christian Life Curriculum' for Sunday schools[137] in an attempt to arrest their twelve per cent annual

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(131) Australian Year Book, 1974, p.149 and South Australian Year Book, 1973, p.146.

(132) ibid., in fact, from 1966 to 1971, the increase was 7.4 per cent which then declined by 1976 to 4.1 per cent.

(133) ibid..

(134) ibid., the Presbyterians suffered a slump of 18 per cent.

(135) Australian Year Book 1974, p.134 and South Australian Year Book 1973, p.119.

(136) A 1978 Uniting Church survey indicated that church membership was continuing to decline in South Australia, see The Central Times, June, 1978.

(137) Dale, National Times, July 15-20, 1974, p.8.

drop-out rate. Thus their motivation for the religious education push was perfectly legitimate and astute. But, why were they so succesful in getting the course in this state?

As suggested above, the government of the day definitely saw electoral value in acceding to the 'christian' pressure and yet, one could argue that they need not have moved so blatantly or so rapidly just to avoid offending the voters. A more balanced Steinle Committee could have been selected; the Project Team could have included some non-Christians and 'minor-church' christians; the Education Act could have been amended less obtrusively; a Committee could have been formed to examine, profoundly, all aspects of the legal, educational, social and historical matters related to religious education and could have conducted an extensive enquiry over a longer period thereby enabling the government to make no changes (which would satisfy the religious education opponents) and yet appear to be doing something (which would satisfy the supporters). This ploy is a not unfamiliar weapon available to governments when they are faced with controversial reforms but, instead, with no demand from students, teachers or parents, they literally stampeded through a course which within two years of operation had been substantially condemned.

As indicated above South Australia has, since its earliest colonial development, been a Christian state with an articulate though not often an intellectual religious community.[138] And while there has been a marked decline in church attendances and membership (apart from the boost to the Catholic Church and the Greek Orthodox Church with the arrival of immigrants from Europe since the Second World War) this is not indicative

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(138) "Adelaide's church institutions carefully and without excessive emotional display, defined both their creeds and public image to accomodate sectional challenges from society", French H., Churches and Society in South Australia 1890-1900, p.469 and p.470 ... the churches, "never seriously questioning the social order, consistently offered a critique of social issues whether political, economic or moral." (my emphasis) In other words, the religious community's contribution to a theoretical understanding of society has tended to be more loud than profound.

of a broad 'non-christian' movement (the huge majority of South Australians still insist that they are christian!) nor does it suggest that the religious hegemony which has developed as part of a christian history is necessarily in decline. The last two Governors have been professional church-men;[139] the Australian Broadcasting Commission Television Stations broadcast church services on Sunday mornings; Parliament is always opened with the Lords Prayer; the Press run 'Thoughts for the Day' taken from Bible references; letters to the Editor columns are still freely available to christian warriors who continue to fight against theatrical nudity, political blasphemy or other examples of heathen influence; motels still leave Bibles in rooms which are used for often the least spiritual of purposes; prisons and armies still provide chaplains and Bibles for their inmates; religious groups still receive taxation concessions and exemptions;[140] courts still use Bibles when swearing oaths; and most people still get baptised, married and buried with church services. Although some of the Christian ceremonies such as Christmas and Easter are certainly becoming more and more secular, morality is still largely equated with Christianity. In other words, in general, Christianity is still a significant part of our dominant culture.

That powerful religious hegemony would certainly facilitate any attempt to increase the church influence in schools and perhaps it explains the ease and rapidity of the religious education push. There was in addition some hostile reaction to the changing moral values of young people which seemed to provide ammunition for the churches to demand a restoration of 'religious' moral training through the schools. In fact the evidence which is usually presented by those who are horrified by these apparently declining social standards is very flimsy. Indeed, far from condemning these changing values, many other church people espouse a liberal support for them. Many Christian leaders (and followers) marched against the Vietnam War and many have marched against uranium mining; some have argued that minor drug penalties have been too heavy or too selective; some support more liberal sexual laws; many have indicated great sympathy

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(139) Sir Doug Nicholls and Rev.Keith Seaman.

(140) Churches are not required to pay land tax or council rates on their properties.

toward the unemployed, migrants and Aboriginals. It is significant, however, that such sympathy has tended to come less from the non-conformists who, perhaps, are still deeply entrenched in their traditional opposition to alcohol, gambling and sexual promiscuity (including dancing)[141] and see the old puritan denial as still the most effective answer to contemporary social 'ills'. But, while this puritanical line is bandied about by some church people, one wonders just how much credibility or favour it has even amongst Methodist congregations.

Taking into account the hazy relation between morality thrusts and economic conditions discussed in Chapter two, the 1975 moral push cannot be explained solely in terms of changing economic requirements but this factor deserves some attention. The state had experienced a long boom, followed by a temporary recession from which it was climbing out, when the religious education course was first seriously mooted. The early 1970s were years of confidence and hope, when employment was high, government spending ond private investment was high, and young people appeared to have increasing opportunities of higher education and a widening choice of work. And yet, amid this 'prosperity', the Methodist Church launched a course which would superficially seem more appropriate for dealing with an era of industrial chaos and social unrest. Perhaps they were simply over-reacting.

Certainly, the concern which the Protestant churches had with their declining adherents, their moves towards unity, their despair with the religious instruction system and perhaps their apprehension over some radical moral fashions provides a setting for the introduction of religious education, and the government's pre-occupation with building an electoral advantage given its rapid passage ample political credibility.

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(141) Condon (ed), op.cit., p.7, (Vol.III), "Few questions cause more trouble to many Methodist parents than that of dancing ... They are anxious on the one hand not to deny their young people a most exhilirating pleasure ... and on the other hand they dare not ignore the witness of universal experience and the tradition of the church in general, and of the Methodist church in particular, that dancing is a highly dangerous pastime.", July 8, 1921.

Perhaps the swiftness of its passage and even the initial concept of the course also received some assistance from a certain few strategically-positioned, closely-connected men who were able to co-ordinate their religious pre-occupations.

In 1972, less than four years after the Methodist Church had pulled out of the religious instruction system, the leadership of the church (Rev. Dr. M.L. McCarthur was Chairman of the Methodist Conference at the time) sought an assurance from the Education Minister that a Committee would be set up to deal with the religious education question. That assurance was granted and subsequently the Committee of Enquiry was stacked with churchmen and others who, while representing various educationally-involved interests, were all either lay preachers or active Christians. Enough prominent people were included to give their report sufficient political weight. For example, its chairman John Steinle (then a Departmental Head, now Director-General of Education); Milton Hunkin (then a Primary Head, later a SAIT President); Brian Hannaford (then a Secondary Head, now a 'Super-Head' at Marion HighSchool) and Rev. Dr. Graeme Speedy (Lecturer, Bedford Park Teachers College, formerly Co-Director, Joint Board of Christian Education, now Director of Sturt College of Advanced Education). It first met in October 1972, only a few months after the Methodist Conference motion had been presented to Hudson. It sat for only ten months (which included the summer vacation) and produced a report which did not canvass, in any depth, the matter of whether there should be a religious education course, per se. It recommended that its existing members be given the Standing Committee job of advising a three person Project Team, (which would prepare a syllabus) and ultimately advising the Director-General on all aspects of the introduction of the course. The Co-ordinator of the Project Team was a former Youth Work Director with the Methodist Church and his two colleagues were committed Christians.[142] The Standing Committee decided

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(142)One of them, F. Drew, for example wrote in a letter to the Editor of the Sunday Mail, February 9, 1975, "To suggest that children of seven to nine years of age be concerned with philosophies other than those based on religious beliefs is not only ludicrous, but quite unsound from an educational point of view." This indicates her strong religious stance. The other was R.W. Standfield.

that it, without any experience or expertise in the field, rather than the usual Education Department Curriculum Evaluation Board, would evaluate the course which the Project Team prepared: the irony of evaluating its own advice apparently did not raise any alarm from within the Committee although it did produce a strong reaction from KOSSS.[143] A special sub-committee of the Teachers Registration Board was recommended by the Steinle Committee to "provide accreditation for teachers in Religious Education".[144] rather than using the normal Board which made judgements about every other teacher in the state. This obviously cast suspicion on what criteria might be used to assess religious education teachers and opened the way for a conveniently composed group of accreditors. The Standing Committee also recommended the establishment of local school committees to advise the Principal on matters relating to the course in that school. These committees were also to be heavily represented by the clergy (four out of nine). Thus, in every area of implementation, the composition of the involved committees was dominated by clergy and committed church-people. The Education Department, infamous amongst informal commentators for its unusually high concentration of Methodists in senior positions, had, it seemed, been careful in its recommended selection of committee and project members. The present Education Minister, Dr. Don Hopgood himself a Methodist lay preacher, would doubtless be less than antagonistic toward the consolidation of the religious education curriculum.

Since a Methodist network appears to exist, there is some point in briefly seeking the historical reasons for the unusually strong position which Methodism acquired in South Australia. Robin Walker, in an article entitled "Methodism in the 'Paradise of Dissent', 1837-1900",[145] provides a starting point. He calculated that by 1855 Wesleyan Methodists constituted thirteen per cent of the colony's population. This quite substantial proportion could be explained in four ways. Firstly, between

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(143) The Australian, January 28, 1975, letter to Editor from K.P. Barley, Hawthorn , South Australia. Barley was secretary of KOSSS.

(144) Almond and Woolcock, op.cit., p.81.

(145) The Journal of Religious History, Vol.5, No.4, 1969, pp.331-347.

1836 and 1840, a large number of immigrants came from Southern England, a strong Methodist area. Secondly, up to 1840, fifteen per cent of assisted migrants came from Cornwall, Devon and Somerset, also strong Methodist counties. Thirdly, Cornish miners, who were often Methodists, were attracted to the copper mines at Kapunda in 1843, Burra in 1845 and Moonta in 1860 while, finally, up to 1856, most immigrants were working class people and Methodistsin Britain in the mid-nineteenth century were usually members of that class.[146] Indeed, Methodism flourished in working class areas such as Port Adelaide and Moonta although Walker admitted that no calculable figures were available on what percentage of Methodists were working class.[147]

By 1866, although Wesleyan Methodists still only accounted for thirteen per cent, when their numbers were added to the Primitive Methodists and Bible Christian totals, they collectively numbered 163,000 and 21 per cent of the total population.[148] In 1871, they had increased to 23 per cent and by 1901 they had topped 25 per cent.[149] And their political and educational activity was not dwarfed by their numbers. By 1869, they had established Prince Alfred College as one of the two "nurseries of the Establishment";[150] between 1857 and 1876 there were two Methodist Legislative Councillors - this increased to eight between 1877 and 1896;[151] the Labor leader and Premier from 1905 to 1909, Tom Price, was a Methodist local preacher;[152] while in 1891, six candidates stood successfully on a 'Methodist ticket'.[153] Most of their political work has hinged on morality - they campaigned as early as 1839, when G.W. Cole,

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(146) ibid., pp.331-332.

(147) ibid., p.342.

(148) ibid., pp.331-332: those three groups formed one church in 1900.

(149) ibid., pp.331-332.

(150) ibid., p.345, the other of course, was St. Peters College, the 'nursery' for Anglican boys!

(151) ibid., p.346.

(152) ibid., p.345.

(153) ibid., p.345.

a Methodist preacher, formed the Total Abstinence League, against dancing, theatre productions, concerts, fiction, gambling, prostitution, divorce, Sunday sport as well as drinking, on the grounds that they all constituted immoral activities.[154]

Robert Wearmouth, referring to the British experience, lavished extravagant credit on Methodists for their political work. He wrote,

> "In philanthropic enterprises they have usually been the chief promoters, in Trade Union organisation the architects and builders, in political and social welfare the pioneers and leaders, in local government service the predominant influence ... Although late in the field of public service, the Methodist influence soon acquired distinction and importance."[155]

Later, his excessive praise included the assertion that

> "Labour's ascent to political influence and authority was due more to Methodism than to Marxian theories, more to the prophets and the New Testament than to the Communist Manifesto. That was true no doubt of the beginning and remained true after a considerable period of history, but may not be true at the present

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(154) In 1878, all children were asked to pledge total abstinence in a campaign called 'Bands of Hope'; in 1883 they used unfermented wine at communion.

(155) Wearmouth Robert, The Social and Political Influence of Methodism in the Twentieth Century, The Epworth Press, London, 1957, p.211, for a counter view, see Milliband R., op.cit., pp.181-182, "... a general secretary of the Labour Party once committed himself to a proposition which has often been reiterated, namely that 'Methodism and Marxism' had been the inspiration of the Labour movement. The proposition is more alliterately smooth than historically accurate. For however non-Establishmentarian in a secular as well as a religious sense Methodism may have been, there is very little in its history to suggest that it was ever concerned to preach rebellion to its votaries, and much to suggest, on the contrary, that the burden of its message was adaption and submission to the economic and political order, not challenge - let alone rebellion - and that it played a by no menas inconsiderable role in reconciling those who came under its influence to the work-disciplines and thesystem of denomination of the new industrial order", see also, Thompson E.P., The Making of the English Working Class, Victor Gollancz Ltd., London, 1965, especially Chapter II.

> moment. By and large, Methodism appears to have lost place and persuasion in the politics of today."[156]

Even allowing for the qualifications, Wearmouth's assessment is certainly too glowing for the South Australian context even if his claims could be conceded for Britain. However, the Methodists were still very influential in the colonial development of this state; so important, in fact, that Pike was prompted to refer to the 1870-1900 period in South Australian state education as the 'Methodist era'.[157] Walker disagreed that their dominance was so great as to warrant such a label but he did admit that in 1883, 1889, 1891, 1893 and 1895, they constantly voted in favour of the Bible being used in schools although, he pointed out that in 1875 they had been divided over the Education Act which excluded Bible reading during school hours.[158]

Their work in Sunday schools was definitely second to none and by 1901, they boasted 40 per cent of the total Sunday school enrolments in the state, out-numbering even the Anglicans.[159]

In Paradise of Dissent, Pike argued that the Methodists travelled the "roads to respectability"[160] by virtue of their early arrival which enabled them to obtain land, and because their temperance and thrift enabled them to accumulate wealth. With this economic advantage, they coupled a piety which to an important extent became a formidable example of morality and esteem, reference to which was frequently made during periods of both deprivation and depravation. It was the Methodist beacon of integrity and success which was often lauded as the height of

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(156) ibid., p.253.

(157) Pike D., 'Education in an Agricultural State', Melbourne Studies in Education, 1957-1958, pp.68-81.

(158) Walker R., op.cit., p.345: they supported the National Scripture Education League during the 1890s.

(159) ibid., p.333.

(160) See especially pp.509-516.

personal achievement particularly when recession hit the economy of the state.

Examples of the concern which both lay and church Methodists have maintained for the educational standards (and especially the moral standards) of state schools, have been documented above. Their newspapers, their sermons and their participation in education, social and political movements have all expressed an almost obsessive pre-occupation toward what they have identified as a decline in ethical norms caused by a deepening morass of secularity. Thus, their answer to this moral abyss has been to herald a return to christian values and a re-awakening of a religious view of the world. Recently, in spite of (and perhaps, because of) their apparent lack of active support, they have conducted campaigns to uphold christian standards which have been shrewd rather than ostentatious, dogged rather than flamboyant. They have tended to rely more on this quiet grit because they have been forced to adjust to the reality that loud popular support is no longer easy to win. The more viable strategy has been to solicit the tacit support of the so-called 'silent majority' who still declare themselves Christians (albeit in decreasing numbers)[161] but whose enthusiasm for vigorously defending their religion has waned. The cabalistic tactic by which they appear to have conducted the religious education campaign illustrates their continuing determination while the success (however marginal) in having it included in the state school curriculum vindicates their faith in the christian hegemony which continues to exert a very decisive influence on South Australian educational change.

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(161) Recent statistics indicate that 11.3 per cent of people in South Australia are now declaring themselves as having 'no religion', Australian Bureau of Statistics 1976 Census, op.cit., p.4. This compares with figures from the 1966 and 1971 Census respectively, 0.3 per cent and 8.2 per cent. In other words, the 'no religion' group has increased sixteen fold during the last decade.

To briefly conclude, this chapter has offered a critique of various Marxist, neo-Marxist and pluralist theories of Christianity, and has detailed the political wranglings which occasioned the introduction of the religious education course into South Australian state schools. The intention has been to indicate that any useful theory of the function of Christianity in a capitalist society must be historically-informed as well as sociologically sensitive to the political links between religious philosophy and the economic and ideological hegemony of capitalism.

CHAPTER V

The previous chapters have, collectively, attempted to make the following points: that the teaching of religion in schools in South Australia has always been a contentious political issue, that the debates on the issue have reflected historical changes in party politics, educational theory, economic and industrial conditions, and social mores as well as church politics, that the introduction of the courses into state schools have been characterised by both overt and covert manoeuvres involving churches, education departments, parliaments and various other pressure groups representing antagonistic interests, and that the political battles surrounding religious education have been conducted within the bounds of state hegemonic legitimacy and manifest themselves as aspects of the continuing struggle of subordinate ideas competing for survival in a hostile ideological environment.

These points represent the general conclusions that can be made about a study of religious education in this state which takes into account the broader political issues associated with the teaching of religion in schools. They indicate the extent to which political parties are prepared to introduce legislation which is specifically aimed at woo-ing certain voters; they expose the philosophical themes which indulge the interest of intellectuals who have particular pre-dispositions toward educational and political theories - for example that of indoctrination, truth, morality, rationality, knowledge, faith and indeed, learning itself; they suggest the influence which economic booms and depressions might have on active church affiliation, on church finances and on intra-church politics; they infer that the owners and controllers of industry, (along with various other spokesmen from the legal, educational, security and religious professions) recognise some useful purpose which religious education can perform in developing positive attitudes towards changing arrangements, espectations and skills of work. They show the residual role which religion tends to play in the retardation of public acceptance of liberal values associated with social and moral 'fashions'; they describe the denominational hostility which plagued the early churches but which diminished as the Protestant churches suffered embarrassingly low membership following the Second World War and sought new alliances to regain both their numerical and political strength; they disclose the

cabalistic politicking amongst church leaders, public servants, politicians and partisan community activists when drafting and implementing legislative and policy changes associated with religious education; and they demonstrate the resilience of Christian attitudes and values in enduring the widespread public embrace of secular behaviour and the growing availability of alternative moral paradigms.

Having concentrated on a historical approach to the political analysis of religious education in South Australian state schools, one ought to be able, on the basis of precedent, to offer some, at least, tentative proposals about its future. For a start, the courses which have been developed in this state are being used as models for interstate curricula. Thus, they are likely to have wide implementation even if they fail to gain popularity within South Australia. Queensland, for example, while still committed to a rather narrow, Christian orientated programme for religious education, may find that changing social attitudes demand a broader treatment of religion and morality and may use the South Australian courses as a guide for their transitional curriculum.[1]

More-over, the teaching of religion as presently practised in this state, while neither popular nor increasing in popularity, is not likely to disappear. In spite of the growing secularity of social values, and in spite of the influence of various experiential religious sects, the dominance of the traditional churches in providing the endorsed hegemonic morality of the state is not being obviously eroded. Furthermore, during economic recessions, it has become familiar for rather extreme, fundamentalist propaganda to proliferate and such organisations as the Festival of Light,[2] which has quite a powerful parliamentary and educational voice in South

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(1) G. M. Rossiter, 'Emerging patterns in Australian religious education', Journal of Christian Education, Vol.22, No.1, 1979, p.163.

(2) The Festival of Light has developed a strong base in South Australia through the appointment of a full-time director, Mr. Steve Stevens, through the publication of a monthly newsletter, through the research work of Dr. John Court and through its informal association with the state member for Coles, Mrs. Jennifer Adamson.

Australia, are likely to provide enough public rhetoric and private organisation to ensure that the existing influence of Christianity in state-run schooling does not diminish during the current recession.

Perhaps the most confident projection that can be presented relates to the framework within which educational and religious struggles are likely to be conducted. There seems no doubt at all that the mechanisms presently provided by the state, will continue to operate. These mechanisms include committees of enquiry, evaluation committees and curriculum development committees, all of which tend to work towards providing representation for teachers, churches, parents and administrators and which aim for compromise and continuity for every innovative programme. They include parliamentary legislation which, of course, requires the approval of both Houses and, therefore, at least until the next state election, the approval of both major parties.[3]

The framework also includes the organs of mass communication supplied by the media. Those organs (the press, radio and television) are unlikely to alter, either. Thus, one can assume that since all mediums presently favour the articulation of conservative views, any radical changes to existing educational policy or religious position is unlikely. It would require major reversals of ownership[4] and of presentation[5] to ensure that

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(3) At present, the Legislative Council is controlled marginally by the Liberal Party although, on reasonable predictions, the Labor Party will win control of it at the next election. See D. Jaensch, 'The 1975 Elections in South Australia A Statistical Analysis', Occasional Monograph No.3, 1975, pp.8-9.

(4) The details of media ownership in South Australia are as follows -

Press:	Advertiser	controlled by	Herald and Weekly Times
	News	" "	News
T.V. :	ADS-7	" "	Herald and Weekly Times
	NWS-9	" "	News
	SAS-10	" "	T.V.W.
	ABS-2	" "	A.B.C.
Radio:	5AA	" "	South Australian Trade Unions
	5AD	" "	Herald and Weekly Times
	5DN	" "	John Fairfax
	5KA	" "	Central Methodist Mission
	5AN	" "	A.B.C.
	5CL	" "	A.B.C.
	5UV	" "	University

See Henry Rosenbloom, Politics and the Media, Scribe Productions, Victoria, 1978, p.153.

(5) At the moment, the only avenues of public participation in the commercial media are through letters to the editor (press) and talk-back radio. In both cases, conservative views are dominant.

progressive reforms were actively encouraged. No such reversals seem imminent.

Thus, all future struggles seem likely to occur within clearly demarcated structures and, as a consequence, will not differ fundamentally from previous struggles. Indeed, it is one of the central observations which this thesis makes, that throughout the entire history of South Australian ideological struggle, the hegemonic role played by our christian and capitalist culture has largely controlled both the parameters of struggle and its outcomes.

In conclusion, one further observation deserves to be recorded. The South Australian Education Department has recently introduced a pilot course called Social Education into six schools. It is intended to be a combination of religious education, health education and social studies and has, as its chairman of all three curriculum committees, Rev. Dr. McArthur, the same person who was President of the Methodist Conference in 1972, who had been appointed to the Steinle Committee in that same year and who later took up a position in the curriculum development section of the Education Department. It is worth noting that one man has been able to actively participate in the continuing implementation of religious education into state schools and while credit for the introduction of the course does not reside in a single person, McArthur's involvement with both the church and the state can stand as a symbol of the links which both institutions have been able to forge in their historical struggle to provide ideological and economic stability within South Australia. That continuing struggle goes beyond this thesis although most certainly its future will draw heavily on its past.

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