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MODERN GREEK STUDIES
(AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND)

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Το περιοδικό φιλοξενεί άρθρα στα Αγγλικά και τα Ελληνικά αναφερόμενα σε όλες τις απόψεις των Νεοελληνικών Σπουδών (στη γενικότητά τους). Υποψήφιοι συνεργάτες θα πρέπει να υποβάλλουν κατά προτίμηση τις μελέτες των σε δισκέτα και σε έντυπη μορφή. Όλες οι συνεργασίες από πανεπιστημιακούς έχουν υποβληθεί στην κριτική των εκδοτών και επιλέκτων πανεπιστημιακών συναδέλφων.

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The University of Sydney

RELIGION IN AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY:
A PLACE FOR EVERYTHING,
AND EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE

ABSTRACT

Contemporary Australian expressions of religion and spirituality demonstrate a diversity and flexibility that is largely the result of the changes wrought by the dual processes of secularisation and multiculturalism, which have increasingly characterised Australian culture since the 1960s (Bouma 1999, 18-24). Prior to the mid-twentieth century, Australia's spiritual and religious climate was dominated by the convict origins of the white settlers, interdenominational conflict between Catholic and Protestant Christians, and the systematic suppression of the indigenous Australian Aboriginal culture, including Aboriginal religion (Thompson 2002, *passim*).

'Spirituality,' a looser construct than 'religion' (Brown, 1997, 116), has gained in popularity as organized religion, chiefly Christianity, has declined. Data from the five-yearly Australian Bureau of Statistics censuses demonstrates a strong trend towards personal choice in matters of religion and spirituality (particularly in the 1991, 1996 and 2001 censuses), and also changes in the religious profile of Australians that are the result of immigration ('A natural choice', 2003). However, since the election of the conservative Howard federal government in 1996 Christianity has occupied a prominent place in public affairs, due to the government's espousal of 'family values' and outsourcing of job placement agencies to churches, among other things (Maddox, 2005).

This paper is divided into four sections: the first details the colonisation of Australia and the religious context of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; the second

examines the effects of secularisation and the growth of diversity; the third gives details of a broad range of contemporary spiritualities with distinctively Australian manifestations; and the brief fourth section chronicles the rise of a public, right-wing Christianity over the past decade, culminating in the electoral success of Family First in the 2004 Federal election.¹

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT: THE NINETEENTH AND EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURIES

The modern nation of Australia was founded as a British penal colony in 1788, when Governor Arthur Phillip and the First Fleet arrived at Sydney Cove in the afternoon of 26 January, now celebrated as 'Australia Day' (Hughes, 1987, 2). The established religion of the colony was Anglican Christianity; one-third of the convict population that was Catholic and predominantly of Irish extraction was denied priests and freedom of worship until 1820 (Campion, 1982, 45). However, the majority Anglican convict population also scorned institutional religion, and Governor Macquarie (1810-1821) was compelled to order 'compulsory church attendance for convicts in government service, and enforc[ed] laws against the profanation of Sundays by arresting loiterers and charging publicans who traded during hours of worship' (Carey, 1996, 4).²

Indigenous inhabitants of the country were summarily displaced by the colonists, and their traditions and religion were, until approximately 1870, completely denied. In 1798, a decade after settlement, David Collins wrote *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales*, which contains extensive information about Aboriginal customs. He discusses what modern readers would recognize as initiation ceremonies and corroborees (ritual gatherings featuring dance and music), but does not dignify them with the title 'religion.' In fact, he asserts that the Aborigines have no religion:

It has sometimes been asserted ... that no country has yet been discovered where some trace of religion was not to be found. From every observation and inquiry that could be made among these people, they appear to be an exception to this opinion (qtd. in Swain, 1985, 29).

There was no indication that Collins, or other early colonial observers, had any inkling of the theological underpinnings of Aboriginal ritual and social organization. The rich mythology, commonly referred to as 'Dreaming stories,' detailing the activities of ancestral spirits, remained unknown to whites.

Initially, there was no attempt to convert the Aboriginal people to Christianity, as it was believed that they would die out. By the 1820s approximately half the Aboriginal population of eastern Australia had died, chiefly from the introduction of European diseases such as smallpox. In that same decade missions were established, and the indigenous people were forced to take up residence on what were effectively reservations. Few conversions to Christianity resulted, with the majority of Aboriginal people maintaining their traditional religion despite traumatic upheaval (Swain & Trompf, 1995, 79-86). The climate of opinion regarding Aboriginal religion and culture shifted in the 1870s, as the emerging academic discipline of anthropology offered new perspectives on the subject.

The first census of the colony was conducted in 1828. All 36,484 residents were classified as either Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and 'Mohammedan and pagan'. The final category numbered some nineteen persons. This is an important indication that even throughout the Christian-dominated nineteenth century there was a limited amount of multiculturalism, and a fragile multi-faith society, in Australia. The Australian Jewish community began with the First Fleet, on which there were between six and sixteen Jewish convicts (Rubinstein, 1986, 23); however, the Jews of nineteenth century Australia were concerned to assimilate into the wider society:

They regarded themselves, essentially, as 'Englishmen of the Mosaic persuasion.' Religion alone would distinguish them from citizens of other 'faiths.' They used the term 'faith' advisedly and promoted the image of Judaism as a 'denomination,' a term more familiarly associated with the various branches of the Christian religion. For the sake of acceptance by non-Jewish society, they promoted the view of Judaism, of religion generally, as primarily a matter of private conscience (Rubinstein, 1991, 6).

As the exploration of the desert interior of the continent progressed, cameleers from the subcontinent (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan) were brought in to assist the explorers. These cameleers were mostly Muslims, although some were Hindu (Carey, 1996, 155). Initially their numbers were negligible, but the Gold Rush of the 1850s greatly increased Australia's racial and religious diversity by delivering a huge increase in population to the colony. For example, the population of Victoria increased from 97,489 in 1851 to 539,764 by 1861. These migrants included substantial numbers of subcontinental Muslims and Hindus, and Chinese Buddhists and Taoists (Bucknell, 1992, 215). There was also a substantial Sinhalese Buddhist community on Thursday Island in the 1880s (Croucher, 1989, 5).

This nascent multiculturalism was effectively terminated by the Federation of the various colonies into the new nation of Australia in 1901. The decade preceding Federation was characterised by racist agitation and economic anxiety (Palfreeman, 1967, 1). To counter this, the new nation passed two pieces of legislation that barred non-whites from entering Australia, remaining in Australia, or becoming Australian citizens. These were the Immigration Restriction Act (1901) and the Naturalization Act (1903). The operation of these and related pieces of legislation came to be called the 'White Australia Policy'. It had the effect of limiting religious, as well as ethnic diversity, in Australia.

The first opportunity to rethink this policy came at the end of the Second World War, when thousands of refugees were accepted as immigrants. Although the majority of migrants were white and Christian, there were a significant number of Eastern European Jews, who differed in orientation from the existing Anglo-Jewish Australian community. Sherington remarks that these European migrants made a great contribution to changing the monocultural nature of Australia:

What was perhaps most noticeable about the refugee settlers of these years was the variety of their origin and background. What most of them had in common was a lack of familiarity with anything Australian. A general cross-section of much of pre-war European society was represented. Amongst the refugees from central, eastern and south-eastern Europe were many young, single persons conscripted for forced labour during the war. Many came from rural backgrounds and they had few formal qualifications. Other east Europeans, particularly from Hungary and Czechoslovakia, came from a more sophisticated pre-war society, many with university training and professional qualifications. Many of the Baltic peoples had left home of their own free will, often in family groups. Some had worked in Germany during the war. Others had fled before the armies of the Soviet Union (1990, 134).

In the mid-1960s a combination of forces within Australian society, including the Australian Council of Churches (most vocally represented by the Methodist Reverend Alan Walker) and the Immigration Reform Group, called for the repeal of the White Australia Policy. After this, both the Labor (progressive) and Liberal (conservative) governments of the 1970s and 1980s were committed to a policy of multiculturalism, and to a broad-based non-discriminatory immigration policy (London, 1970, 92). This had the effect of increasing Australia's religious diversity at a time when Australians were re-thinking their attitudes to Aboriginal people and their culture, and to the hegemonic dominance hitherto enjoyed by Christianity. The stage was set for an explosion in

religion and spirituality, paradoxically facilitated by the increasingly secular nature of Australia society.

SECULARISATION AND DIVERSITY: THE 1960s TO THE 1980s

Secularisation is broadly defined as 'the process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols' (Berger, 1967, 107) and has been the predominant Western theological, social and cultural trend in the twentieth century since the First World War. As a result, traditional Christian religion is in decline and spiritual satisfaction is being sought elsewhere, and many practices that in a non-secular world would immediately be recognized as 'religious' now occur outside of religious contexts.

Australia has always been characterised as a secular nation; the fervent religiosity that is apparent in the United States of America is almost entirely absent from Australian life (Millikan, 1981, 8). However, experimentation with different religious beliefs and spiritual options has historically been restricted to a tiny minority of the population. From the last quarter of the nineteenth century there were white Australians who shared an interest in non-conventional religion, including Theosophy, Unitarianism, Freemasonry and Spiritualism (Roe, 1998, 307). Indeed, the second (and fifth and seventh) Prime Minister of Australia, Alfred Deakin, was a committed Spiritualist and a member of the Eclectic Association of Melbourne: the noted Theosophical leader Charles Webster Leadbeater (1854-1934) was resident in Sydney for almost twenty years (Drury & Tillett, 1980, 11); and visual artists such as Christian Waller (nee Yandell) and Napier Waller (McFarlane, 1993, *passim*) and Rosaleen Norton (Drury & Tillett, 1980, 62-73) used their unconventional belief systems (respectively Theosophy and Satanic occultism) as the basis for their artistic products.

The 1960s brought the hitherto concealed area of unconventional beliefs to the surface in Australia. However, Australia lagged behind America, experiencing the full impact of the civil rights movement, the women's movement, the anti-Vietnam War protests and the push for equal rights for the gay and lesbian community only in the 1970s (Gillman, 1988, 35). The other significant change to the Australian religious climate in the 1960s was the introduction of new religious movements (NRMs) such as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) and the Church of Scientology (Gillman, 1988, 338, 367-368). New religious movements remain statistically small, with the 2001 Census listing 2032 Scientologists, 747 Eckankar members and 1066 Rastafarians.

It became more socially acceptable to proclaim affiliation to a fringe religious group with the decline in power and social influence of the Christian churches. While the Roman Catholic church has maintained its membership reasonably steadily, the 'Church of England has declined consistently since 1921, when it encompassed 44 percent of the population' (McAllister, 1988, 255) to 20.45 percent in 2001. The gradual secularisation of Australia was evidenced in the construction of the Census question on religion:

[b]efore 1971 the question assumed that respondents would categorize themselves into one of the conventional religious denominations. Secular respondents could write in some disclaimer or, more frequently, would refuse to answer the question. From the 1971 Census the question allowed for disavowal: 'What is this person's religious denomination?' (If no religion write 'none') (Hogan, 1979, 391).

The change in Australia's religious climate in the late 1960s was profound and occurred swiftly, rendering a work such as Hans Mol's *Religion in Australia* (for which the research and writing was completed in 1970) virtually out-of-date before it was published in 1971, as it concentrated only on Christianity and various sectarian conflicts.

The secularisation of Western nations has been seen to go hand in hand with the development of pluralistic cultures and new religious forms (Lambert, 1999, *passim*). For Australia, the accelerated immigration (chiefly of Asians) in the 1970s created substantial Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic communities (Viviani, 1996). These religions are not 'new' in a world sense, but were exotic and challenging for Australians. This was particularly true of migrant Buddhists, in that there was an Anglo Australian Buddhist community, with its roots in Theosophy and a Theravada inclination, that had little experience with the more devotional and ritualistic east Asian Buddhist forms (Croucher, 1989, *passim*).

After tentative beginnings, these migrant religious communities began to form associations and to build temples, transforming the drab suburban landscapes of Australian cities. The 'Sri 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' which was the first dedicated Hindu temple in Australia (Lahiri, 1992, 206). The South Indian and Sri Lankan Sri Venkateshwara Temple Association built a substantial and highly ornamental temple on the southern outskirts of Sydney, which opened in 1985 (Bilimoria, 1989, *passim*). Buddhist temples were also constructed, and in 2000, the Australian Caodaist community opened their first temple in Wiley Park, in Sydney's west, with community leader Mr Nguyen Chanh Giao

declaring that it was 'a gift to all Australians' (Hartney, 2003, 37). Caodaiism is a Vietnamese new religious movement, founded in the 1920s, with 819 members in Australia, according to the 2001 Census.

Migrant religious communities initially made little contribution to the spiritual life of the wider Australian community, but rather constituting separate subcultures. Neo-Hindu movements such as Siddha Yoga, Sahaj Yoga, and ISKCON continued to be the direct point of contact between white Australians and Hindu spiritual ideas. Likewise, Western Buddhism remained the dominant form of Buddhism to which white Australians converted until the 1980s, when Tibetan and Zen forms of Buddhism began to grow in popularity (Gillman, 1988, 325). Islam has had a more tortuous path to social acceptance within Australia, with the events of September 11, 2001 and the Bali bombings of October 12, 2002, and the protracted scandal over the mandatory detention of refugees, particularly Afghan and Iraqi Muslims, sparking anti-Islamic prejudice and community disturbance (Deen, 2003, 7, 53, 285-291). However, elegant and beautiful mosques dot the Australian landscape, and Muslim community leaders work tirelessly to counteract the negative images. Of great significance here are the Lebanese community's Lakemba mosque, which caters to the majority of Anglo converts (Deen, 2003, 308-315) and the Turkish community's Auburn Gallipoli Mosque, base of the Affinity Intercultural Foundation, which organises frequent interfaith conferences (*Travelling Together*, 2003).

The final element in the increasingly diverse religious and spiritual landscape of Australia was the gradual but definite rehabilitation of indigenous Aboriginal religion and spirituality, both for indigenous people themselves and for the newly-curious wider community. In the 1960s Aboriginal people had finally been granted full citizenship of Australia, the land which they had inhabited for tens of thousands of years before being displaced by the European settlers: and in 1972 the Land Rights Commission was established; '[u]nder legislation which resulted, Aborigines claiming to have a traditional claim to land which is unalienated crown land outside town or city boundaries can apply to a commissioner who may then recommend to the minister that a land grant be made' (Brennan, 1993, 9). Land rights and citizenship resulted in a more confident and vocal Aboriginal population, and, strangely enough, with a stronger identification of Aborigines with Christianity. This was tempered by the tendency for Aboriginal Christians to speak of 'two laws,' traditional and Christian (Trigger, 1988, 229), and to combine aspects of both religions.

For non-indigenous Australians the desire for knowledge of Aboriginal culture and spirituality focused on the relationship that the Aborigines have with the land, and the belief that Dreaming events, related to ancestral spirits, leave their mark on the features of the landscape (Habel, 1999, 95-101). This was facilitated by an increase in knowledge

about traditional Aboriginal art, which depicts Dreaming stories and maps sacred features of the land (Haynes, 1998, 11-22), which are *tjukurpa* in the Pitjantjatjara language; and an interest in travel to Aboriginal sacred sites, especially the world's largest freestanding monolith, Uluru, formerly known as Ayers Rock (Digance, 2003, 149-154; Whittaker, 1994, *passim*).

Film, literature and popular culture contributed interest in Aboriginal culture. An important film that speculates on the contribution of the Aboriginal people to the modern Australian identity is Peter Weir's apocalyptic fantasy, *The Last Wave* (McElroy & McElroy Productions, 1977). This film explores the dilemma of David (Richard Chamberlain), a white, middle-class lawyer defending some Aboriginal youths from the Sydney ghetto of Redfern on murder charges. David dreams of disasters, and through Aboriginal Chris (David Gulpilil) he discovers that dreams may be sources of true knowledge. A recent on-line review of the film notes that it poignantly depicts white Australians as cut off from reality, as people who 'have lost their past as well as their dreams. To them, secrets are things to be uncovered and explained' (Ward, 2003). The Aboriginal characters, despite upheaval, retain an understanding of secret things and appreciate knowledge that may not conform to legal notions of evidence or proof. This film pre-dates the popularity of the New Age movement in Australia, but already shows developing Western perceptions of Aboriginal people that were to become significant for advocates of the New Age.

The start of the 1980s is another major turning point in the growth and development of Australian spirituality. The process of secularisation continued to advance; social evidence of this included a substantial decline in the numbers of marriages and a related rise in divorce rates. This in turn pointed to the steady decline of influence of the churches. The 'New Age' movement has been variously defined by academic commentators: in a classic formulation, Hanegraaff identified the New Age as a Western cultural phenomenon, the major sub-categories of which were channelling, healing and personal growth, New Age science and neo-paganism (1998). Its origins lie in the hidden or esoteric traditions of the West: alchemy, Renaissance Hermeticism, occult lodges and other related phenomena, which under the influence of secularisation have gradually become exoteric (Hanegraaff, 1988, 523-524).

THE NEW AGE AND BEYOND: 1980 TO THE PRESENT

As with other Western countries, Australians have embraced New Age spirituality with enthusiasm. This is seen as an extension of the radically individualistic nature of contemporary Western society, where individuals construct meaning, spirituality and

religion for themselves (Bendle, 2003, 7-9). The continuum tends to extend from those whose attitude is predominantly secular, but therapeutic; through those who are without formal affiliation but regard themselves as 'spiritual'; to those who are affiliated with a movement and engage with forms of spirituality that tend to be more 'religious'. There is also a strong link with a consumerist lifestyle (Possamai, 2002, 197-199). Neo-paganism is the most formal of the New Age religio-spiritual phenomena. It is not precisely known when paganism appeared on the Australian religious scene, though Hume suggests that its visible presence in the 1970s was preceded by a significant occult and esoteric subculture. This began with the already mentioned unconventional religions of the late nineteenth century, and continued throughout the twentieth century with the Rosicrucians and the Ordo Templi Orientis (founded by Aleister Crowley, the 'Great Beast'), and other pagan movements (Hume, 1997, 30-40).

The growth of paganism (particularly Wicca, founded by Englishman Gerald Brousseau Gardner, author of *Witchcraft Today* (1954), was accelerated in the 1970s; and the 1991, 1996 and 2001 Censuses demonstrate that it is now one of the fastest-growing religions in Australia, along with Buddhism and Islam. The 2001 Census figures suggest that the neo-pagan population of Australia is still small, though fast-growing. To get a total figure, the following groups can be amalgamated: Druidism (697 members); nature religions (2,176 and 49 members); paganism (10,632 members); pantheism (1,085 members); and Wicca (8,755 members), giving a total of 23,394. This is more than twice the number of self-identified pagans that appeared in the 1991 Census, 0.12 percent of an Australian population of nearly nineteen million.

Australian pagans are statistically likely to be under thirty-five, university educated, 60 percent female and 40 percent male, living in de facto relationships, and politically active in non-party political areas such as education, environmentalism and charity work (Burke, 2003, 3). The gradual mainstreaming of paganism is illustrated by the contrast between Hume's 1997 book and Douglas Ezzy's *Practising the Witch's Craft* (2003). Hume's study is carefully academic, and employs classic modes of analysis (such as the late Ninian Smart's 'seven dimensions of religion') to demonstrate paganism's legitimacy as a religion; she also discusses legal issues which may affect pagans and locates the rise of paganism within the general frame of the secularisation of Western culture; concluding hopefully that in the future it will seem as legitimate a religious choice as any (Hume, 1997, 226-238).

Ezzy, by contrast, has six years later assembled a book which is essentially a collection of testimonies: fifteen chapters in which sixteen practising pagans (including Ezzy himself) speak of the effect the practise of paganism has had in their lives. The tone is warm and conversational, and the pagans all emerge as charming and interesting people,

ranging from youth to late middle-age. Common themes include the feeling that the Christianity of their upbringing did not fit their view of the world; the electric experience of working ritual, solitary and in a group; concern with feminism and the environment; and the celebration of human life, from birth through sex to death. Specifically Australian adaptations such as the reversal of the ritual calendar of northern hemisphere pagans (so that Samhain is 1 May, and Beltane 1 November, in accordance with the seasons; and the lure of the Australian bush as a ritual environment, radically different though it is from the pine forests of northern Europe (Ezzy, 2003, 242-256). Ezzy invites a far broader reading public to recognise pagans as neighbours, friends, and fellow Australians. Paganism, the religion of the past that was all but extinguished by the advance of Christianity, has been resurrected as Christianity's influence declined.

Aboriginal spirituality also exerts a powerful attraction for many New Age inclined Australians, which on occasion has become controversial. Traditional Aboriginal religion is a matter of tribal inheritance and local land relationship. One such crisis point was reached at the time of the Harmonic Convergence (15 August 1987), when New Age practitioner Jose Arguelles attempted to make Uluru part of the event. The Anangu, traditional owners of the Rock, refused: '[t]he reason specifically given was that the Anangu did not believe in a worldwide network of sacred sites, and that they saw that idea as irreconcilable with the local depth of belief' (Pecotic, 2001, 71-72). Another important site of conflict has been over the claims made by certain 'white shamans' that they are privy to Aboriginal Dreamings. Part adventure tourism, part corporate motivational activity, 'Advanced Shamanic Men's Trips' tours organized by white shamans such as Deva Daricha, Randal Allen and Greg Snowdon explore the remote parts of the central desert of Australia, which includes encounters with local Aboriginal people. Journalist John van Tiggelen noted that Greg Snowdon:

paid them \$50 per adult per day to stay with us as 'hosts'. Hardly award rates, to be sure. He also recently signed a book deal to write a shaman's guide to manhood which will borrow heavily from their Dreaming stories... (van Tiggelen, 2002, 19).

However, there are differences of opinion as to whether such shamans are exploiting Aboriginal culture. Some believe that wider knowledge of Aboriginal spirituality will ultimately assist Aborigines, and others that cultural appropriation is unavoidable. Apart from fundamental differences in the understanding of sacredness, modern Western society emphasises the individual, whereas traditional Aboriginal society involves 'a range of rights and responsibilities that govern most daily behaviours' (Edwards, 2002, 25).

Nevertheless, many white Australians continue to be spiritually inspired by the example of Aboriginal people, particularly in relation to their attitudes to the land.

Other expressions of contemporary Australian spirituality are more fluid and less easy to map than paganism. Many Australians deny any religious allegiance: the 2001 Census confirmed over three million people in this category (2,957,304 as 'no religion', and the other categories which may be added to this total, such as the 17,567 agnostics, the 24,464 atheists, the 1,617 rationalists and the 5,041 Humanists). However, these people may take part in para-religious and para-spiritual activities including forms of corporate motivation and spiritual tourism, and buy books on mythology, psychology and 'self help'. One recent manifestation of a spiritual nature that illustrates the blurred boundaries of spirituality is the apparition of the Virgin Mary that was visible on the headland in the Sydney seaside suburb of Coogee. This was first reported in newspapers on 22 January 2003, but had been sighted late in 2002 by Christine Cherry, the proprietor of a local laundrette (Cusack, 2003, 121). Eighteen residents of nearby suburbs had died in the October 12 Bali bombings, including members of the local football team, the Dolphins. People flocked to the site, and the apparition was something of a media phenomenon until the colder weather of late May diminished the crowds. The believers were Catholic and Protestant, not Christians at all, and adherents of alternative spiritualities (Christine Cherry herself is an astrologer). The meaning of the apparition was fluid and negotiable, but a consensus position emerged; the apparition was part of the process of dealing with the grief generated by the Bali death. Chifley argued that:

Sydney's beaches after the tragedy became shrines to the fallen. Rituals at the water's edge, however concocted and self-conscious, signalled a new seriousness in our religious expression... It is only human that anxiety about an increasingly uncertain future should seek to manifest itself outwardly. By providence or coincidence a trick of the light has become an opportunity to deal publicly with that grief and fear. It is not something anyone could have planned. While archbishops might wince and unbelievers rail, the pious and some of the not-so-pious will come to have a look and perhaps even stay to pray (Chifley, 2003, 11).

Travelling to Coogee became a pilgrimage, a religious practise that is age-old and predates Christianity. Pilgrims left flowers, personal items such as handkerchiefs, and other votive offerings, and purchased candles and medals on site from Christine Cherry. This would best be classified as a form of modern secular pilgrimage (Digance and Cusack, 2001) where behaviour that would traditionally have been regarded as 'religious' takes place outside of a formal religious context. The recent excitement over Pope John Paul's

beatification of the Australian Mary McKillop (1842–1909), founder of the Sisters of Saint Joseph, is a similar phenomenon. It is assumed that this would chiefly interest Australian Catholics, but there is a broader nationalistic fervour, which manifests itself in political cartoons, television documentaries, the foundation of a museum and shrine to Mary McKillop in North Sydney, and the consistent expression by Australians of all religious, spiritual and secular persuasions that to have a native born saint, one who was ‘ours,’ is a matter of great cultural importance (McCreanor, 1999, 31).

This phenomenon is closely related to the ways that Australia has developed secular and civil religious events to create a shared public culture amongst Australians of differing religious and ethnic origins. Just as grief and loss are pivotal to the apparition of the Virgin Mary at Coogee, the terrible events of Gallipoli in the First World War are the focus of Anzac Day, a national public holiday that celebrates the sacrifice of the members of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps. On 25 April 1915 approximately 20,000 soldiers landed on the beach that would later be known as Anzac Cove. The landing was inept, and the soldiers found themselves facing cliffs and constant enemy fire and shelling. Over the next two days they battled a large Turkish force led by Mustafa Kemal, who later became Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, in 1923. Thousands of Australian and New Zealand men died in the days that followed the landing (‘Anzac Day’, 2003).

Historians agree that this was Australia’s coming of age, a defining moment that created a national myth (Inglis, 1998, 461). The passionate desire to remember the fallen dominates Anzac Day, 25 April, and the deaths over the previous few years of the last remaining Australians and New Zealanders that served in the First World War has heightened the sense of pathos and the necessity of cultivating memory. Massam and Smith, speaking of the Second World War, observe: ‘[w]hen individuals gathered at thanksgiving services and military parades ... they brought an infinite variety of personal interests and commitments, yet, as members of the nation, found a common context of coherence and meaning in which to unite’ (1998, 68). This is exactly the achievement of Anzac Day in the early twenty-first century, where migrant Australians, particularly Asians from countries that were recently enemies (Vietnam and Korea most obviously) mourn the dead in war and commit to their new country. Australia has also forged strong and emotional ties with Turkey, best exemplified by the tribute to the memory of the Anzacs by M. Kemal Atatürk, which was written in 1934, and is engraved upon the Anzac Memorial in the Australian national capital, Canberra:

Those heroes that shed their blood and lost their lives...
You are now lying in the soil of a friendly country.

Therefore, rest in peace.
 There is no difference between the Johnnies
 And the Mehmetts to us where they lie side by side,
 Here in this country of ours.
 You, the mothers, who sent their sons from far away countries...
 Wipe away your tears.
 Your sons are now lying in our bosom and are in peace.
 After having lost their lives on this land, they have
 Become our sons as well ('Anzac Day').

Increasing numbers of Australians make the pilgrimage to spend April 25 at Anzac Cove, Gallipoli, commemorating the dead at the site of their sacrifice.

THE RISE OF THE RELIGIOUS RIGHT IN AUSTRALIA, 1996–2005

At the start of the twenty-first century Australia has a vibrant and still-developing multi-faith culture. Institutional Christianity has been in decline since the mid-twentieth century, but recently both the Catholic and Anglican churches (the majority denominations) have engaged in re-thinking their role in Australian society (Miley, McGillion), and newer forms of Christianity, such as Pentecostalism, have been making inroads into Australia, chiefly from the United States. Migrant communities have established thriving religious presences: Jewish, Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Mandaean, Baha'i and Caodaist, and a host of other smaller religions and spiritualities are now known to wider Australian culture through the construction of places of worship and the hosting of cultural and religious festivals. Since the 1960s new religious movements such as ISKCON and the Church of Scientology have been presences in Australia, and the eclectic New Age forms of spirituality have flourished since approximately 1980.

Local imagery serves to make traditional Christian festivals such as Christmas and Easter uniquely Australian: the Easter Bunny has been displaced by the Easter Bilby, a small and cute animal that also happens to be an endangered species, that is dearer to Australian hearts than the rabbit, which is, after all, vermin (Boer, 2000, 41-42). There are many Australian secularists and atheists; they are drawn into the Australian spiritual scene through their allegiance to and participation in civil religious events such as the annual 25 April Anzac Day commemorations, and the events surrounding Australia Day, 26 January, which is both celebrated both as the foundation of the non-indigenous nation and mourned by the indigenous people as marking the loss of their independence and

sovereignty. The traditional religion of Aboriginal Australians is the final element contributing to the rich fabric of contemporary Australian spirituality, with increased interest among both indigenous and non-indigenous Australians over the past twenty years.

Despite this variety, and the aggressive secularity of Australian public culture, the past decade has seen the infiltration of Australian politics by an American-style 'religious right' which the conservative Prime Minister John Howard has actively encouraged. The Howard Government has outsourced employment agencies to Christian churches and sought to involve church leaders in the business of government to a greater extent than ever before, blurring the separation of church and state. One example is the appointment of an Anglican archbishop, Peter Hollingworth, as Governor General, although this ended disastrously due to a scandal over his handling of a sexual abuse case in the past (Maddox, 2005, 296-9; 309-11). A greater percentage of the members of parliament, and in particular of the Cabinet, now profess a strong commitment to Christianity. Moreover, through its employment of the discourse of 'family values' the Liberal/National Coalition has brought issues such as abortion, same-sex relationships, and bio-ethical issues back into the public eye (Marr, 1999). It is difficult to conclude otherwise than that the Government, now in its fourth term and controlling both houses of Parliament, intends to reverse many of the secular, utilitarian trends that gave increased autonomy to Australians in their private lives, by legislative means (Maddox, 2005).

These moves are supported by the sector of the community that identifies with a 'new style' Christianity being promoted, chiefly by evangelicals and independent pentecostal churches, such as Hillsong in Sydney's north-western suburbs (Pryor, 2005). These churches espouse a prosperity gospel, which neatly complements the Coalition's aggressive economic policy. Hillsong's pastor Brian Houston is the author of *You Need More Money: Discovering God's Amazing Financial Plan for Your Life*, and conspicuous consumption, rather than concern for the poor, is the dominant image of the church, which has nearly 20,000 attendees at its weekend services (Macken and Barker, 2005, 60). In the 2004 Federal election the surprise success was Family First, a political party stemming from the Assemblies of God, Australia's largest pentecostal church. Family First gained 1.99% of the national Senate vote and gained a Senate seat in Victoria. Its leader, Andrea Mason, is the first Indigenous woman to lead an Australian political party (Mitchell, 2004, 24).

Australia remains a very secular country, with weekly attendance at Christian churches at only 9%, and sociological studies indicating that only 14% of households (of all religions, not only Christians) engage in religious activities in any given week (Bouma and Lennon, 2003). It is too early to predict what the success of Family First and the embracing of religious rhetoric after the fashion of the American religious right might

mean for Australia's future. Maddox (2005) argues strongly that the secular electorate interprets the Coalition's 'values' rhetoric very liberally, favouring Christian institutions such as churches and schools because of a vague feeling that it is a good thing for others to be religious, even if one is not personally. Australia is possibly the most multi-cultural and multi-faith society in the world, and it remains to be seen whether this considerable achievement might be damaged by the apparent return of Christianity to the public discourse about Australian identity and values.

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