III.
Multiculturalism and Religious Traditions

From Assimilation to Affirmation: The Jews of Australia

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1. Introduction

It is impossible to understand the significance of the history of the Jews in Australia without placing it in a wider context of Western modernisation. In the following remarks, we shall begin with an attempt to understand the general historical and cultural setting in which Jews lived their lives in Australia. After this it will possible to describe the rise of the dominant form of Judaism in Australia during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, its transformation by the immigration of refugees from Nazi-occupied Europe both before and after the Second World War, and contemporary issues in Australian Jewish life.

2. The Cultural Background to Jewish Life in Australia

The history of the British settlement of Australia is peculiarly tied to that of North America, and it is interesting to compare the cultures that developed in these two colonies. For the First Fleet that arrived in Sydney Harbour in 1788 had been diverted here by the outbreak of the American Revolution shortly before; previously, flotillas carrying "transported" convicts had been sent to the English colonies on the east coast of North America. Australia, one might say, from the start represented the English colony that was the alternative to North America, the colony that did not rebel. There were therefore many things that were similar in the societies that developed in the two different lands, and also many things that differed. The position of the Jews in Australia and the United States illustrates these similarities and differences.

Both the American colonies, and later, the United States and Australia were frontier societies of the British Empire. They both received the underclasses or peripheral groups of Great Britain, levelled not only by their origins and exile status but also by the necessity to make good through personal endeavour and not through birth or class origins alone. Both had to settle in unfenced, endless forests and plains and to build their society from the ground

up, and both were far enough from the home country to evolve their own mores, their own culture and finally their own national identity, throwing off the inertia of Europe with its prejudices and constraining traditions. The Jews who were among the settlers in both lands could therefore hope for lives to some degree freed of the heavy weight of prejudice that bowed down the souls of Jews in Europe.

Yet the colonies were after all quite different in their own history, and their egalitarianism also differed as a consequence. For one thing, the North American colonies from the first were made up of minority religious groups, ideological refugees from England and dissenters, from a wide variety of perspectives. Transported convicts made up only a small portion of the settlers, most of whom had come voluntarily to escape England and to make a new life for themselves. The diversity of the groups was itself a powerful influence on American attitudes. It was a fact of daily life that people differed a great deal from each other, but were nevertheless working and competing together as equals. A strong emphasis on individualism and allowance for dissent was the result. Submergence in the group was not expected. Another factor in the American cultural development was the variety produced by thirteen different colonies, each with its own indigenously created and changing social order. Class-war attitudes had no basis on which to form in the American colonies. Eventually the American Revolution made a definitive break with the entire British socio-political structure and it was impossible to make any special claim for oneself in the United States based on class or hereditary position in England. At the same time, the complexity and independence of life in America made the ideal of equality less a matter of protest against an increasingly irrelevant British system, than a matter of acceptance of internal diversity and pluralism. In these circumstances, the right of Jews to form their own autonomous congregations and to maintain their own different religion in the way they saw fit was taken for granted, so long as it did not lead to separation from the general society in secular matters. It was possible for them to be "different", and still to be fully American. In fact, the Jews and Judaism held an honoured position in the newly United States, for the Protestant-influenced but liberal humanist founders of the American Constitution explicitly modelled themselves on certain Hebraic Biblical precedents (such as equality under the law, levelling social reform, separation of religion and state, and so on), and they saw their own history very much in terms of an exodus of oppressed peoples into a promised land under

God. Jewish religious differences were even to a certain degree encouraged as a visible proof of the tolerance and "enlightenment" of the American way of life.

In the generations that followed, an enormous number of immigrants came to the United States from almost all European countries, and from other countries as well, producing a highly diverse society. "Hyphenated Americans" came to be taken for granted (that is, "Italian-Americans", "Polish-Americans", "Hispanic-Americans", and so forth). The openness of the society to all these groups was expressed symbolically by a civil religion of an enveloping patriotism and ethical monotheism of which the various religions of the U.S. became denominations; it came to be usual to include rabbis, Protestant ministers and Catholic priests on the same public platforms.

But there were some important contrary forces in American culture that discouraged diversity. A major influence on American thinking about group diversity was of course the Enlightenment tradition. According to this tradition there should be no differences between people at all. Everyone was equal in the light of reason, just as they should all be equal in the law, without special distinctions. Everyone had the right to be the same - which is not the same thing as the right to be different. The thrust of this way of looking at things could only be negative for Jewish group perseverance into the future. There was a strong "patriotic" desire to make all Americans merely Americans, and to relinquish all distinguishing traditions. For there was, despite the diversity and pluralism, a strong and countervailing "melting-pot" ethos, an expectation that the distinguishing aspects of the different immigrant cultures would finally give way to the emerging American way of life. It is true that Old World prejudices tended to fade away in the United States, but they were often replaced with impatient contempt for those who persisted in being different. A major influence on this melting-pot ideology was the American public school system, through which almost all Americans went in the course of their growing up. Jews endorsed the non-sectarian public school system whole-heartedly and eagerly adapted their religion to American standards. But from the 1880s on they also tended to live in the same areas of settlement, and usually had a large enough population to sustain a wide variety of religious movements and even some thoroughly "Jewish" religious and social enclaves.

Many of the socio-cultural factors sketched above for the American colonies and the United States that developed from them did not obtain in the case of Australia. Australia did not begin as a diverse society made even more multicultural by the immigration of a wide range of European and other

immigrants. It was and still remains primarily an extension of Great Britain. Pluralism is simply not an Australian tradition. There was no Revolution in Australian history either: the ties with British political and social structures go back to the founding of the colony, and the English Queen is still sovereign of Australia. The continuities with British society were in many respects both simplified and exaggerated in the Australian colony, and class divisions were even more polarised, due to the important role transported criminals played in the settling of the new land. A strongly demarcated class division arose from the start, between the transported population and their military warders and guardians who stood for the superiority of British values and civilisation. The poverty of the transported population, even after they won their freedom, contrasted with the relative prosperity of their masters, who had often taken the choicest land. A "squattocracy" evolved of land-owners who could employ indentured prisoners as servants and farmhands. The bitterness of this exploitation has become a part of Australian mythology, with the servants (and later on the lower classes and the workers) presented as the honest and decent folk, true Australians, ground down by a cruel upper class aping British manners. These myths are even shared by those who descended from "free settlers", the eventual majority of nineteenth century immigrants who came voluntarily to Australia from England, Scotland and Ireland to make a new life. Most of them were also from poor backgrounds, had a difficult time in the first generation or two, and could relate to the mythic images.

The class hostility expressed in these formative myths was intensified by a certain degree of ethnic and religious tension as well: many of the transported population came from Ireland (and so were also Catholic), and were the victims of the ongoing British repression of independence movements there. The upper classes, however, considered themselves guardians of Protestant and usually Anglican virtues; the Anglican Church was the establishment religion of the new land, though other denominations were given free rein. The middle class aspired to the prestige of British rectitude as well, and modelled itself upon those symbols and expectations. Establishment values were inculcated in the private, often Protestant and denominationally run schools that the better-off classes sent their children to, while the lower classes made do with the public school system or the eventually massive Catholic school system. The divisions in the educational system only served to anchor the class/ethnic/religious divisions more firmly in Australian society. It might be added that the instruction in these

religious schools tended to disseminate negative views of Jews and Judaism in the folk culture of Australia.

The result of all this in Australia was the development of a strong and non-pluralistic egalitarian ethos which (often, but not always) saw itself as being in conflict with the ruling powers of the land. Egalitarianism was a protest ideology to a far greater degree than in America. It was always in tension with establishment values or "snobbery". In Australia, this was expressed as "mateship", "giving a battler a fair go" and so on. Individual eccentricity was accepted up to a degree, as long as it was unpretentious and humble. Friendliness and readiness to work went a long way toward redeeming a person. But behind all this, there were strong group values: the standard was how well one got along with other "mates". Pretentiousness meant considering oneself better than one's "mates", acting as if part of a better, different group or in terms of better and different values. Such individualism and "elitism" was very severely criticised, with a much stronger edge to the criticism than in the United States. Even those who rose from humble origins and excelled in culture or business were criticised; there is a noticeable tendency even today in Australia to take pleasure in "cutting down the tall poppies". No matter what a person's background, he or she was to be judged in terms of how well he or she merged with the group effort.

The implications for Jews should be obvious. There was a very strong assimilatory ethic operating in Australia, according to which a Jew would get along just fine, and a Jewish background would not be held against him or her, so long as the Jew merged with the group, showed "mateship", did not separate out in any pretentious way into a distinctly different Jewish community, and so on. In short, a Jew would do well as an individual as long as he or she was not too Jewish. In fact, as a result of the widespread "protest mentality" and hostility to "the Establishment", many Australians tended to reject formal religion as a whole (in this again contrasting to the American experience), and there was widespread ignorance about Jews or about what Judaism actually was. This ignorance and indifference, although sometimes leavened by coarse negative folk stereotypes, often enabled Jews as individuals to make their way in life without any notable antisemitism being directed to them at all.

Juxtaposed to this, and sometimes merged with it, was the view of Jews held by the "Establishment", namely that there was something improper and un-English about them, something un-Anglican, something upstart and merely commercial. Jews were regarded in partly religious (that is, Christian) terms,

with the heavy weight of those prejudices therefore lying beneath the surface, partly in cultural terms (as elaborated in the English literature usually taught in secondary school classes, which made much of Shylock and Fagin), partly in ethnic terms (as uncomfortably different from Anglo-Saxon or Celtic Australians) and partly in social terms as impudent rivals in business. So we see them kept out of the upper reaches of the government bureaucracy, the best clubs and the faculties of the best universities throughout the past two centuries, though they might well be accepted elsewhere if they are very "establishment" in manner and had shown themselves to be able, thoroughly patriotic and worthy. The mixture of this old-fashioned antisemitism in some quarters with the indifference to Jewish identity and ready inclusion of Jews as individuals in general society, in other quarters, produced a complex situation for Jews in Australian life. As a result, even today Jews are not allowed in certain prestigious clubs, and Jewish professors at such leading universities as the University of Sydney only appeared in the 1940s, but on the other hand the first native-born Governor-General of Australia (1931-36), during a period of rather strong prejudice against Jews in Australia and around the world, was nevertheless a Jew, Sir Isaac Isaacs, and the leader of Australian forces in the First World War was another Jew, Sir John Monash, a man lionised both in England and Australia. This certainly showed that individuals in many settings were more or less taken on their merits in Australia (as long as they were "true-blue Aussie"), one of the few countries of which this could be said.[1] Nor are these the only Jews to rise to highly esteemed positions in Australian society. In recent years, Sir Zelman Cowen has given distinguished service as Governor General and many other Jews have been knighted for their prominent careers in all aspects of Australian life.[2]

The factors discussed above go a long way toward explaining the experience of Jews in Australia over the past two hundred years. It even explains the shape Judaism took in this country. Let us review some of the chief highlights of that history.[3]

3. The Rise of Anglo-Judaism

There were perhaps six Jewish prisoners transported to Australia in the "First Fleet" of 717 prisoners (and 210 marines and officers) brought to Sydney Cove in 1788. The "transportation" of ship-loads of convicts from Great Britain continued for about a century; like the first group, most were quite young petty offenders (as we would consider them today, although a person then could be

sentenced to long prison terms, death "or transportation" for the theft of a pair of gloves or a roll of lace from a shop). Usually they had little knowledge of Judaism. Some were even illiterate. Forced attendance at Church of England Sunday services was a fixed feature of convict life.

Free Jewish settlers did eventually come out from England, settling not only in Hobart, Sydney and Melbourne but also in places established from the 1830s on like Adelaide or Perth, and in smaller country towns where they often ran general stores. It was the free settlers who began pressing for regular Jewish services in Sydney in the 1820s. But for the first forty years of settlement the Jewish population was too small, too scattered, and either too assimilated or too ignorant of Judaism to form viable congregations and Jewish communities. Many lived in small towns where they were the only Jews, and even in the cities there were only a few Jewish families. In 1848 there were just 200 Jews in the whole of Victoria. Even as late as 1851, the entire Jewish population of Australia was less than 2,000 - with the discovery that year of gold, a Gold Rush began that was to bring another 3,000 Jews to Australia over the next decade. But there was a severe shortage of Jewish women, which meant that large numbers of Jewish men had to marry out, and their descendants have usually merged with the general Australian population. It has been estimated that today perhaps 250,000 non-Jewish Australians have some Jewish ancestry, indicating how extensive that intermarriage was during the nineteenth century. Even in the first decades of the twentieth century, with a normal balance between men and women well established in the Jewish population, rates of intermarriage remained too high to sustain Jewish community existence into the future: the 1921 census, for example, revealed that in Victoria and New South Wales approximately 30 per cent of Jewish males married out, and 16 per cent of Jewish females; rates were almost certainly considerably higher in other states with their much smaller and more residentially scattered Jewish settlement.[4]

It may be remarked that the whole thrust of Australian society, with its distinctive mixture of tolerance to the individual Jew and rejection of Jewish differentness in any way, worked strongly toward the attenuation of Jewish affiliation. A Jew who held strong Jewish loyalties was liable to the charge of "double loyalties", an accusation or suspicion that constantly reappears in Australian newspaper and magazine accounts throughout the nineteenth century, and that only increased in intensity as the Second World War approached and when, after it, agitation to establish the State of Israel grew. This gentile perception of tension between Jewish affirmation and Australian allegiance has

been, in short, an on-going issue for Australian Jewry, almost from the start of European settlement.

It was not easy, therefore, to create or maintain Jewish communal life. The first such recorded effort was the establishment of a Jewish burial society in Sydney in 1817, as a result of the desire of convicts and "emancipists" (those who had completed the term of their conviction and were now free citizens) to have Jewish interment. No doubt there were already formal prayer services; by Jewish law, all that is needed for that is ten adult males. But the first Torah scrolls (crucial for the Torah reading three times weekly) that arrived in the Australian colony were brought out only in 1830 by Rabbi Aaron Levy, a judge (*Dayan*) of the London rabbinical court (*Beth Din*). During his five month visit he helped to unify the small Sydney Jewish community, corrected its religious practices and gave the impetus for the establishment of the first formal congregation in November, 1831; (it rented its accommodation).

The first synagogue built as such in Australia was consecrated in York Street, Sydney, in April, 1844. It was soon followed by the dedication of the Hobart Synagogue in July 1845, the Launceston Synagogue in 1846, the Melbourne Shearit Israel or Melbourne Hebrew Congregation Synagogue in 1847, and the Adelaide Hebrew Congregation Synagogue in 1850.[5] A curious thing about most of these synagogues, including the first one in York Street, is that they were built in a style that looks very odd today, namely in a pseudo-Egyptian style, with columns in the front portico carved into the curving shape of papyrus bundles, or entry ways, front doors, and stained-glass windows that sloped inwards as they rose to the top. The interiors, however, followed traditional Ashkenazi (northern and eastern European Jewish) patterns, with wood used liberally throughout, and the *bema*, or Torah-reading platform from which prayers are led, located in the centre of the sanctuary so that the congregants' benches or seats surrounded it and faced inward to it, rather than all facing forward to an elevated platform in the front as in Christian and Liberal Judaism's services.

The Egyptian architectural symbolisms were no doubt meant to point with pride to the deep antiquity of Judaism and echoed the general fascination that existed at that time for ancient Egyptian civilisation, only fairly recently come to the attention of the public through the Napoleonic conquest of Egypt, decipherment of the Rosetta Stone, and so on. The stress on this symbolism was also no doubt meant to replace the common negative image of the eastern European Jewish pedlars with one more glamorous in the public mind. There

could be nothing "upstart" about such a religion or its adherents! Its claim to an illustrious ancestry going back many millennia bettered that of the English aristocracy, a mere centuries-old lineage at best. But another potent factor in this symbolism was the influence of the Masonic Lodges in Australian society; many leading Jews belonged to the Masonic Lodges of their community, and felt a harmony between their Jewishness and their Masonic affiliation. It is not irrelevant that the Masonic creed, like Judaism,[6] called for a universal fellowship of all peoples and faiths without requiring the conversion of everyone to one single religion; this made the Masons one of the few gentile associations that offered Jews the chance to stand together as Jews with gentiles, as equals working for a more just and civilised society. So even the architecture of the first Australian synagogues made clear the liberal and assimilated self-understanding and aspirations of its members. The buildings presented to the public a highly dignified face of the Jewish community.

The services in the synagogues mirrored the message given by their architecture. Etchings of the day show congregants praying in top hats and in sabbath clothes of upper class attire. (Of course, it is obligatory in traditional Jewish prayer to wear a head-covering.) The services were dignified and solemn, and in conformity as much as possible both to the standards of decorum of the period and to Orthodox practice. The more informal, homey and sometimes quite disorganised style of worship of the eastern European ancestors of most Australian Jews was studiously avoided. Instead, the model developed in England by Chief Rabbi Dr. Nathan Marcus Adler (1803-1890) was followed in Australia (for example, top hats were part of British Jewry's attire at services too).

As has been pointed out by Suzanne Rutland, there is a similarity between the form of Orthodox practice espoused by Chief Rabbi Adler and that developed in Germany by Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch and generally called "neo-Orthodoxy" (Rutland 1988b:2). Both evidently answered to the pressures of European environments in which Jews were not entirely accepted into general society, with their critics referring to the allegedly uncultivated and unworthy nature of Jews, and the primitive or medieval nature of Jewish practices and beliefs. The neo-Orthodox movement, arising during the hey-day of Romanticism in central Europe, responded to those criticisms with much the same kind of enthusiasm for the beauty of traditional rituals and symbolisms and the mysterious sanctity of past institutions, that Romantic conservatives of other religions espoused. Neo-Orthodox advocates insisted on the compatibility of a

completely Orthodox life-style with modernity and stressed the aesthetic and ethical beauty of Jewish ritual. Secular learning and cultivation together with Torah-faithfulness was their watchword (*Torah im derech-eretz*, as it was said in Hebrew).

However, the neo-Orthodox goal was only possible with a vital and cohesive Jewish community, with a complete range of facilities for the observance of Orthodox practices (kosher butchers, ritual baths, and so on), and a multitude of charitable and secular social associations to provide a kind of cradle-to-grave community involvement catering to every interest group within the Orthodox community. Underlying this was the view that Orthodox Jews would not and should not mix socially with non-Orthodox Jews, much less with non-Jews. Such an expectation could be said to be entirely realistic in Germany, where neo-Orthodoxy evolved, for even entirely assimilated and non-Orthodox Jews found it very difficult there to find social acceptance in the non-Jewish society. But the ideal of the separate and fully articulated Orthodox community was less easy to recreate in England; it became evident that it was impossible in nineteenth and early twentieth century Australia.

The decorous ritual of the synagogue was often the chief expression of Australian Jewish affiliation; home observances were much less strictly kept (for example, kosher dietary laws and even the sabbath restrictions were seldom followed), and there was no desire to create any Orthodox Jewish community enclave. Instead there was developed what could with some hyperbole be called a Jewish version of Anglicanism: high ritual symbolism and solemn dignity in the religious sanctuary, a warm appreciation of cultural and religious tradition, combined with a mainly ethical and subjective conception of religion lacking distinctive separatist observances in ordinary life. Thus there was nothing unusual in those adhering to "Anglo-Jewish" Orthodoxy in Australia going to sabbath services early on Saturday morning, and doing business in their stores in the late morning and afternoon. Jews freely dined with non-Jewish friends who served non-kosher foods. Despite some unsuccessful efforts to create Jewish day-schools in the nineteenth century, most Jewish children went either to the public schools (where Protestant values were very close to the surface) or to the more prestigious private schools run by various Protestant denominations, where Christian religious education was often obligatory. The laxity of observance was such, and the resistance of lay leadership to a stricter regime so strong, that by the end of the century, and increasingly in the first decades of the twentieth century, several rabbis brought to Australia to lead "Orthodox" congregations

gave up and either took positions elsewhere in Australia or returned abroad in frustration at not being able to implement significant changes in practice; other rabbis reconciled themselves to being one of the few really Orthodox members of their respective congregations. Yet there began to develop a tension between Anglo-Jewish Orthodoxy and the slowly growing number of more strictly Orthodox eastern European Jews who came to Australia through immigration, between 1880 and 1930.

Liberal Judaism began to take root in Australia only from the 1930s on, following the immigration of German Jewish refugees to Australia. In many respects Liberal attitudes offered a creative and positive response to the situation Australian Jews were in, but the very laxity of Anglo-Jewry's "Orthodoxy" also meant that for a long time there did not seem to be a real necessity for Liberal congregations. However, Mrs Ada Phillips, who founded the first Liberal congregation, the Temple Beth Israel, in Melbourne in 1930, pointed out that the lack of a more progressive and modern Jewish practice had caused a long-term drift of Jews from the Orthodox synagogues into (a rather typically Australian) no observance at all. And those supporting the establishment of Temple Emanuel in Sydney in 1938 observed that of the 10,000 Jews then in Sydney, only a little more than a quarter were affiliated with a congregation; by 1945 the Liberal Temple had attracted over 1,000 members (Rutland 1988b:205). There are at present Liberal synagogues in most Jewish communities of any size, with membership comprising around 20 per cent of the Australian Jewish population.

The immediate impetus for the break-away of a portion of a community's Jews from the local Orthodox congregation, in order to found a Liberal congregation, often came from difficulties about converting a non-Jewish spouse to Judaism. Many Orthodox rabbis, very concerned about the pre-World War II high intermarriage rate amongst Australian Jews, sought to diminish the likelihood of such marriages by letting it be known that they made conversion very difficult, or refused flatly to accept any converts at all. In their view, few of such conversions were genuine religious conversions, and in the prevailing laxity of observance, even "sincere" conversions could not be to authentic traditional Judaism. There is in fact a Talmudic prohibition on accepting converts who merely change religion in order to facilitate marriage; many rabbis even today have chosen to take this as a general prohibition in the contemporary situation. The attitude of Liberal Judaism has always been more welcoming to converts and more accepting of their sincerity. A significant proportion of many Liberal congregations has come to be made up of converts, many of whom are single

people or whole families (that is, a planned marriage is by no means the inevitable precipitating cause). In Australia, in particular, differences on these and many other matters have made relations between Orthodox and Liberal rabbis quite strained, with heated exchanges regularly breaking out in the Australian Jewish newspapers.

The interest in conversion indicates a considerable amount of what might be called "philosemitism" in Australian society. This has always existed. In the course of the nineteenth century, the security felt by Australian Jewry, and its assurance that there were friends or at least sympathetic hearers amongst the general population was expressed in the vigour with which the leading Jewish community representatives protested against some of the occasional grosser public expressions of antisemitism. But as the century moved to its conclusion, the expressions of hostile prejudice became more common, as did even more extreme expressions of antisemitism elsewhere in the world. For along with the rest of the Western world, the new doctrines of social darwinism and ideological racism began to be felt in Australia. Matters came to a head in the early 1890s, when rumours spread that the French Baron Maurice de Hirsch was planning to finance an immigration of 500,000 Russian Jews to form an agricultural settlement in Australia. Since 1881, Russian Jews were being savaged by massive pogroms at frequent intervals, which the Russian government did nothing to stop. The flight of Russian Jews to other lands over the next generation produced the first major and on-going refugee crisis of modern times, with two million eventually finding shelter in the United States and the first major Zionist settlements being established in then Palestine. The ethnocentric White Anglo-Saxon Protestant Australia policy was already effectively in place, and the rumours of a large Jewish immigration evoked an extreme and panicked reaction in the Australian press. The rumours were merely that, but the harsh antisemitism that surfaced at that time was real (and not entirely without precedent in earlier Australian literature and news media). It was made a political football, with demagogues latching onto the topic with enthusiasm. The labor movement, then as later, was particularly hostile to the idea of foreign immigration.[7] The stalwart objections to racial defamation by such champions of the Jewish community as Rev. Elias Blaubaum only served to inflame the polemic further, teaching an entire generation of Jewish community leaders that prejudice had become too intense and general to be openly combated: whatever the Jewish community did publicly to defend itself was used as an excuse for more attacks. There were certainly still many philosemitic non-Jewish leaders

quite ready to defend the Jews publicly, including a number of (mostly fundamentalist Protestant) clergymen, but the general clamour and harshness of the public debate deeply wounded Jews, and quiet diplomacy came to be the preferred method of dealing with incidents right up to the Second World War.[8]

4. The Transformation of Australian Jewry: 1933-1960

The Nazi takeover of Germany and the build-up to the Second World War provoked a similar major crisis and turning-point for Australian Jewry. It is estimated that a little over 7,000 Jewish refugees were able to gain asylum in Australia between 1933 and 1939: few enough, especially considering the desperate need (Rutland 1988:77-91). But there was quite a bit of controversy in the public press about allowing any refugee immigration at all, or keeping it quite low, despite the admitted Australian need for more people. The recently released government archives for those years reveal just how strong the resistance to Jewish refugees was amongst some bureaucrats.[9]

In the decade following the Second World War, another 18,000 Jewish "Displaced Persons" came to Australia, having survived the concentration camps and other horrors of Nazi-held Europe. (The Holocaust remains a vivid personal recollection for around ten per cent of Australian Jewry today. A much larger percentage have lost relatives to it, and/or are children of survivors.) By 1954, the Jewish population of Australia was (probably under-) estimated to be just over 48,000 (at present, the figure is about 100,000). These immigrants have helped to transform the entire orientation and quality of Australian Jewish life. Coming as most did out of vibrant and intensely Jewish communities in eastern Europe, and as the last survivors of those communities, they have had a strong motivation to recreate a vital Jewish religious and community life in Australia. In subsequent decades, Jewish immigration from Egypt, South Africa and the Soviet Union have contributed further to the dynamism and cultural variety of Australian Jewish life.

A sociological study of the Melbourne Jewish community in the 1960s, tellingly given the title *From Assimilation to Group Survival*, indicates how remarkably the new immigrants had transformed Australian Jewish life between the 1930s and the 1960s. As Peter Y. Medding, its author, comments (Medding 1968:269-70):

> The development of Melbourne Jewry since 1920 has witnessed the invigoration of a community in danger of disappearance. ... The 1960s ... find a community in which group identity and activity in all

> spheres have been considerably strengthened. ... Melbourne Jewry ... has resisted structural assimilation ... (despite achieving) a marked degree of adaptation to Australian society (and) while creating and maintaining a complete socio-religious structure of its own.
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> Melbourne Jewry's provision for its socio-religious needs ... is extensive. It begins in early childhood and continues right through the life cycle, including the kindergarten, the day school, the youth organisation, the university student society, the marriage partner, the synagogue, the residential area, the cultural, sporting, social and welfare organisations, the adult friendship group, the old age home, and finally the cemetery. In all of these activities, Melbourne Jews can, if they wish, follow a path which will never take them outside their own group. The existence of such a vast network of socio-religious institutions and activities has important sociological implications. As we pointed out, each of its separate elements acts to both communicate and reinforce group sentiments, attitudes, practices and values.

The religious scene had been transformed, too, with the emergence of a much more diverse, and much more observant, Jewish congregational life. Well over a majority, perhaps as much as 70 per cent, of Australian Jews are affiliated with Orthodox congregations, a most unusual situation in Western countries. The last forty years have seen the development of a variety of new Orthodox groups, representing the whole spectrum of Orthodox ideologies such as we find in the United States and Israel. "Modern Orthodoxy", dominant in the afore-mentioned countries, is well represented now in Australia, for example. Unlike the Anglo-Orthodoxy of earlier generations "modern Orthodoxy" is strongly Zionist, is interested in building up a strong Jewish community, and seeks a degree of common cause with non-Orthodox Jews. Further to the right are smaller but quite dynamic groups of Hasidic Orthodox (having their roots in eastern European Jewish mystical movements, they are sectarian in outlook and generally uninterested in accommodating secularist society or non-Orthodox Judaism at all) and what has been called "strict Orthodoxy", that is, non-Hasidic but also sectarian Orthodoxy; the Hasidic and the non-Hasidic sectarian Orthodox are often grouped together as the "Ultra-Orthodox" (see W.D. Rubinstein 1991:155-210). The 1940s saw the passing away of the dominance of "Anglo-Orthodoxy" as its leaders either gave way to much more Jewishly affirmative representatives of the new refugee generation, or changed their outlook under the pressure of world antisemitism, the Holocaust and the rise of the State of Israel. Assimilation ceased to take the top priority and group

survival replaced it on the agenda. The new realities were most dramatically revealed in the course of the development of Zionism in Australia.

The relationship of the older Anglo-Jewish leadership to the Zionism cause was, as could be expected, often strained. Of course, at the start of the Zionist movement in Australia in the 1920s, as long as the British government seemed to support the Balfour Declaration, almost the whole of Australian Jewry gave at least luke-warm support to the Zionist cause, and some retained a supportive attitude even after the change in British policy: Sir John Monash had warmly encouraged the Zionist movement from its beginnings in the 1920s, for example; he even accepted the position of honorary presidency of the new Australian Zionist Federation in 1927 (see Honig 1990 and Serle 1982). But from the late 1920s on, the situation became sensitive and difficult for Australian Jews, because the British government, traditionally Arabist in sympathies anyway, was increasingly coming around to the view that it had to support the Arab side against the Jewish cause because of concern for oil and for global strategy. Outright antisemitism in the British civil service was also a factor in leading it even to sabotage occasional pro-Jewish Prime Ministerial initiatives, for example Churchill's directives on behalf of Jews in Nazi concentration camps, and on behalf of Zionism (see Wasserstein 1979). The government in any case began to repress Zionist activism and development in Palestine, and to aid Arab movements. The world press echoed with accounts of Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi-occupied areas of Europe from the early 1930s on, and after the War the plight of displaced persons who had survived the concentration camps filled the news: they were prevented by British troops and ships from joining Jews in the land of Israel - even when there was no other asylum for them. From the middle 1930s through to the establishment of the State of Israel, the Australian press took a pro-British, which usually meant an anti-Zionist, line.

The pressures told on many Jews. Sir Isaac Isaacs devoted a good deal of his energies in the last years of his life, from 1941 through to 1947, to attacking Zionism in Jewish and general newspapers, particularly claiming that Jewishness was merely a matter of religion, and raising the "double loyalties" charge given so much currency by antisemites. These articles and letters to the editor aroused very strong reactions from most Australian Jews; in 1944, Julius Stone, the first Jewish professor to be appointed at the University of Sydney Law School, and a specialist in international law, refuted Sir Isaacs' arguments point by point in a series of very effective articles later published as a book, *Stand Up and Be Counted* (1944). He showed that Australian Jewish support for Jewish national

self-affirmation in Palestine no way constituted disloyalty by Australian Jews to Britain or Australia, would not necessarily disadvantage Arabs and was open to peaceable negotiation with them, had a strong historical foundation and was entirely supported by international law. The anxiety expressed by Sir Isaac Isaacs about Jewish self-determination, however, was the product of all the historical realities we have already discussed, so that he embodied an entire era and mode of being of Australian Jewry (and even of Western Jewry generally) in the position he took. It was an era and mode of being that most Jews, finally including most Anglo-Jewish leaders as well, could no longer endorse, precisely because it had led to the Holocaust, and the catastrophic loss of one-third of world Jewry - two-thirds of the Jews of Europe - while even the Western allies stood by with hands folded (see M. Gilbert 1981).

5. Contemporary Trends in Australian Jewish Life

Certainly Australian Jewry emerged from the Second World War as a strongly Zionist community, and so it has remained. It has also renounced passivity as a communal strategy when it comes to Jewish issues. In this the Jewish community has been aided by remarkably able leadership, including the recent president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, Isi Leibler, who has taken a prominent role in international affairs, helped to bring the plight of Soviet Jewry to the attention of world governments, and has risen to top leadership positions in the World Jewish Congress, an umbrella organisation representing Jewish communities from around the world. Support for Israel's difficult struggle as the only secular democratic (and non-Muslim) state in the Middle East has been forthcoming from the leaders of both major political parties in Australia up to the present day; Dr. Herbert V. Evatt, for example, as the then leader of the Australian delegation to the United Nations and eventual chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Palestine question, played a crucial role in passing the 1947 U.N. resolution approving the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine (see Freilich 1967:192ff. and Gouttman 1987:262-302). Robert Hawke, Prime Minister of Australia between 1983 and 1991, has given particularly warm support for Israel, despite a strongly anti-Zionist hard-left component in his own Labor party. Australian diplomats played a key role in winning the formal U.N. repudiation in 1991 of the 1975 Soviet- and Arab-sponsored U.N. resolution equating Zionism with racism.

The dynamism of the Australian Jewish community at the present time is no doubt the result of many causes. In addition to those already mentioned, there

are four other major factors that need to be taken into account: the generational efflorescence of a still young community, the potent influence of Israel's success as a spur to Jewish pride and activism, the extraordinarily effective Jewish day-school network, and the development of a genuinely multi-cultural environment in Australia and throughout the Western democracies. I will take up each in its order.

The Australian Jewish community is, of course, as old in a general way as the European settlement of Australia itself. But because that community was so revitalised by the influx of refugees and other immigrants before and after the Second World War, it is also a very young community, going through a kind of second generation maturation. This has spurred the creation and/or renovation of a wide range of community structures.[10]

Especially for a community so shaken by the decimation of European Jewry, the creation of the State of Israel has acted as a spiritual tonic. Without that, Jewish life would have probably languished in melancholy not only here in Australia, but also elsewhere. Zionism has provided a driving force rejuvenating Jewish communities all over the world. And Israel's role in receiving around 700,000 refugees from Middle Eastern countries, half a million from the Soviet Union in the last decade (with perhaps another million to come), and tens of thousands from other lands, such as the 30,000 Ethiopian Jews, saving all these groups from severe persecution, is an on-going validation of Israel's reason for existence. Israel's resourcefulness and social, cultural and scientific creations, its multicultural diversity, and its democratic liberalism, give pride to Jews everywhere. This is not to deny that Israel has its problems, but only that there is much to gladden its friends in its short history of four decades.

A particularly striking feature of the Australian Jewish community is the extraordinarily successful day-school system it has created. As was mentioned earlier in this article, Anglo-Jewry did not wish to create a separate educational system, and so Jewish children at the beginning of this century went either to the public schools, or to Christian denominational schools. In either case, they were not adequately instructed in Judaism, or were actually instructed in antisemitic stereotypes. The writer's own children, in their last years of public secondary school in Adelaide in the early 1980s, took English classes in which a violently antisemitic legend from Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice*, and Dicken's *Oliver Twist*, were all included in the state-determined English syllabus and were selected by the school as required reading - and were not presented as unfairly slanderous to Jews.

However, since 1949 in Melbourne, and 1953 in Sydney, (more recently in most other major capital cities), there has appeared a strong Jewish day-school system, which has grown to the point that 70 to 75 per cent of Jewish children in Victoria now attend a Jewish day school (with eight schools to choose among in Melbourne), and around 56 per cent of Jewish children in Sydney (with six schools). Smaller Jewish communities, for example in Adelaide, have only been able to sustain a single primary school, but particularly in Melbourne and Sydney the schools express the full variety of Jewish religious and secular perspectives, and many include the crucial secondary years.[11] Australian Jewry has produced a more effective educational system than almost any other Diaspora community, a telling testimony to its commitment to the future.

Beginning in the United States in the 1960s, and spreading to Australia and other Western countries by the 1980s, there has developed a strong commitment to multiculturalism and cultural diversity in the Western democracies which marks a new phase in modernity. The complexity of Western civilisation now seems to evoke and even to demand diversity. There is a new legitimacy for the right to be different, which contrasts rather strongly with the previously prevailing emphasis on the egalitarian right to be the same which we explored at the beginning of this essay. There has been general interest in "exploring one's roots": recovering ethnic cultural distinctiveness. This has also affected Jews, and has given a general cultural justification for renewal of Jewish community life and culture in Australia and elsewhere. In this respect, Australian Jewry are part of a world-wide pattern (see Zuesse 1987).

The new climate has definitely changed the way Jews are seen by other Australians. This can be illustrated by the changing responses to opinion surveys over the past generation. In 1948, for example, researchers from the University of Melbourne Department of Psychology conducted studies of attitudes in a representative rural community and in Melbourne (Oeser and Emery 1954:66-87, Oeser and Hammond 1954:64-98, and so on).[12] These surveys demonstrated strong antisemitic attitudes in both communities, with, for example, almost half the respondents in the rural study stating only negative views of Jews, and only one-tenth having only positive views, making Jews not much more acceptable than Germans and Japanese (three years after the end of World War II: Oeser and Emery 1954:67, Table 22)! In 1960 a study was conducted of the Perth population on "social distance" attitudes, and it was found that about 40 per cent had doubts about having personal social relations with Jews, and only half had a positive view of Jewish immigration to Australia;

about the same percentages applied to Italians.[13] (Only Malayans, of the seven ethnic groups mentioned, got more negative responses than Jews.)

In 1984, the Australian Institute of Jewish Affairs commissioned McNair Anderson, one of Australia's leading polling agencies, to conduct a public opinion survey of Australian attitudes to Jews and other minority groups. An analysis of this survey was later published by W.D. Rubinstein (See W.D. Rubinstein 1986 and 1987). The survey revealed a surprising pattern of attitudes. For one thing, (and contrary to some other studies), membership in most mainstream Christian denominations, including the Catholic Church, seemed to have little impact on, either for or against, Australian attitudes to Jews, or for that matter to any other minority groups, although Lutherans, Church of Christ members, and, it would seem from the detailed results, Uniting Church members seemed to be more antisemitic than the norm; those born as Presbyterians however were less so. And while Australians are shown by the survey to be at present relatively tolerant of minority groups *per se*, it appears that the strongest prejudice is directed, in order of declining negative intensity, to Italians, Greeks, Vietnamese, and those of British background, more than at the Jews (only attitudes to these groups were tested). In fact, the Jews are more positively viewed than any of the other groups named. At the same time, there was not much detailed knowledge about Jews and Judaism; one might call the results expressive of benevolent ignorance.[14] As regards Israel, there was much stronger support for Israel than for the Arabs in the Arab-Israeli conflict, but even so there was a great deal of neutrality too. The most clear-cut anti-Zionist responses of all, and the strongest pro-Arab sympathies, were expressed by those strongly supportive of the trade unions and left-wing positions generally. There was no significant right-wing antisemitism or anti-Zionism. On the contrary, there was strong support both for Jews and the Jewish state by those with conservative views.

These results indicate a great improvement in Australian attitudes to Jews over the past generation or two. The most anti-Jewish attitudes seem to linger in left-wing circles, interestingly enough, although apart from the disproportionate representation of such ideological views in the media and in academia, this is not representative of Australian attitudes.[15] A recent study of the Christian denominational press in Australia bears out that it is precisely the more left-leaning "liberal" denominations, or groups within denominations, especially those given to liberation theology and "social justice" issues and supporting the Australian Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches, which have

had the biggest problem with Jewish topics.[16] Multiculturalism for these groups evidently does not start at home, with the "Judaeo-Christian" tradition. This study also notes that the Catholic Church and its press have been much friendlier, by and large, than the Protestant churches, but that the strongest sympathy for Jewish group identity and contemporary concerns can come from such fundamentalist Protestant groups as the Christadelphians.

However, the general tenor of Australian attitudes to Jews is positive and welcoming, and it is on that note that it is appropriate to end our discussion. Jewish history is full of paradoxes, and Australian Jewish history is no exception. Who would have thought, one hundred years ago, that Australia, so far from the heart-lands of Jewish culture in Europe, would have developed by the last decades of the twentieth century into such a significant and dynamic centre of Jewish life? In many respects, the Australian Jewish history is an Australian as well as a Jewish success story, and Jews looking back on the way their community has grown and become increasingly at home and Jewishly affirmative in this country, can feel an almost unalloyed delight in this country and their role in it.

Notes

1 Yet even Monash in later life found it necessary to advise an aspiring young Jewish intellectual, "Remember you are a Jew, and if you muck it up you will be blamed for it." See Searle (1982:414) as quoted by Honig (1990:82).

2 A listing of prominent Jewish Australians fills two chapters totalling over two hundred pages of H.L. Rubinstein (1991:359-470), and W.D. Rubinstein (1991:295-378). An Australian National University sociological study conducted in the mid-1970s revealed that of the 370 leading Australian elite figures of 1974-75 in all aspects of Australian culture and society, five per cent were Jews. As W.D. Rubinstein points out, "This figure of 5 per cent represents a degree of overrepresentation of about ten times (1000 per cent), given that the Jewish percentage in the overall population is about 0.5 per cent. Such a degree of overrepresentation is phenomenal, and says much both about the creativity and drive to succeed of the Jewish people and the openness and realistic opportunities for social mobility in democratic Australia". (*ibid.*:296f.)

3 A number of major historical studies have come out in the last few years, including Suzanne Rutland's straight-forward, richly detailed *Edge of the Diaspora: Two Centuries of Jewish Settlement in Australia* (1988b); Hilary Rubinstein's *Chosen: The Jews in Australia* (1987), oriented more to socio-cultural synthesis; and H.L. Rubinstein and W.D. Rubinstein's *The Jews in Australia: A Thematic History* (1991), which devotes its two volumes to historical analysis of specific issues. An excellent overview can be gained from W.D. Rubinstein, ed. *Jews in the Sixth Continent* (1987), made up of essays on specific topics by leading scholars. These histories are the most thorough and scholarly studies on the subject; earlier treatments tended either to be more specialised (on the history of Jews in a particular city, for example), or more general. But we can add here Peter Medding ed. *Jews in Australian Society* (1973), with a sociological approach, John S. Levi and G.F.J. Bergman *Australian Genesis: Jewish Convicts and Settlers, 1788-1850* (1974), with a biographical orientation; and Israel Getzler *Neither Toleration nor Favour: The Australian Chapter of Jewish Emancipation* (1970).

4 See the discussion and references in Zuesse 1987:endnote 1, p. 22.

5 The choice of such terms as "Hebrew" congregation, or the equally favoured term "Israelite", or even "Mosaic", was characteristic of nineteenth century Australian Jewry. The term "Jew" or "Jewish" was avoided in self-characterisations in all contexts. As with all minority groups that are heavily discriminated against or that suffer from strong popular prejudice, the very name of the Jews had become so laden with negative connotations that Jews sought to replace it with other, more "dignified" and positive names. One might even posit this as an iron law of prejudice, that we can tell what groups suffer from general prejudice in a society, by their attempts to escape from their very own name and to replace them with other more acceptable ones.

6 The multicultural message of the Hebrew Scriptures has been entirely ignored by Christian exegetes more inclined to read their own religion's either-or views into the text. But Jews have always been aware of it, and, considering the context of this volume on multiculturalism, it ought to be mentioned here at least briefly: it is the reason for the lack of Crusade ideology in Judaism and the readiness of Jews down through the ages to

dwell peaceably in other cultures. Already in the Biblical period we find Abraham offering sacrifices with King Melchizedek to the Most High God both worshipped (Gen. 14: 18ff.); Job, a pagan Arab according to traditional Jewish exegesis, is the subject of a whole book of the Bible, and is presented as a model of godly piety for Jews and all humanity; and merely the purification of Ninevite behaviour is needed for Ninevite religion to be acceptable to God, without conversion to Judaism being required (the Book of Jonah). As Deut. 32: 8-9 puts it: "The Most High assigned nations their lands; he determined where peoples should live. He assigned to each nation a heavenly being, but Jacob's descendants he chose for himself." The various religions of the world with their heavenly intermediaries are therefore ordained by God and are efficacious for salvation when rightly understood. Even more pointedly, Jews are commanded in the Mosaic books to "love the stranger" or non-Jew who lives in their midst, for they know what it is like to be of an alien minority from their time in Egypt (Lev. 19: 34, Exod. 22: 21, and so forth). The Talmudic rabbis systematised this outlook in their teaching that there was a covenant God made with Noah that applies to all his descendants; anyone keeping its basic precepts (reverence for a single source of reality and just and kind behaviour) is assured of salvation no matter what their formal religion. For an attempt to place these beliefs within the wider context of Jewish world-view, and further bibliography, see Zuesse (1990:158-83, especially 173).

7 In light of the monocultural outlook, cultural secular-Christian framework, protest egalitarianism and anti-Establishment attitudes we have already pointed to as part of the Australian outlook, it is interesting to note the nature of antisemitism in these crucial decades. M.C. Frame has commented:

> Anti-capitalism, support for white Australia, opposition to British imperialism and anti-Semitism provided a rich mixture of radical attitudes before 1914. *The Bulletin* invented a composite character titled John Bull-Cohen, or British imperialism acting at the will of Jewish financiers. A radical journalist, H.I. Jensen, wrote in *The Rising Tide* (1909) that Australia and New Zealand were allowing themselves to be fleeced wholesale by 'hooknosed moneylenders' in the shape of British capitalism. During the 1914-18 war, a left-wing

> MP, Frank Anstey, made the same equation of British imperialism and Jewish finance in a pamphlet called *The Kingdom of Shylock*. Even as late as 1947, a trade union newspaper welcomed the proposed nationalisation of the banks by the Chifley Labour government on the grounds that it would discomfit the Jewish bankers. See Frame (1971:37).

Nowadays, the fundamental outlook attaches itself to anti-Americanism. One may conclude that there is a continuity between right and left-wing antisemitism, with the chief difference being that the left-wing tends to stress so-called "ideological" justifications for antipathy (that is, anti-"Zionism") rather than frankly religious or nationalist ethnicity. As in New Zealand, the most fanatical Australian antisemites have generally espoused a kind of socialism linked with nationalist, racist and Christian ideas, in the form of the Social Credit movement; the League of Rights in Australia, the leading extremist antisemitic group in Australia today, has strong ties with this kind of ideology. (See Campbell 1978.)

8 The above paragraph draws upon H.L. Rubinstein 1991:478-82. On philosemitism amongst Australian non-Jews, also see S. Liberman 1987:76-100.

9 Considerable controversy amongst historians of Australian Jewry has emerged over the interpretation of government policies to Jewish refugees both before and after the Second World War, and how far antisemitism guided these policies. All of the general histories published in the last few years that are listed in Note 3 (above) make reference to this debate, and offer bibliographic references that can guide the student. Almost all recent issues of the *Journal of the Australian Jewish Historical Society*, and *Menorah: Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* have articles on this topic.

10 P.Y. Medding (1968:22-26) has also drawn attention to the already middle-class, urban, entrepreneurial or professional nature of the Jewish immigrants when they came to Australia, making them able to sustain a prosperous community infra-structure with amazing rapidity.

11 The figures given in this paragraph come from W.D. Rubinstein (1991:Chapter 4, pp. 211-253), where more details can be found. Rubinstein gives chief credit for the development of the Australian day schools to Benzion Patkin (see *ibid.*:220), a man who literally dedicated

his life to this cause. Patkin had a very difficult time prevailing against the assimilationist philosophy of Anglo-Jewry.

12 W.D. Rubinstein (1991:391-4) attempts, unconvincingly in my view, to cast doubt on the results of these studies. He also remarks on Oeser's own prejudiced discussion.

13 R. Taft 1965:18ff., Table 1. Taft shows, p.22, that cultural pluralism was disliked by virtually all those polled, including immigrants, who were eager to assimilate as completely as possible. The "monistic" Australian culture was clearly dominant. There can be no doubt that a similar poll taken today would produce quite different results.

14 This may correlate with the marked decline in Australian religious observance and in membership of mainstream Christian churches, which has aroused a considerable amount of scholarly attention in recent decades: the stereotypes passed on through traditional Christian teachings about the Jews may have less impact even on Church members, and also reach fewer people than before. That traditional teachings do continue, despite efforts by some denominations (and particularly the Catholic Church) to rectify the erroneous images of Jews in preaching and religious education, was brought home to the Jewish community in 1991 when Mark Leibler, head of the Australian Zionist Organisation, on an invited visit to Brighton Grammar School, an Anglican school, inadvertently noted a Gospel lesson written on a blackboard. The lesson, written by the school Chaplain, asserted that the Jewish leaders and Sanhedrin authorities purposely killed Christ, who had brought a new law to replace the inadequate "old law of Moses"; they also angrily killed such Christian disciples as Stephen who reproached them for their crime. In subsequent correspondence, not only did the headmaster of the grammar school defend the correctness of the traditional teaching, but so did the recently elected Archbishop of the Anglican Church, Keith Rayner. There was no apparent awareness of current scholarship which indicates Roman responsibility for Jesus' execution, and that the trial of Jesus as related in the Gospels did not follow Jewish law and so no Pharisaic Sanhedrin could have been involved, that even according to the Book of Acts (5: 34ff.) the Pharisees were firmly against persecution of the new Jewish-Christian sect, and so on. For full reproduction of the

correspondence on this incident, with commentaries by various Jewish and Christian scholars and leaders, see the journal *Generation: A Journal of Australian Jewish Life, Thought and Community*, 1991:2(3):24-53.

15 This link between strong leftist views and hostility to Jewish group self-affirmation conforms to world-wide trends. See, on this, Wistrich ed. 1979. The roots of this attitude go right back to the beginning of the Enlightenment period, according to Hertzberg (1968, 1970:especially 363f.): there developed then an obsession with obliterating differences, and a Christian-derived tendency to point to the Jews as of course the negative instance par excellence of group difference, which Hertzberg characterises as an ideology of egalitarian "totalitarian democracy". We have discussed some of the consequences of this prevailing Enlightenment attitude for Jewish life in Western countries in our introductory remarks to this essay.

16 See W.D. Rubinstein and M. Cohen 1989. It is interesting that those fitting this supposedly ecumenical and multicultural profile have shown no interest in participating in the Council of Christians and Jews which now has branches in both Melbourne and Sydney, and which has been working toward better relations between the two religious groups. There seems instead to be a marked propensity for scholars in left-leaning theological circles to use the Jews and Judaism quite unself-critically as the favoured "bad example" of every conceivable and even inconceivable current issue, quite apart from their evident hostility to contemporary Jewish group affirmation. However incongruous the topic, from Aboriginal land rights, attitudes to disease and healing in world religions, feminism, or even multiculturalism (to name some recent instances from the author's own observation), we find that there is a search for some way, however strained and unfair, of using Jewish sources such as the "Old Testament" (not called the "Hebrew Scriptures") as the standing "bad example" that is then compared to the "correct" Christian one, or at least that alleviates or diverts attention from the perhaps poor Christian record. As regards the Jewish view of multiculturalism, see Note 6 (above).

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Diaspora Hindus and Hinduism in Australia: A Sketch

Ajoy K. Lahiri

Introduction

It is entirely germane, in a treatise devoted to Religion and Multiculturalism in Australia and dedicated to our good friend, Vic Hayes, to consider the religious faith of Hindu settlers in Australia. Hinduism's durability and variety, its floating mass of beliefs, customs, practices, philosophies and social ideals, all raise a number of questions for a social philosopher. Brown (1970:14), while dealing with the persistence and continuity of Hindu values, gives the analogy of the *Nyagrodha* or a banyan tree which, when fully grown, "sent out branches, and these sent down air roots, some of which returned into the soil and so became the means of communication between subsurface roots and above-ground branches". This sketch of Hindus and Hinduism in Australia seeks to study some aspects of the original *Nyagrodha* tree, and especially the branch of the tree which has taken its root in the soils of Australia.

Advent of Hinduism to Australia

The advent of Hinduism to Australia is closely linked with the immigration of Hindus to the country. The early history of this immigration is shrouded in obscurity and the available views on this topic are highly speculative. Elkin (1977:64-65), for example, believes that "... there is some historical connection between the Yoga and occult practices of India and Tibet and the practices and psychic powers of Aboriginal men of high degree". Moreover, "Australian Aboriginal religion, with its emphasis on mysteries and degrees of initiation, its doctrine of pre-existence and reincarnation, and its belief in psychic powers, belongs to the Orient ...". The paucity of corroborative evidence and historical research make such views alluring propositions only.

Thus, we will have to turn to the modern period of Australian history in order to trace the early history of the Hindu Indians in the country.

This history may be divided into two broad periods: the first period covers the arrival of Hindus from India in the nineteenth century, while the second period covers their immigration and settlement in the twentieth century.

A small number of Indian domestic servants reached Australia with the first settlers, and a few were sent as convicts (Clark 1962:94, de Lepervanche 1984:36, Jayaraman 1988:542). Most of them returned to India on the expiry of their contract. There were a few suggestions about the advantages of bringing Asian labourers to Australia. For example, Sir Joseph Banks spoke of this advantage, and E.G. Wakefield talked about converting "the enormous wilderness of Australia ... into a ... fruitful garden ... with the help of labourers from China, India or the Pacific Islands" (Willard 1967:1-2, D'Cruz 1962-63:42-43). But these early suggestions did not have any appreciable influence on the administration, for there was no acute need to import them into the colonies.

It was the opening up of the interior of the country in the 1820s and 30s, and the beginnings of primary industries that made squatters realize the advantage of importing coolie labourers from Asia and the Pacific. One of the typical proposals came from John Mackay, an ex-indigo planter from India. In his Memoranda of 1836-37, submitted to the Governor of New South Wales, he pointed out the advantages of importing Indian Dhangar tribal coolies:

> In their own country they have but little rice, and eat snakes, lizards, rats, mice, etc. Their clothing is simple and scanty, and they eat only once, rarely twice, in twenty-four hours. Their habitations are equally confined and simple - For any agricultural purpose, excepting the plough, I consider them fully equal to Europeans - maize flour - a little salt, chillies and vegetables, form their best food. (Yarwood 1968:11-12, Yarwood & Knowling 1982:123, Willard 1967:3-4, Dwight 1976:116-17)

These proposals were rejected by early colonial officials, like Lord Glenelg, the Secretary of State for Colonies, Sir William Molesworth, a colonial reformer, and Lachlan Macquarie, Sir Richard Bourke and Sir George Gipps, Governors of NSW from 1810-21, 1831-37 and 1837-46 respectively (Dwight 1976:*passim*). But, a clear enunciation of the policy of excluding coolies from Australia came from Sir James Stephen, the Permanent Under-Secretary for the Colonies, 1836-47, who remarked that the coolies:

> would debase by their intermixture the noble European race. They would introduce caste with all its evils. They would bring with them the idolatry and debasing habits of their country. They would beat down the wages of the poor labouring Europeans until the poor became wholly dependent on the rich... the opposite state of society, namely, the dependence of the rich on the poor, being the happiest state of society wherever it exists. They would cut off the resources for many of our own distressed people. (Yarwood 1968:10, Rivett 1975:14)

Thus, Stephen can be regarded as one of the earliest initiators of a major policy in the history of Australian immigration that led to its eventual climax with the introduction of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901.

The almost unanimous demand of the pastoralists for importing Indian coolies for shepherding and other types of jobs was rejected in 1841 by the NSW Committee on Immigration on the following grounds:

(a) a race of different origin, colour, and habits from the European would be fated to a position of inferiority and compelled to accept a lower rate of remuneration,

(b) their employment at lower wages would lead to a depression of wages,

(c) classes and castes, other than coolies, might have to be allowed to settle in Australia,

(d) their introduction might deprave the Australian social system,

(e) it would discourage European labourers from migrating to Australia. (Yarwood 1968:12-15, Willard 1968:6-8)

Despite official discouragement, individual Australians continued to bring Indian labourers to Australia. In 1843 Major Alexander Davidson settled in Port Phillip with 14 Indian servants, while P. Friell brought 25 domestic servants to Sydney in 1844. Captain Robert Towns brought 86 Indians to Australia in the mid-1840s as domestic servants, although his idea of bringing 1500 coolies as pastoral workers floundered because of the restriction of immigration imposed by the Indian Emigration Act of the Bengal government. George Sandeman, a pastoralist of Moreton Bay, employed Indian coolies for ten years according to a 1854 report. However, a Report from the Select Committee of the Legislative Council of NSW on Asiatic Labour noted the fact that, owing

to the restriction of Indian emigration by Indian Law, coolies were no longer obtainable (Yarwood 1968:15-18).

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the arrival of only a handful of Indians in Australia. Thus, Jayaraman (1988:543) notes the existence of two Bengalis during the Eureka Stockade of 1854, who "stood at the head of a mob of Europeans". However, many Indians were hawkers and pedlars or farm workers. Farooque (1979:1) maintains that there were Hindus from Rajasthan among Sir Thomas Elder's Beltana cameleers. It was also during this period that two states, Queensland and South Australia, seriously considered the possibility of importing Indian labourers. But, by then, the Government of India laid down two stringent conditions for the colonial states contemplating such importation: firstly, the colonial government would be held responsible for the importation and treatment of Indian labourers; and, secondly, a Protector, thoroughly versed in the language, social customs and character of the coolies, would have to be appointed for their welfare. He would have to be paid by the colonial government, although held responsible to the Indian government only (Willard 1967:100). Eventually Queensland decided in favour of Kanaka labourers while later attempts to import coolies by South Australia, West Australia and Queensland were abandoned due to the expenses involved in, and prevailing public opinion against, such importations.

This period also witnessed the crystallization of anti-Asian attitudes in Australia. The growing resentment against Chinese immigrants, murmurs of disapproval in Britain against the formation of a future slave colony in NSW, and the erection of immigration and tariff barriers in British Columbia, California, Peru, Panama, Ecuador, and New Zealand, and other factors led the Australian colonies to restrict or prohibit Asian immigration by the 1890s. This process reached its climax with the introduction of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901 by the Commonwealth. (Yarwood 1964:5-41, Rivett 1962:1-27, London 1970:3-14, Hawkins 1989:8-16) This imposed almost total prohibition on Indian immigration. However, by then, there were 4383 resident Hindus in Australia (Willard 1967:107).

Despite the indignities suffered by Indian immigrants as a result of the Act, the early twentieth century saw a few amendments to it. A 1904 amendment allowed Indian and Japanese students, merchants and tourists temporary residence in the country (Rivett 1962:16, Palfreeman 1967:12). Further relaxation of the Act followed India's enormous contribution to the allied war effort during the Great War. At the Imperial Conferences between

1917-23, the question of Indian dependents came up for discussion (Palfreeman 1967:16-18). This was followed by Srinivas Sastri's eloquent plea in Australia for the recognition of Indian equality. As a result of these developments, the franchise was granted to resident Indians, and their wives and children were exempted from taking the notorious dictation test (Rivett 1962:23, Yarwood 1964:136-40). But despite these relaxations, migrants from India continue to suffer from many disadvantages (de Lepervanche 1984:56-71).

Since the end of the World War II, however, the pace of change, both internal and external, has gathered momentum. The presence of Asian war refugees, the realization of the futility of Australian isolationism, the emergence of Afro-Asian states and their diplomatic pressure on Australia, and the emergence of immigration reform groups, led to the realization of the irrelevance of Australia's immigration policy. The Nationality and Citizenship Act of 1948 regarded Indians as British subjects and allowed them citizenship rights like other aliens eligible for naturalization. In 1966, the government allowed Indian temporary permit holders to apply for resident status (London 1970:15-51, de Lepervanche 1984:71-76). This facilitated the process of settlement of professional Indians, such as doctors, engineers, university teachers, businessmen and others in Australia. However, it was the election of the Whitlam Labour government in 1972 that initiated major reform programmes in various spheres of Australian national life. The changes in immigration were largely the work of the Prime Minister and his first minister for immigration, A.J. Grassby. The government discarded the White Australia Policy of immigration, and this liberal policy continued during both the Frazer conservative and the Hawke Labor governments.

It is virtually impossible to say anything definite about the nature of Hinduism in early Australia. The historical sources are insufficient and scanty. Those Hindus who came here in the nineteenth century must have maintained a precarious existence on the fringes of the society. Apart from spiritual sustenance, religion was probably their main source of relaxation and entertainment. Women were only a microscopic minority among them. Most of the Hindus were illiterate and did not have any knowledge of the English language. There were a few members of the Brahmanical caste among them (Dwight 1976:132). One may not be wrong in speculating that most of them were *Sanatanist* Hindus who used to perform their religious rituals in private homes. In the absence of a Brahmanical priest, the eldest male member of the local Hindu community used to officiate as a priest, and lead the *Puja* rituals in

front of a clay idol or image. They probably adhered to their characteristic concern for ritual cleanliness, avoidance of certain foods and abstinence from alcoholic drinks. Listening to sacred stories might have been a part of their *Dharma.*

The above picture, I am constrained to admit here, is highly speculative. For a proper picture of Hinduism in Australia, we will have to turn to Hinduism in the last three decades of the twentieth century.

Varieties of Hinduism in Australia

As in other parts of the world, Diaspora Hinduism in Australia can be divided into the following major groups:

(a) Denominational Hinduism on the basis of one's chosen deity (***Ishtadevatā*** **or** ***Ishṭadevī*****)**: Thus we have the worshippers of Vishṇu (Vaishṇavas), Śiva (Śaivas), Śakti (Śāktas), Krishṇa, Rāma, and so forth.

(b) **Adherents of one of the Hindu reformers of the past**: for example, the Arya Samajists (followers of Arya Samaj, founded by Dayananda Saraswati), or followers of Ramakrishna Mission (founded by Ramakrishna's most famous disciple, Swami Vivekananda).

(c) **Adherents of new religious movements**: for example, those of the International Society of Krishna consciousness founded by Sri Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Swami Shivananda (Divine Life Society), Sri Ramana Maharshi, Swami Chinmayananda (Chinmoy Asrama).

(d) **Adherents of Yogic schools of various denominations**: for example, those founded by Sri Aurobindo (Integral Yoga), Maharshi Mahesh Yogi (Transcendental Meditation), Swami Muktananda (Siddha Yoga), Brahma Kumaris (Raja Yoga), and others.

(e) The last group includes those who are motivated by a strong sense of religio-political commitment to India, or by a mixture of western and Indian psychocurative practices, for example, the followers of Ananda Marga (founded by P.R. Sarkar), Bhagwan Sri Rajneesh, and a few Theosophists.

Systematization and Maturity of Hinduism in Australia

Hinduism in the 50s and 60s did not have a proper shape or form and was not well organized. By the 70s, however, most of the metropolitan universities had their Asian and Religion Studies departments staffed by well trained tertiary level teachers. The Hare Krishna and the alternative life style movements, and the immigration of Asian people made Australians aware of the existence of non-Christian people and their religious culture in the country. But it was the advent of Hindu immigrants from the ex-colonial countries, like Fiji, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and South Africa, that gave a great impetus to organized Hinduism, although Hindus from the Indian sub-continent also made their distinct contribution to it.

My own experience as a participant observer in this whole process leads me to the belief that Hindus from the Indian subcontinent are mostly secular minded nominal Hindus, but those from the ex-colonial countries attach greater importance to their Hindu affiliation. This is due to the following factors:

(a) Hindus from India experienced a far deeper process of secularization during and after British rule than the Hindus in the ex-colonial countries. One effect of this was that, while Hindus from outside India clung to their forefathers' religious traditions of the nineteenth century in order to maintain their identity as a distinct people in these countries, Hindus from India did not have such an urge, as the country went through an enormous process of cultural change. Even today, Hindus from the former countries cling to their Hindu ideology, specially Hindu rituals, because it gives them a sense of unity and purpose in foreign surroundings.

(b) Whereas most Hindus from India have an urban background, the forefathers of some Hindu migrants from ex-colonial countries had a rural background.

We should not forget here that the Diaspora experiences of these two groups differ from each other. While Hindus from India are mostly first generation immigrants, those from the ex-colonial countries have been immigrants for many generations. However, for both these groups, the adherence to their notion of "Hinduness" more or less, arose from an urge for ethnic identification, as also from a quest for spiritual satisfaction and goal.

Hindu religiosity manifested itself in a systematic and organised way for the first time in NSW in the mid 1970s. Prior to this, Hindus used to congregate in small groups at private homes of their community leaders for prayer meetings and religious festivals. But the needs of a larger community made private homes inadequate, and the desirability of a regular and permanent venue was increasingly felt. Accordingly, the Śrī Mandir (Auspicious Temple) Society was founded in 1974. It procured an old church at Auburn in 1979. Prayer meetings, Hindu festivals and marriage rituals have since been conducted in this temple, described as "the first Hindu 'shrine' in Australia" (Bilimoria 1989:60). It is patronised mostly by North Indian Hindus. A more traditionally inclined group, consisting mostly of South Indian and Sri Lankan Hindus, founded another association in 1978 named Śrī Venkateśwara Temple Association, which built another temple at Helensburgh in 1985. A Brahmin priest from India conducts services there.

There are a number of other types of Hindu religious groups in Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong. Apart from the Hare Krishna Temple in Sydney, there are spiritual hermitages organized by the Vedanta Society of NSW and the Siddha Yoga Foundation.

In Victoria small groups of Hindus also used to gather in private homes for their prayer meetings. The Arya Samajists used to organize their *Havans* or fire offerings in private homes. Hindus also used to attend spiritual retreats on behalf of itinerant monks from the Ramakrishna order, or *Bhajan* sessions organized for preceptors, like Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Sathya Sai Baba or Baba Muktananda. A Hindu Society of Victoria was inaugurated in 1982. Heavily patronised by South Indians and Sri Lankan Tamils, the Society bought a plot of land at Carrum Downs on the outskirts of Melbourne for building a temple. According to Bilimoria (1989:138) it would be dedicated to five main deities of Hinduism, Śiva, Ganeśa, Durgā, Vishṇu, and Murugan, which may promote the unification of Hindu sects in Australia.

In South Australia Hindus similarly used to gather in private homes for their prayer meetings, and occasionally visit the local Hare Krishna Temple on festive days. By the mid-80s a few religious groups, like the Hindu Seva Samaj (Hindu Association for Social Services), Vedanta Society, the Sai Baba group and the Siddha Yogāśrama became active in organizing prayer meetings and *Bhajan* sessions. By then, there was an influx of immigrants from the ex-colonial possessions of Britain. It was mainly under their patronage that the Hindu Society of South Australia was inaugurated in 1985. With generous

donations from the Hindu devotees, it bought a vacated Lutheran church at Oaklands Park which became the first Hindu temple in the state. The "Inaugural And Thanksgiving Satsang" (Somers 1986:1(I)) was held on 22 January 1986, and was attended by a large number of people. At the initial stages a few lay Hindus officiated as priests, although, at present, a full-time Hindu priest from Malaysia has taken up that responsibility. A Ganeśa image was installed at the temple with inaugural *Pūjā* on 11 and 12 July 1986 (Somers 1986:1(VII)). The temple also contains images of other deities, which may be regarded as an evidence of Hindu catholicity in the state. A few members of the society have also organized the "Three Faiths Tours" in the past, which include visits to a local Muslim mosque, Buddhist and Hindu temples by people of other religious faiths.

The Executive Committee and other members of the Society have also organized a large number of festive days in the Temple since its inauguration, for example, in 1989, among others, they organized the following:

6 Mar: Maha Sivarathri
7 Mar: Telegu New Year
9 Mar: Ramakrishna Jayanthi
21 Mar: Holi Feast
7-14 Apr: Ramayana Week
14 Apr: Tamil New Year
14 Apr: Sri Ram Naumi
20 May: Vaihasi Purnima
16 Jul: Aadi Pirappu
17 Aug: Aavani Aviddam
17-24 Aug: Gita Week
24 Aug: Sri Krishna Janmastamee
4 Sep: Sri Ganesh Chaturthi
12 Sep: Onam Festival
29 Sep: Mahalaya Amavasya
30 Sep-10 Oct: Navarathri
6 Oct: Sri Saraswathi Pooja
7 Oct: Sri Durga Pooja
10 Oct: Vijaya Dasmee
28 Oct: Deepavali Amavasya (Lakshmi Pooja)
23 Nov: Sai Baba's Birthday
9 Dec: Geeta Jayathi (*sic*!)
12 Dec: Vishnu Deepa, and so on.

In Western Australia the Hindu Temple Association of Western Australia was founded in 1986 (Bilimoria 1989:141). Despite many discussions by the

members of the Association, they are yet to make up their minds about the founding of a Hindu temple in their state. In Queensland the Hindu Religion and Temple Association, founded in 1984, have already been planning to build its temple sometime in the future. According to Bilimoria (1989:142-43), the number of Hindus in the ACT is small, while not much information is available with regard to the "concerns" of the Hindus of Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

The inauguration of Hindu temples in various parts of the country may be looked upon as a triumph of multiculturalism in Australia. It genuinely and favourably reflects the openness and tolerance of Australian society, which have enabled people from all parts of the globe to settle down peacefully in the country. As for the Hindu immigrants, the inauguration of the Hindu temple in South Australia was, in the language of the then Secretary of the Hindu Society of South Australia, the realisation of "our long cherished dream" (Somers 1986:1). It shows the maturity and sagacity of the Hindus as a community, and provides a focus for solidarity among Diaspora Hindus of diverse origin and denominations. For thousands of people, these temples will provide spiritual nourishment and comfort for years to come.

Typical Hindu Rituals and Symbols in Australia

The principal aim of Hindu rituals is the purification of mind. This is an inevitable step towards approaching the deity. Contemplation of one's chosen deity and the divinity of one's soul may help remove ignorance, but, for ordinary people, such contemplation may appear to be rather problematic, and, indeed, it may be beyond the capacity of many people. However, it can be made easier for all when it is concretised through rituals.

The use of images and symbols to represent a deity is an example of such concretisation. Praying before an image or a religious symbol helps the mental-spiritual process of concentration on the sacred object. It purifies the mind and draws people nearer the deity. Among the more well known of Hindu symbols, mention may be made of the *Śivalinga*. For the Śaivites, it is an aniconic form of the Supreme Spirit which, though manifest in forms, transcends them all. In many types of worship, a *Ghaṭa* (pot) of water may represent the deity, or may be used as an auspicious symbol. *Agni*, or fire may also be used as a substitute for other forms. The sacred word *Om* is almost ubiquitous in Hindu rituals. *Mantras* (sacred formulas) are sound symbols which, Hindus believe, when repeated and meditated upon, may eventually lead one nearer to the deity.

A typical example of Hindu religious practice is the *Pūjā* (worship) rituals in a temple, although these can be performed in a family home. In Australia some Hindus have set aside a room or an alcove for daily *Pūjā* rituals. The origins of such practices are lost in antiquity. During the Vedic period, the main religious rituals were *Yajñas* (sacrificial rituals) performed at the family altar, but in later Hinduism *Pūjā* became more important and temple worship displaced the family altar. A typical Hindu temple enshrines a deity represented in the form of an image. The deity is fed, bathed, entertained with music and worshipped with the utterance of sacred formulas, and taken through the streets on festal occasions. Inside the temple complex, the *Vimāna* (*sanctum cella*) has large *Maṇḍapams* (pillared halls) leading to it. The whole complex may be surrounded by an enclosing wall with *Gopurams* (towers) at the entrance. The daily worship of the deity follows a definite pattern. Several times a day the priest bathes the deity, dresses him up in new flowers and clothes and feeds him with the chanting of appropriate formulas. Old flowers and the unconsumed part of the deity's food (*Prasāda*) are then distributed to the assembled worshippers. It is also a general practice for the Hindus to circumambulate the temple on entering the complex. Individuals then offer their personal devotional obeisance, and then merely sit down and observe the rituals being performed by the priest.

Another example of a combined Hindu ritual-cum-festival is provided by what has come to be known as the *Saṁskāras*, whose main objectives are explained by Kane (1974:192) in the following words:

> The Saṁskāras had been treated from very ancient times as necessary for unfolding the latent capacities of man for development and as being the outward symbols or signs of the inner change which would fit human beings for corporate life and they also tended to confer a certain status on those who underwent them.

Pandey (1987:277-78) remarks that the *Saṁskāras* "facilitated the development of personality, imparted sanctity and importance to the human body, blessed all material and spiritual aspirations of man and ultimately prepared him for an easy and happy exit from the world of complexities and problems".

Most of the forty *Saṁskāras* mentioned by Pandey have fallen into disuse, although the following are still considered important by some Hindu families in Australia and elsewhere:

> The ***Jātakarma*** (Birth Rituals). These include preliminary precautions for safe delivery, fastidious care in noting the time of birth

for preparing an accurate horoscope for the child and name giving ceremonies. The first feeding of solid food to the child also constitutes an important part of the congeries of rituals concerning the child's health and well-being.

The ***Upanayana*** (Initiation Rituals). In ancient times, the *Upanayana* was an important ritual for the young boys of the three upper castes. They were invested with the sacred thread and thus endowed with spiritual or second birth (*Dvija*) and qualified for Vedic studies. Although largely neglected, it still prevails among some Brahmin families.

The ***Vivāha*** (Marriage Rituals). According to some Hindu lawgivers, the marriage rituals are the most important of the *Saṁskāras*. It begins with the ceremonial reception of the bridegroom by the bride's family, which is followed by the couple receiving each other. The *Kúsaṇḍikā* (consecration of the sacred fire) involves the couple offering a mix of rice, ghee and flower into the fire. An important part of the rituals consists of the *Saptapadī* or the first seven steps of the couple's married life. In the course of this, they take seven vows relating to nourishment, success, fidelity, blissful life, seeking good for all creatures, mutual prosperity and everlasting friendship. This is followed by *Pāṇigrahaṇa* (holding the hand) in the course of which they pray for auspiciousness and healthy life. The whole procedure comes to an end with the placing of vermilion powder on the bride's parted hair by the bridegroom, while the Hindu marriage celebrant continues his prayers, and blesses the couple.

There may be regional or family variations of the above model, although the basic outline remains valid for Hindu wedding rituals in Australia, USA, UK and elsewhere.

The ***Antyeshṭi*** (Funeral Rituals). The cremation of the dead is almost universal among the Hindus. In India it is an elaborate affair, while in Australia, before the body is placed into the furnace in the crematorium, verses from the *Vedas* and the *Bhagavadgītā* are recited. The ashes are collected after the cremation by some families and immersed into the Ganges.

Conclusion: Some Aspects of Diaspora Hinduism in Australia

The difference between immigrants from India and those from the ex-colonial countries is an interesting feature of the history of Hinduism in Australia. This is obvious from the secular orientation of groups like the Indian Australian Association of South Australia, consisting mostly of Indian immigrants, and the more religious orientation of groups like the Hindu Society of South Australia, dominated by Hindu immigrants from the ex-colonial

countries. In the latter countries, it was Hinduism that was able to create strong and viable Indian communities. It sustained their moral sensibility as an exclusive people involved principally with religious mores mainly their own. This tendency persists among sections of Hindu immigrants from these countries.

Having said that I must also emphasize the point that the above views and observations must be corroborated by in-depth future research into the value systems of the Hindu immigrants in the country.

A strong sense of cultural pride is another feature of Diaspora Hinduism in Australia. Hindus realize that they are the legatee of a great historical and cultural tradition, which, despite India's present predicament, once made the country one of the cradles of an immense world civilisation, and Hinduism was its linchpin. Some Hindus continue to study the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavadgītā*, and get spiritual sustenance from them in an increasingly materialistic world around them.

A sense of cultural excellence persists among sections of the Hindu immigrants in the country. Although their political influence is minimal in Australia, this sense of cultural excellence gives them a sense of inner satisfaction. In this, they share a characteristic with the Chinese immigrants, the legatee of another great world civilisation.

Apart from providing spiritual values and solace, Hinduism plays an important role for Hindu immigrants in identity maintenance. They believe that they are a unique people endowed with a religious culture which is respected and admired by thinking people all over the world.

In concluding this sketch, it may be pointed out that the *Nyagrodha* tree has taken its root in the soils of Australia. Hindus are a religiously oriented vibrant community contributing richly to the country's multicultural ethos. They realize that, although everything around them is unsteady and confusing, the present profound malaise is really a form of growing pain. Out of this will emerge a rational faith to sustain a new order of life and rescue humans from spiritual anxiety. Hinduism in Australia is ready to contribute to this quest.

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The Buddhist Experience in Australia

Roderick S. Bucknell

Buddhism, as one aspect of Australia's multicultural experience, is often identified particularly with certain Asian ethnic groups, such as the Vietnamese and Kampucheans. This 'ethnic Buddhism' is, from time to time, brought to the attention of the general Australian population through media coverage of such events as the inauguration of a new Buddhist temple or the ceremonies that take place on Buddhist festival days.

However, there is a second, less conspicuous but no less important component of Australian Buddhism. It comprises the relatively small but growing number of Australian Buddhists of non-Asian (predominantly Anglo-Saxon) origin. These are converts to Buddhism, or at least serious and sympathetic students of Buddhism, who have approached the religion initially as outsiders, rather than having been born into it.

These two strands in Australian Buddhism have generally remained discrete and separate, and within either one of them there exist many differences and even some substantial divisions. Thus, Buddhism in Australia is itself multicultural. Yet despite this diversity, it does make sense to speak of '**the** Buddhist experience in Australia' and to attempt to characterize and understand that experience.

Such an attempt is greatly facilitated by two recent studies. The first is Paul Croucher's 1989 book, *A History of Buddhism in Australia, 1848-1988*, a well-researched and very adequate account despite its relatively meagre coverage of ethnic Buddhism. The other is Enid Adam's as yet unpublished M.A. thesis *Buddhism in Perth* (1991), a sociological study whose relevance extends well beyond the geographical limit indicated in its title. These two works, together with a few less substantial publications, were drawn on heavily in the preparation of the present paper. For the rest, the material presented here is derived from my own rather unsystematic observation and data-gathering over a number of years. Inevitably the resulting account is both incomplete and provisional. It may, therefore, besides providing a broad preliminary overview

of the Buddhist experience in Australia, serve as a stimulus to other, better equipped investigators to undertake a more thorough and systematic study of this challenging topic.

Historical Background

Buddhism probably first entered Australia in the second half of the nineteenth century. The many Chinese gold miners who came here at that time practised a mixed Sinitic religion, which may be assumed to have had a substantial Buddhist component. Sri Lankan workers who arrived not long after the Chinese also brought their own variety of Buddhism with them. However, those early Asian Buddhists made little impression on religion in Australia, as most of them subsequently returned to their homelands.

Any further introduction of ethnic Buddhism from Asian sources was effectively blocked with the passage of the Immigration Restriction Act of 1901, and the block was to remain in place for the next half-century. In the meantime, however, Buddhism filtered into Australia, slowly and unobtrusively, by another route. During the early decades of the twentieth century a small number of Anglo-Australians managed to acquire a knowledge of Buddhism through reading and through travel in Asian countries. In time some formed themselves into organized Buddhist groups. The first such group on record appears to have been established in Melbourne in 1925 (McDonnell and Bucknell 1988:323, Croucher 1989:25-26). Similar groups soon developed elsewhere, and by the early 1950s there were Buddhist groups throughout the country. Their formation was inspired in part by sporadic visits to Australia by Buddhist monks and nuns from Burma, Sri Lanka and elsewhere.

Of the different schools or branches of Buddhism, it was almost exclusively Theravada or 'Southern Buddhism' (the type practised in Sri Lanka and southeast Asia) that interested those early Australian Buddhists. Mahayana or 'Northern Buddhism' had little appeal for them, though Japanese Zen did claim the attention of a few groups.

By the early 1970s some of these groups had established simple monasteries and invited Theravadan monks to take up residence in them. At the same time, small numbers of Australians had undergone training in Thailand, Burma and elsewhere, and been ordained as monks in the Theravadan branch of the Sangha (the Buddhist monastic order). Some of these Australian-born, Asian-trained monks later returned to Australia to practise and teach.

The 1970s saw a major event in the history of Australian Buddhism with the arrival of large numbers of ethnic Buddhists - Vietnamese, Lao and Kampuchean - as refugees from the Indochina war. The Vietnamese were mostly Mahayanists; the Lao and Kampucheans were Theravadans. The latter were fairly well able to associate themselves with the Theravada-oriented groups that already existed. Although those groups had been formed initially by non-Asian Buddhists, they had become increasingly susceptible to Asian influence, partly through the work of their Asian-trained monks. They now provided an environment in which Lao and Kampuchean Buddhists could feel comfortable. Some groups even took the trouble to meet such refugees on their arrival and offer them assistance in settling in.

Some exclusively Lao and Kampuchean Buddhist groups have since been formed, but they still tend to associate readily with the long-established Theravadan groups. This has facilitated the process whereby, during the past decade, several major Theravadan monasteries have been established, more or less on the southeast Asian model but with predominantly non-Asian communities of monks and lay supporters. One such centre, Bodhinyana monastery located outside Perth, has developed to the point where people can now be trained and ordained there as monks in the Theravadan branch of the Order (Adam 1991:131).

For the Vietnamese Buddhists the situation was very different. Being followers of Mahayana, they found it more difficult to fit in with the existing Theravada-oriented groups. Consequently, Vietnamese Buddhists, once settled in, soon formed their own Buddhist societies. Many of these societies have since established temples and installed monks and nuns to minister to their needs. Such societies and temples fulfil more than a religious function. They double as cultural and welfare centres, where Vietnamese language and customs are kept alive, and newly arrived migrants can be made to feel at home. These social and cultural roles provide much of the justification for the use of the term 'ethnic Buddhism'.

Another group of refugee Asian Buddhists to arrive during the 1970s was Tibetan. Though few in number, the Tibetans in Australia have exercised a remarkably strong influence. Their Vajrayana, or Tantric style of Buddhism (a development from Mahayana), appears to hold a particular fascination for westerners, not only here but all over the world. This may be due in part to its colourful symbolism, perhaps also to the charismatic figure of the Dalai Lama, who visited Australia in 1982. In any case, the arrival of the first Tibetan monks

during the 1970s was soon followed by the establishment of several institutes for the study and practice of Tibetan Buddhism. These have since developed into large, active organizations with substantial non-Tibetan memberships.

The Appeal of the Different Schools

As a result of this haphazard historical development all three of the major branches of Buddhism - Theravada, Mahayana, and Vajrayana - are now well represented in Australia. It is instructive to consider how the styles and teachings of these varieties of Buddhism appeal to different ethnic and cultural groups.

From the beginning the non-Asian Australian Buddhists were predominantly attracted to Theravada. This may have been due in small measure to 'historical accident'. For Australians interested in Buddhism, the most accessible parts of the Buddhist world were the then British colonies of Ceylon and Burma, both of which happened to be strongly Theravadan.

However, the main factor was certainly a perception that Theravada best preserved the 'original' teaching as imparted, 2500 years ago, by the founder, Gotama the Buddha. This view does have a certain validity. The Theravadan texts are in the original Pali language, while the texts of the other schools are mainly Chinese or Tibetan translations. The Theravadan monks keep most closely to the rules of discipline laid down by the founder, for example wearing simple sheets of yellow cloth, not eating after midday, and avoiding the use of money. Also, in their practice Theravadan monks and lay people tend to de-emphasise ritual. They insist, for example, that the offering of incense in front of an image of the Buddha is merely an expression of respect and an act of recollection. The more elaborate ritual of the other schools, directed as it is toward various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, involves an activity that closely resembles prayer. It is often perceived by critical westerners as a superficial accretion, and as compromising the spirit of 'original' Buddhism.

Most important, however, for the early western Buddhists in Australia was the relative simplicity and directness of the Theravada teaching. Here was an essentially atheistic doctrine of self-help, with a strongly psychological concern, which focused squarely on the problem of attaining individual enlightenment and liberation through the practices of morality, concentration, and insight meditation. The psychological aspect was consistently emphasised by the early Buddhist groups, as is evident in the books and pamphlets they published. For example, one such group declared in its charter: "The objective

of the Buddhist Study Group, Melbourne, is to promote interest in Buddhism as a workable psychology adaptable to modern problems" (De Jong 1982:6). What these Theravada enthusiasts were particularly interested in was the Buddhist analysis of the human psycho-physical complex and the associated meditative practices, which they perceived as essentially a self-administered psycho-therapy. With this hard-headed, analytical approach, they naturally tended to devalue the ritual dimension of Buddhism. Some went so far as to maintain that the use of Pali terminology should be abandoned, even in serious writing on Buddhist doctrine. They attempted to formulate the teaching entirely in terms of then current psychological concepts.

In the case of Japanese Zen, the only Mahayana school that attracted serious attention, what appealed was again the teaching's simplicity and directness. Zen de-emphasises scriptural study and ritual in favour of disciplined meditative practice, and it insists that monks must combine their practice with productive work.

In keeping with their declared interests and concerns, the early Buddhist groups had, as their main activity, critical study and discussion of the Theravadan texts. They did mark the day of Vesak (commemorating the Buddha's birth, enlightenment, and death) with a simple ceremony, but otherwise they paid little attention to the more colourful external side of Buddhism. Thus Buddhism was, for its early followers in this country, something rather different from what it was for most Asian Buddhists in their homelands.

It is not surprising, therefore, that when Asian Buddhists began arriving in Australia in large numbers during the 1970s, they found they had little in common with the existing Buddhist groups. For the Mahayanist Vietnamese the gap was virtually unbridgeable. The new groups that the Vietnamese have themselves since founded fulfil a totally different set of functions. Instead of textual study, learned discussion and meditation practice, they provide, above all, for the ritual and social dimensions of the religion. Most Vietnamese groups, having quickly passed through the early stages of meeting in members' homes or in rented or purchased accommodation, have now constructed large, well-endowed temples. These temples often have some kind of functional institution attached, such as a Vietnamese language school or a retirement home for elderly parishioners. Thus, for Vietnamese Buddhists the religion provides a valuable focus of ethnic identity. This is explicitly recognized in the charter of the Vietnamese Buddhist Federation of Australia. The second of its stated aims

is "to inculcate and develop fundamental Buddhist traditions and the Vietnamese culture in Australia" (Croucher 1989:102).

This is not to say that all Vietnamese Buddhists are uninterested in textual study and meditation practice. While most ordinary Vietnamese Buddhists are attracted to centres associated with the devotionally oriented Pure Land school, many, generally those with a better education or a more critical approach, join Vietnamese Zen centres. True to its name, the Mahayana (the 'Great Vehicle') caters for all temperaments.

Buddhists and the Wider Australian Society

The existence of such ethnically specific Buddhist groups and temples, particularly Vietnamese, but also Khmer, Lao, Thai, Burmese, Sri Lankan, Tibetan and Chinese, raises the question whether Buddhism is, for its immigrant adherents, a help or a hindrance to their integration into mainstream Australian society. Does membership in such groups present an obstacle to immigrants' sense of belonging here, or does it perhaps have the opposite effect?

As Adam points out (1991:4, 180), it is widely - but incorrectly - assumed by locally born Australians, including some otherwise well informed sociologists, that Vietnamese Buddhists integrate into mainstream Australian society less readily than do Vietnamese Catholics. (Roughly 20 percent of Vietnamese immigrants are Catholic.) This assumption seems natural: 'obviously' Vietnamese Catholics will feel more at home in predominantly Christian Australia than will Vietnamese Buddhists. However, research (by Cox 1982:136ff, and Adam 1991:180-182) has shown that in fact it is not so. When both groups are tested using a range of measures of alienation, it is found that the Buddhists feel less alienated from mainstream Australian society than do the Catholics. A major factor here appears to be attitude to other religions. While most of the Catholics interviewed by Adam stated that they felt threatened by other religions, most Buddhists denied feeling any such threat (1991:181-182). Thus it seems that Buddhism's tolerance for other traditions contributes to making its adherents feel comfortable in their new and initially alien social environment.

A related question, also investigated by Adam, is how Buddhists, both Asian and non-Asian, feel, in a more general way, about being Buddhist in a predominantly non-Buddhist society. For example, which aspects of the behaviour of non-Buddhists do they feel uncomfortable about? Asked this question, Asian and non-Asian Buddhists agreed in expressing strong negative

feelings about what they perceived as non-Buddhists' excessively liberal attitude to sex, their over-indulgence in alcohol, their thoughtless taking of life (for example, spraying insects), and their generally very materialistic values (Adam 1991:124-125). Most of these answers evidently reflect a concern about departures from the Five Precepts of Buddhism: abstention from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, false and harmful speech, and the consumption of alcohol and other drugs.

Although Australian Buddhists of all ethnic backgrounds claim to feel no sense of threat from other religions, they do occasionally find themselves drawn into minor conflicts. There have been several cases of opposition, by local residents, to the building of a Buddhist temple in their neighbourhood. Well publicized cases of this sort occurred during the 1980s in Footscray, Melbourne, and in Fairfield, Sydney (Croucher 1989:104). Another is currently brewing in Brisbane following the announcement of plans, by the Chinese Fo Kuang Shan sect, to construct a large Buddhist monastery on the southern outskirts of the city.

Usually such objections are ostensibly based on concern about excessive traffic flow or infringements of building regulations. It is clear, however, that environmental concern is only part of the problem; an element of religious intolerance is also present. In the case of the proposed monastery in Brisbane, 550 written objections were lodged with the City Council, and the *Courier-Mail* (14/9/1991:11) reported, "The majority of individual objections and letters to aldermen were on the grounds of religion. Many quoted excerpts from the Bible."

Inter-religious rivalries naturally surface from time to time, despite the best efforts of well-intentioned church and temple leaders. In 1980 Melbourne Anglicans expressed outrage when Vietnamese Buddhists were permitted to use a Surrey Hills church as the venue for their Vesak celebration (Croucher 1989:111). A similar reaction occurred in Perth when the Anglican cathedral was made available for addresses by the Dalai Lama during his 1982 visit (Adam 1991:24). On the other hand there are examples of excellent relations, at the temple/church level, between Buddhism and Christianity. For example, in the late 1970s, when Vietnamese Buddhists in Melbourne were struggling to gather funds for the purchase of a building for their first temple, they were helped out by a large contribution from the Catholic Immigration Office (Croucher 1998:111).

The difference in attitude between Protestants and Roman Catholics illustrated in the above incidents may well have a deeper significance. It has often been noted by researchers that Catholics are generally much more at ease with Buddhism than are members of other Christian denominations (Croucher 1989:110-111). The reasons for this affinity between Buddhism and Roman Catholicism have yet to be identified. One possible factor is their shared interest in meditation and silent retreat. Indeed, various forms of Buddhist meditation are being increasingly practised within Catholic monastic orders (Croucher 1989:110). It is also noteworthy that converts coming to Buddhism from a Christian background are predominantly former Catholics. Adam (1991:89, 134) found that the proportion of former Catholics in a sample Australian Buddhist community was roughly double the proportion in the wider community.

Why Buddhism?

The matter of conversion to Buddhism raises the question: What has caused these people to drop their allegiance to Christianity, or in some cases to agnosticism, and embrace this exotic eastern religion instead? Here again Adam's research provides some provisional answers. Respondents to her questionnaires mentioned perceived negative features in Christianity as well as perceived positive features in Buddhism. The negative features perceived in Christianity included a failure to provide adequate answers to life questions, its dogmatic stance which discourages individual thinking, its internal divisions and its hierarchical structure. Positive features consistently perceived in Buddhism included its lack of a God, its lack of any demand for blind faith or acceptance of dogmas, its seemingly scientific approach, its encouragement of individual thinking and its tolerance of other religions (Adam 1991:117). Some of these responses betray a certain naivety about Buddhism; for example, Buddhism is far from being free of internal divisions or of hierarchical structure. Nevertheless, it is clear that what attracts Anglo-Australians to Buddhism is above all their perception of it as open and undogmatic, as encouraging critical enquiry rather than unquestioning faith.

What sorts of people choose to become Buddhists? Examination of such variables as age, socio-economic circumstances and others, reveals no evident pattern. Unlike some minority religions (for example, the Hare Krishna movement) which attract members from certain specific sections of society, Buddhism draws its membership from all age-groups and all socio-economic

strata. All types of temperament are represented too, as is clear from Croucher's portrayal of the major characters in the history of Australian Buddhism. They include scholars, poets, beach-combers, reclusive meditators, dedicated social-workers, politicians, ... But the vast majority have always been seemingly ordinary people, whose degree of commitment to Buddhism ranges from slight to wholehearted.

Among the Asian-Australian Buddhists, most of whom are Buddhists by birth rather than by choice, the range is probably much wider. Available information on this point is meagre, however, and likely to remain so, given the existing cultural and linguistic barriers. The world of ethnic Buddhism in this country remains to a large extent unknown territory to Anglo-Australian Buddhists, to the impoverishment of both sides. Thus we see, for example, Anglo-Australian Zen groups calling on the services of Zen masters from Hawaii or California when, as Croucher points out (1989:103), there may well be equally competent masters resident in Vietnamese Zen temples right here at home. Such is the difficulty of penetrating the communication barrier.

Prospects for Unity

Attempts have been made to break down the barriers between the different Buddhist traditions in Australia. Some loose regional groupings have been established to promote discussion and coordination. The first was the Buddhist Council of Brisbane, formed in 1982. Such councils are in their turn loosely linked through a national body, the Australian Buddhist Federation. However, these inter-traditional links seem weak indeed compared with the strong and effective links that exist, in certain cases, between groups representing a single tradition. For example, the many Vietnamese groups have formed themselves into the Vietnamese Buddhist Federation of Australia, and almost half of the two dozen existing Tibetan groups are united as branches of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition, an international body based in Paris.

There seems, therefore, little likelihood of any strong move toward genuine unity among the various types of Buddhist groups in Australia. Over eighty groups exist altogether, representing a total Buddhist population of about 100,000 (ninety per cent of whom are of Asian origin) (McDonnell & Bucknell 1988:325, Croucher 1989:123). There could be practical benefits in presenting a united Buddhist front, for example when campaigning for government recognition at various levels. The general lack of interest in achieving such unity

is perhaps ultimately a reflection of the essentially individualistic and private nature of the Buddhist way of practice. Many Buddhists feel that groups consisting of more than just a few individuals are inherently counter-productive. The Buddhist teaching, at least in its Theravadan form, stresses individual striving toward an individual goal (enlightenment and liberation). The bigger the group, the more bureaucratic it becomes, and the further it departs from this spirit of individual endeavour.

Ethnic Buddhism, with its mainly cultural and social functions, seems set to remain distinct and separate from the style of Buddhism to which most non-Asian Australians are attracted. This distinction is perhaps to be seen as natural and appropriate. It is, after all, merely a local version of a similar distinction that has long existed in Asian Buddhist countries. Always there have been those (the majority of adherents) who have made the religion serve a primarily social role, and those (usually a small minority) who have instead seen it as primarily a soteriological vehicle or medium.

Over the long term it may well be this small minority that has the bigger impact in Australia, as also in other western nations where Buddhism has taken root. Interest in Buddhist techniques of meditation is growing steadily. Meditation centres scattered around the country attract not only people who would call themselves Buddhists, but also psychologists, therapists and ordinary people seeking such tangible benefits as relief from stress. These experimenting meditators, exploring the ancient practices for developing concentration and insight, are finding them to have a range of valuable applications in the modern western context.

Such serious interest in Buddhism is the exception. Most Australians undoubtedly perceive Buddhism in this country merely as one of the more exotic aspects of the multicultural scene. The sight of a Buddhist *stupa* (pagoda) set among gum trees, or of a yellow-robed monk walking through suburban Sydney, probably evokes in most Australians a strong sense of strangeness and incongruity. For Buddhists, however, and for those who are familiar with Buddhist teachings, such sights may serve as reassuring evidence that the tolerance so strongly advocated by this major world religion is being practised, albeit a little imperfectly, in multicultural Australia.

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Multiculturalism and the Uniting Church

Bernard A. Clarke, A.M. and Arnold D. Hunt

The missionary legacy of the three Churches[1] which came into union in 1977 ensured that the new Uniting Church in Australia understood itself to be a multicultural church. The *Basis of Union* stated that "Christians in Australia are called to bear witness to a unity of faith and life in Christ which transcends cultural and economic, national and racial boundaries, and to this end she (the UCA) commits herself to seek special relationship with Churches in Asia and the Pacific".[2] At Union this focus was directed towards partner relationships with churches in the Pacific and Asia. By its tenth anniversary significant migration from the Pacific and Asian countries - Tonga, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Samoa in the Pacific; Korea, India and Indonesia in Asia - had created a new situation. In this description of multiculturalism in the Uniting Church in Australia the emphasis is on the influence of this heritage. There are other key strands to the multicultural experience of the church.[3]

Sixty "migrant-ethnic"[4] congregations had joined the UCA,[5] eight "interim" congregations/communities were more loosely connected, while four more expressed interest in joining the UCA during 1989. Many "tenant type" migrant-ethnic congregations shared the use of UCA property, maintaining good relationships with the UCA, but remaining as independent churches.

Brief Survey of Ethnic Churches

There are 2,000 Tongan members of the UCA.[6] In NSW there is a large Tongan parish with twelve separate congregations.[7] Two other congregations are linked to UCA parishes. One congregation is associated with a UCA parish in Queensland, and a Tongan fellowship group meets in Western Australia. A Tongan-Australian parish is based at Kew, Victoria. Another Victorian group began developing in 1989.

The 392 Fijian members of the UCA are mainly active along the eastern coast in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne. In NSW there is one congregation and three fellowship groups. In Brisbane a congregation is associated with the

Southside Inner City Parish, while in Melbourne a fellowship meets in West Melbourne.

There is a small community of about 500 Rotuman people in Australia. Approximately 100 of these participate in the life of the Uniting Church as one of the eleven congregations of Wesley Central Mission, Sydney.

There are only 130 Samoan members of the Uniting Church, but many more Samoans have their own Methodist and Congregational Churches directly under the authority of their Samoan parent bodies. The UCA members were originally a congregation at Wesley Central Mission, Sydney, but now are a parish at Auburn.[8]

Korean migrants have a short twenty year migrant history in Australia, but they have been the most vigorously growing migrant group in the UCA now numbering over 3,000 members. In NSW alone they have formed eight parishes. The Korean Church of Melbourne is also a parish. The Canberra Korean Uniting Church, the Western Australian Korean Congregation, and the Adelaide Korean Church are congregations linked to Uniting Church parishes. Most members come from the Presbyterian tradition, but each congregation would include Methodists, Baptists, Church of Christ and others.

The Indonesian membership in the UCA is 450. There are Indonesian Uniting Church parishes in Sydney and Melbourne. There is also an Indonesian congregation in Victoria. The Nightcliffe parish in Darwin has an Indonesian congregation.

Tamils are very active in the normal structures of the UCA so there are no separate statistics. There are two strong concentrations of Tamil people, one in Homebush in Sydney and the other in Darwin. Both contribute significantly to the leadership of their parishes.

Khmer people began to relate to the UCA recently through contacts made in refugee centres around Australia. For example, members of the Springvale Church in Victoria befriended one Khmer family. This eventually led to participation by twenty six other families in Springvale Church.

Chinese people have a long history in the UCA. The Melbourne Chinese parish was founded as a Methodist Church in 1873 and joined the UCA at Union. Recently it divided into two congregations, one English-speaking and the other Chinese. There have been many Chinese members spread throughout UCA parishes for many years. In the Northern Territory, for example, Chinese families were foundation members of the United Church of Northern Australia.

The Evangelical Arab congregation of the Regional Parish of Collingwood, Richmond and East Melbourne, an Arabic-speaking Presbyterian congregation, is one example of UCA members from Greek, Assyrian and Macedonian groups. Their Church administration is a mixture of Presbyterian and UCA traditions. A small group of Iranian Presbyterians began gathering together and have grown to about fifteen families since joining the UCA in 1974. Armenians have formed the Armenian Evangelical Church of Sydney. They come from a Congregational tradition and began their life together in 1968.

There is a large Macedonian community in Melbourne dominated by the Macedonian Orthodox Church. However, in 1974 Macedonians formed a Methodist congregation which has come into the life of the UCA as the Macedonian Evangelical United Church - part of the Preston Parish. They have integrated fully into UCA procedures. Greek membership in the UCA is only a small proportion of the strong Greek Orthodox community in Melbourne. They have formed the Greek Evangelical Uniting Church and are part of the Blackburn Parish.

Aboriginal and Islander people have always vigorously resisted being described as an ethnic group to be considered as another example of Australian multiculturalism. They contend that their situation as the original people of Australia is totally different. They demand a qualitatively different response from the wider Australian community that recognises the implications of their prior occupancy in this country. Their view is to some extent reflected in the contrasting treatment they have received from the Uniting Church, which established the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress to enable Aboriginal and Islander members of the UCA to control their own life within the UCA. Their Aboriginal and Islander membership in the UCA is not statistically separated so there are no specific figures of their membership in the UCA. However, their are eight parishes and eleven separate congregations in the Northern Synod. They are concentrated in Arnhem Land, where there are six parishes and two extra congregations, in the Pitjantjatjara Lands where there is one parish and six congregations, and in the Kimberley where there is a parish and a congregation.

In Queensland three of the five parishes are on the western side of Cape York Peninsula and others in Townsville and Brisbane. There are several congregations stretching from New Mapoon at the very tip of the Cape, through Cairns and down to Brisbane.

In Western Australia there is a parish at Coolbellup[9] and a congregation at Bunbury. No other southern state has yet reached the point of establishing an Aboriginal parish. There are congregations in Hobart, Adelaide, Wellington and Sydney. There are also strong relationships with Aboriginal people which are not expressed in the form of a church structure. This is common to a situation in which many communities or ex-missions have cordial relationships with a number of church groups, both denominational and interdenominational, who come for rallies, evangelical campaigns or for short visits and then move on.

The Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress also provides major institutional services to Aboriginal communities. In the Northern Synod, for example, the UAICC is heavily involved through their Aboriginal Research and Development Service in community support throughout the Synod and provides strong services to combat drug and alcohol abuse. In Queensland Yalga Binbi concentrates on the provision of educational support to Aboriginal communities. The Calvary Presbytery is gathering funds to open the UAICC school, Shalom College.

Historical Roots of Multiculturalism

Each of the Churches which came into Union in 1977 brought its own powerful missionary tradition. Methodist ties were strongest in the Pacific; these included Tonga, Fiji, Samoa, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. Methodists have also had a long and enduring relationship with an area in North India. Presbyterian ties with Asia were predominant, especially with Korea, Indonesia, India and Thailand, as well as having a long involvement in Vanuatu. Congregational members brought with them the legacy of the London Missionary Society and its work in Papua, Samoa, Tuvalu, Kiribati and Nauru.

All these churches retain their Methodist, Presbyterian or Congregational identities, or have become a part of wider unions in their own countries.[10] The parishes and congregations which have arisen from these mission roots of the UCA include Korean, Tongan, Fijian, Samoan and Indonesian churches.

Migration has introduced people from many other countries with which there have been no missionary ties at all. One example is the Presbyterian Church in Taiwan which has built a special relationship with the UCA. Similarly other migrants have joined UCA because they are from a Methodist, Presbyterian or Congregational background in their country of origin. These denominational links stimulate initial contact with a Uniting Church minister or congregation whose friendship brings them into the life of the UCA. This

process has been prominent with people from Europe and Middle Eastern groups, and has encouraged Tamil, Cambodian and Vietnamese people to share in the life of the Uniting Church.

Each denomination brought its ties with Aboriginal communities into the UCA. Mission work in Cape York, Arnhem Land, the Kimberley, and the Pitjantjatjara Lands left a strong legacy. This now includes fifteen parishes and many smaller groups. In the Pitjantjatjara Lands, for example the Presbyterian Church left a tradition of ordained elders. There is only one parish with two ministers, Rev. Peter Nyaningu and Rev. Bruce Bickerike. This parish serves the major communities at Ernabella, Amata, Pipalatjar, Fregon, Indulkana, and Mimili. Each community has its own ordained elders who lead the Christian community. They preach regularly and, until the Rev. Peter Nyaningu was ordained, celebrated the sacraments. They also serve many smaller homelands based on extended family groups such as at Kalka, Kenmore Park, Angatja and others. Similarly, the Yirrkala parish in Arnhem Land relates to the communities at Gan Gan, Baniyala, Gurrumurru, Dhalinbuy and elsewhere. Again primary responsibility rests with lay elders or lay pastors. In the southern states, organised mission activity of the churches in the UCA ceased very early. Until the establishment of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, the formal support of the UCA had been given to the Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship. This fellowship brought together groups from the various evangelical traditions.[11]

Despite the lack of organised work there were local groups who built relationships which have endured. Pastor Don Brady, who was employed by the Central Methodist Mission in Brisbane, laid a strong foundation with emphasis on Aboriginal struggles for justice. Townsville and Brisbane became strong parishes. People from Mogumber[12] in Western Australia, formed the basis of a UCA parish in the Perth suburb of Coolbellup. Since 1985 such local fellowship groups have begun to emerge as a part of the life of the Congress in every Synod.

Connection with the Uniting Church

The Uniting Church has provided a variety of options for those who seek to belong to it. The choices do not simply rest upon the closeness of the earlier relationship. In many cases the strength of ethnocentrism in the particular group strongly influences the nature of the relationship sought in the Uniting Church.

Four patterns have emerged in the relationship of the migrant-ethnic groups to the UCA.

Individual Attendance or an Interim Congregation

Many people choose to attend the Anglo-Australian church in their residential area as individuals, others are members of an interim congregation which is part of an Australian congregation or parish. Such congregations have no structures of their own, but may organise special services and Bible studies in their mother tongue.

Component Congregation in a Parish

Twenty of the fifty congregations which have formed their own Council of Elders fall into this category.[13] One example is the South Inner City Parish in Queensland. It consists of three congregations: one Tongan, one Fijian and the other Anglo-Australian. Each has its Council of Elders, but all come under the same Parish Council. Wesley Central Mission in Sydney has eleven such congregations. Each congregation's membership reflects a particular migrant community, for example, from Tonga, Samoa, Fiji, Rotuma or Asia.

International Type Congregations

Seventy percent of the migrant-ethnic membership of the Uniting Church is in Sydney. In 1982 Rev. Dr T. Chi, who was involved in one of the eleven Wesley Central Mission congregations, restructured the Chinese Fellowship, begun in 1979, into an "International Congregation". Its initial membership is drawn from Chinese people from Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan, Indonesia and Malaysia, and now it also includes Filipinos, South Africans, Fijians, other small Asian groups and Anglo-Australians.

The Congregation governs its own life, striving to minimise cultural differences by a strict adherence to the regulations of the UCA.

Separate Parishes

There are sixteen formal migrant-ethnic parishes with twenty seven congregations in the UCA. The Tongan Parish of the UCA in Sydney, for example, consists of twelve congregations from Wollongong, Canberra and the metropolitan area. The largest concentration is in Sydney. Twelve of the sixteen parishes are in NSW and eight of these twelve are Korean. Their active church life is based on their original Christian traditions operating within the framework of a UCA parish. **By 1990 the number of congregations (or parishes) formally linked to the Uniting Church had risen to seventy.**

The Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress has taken a quite different route and has established its own formal relationship to the Uniting

Church. In the seventies the missionary work which maintained relationships with the people in Cape York, Arnhem Land, the Kimberley and the Pitjantjatjara lands was coming to its end - leaving a legacy of competent Christian leaders like Rev. Djiniyini Gondarra. These leaders identified strongly with the emerging Uniting Church. In Queensland Rev. Charles Harris had associations which grew from relationships with the Methodist Church. At Crystal Creek, north of Townsville, two of these leaders, together with others from various denominational backgrounds committed to Aboriginal control of ministry and mission, came together and decided to form their own organisation.

Initially it was planned to be ecumenical,[14] but eventually the group decided to seek a mandate from the Uniting Church. In 1985 the General Assembly of the Uniting Church approved the charter of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress. It gave the Congress responsibility for the ministry and mission of the Uniting Church amongst Aboriginal and Islander people. The same Assembly built the National Committee of the Congress into its Commission of Mission as one of its four missionary committees.[15]

In the Synods where the UAICC is strong enough to establish Presbyteries the arrangement has worked well. In Synods where the Congress is weaker, however, questions of authority between Congress and Presbyteries remain ambiguous. These formal relationships have provided access to the financial structures of the Uniting Church with Congress being funded as a mission arm of the church. It has also provided a mechanism for Aboriginal and Islander people and the church to work through vexed cultural questions related to the education and ordination of ministers.

Leadership of Ethnic Churches

The leadership of ethnic churches is strongly influenced by the churches in their respective homelands. Most ministers have been chosen by the overseas churches to become ministers of the congregations of the Uniting Church, usually on the basis of a formal arrangement between the sending church in the country of origin and the Assembly of the Uniting Church.

Other ministers from many countries come to Australia by other means. Some arrange a settlement in an Anglo-Australian parish, some who came to Australia for other reasons are called to become the minister of a local migrant congregation linked to the UCA, or have themselves started from scratch to build a congregation of their own which later joins with the Uniting Church.

The Tongan Parish in Sydney illustrates another factor influencing the way ministry may develop. Tongans in Australia retain their close identification with their home country and the free Wesleyan Church of Tonga. This tradition ensures plentiful resources of faithful lay preachers and leaders. They make possible the organisation of large parishes with many congregations led by lay people. The parish has a strong Superintendent minister who works through these lay leaders.

The Uniting Church has sought to assist in the development of such leadership in Australia by providing courses to accredit them as lay preachers in the Uniting Church.

Ordained ministers from other countries may be required to complete additional studies if they are to be recognised as ordained ministers of the UCA. The Uniting Church requires everyone to meet common standards for acceptance as candidates for the ministry, so people of migrant-ethnic backgrounds are educated in UCA theological faculties. Their ordination will entitle them to minister to any parish in the Uniting Church.

The Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress is again treated differently. The accreditation of Nungalinya College courses for ordination has been based on a curriculum specifically designed for Aboriginal and Islander people.

There is, therefore, an emphasis in the Uniting Church on conferences and seminars for the various language and cultural groups designed to foster **lay leadership**. These have provided an opportunity for leaders emerging in congregations to come from all over Australia to spend time together. Conferences emphasise bible study and fellowship, but they include study of the government and political structures of the Uniting Church to help ethnic groups relate more effectively to it. So far courses have been held for Tongan, Fijian, Samoan, Indonesian and Korean leaders.

In the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress there are two quite separate perspectives on leadership.

In the Queensland Synod area the Calvary Presbytery is a powerful self-governing body. So is the Northern Regional Council of Congress which is part of the Northern Synod. Both are expanding strongly and have developed good financial and person resources. They are the beneficiaries of a process of education for ministry which began as local preacher training courses at Minjilang in 1965. Calvary Presbytery has organised Yalga Binbi (a community work and educational centre based on Townsville) and it is in the process of

establishing Shalom College (a primary and secondary school). The Northern Regional Council of Congress uses their organisation, the Aboriginal Research and Development Service, to provide many of its services to Aboriginal communities.

It is vastly different in the southern Synods. There is no missionary legacy on which to build; so the Congress tends to be much smaller and without adequate leadership. The historical roots of Aboriginal life are either related to other churches, or to the Aboriginal Fellowships such as the AEF. Unlike migrant-ethnic congregations most Aboriginal Christians in Southern Australia do not stress their Aboriginal cultural base. Indeed, the prevailing attitude is that much of traditional Aboriginal culture was demonic. Thus, the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress finds that it challenges many of the prevailing theological presuppositions of Aboriginal Christians in southern Synods. It is not only committed to the indigenisation of worship and theological reflection, but also to the political struggle for land rights. This leads to suspicion of the orthodoxy of UAICC pastors and workers by groups which lay great stress on correct dogma.[16] In southern Australia, therefore, leadership training and theological education have a very high priority.

National Consultation on Ethnic Diversity, August 1990

In August 1990 a National Consultation on Ethnic Diversity brought together eighty people, including forty five representatives from thirty one migrant-ethnic congregations.

This consultation strongly supported the notion of a multicultural church. Seongja Yoo reported that the Conference "... reaffirmed (in) all of us a hope and possibility that we can open our hearts to anybody, any tradition and any culture, coping with the difficulties we are facing, **because the Church that Jesus has built is universal**".[17]

The report suggests that the Uniting Church should be open to multiculturalism because of what it can contribute to the life of the church. It can lead to a truer picture of the gospel because it enables different cultural perspectives to stand side by side. It holds the promise of a more balanced view of reality and the gospel. It brings the great enrichment of new images, evangelical vigour and an enriched theological reflection.[18]

The Consultation began to tackle some of the main problem areas of multiculturalism in the UCA. For example guidelines have been prepared to assist migrant-ethnic groups to obtain property on equitable terms. This has

always been a problem because whilst many parishes have been prepared to share property, it has been on their terms. The migrant-ethnic groups have been guests, knowing everything they plan is at the whim of their hosts. Issues such as the resettlement of overseas ministers in Australia, Sunday school materials in familiar language and contexts, and training courses for lay preachers were placed on the agenda of the wider UCA. The Conference also asked the UCA to address specific political issues. For example two working groups were appointed to consider present immigration policy. A special concern was expressed over the status of overstayers and would-be immigrants from the Pacific.

The real significance of this Conference was that it became a forum through which migrant-ethnic issues could be placed on the agenda of the wider church.

Piety and Culture

Many ethnic congregations in the Uniting Church tenaciously preserve elements of their traditional culture. In the first generation at least, much of the worship reflects the practices of the homeland rather than the ethos of the Uniting Church. Reflecting on his intimate involvement with Asian and Pacific churches John Brown points to the continuing tension between the introduced gospel and the earlier culture in their life. He suggests that such tensions continue in their church life in Australia. Indeed, the tensions between the Gospel message and cultural values seem heightened rather than diminished in the Australian context.[19] Congregations can become more conservative as they work through the questions of identity which inevitably arise within families and migrant-ethnic groups seeking to acculturate to Australian values.

The Future of Multiculturalism in the UCA

It is clear that people who have migrated to Australia have different hopes for the future. Some seek rapid assimilation. For example, professional immigrants from India and Sri Lanka sought membership in Uniting Church parishes immediately. Some migrated to Australia specifically to be ministers in "normal" parishes. There are already many illustrations of migrant families being absorbed into the life of the Uniting Church. In the Lakemba Parish in NSW, four Korean, three Tongan and some Samoan families attend English language worship services in a typical working class Sydney congregation.

Another phenomenon which may illustrate possible trends is the beginning of additional English-language services for second generation people in the strong Korean congregations. The rationale for these services is that it may enable the cultural groups to remain together even though some are worshipping in English and in a Uniting Church pattern. It is possible that there will be a variety of developments and diversity is likely to continue indefinitely.

The next Conference of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress plans to explore the question of an indigenous church more thoroughly. The "indigenisation" of the worship and work of the Congress has always been an objective, but there has been confusion about what this actually means. Some seek a totally indigenous church whose members are **all** Aboriginal people; others value their association with the Uniting Church, but seek real control of the decisions which affect the Aboriginal members of the church; yet others stress that indigenisation is a theological process in which Aboriginal and Islander people explore the story they have received from the perspective of their life and cultural traditions. The various views within the Congress interact with its membership of the wider Uniting Church community. Ethnocentric values reinforced by marginalisation and exclusion of power in the wider community, may suggest the eventual emergence of a black church. However, the existing bonds with the UCA are strong. The future is not clear, but the one option that is not canvassed is absorption into a white church.

Conclusion

The ethnic congregations have brought a significant new membership into the Uniting Church. They inject new vitality into the life of the older church communities to whom they relate. They introduce their own point of view into Uniting Church discussions so that its agenda must now include issues affecting both migrant-ethnic and Aboriginal members. This is altering the very nature of the Uniting Church.

They are few in number, but, as they have shared their own cultural values with the wider membership of the Uniting Church, it has proved to be an enriching experience for many members of "white" churches. This experience has strengthened the Uniting Church's commitment to multiculturalism as an expression of Christian community life. The migrant-ethnic members have introduced a new dimension into the Church's life. They are alerting the wider membership not only to new cultural experiences, but to wider issues of justice and of faith.

The commitment to the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress is a part of the same picture. In worship together and in the work of the ministry there is the same sense of enriching sharing of different cultures. However, our relationships are complicated by history and the Church's ambivalence about its role in Aboriginal political struggles for justice. It is also complicated by fears. On the one hand there is fear of absorption and on the other of separation. The Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress is a bold attempt to find in a way between these historical extremes, and hopefully, it offers a way to continue on a pilgrimage together, even though none of us knows the final destination.

This has been a description of multiculturalism, but even with a much more critical eye one thing would emerge very clearly. The Uniting Church in Australia is very strongly committed to multiculturalism. It believes quite passionately that all people are made in the image of God - that all are equal in value before God. It seeks to express this commitment in its life together by welcoming people whose roots have been in other cultures and lands, into its life and fellowship. It is a testimony to the multiculturalism of the gospel which for many earlier generations, inspired our earlier missionary outreach.

Notes

1 The Methodist Church of Australasia, the Presbyterian Church of Australia and the Congregational Union of Australia held their Inaugural Assembly as the Uniting Church in Australia in June 1977. We use the initials UCA to refer to the Church throughout the document.

2 Basis of Union, para 2, p 5.

3 See Houston (1986), *The Cultured Pearl* for a wider coverage of the debate on multiculturalism within churches. It includes many contributions from Uniting Church members.

4 This is a term used by the National Mission and Evangelism Committee of the Commission for Mission, the UCA committee responsible for relationships with the ethnic communities and their congregations.

5 The most recent information on the situation in the Uniting Church is contained in the *Report to the National Mission and Evangelism Committee* by its Ethnic Affairs Officer, Seonja Yoo, numbered NM & E 89-7-9 and dated 2 December 1988, and the *Report of the National*

Consultation on Ethnic Diversity, August 1990, published by the Uniting Church Assembly National Mission and Evangelism, Sydney.

6 The following figures are all based on 1989 statistics. In the text we refer to the rapid increase in numbers, but as yet no official figures have been published.

7 The UCA structure provides for an Assembly as the national Council, Synods as the state level Councils and Presbyteries as the regional Councils. Local groups are organised into Parishes, and each parish may include one or more congregations within its bounds.

8 The parish is a vehicle enabling ethnic groups to escape some of the tensions inherent in participation in the UCA. This tension arises from the desire to maintain traditional styles of church organisation and worship. It also provides a mechanism to gain control of their own life. As a parish they have the freedom to adopt their own cultural patterns within their parish life and in their Parish Council so long as they adopt UCA patterns when relating to other Parishes or Presbyteries.

9 A southern suburb of Fremantle.

10 For example, the work of the London Missionary Society in Papua became the Papua Ekelasia. The Papua Ekelasia then became part of the wider United Church in Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands, Similarly, the original work of the Methodist Church in India became a part of the United Churches which emerged in South and North India.

11 The Aboriginal Evangelical Fellowship was strongly supported by the Methodist Church which, through the ministry of Rev. Ernest Clarke in Western Australia, participated in the planning and formation of the AEF in Perth in the early sixties.

12 A Methodist institution for Aboriginal children.

13 The regulations of the Uniting Church provide the basic structures of a congregation. Each congregation must be recognised by resolution of a Presbytery which also declares it part of a parish, or constitutes it as a parish. Each congregation forms a Council of Elders to fulfil its responsibilities.

14 The argument was that denominational distinctions which emerged in Europe meant little to Aboriginal Christians. They felt that the divisions cut across family and kinship ties and had been very destructive. They sought no link with the organised ecumenical movement, but an openness which allowed Aboriginal Christians from any denomination to share in their organisational life.

15 The four committees of the Commission for Mission are:
The World Mission Committee
The Social Justice Committee
The National Committee of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress
The Frontier Services Committee.

16 The dogma is in the evangelical tradition: strict emphasis on the inspired word of God, emphasis on salvation by faith, and rigid moral values.

17 *National Consultation on Ethnic Diversity*, p3. The report indicates there were Tongans, Indonesians, Armenians, Egyptians, Fijians, Samoans, Taiwanese, Chinese, Sri Lankans, Indians, Koreans, Dutch and Hungarians among the participants.

18 *Ibid.*:6f.

19 From the letter of John Brown to Bernard Clarke, 16 April 1991.

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