

Feature Articles

This section will contain refereed articles pertinent to studies of religions but will no longer strive to have these conform to a theme. Guest editors will be encouraged to develop this section for thematic treatment of a particular area of study. Majella Franzmann has been accepted to edit a feature section on Gnosticism for the Autumn issue 1997. Contributors are asked to send articles on this theme and other topics to the Co-editor Tricia Blombery, 87 Cavendish Street, Stanmore 2048.

The Americanisation of Christian Education in Queensland

A study of the Sunday School and New Christian School Movements 1945-96

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It is a truism that Australian culture is succumbing to American influence. Children wear American sport apparel and repeat Americanisms like “hi”, “yo”, “no way”, “your welcome” and “have a nice day”, as a matter of course. People’s lives are becoming more busy and pressured, violence and conflict are becoming more noticeable in the media and the public sphere (Banks, 1995). Ritzer’s (1993) thesis that society is becoming “McDonalised” has strong supporting evidence in the everyday life of most Australians. In the sphere of Christian education the signs of Americanisation are also present.

This article explores the impact of American influences upon Christian education in two arenas of Australian church history, the development of Sunday schools and new low-fee Christian schools in Queensland since 1945. The article shows direct American influences upon the progressive development of Christian education in the Australian state of Queensland. The paper reflects upon indirect American influences on Christian education and questions the validity of importing Americanisms into Christian education in the Australian context.

If evangelism has been one half of church life, Christian education is the

other half. After one has been converted to the faith, or born into a Christian household, one is expected to be 'raised in the faith', meaning a process of religious education. The concept of "Christian Education" as an organised area of church life was developed by American Protestantism. The large mainstream American denominations developed, in the early twentieth century, massive Christian education departments to service their denominational churches (Buch, 1994). In the post-1945 period, Queensland Protestant churches hosted visitors from these American Christian education departments to teach churches how to organise their Christian education programs.

The obvious American influence on the Sunday School system in Queensland Protestant churches after WW II was the Baptist Union's adoption of the Southern Baptist Convention's (SBC) All Age Sunday School model. The All Age Sunday School (AASS) was developed by Arthur Flake, a SBC educator, in 1922. This model was articulated in Flake's *Building a Standard Sunday School*. Evangelistic aggressiveness underlies Flake's concept of the AASS. The rapid growth of the SBC and the success of the AASS had just become evident in the 1940s when American military chaplains stationed in Queensland were noting the decline of attendance in Australian churches and Sunday Schools. In 1943 one American military chaplain wrote back to his wife in the United States, stating

... the Australians are very old fashioned and behind the times in their religious education programs. It is the same in the churches of all denominations (Daniel and Potts, 1985: 167).

Interest in the SBC's AASS model came with the appointment of the Reverend John H Knights as the Baptist Union's first Youth Director in December 1946. During Knights' first year in the newly established Young People's Department (YPD) based at the South Brisbane Baptist Church, the Baptist Union of Australia (BUA) released a report of the Federal Education Board which called for Sunday School teaching and curriculums to be modernised. Knights' response was to change the South Brisbane Sunday School program along the lines of the AASS model (Holt, 1983: 26). The time of the Sunday School was moved from the afternoon to before the morning Church service. Teachers' training was introduced and an emphasis was made on "learning by doing". In line with the evangelistic aims of the AASS, Knights conducted visitation drives in the local area to recruit more children for the Sunday School. From 1947 to 1952, using principles of the AASS, Knights was able to set up new Sunday Schools across the State, as well as increasing the enrolments in existing schools.

The revitalisation of the Sunday School brought new growth for Baptist churches, which in turn increased the support for Knights' AASS strategy in the YPD. As the AASS had been a catalyst for growth in the SBC, the AASS was to become a technique to bring growth for the Baptist Union. The concept of a Sunday School being a place to train young children in the faith was being replaced by the concept of the Sunday School being a method of Church expansion. Queensland Baptist, the Reverend J E White, in June 1951 (:11), stated "The S.S. is always our most promising field for evangelism. Statistics prove that the Church is dependent on the

S.S. for the bulk of its membership, estimated at eighty per cent”.

In 1954, Knights left the YPD to take up the position of Executive Secretary of the Australian Baptist Board of Christian Education. The Board of Christian Education took up the responsibility of creating a uniform Australian curriculum for Sunday Schools in the Baptist Union of Australia (BUA), using the SSB material as a model. In 1956, in his new federal position, Knights brought Dr W L Howse, the SBC Director of Religious Education, over to Australia to present a conference in Sydney to promote the AASS in BUA churches.

The essential thrust of the SBC approach that Howse introduced was an American sense of organisation. As Howse (1956: 14) himself said of American Baptists, at the very first session of the Yarramundi conference:

Let me say in beginning the discussion this morning that our Baptist people in the States have been together in the field of doctrine. We believe in the same things and our fellowship in our belief has been one of our great assets. At the same time we have been together in our methods. Perhaps in some ways organisation has been over-emphasised. I heard a story of three Americans who fell from a plane. On the way down they organised an aeronautical society. They elected a president, a secretary and made the third member of that group, chairman of a safe landing committee. We are organisers. There is no question about that. But we don't trust in that. We believe that God is a God of order, a God of system. And certainly if we can enlist people to take responsibilities and train and develop these people in their tasks, call it organisation, call it whatever you will, it is an essential part of growing a great church because no people will do any better than they know to do.

Howse also spoke to a gathering of Baptist ministers and Deacons at Central Baptist Church, Sydney, and to a gathering of 1500 Sunday School teachers at the Presbyterian Assembly Hall, Sydney. At the Central Baptist Church meeting Howse outlined several principles in Church Administration based on his experience in the SBC (1956a: 5-12). The principles were the enlisting of “plain people” to do church work, the training of these workers, regular meetings for planning and conference, planning the church programme well in advance, and the church's election of all the workers and approval of the recommendations of all the organisations. At the Presbyterian Assembly Hall meeting, he outlined five principles for growing a Sunday School - take a religious census, start more classes and departments, enlist and train more workers, provide more building space, and run a visitation programme (Howse, 1956b).

The impact of the Howse visit on the Baptist Union was great. At Yarramundi, the Reverend A C Prior (1956) made this tribute to Howse which indicated the great significance of his visit:

Dr Howse, the brethren have asked that before you leave us, I should try to put into words the depth and the extent of our appreciation of yourself and of the vision that you have brought to us in these days. I have been drafting a report of your ministry over these days for the “Australian Baptist” and I have headed it, “A New Vision of Baptist Work in Australia.” ... I believe, Dr Howse, that no visit to Australia made by a Baptist leader has had the significance and the importance both in immediate and distant results that yours has had and will have with the passage of time.

In May 1956, a meeting of the Australian Baptist Young People's Board examined how to implement the SBC SSB programme in Australian Church life (Australian Baptist Board of Christian Education and Publication correspondence. Box 32-10. AR.221) This plan of implementation included distributing copies of Howse's addresses to every Baptist minister, the importation or publication of SSB material (including the prime text -*Building a Standard Sunday School* and the SSB periodical - *Home Life*), the use of SSB certificates, seals and its diploma system, the teaching of the SSB methods at Baptist theological colleges (the possibility of sending someone to do a short course at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary was considered), and the setting up of "a Board to Perform in Australia the same function as the S.B. S.S. Board adapting to the Australian situation". This was done by taking the Young People's Board as one Federal Board which would administer Education, Promotion, and Publication, thus converting it into the Board of Christian Education and Publication.

The import of the SSB's AASS system meant a re-orientation in the Sunday School program for Queensland Baptist churches. The Board of Christian Education and Publication adopted a reward system called "Standard of Excellence" which was outlined in Flake's *Building a Standard Sunday School*. A "Standard of Excellence Pennant" was awarded every year to each AASS.

The SBC Sunday School series that were sent to Queensland Baptist churches meant that teachers and students were treated to a host of Americanisms. In the July 1959 issue of *The Adult Teacher*, the

front inside cover had a picture of the American flag with the patriotic words of Katherine Lee Bates - "America ! America ! God Shed His Grace On Thee, And Crown Thy Good With Brotherhood From Sea to Shining Sea". (*The Adult Teacher*, 4, 7. July 1959). In the June 1962 issue of *The Adult Teacher*, the front inside cover had a photograph of the Robert E Lee monument in Dallas, Texas, with a quote from Lee about the importance of duty (*The Adult Teacher*, 7, 6. June 1962). A whole unit in the October-December issue of *Baptist Adults* (1963: 25-55) was devoted to a study of "the Communist Challenge" which was pure training in American Cold War ideology.

C P Morgan, the Chairman of the Christian Education Department, stated, at the Silkstone AASS, that "Australia had a great start because of access to material from U.S.A." (*Queensland Baptist*. April 1959: 7).

In the early 1960s, there was a major development of AASS in Queensland, carrying the concept of an All-Age Sunday School beyond the Baptist Union. In 1960, the Methodist Church began what they called "All-Age Church Schools", first at Nambour Methodist Church, and then at Darra Methodist Church. In 1961, the Methodist version of the AASS increased to ten schools. By 1969, there were 22 Methodist AASS schools (Alcorn, 1969: 72). In November 1960, the Reverend William Kirschke, the Christian Education Director of the Assemblies of God in the United States, toured around Queensland, lecturing on the AASS to Queensland Assemblies of God churches (*Courier Mail* 9-11-60: 12) In 1961, the first Presbyterian All Age Sunday School in Australia commenced in Rockhampton.

The AASS curriculum material used by the various Baptist Union departments, up to this time, was drawn from the SBC material. In 1960, the BUA Federal Board of Christian Education, however, began the process of producing an "Australianised" AASS curriculum. For this purpose, a conference was held in Melbourne which included Queensland Baptist officials. "Australianising" the AASS lesson material meant making "surface" changes such as altering the American northern hemisphere seasons for the seasons in the Australian southern hemisphere, and replacing American spelling and slang with Australian equivalents. The basic structure and ideas in the new curriculum remained as it was in the SBC material.

In 1963, the Board of Christian Education and Publication published its own "indigenous" AASS literature, the first issue of the Australia-New Zealand Baptist Senior Young People's and Adult Sunday School periodicals. It was not until 1970 that the new Australian curriculum, the Federal Board's WORD & LIFE, was completed (*Courier Mail* 9-11-1960: 12).

The President of the Baptist Union during 1961, the Reverend S Lane, claimed that the AASS was responsible for a rising spiritual tide within the Union. (*BUQ Yearbook*. BUQ. 1961: 48).

In 1967 Mr C J H Schull became the new Director of Christian Education. A decline in the number of scholars in AASS had occurred gradually during his office and it had been hoped that the new curriculum could stem the alarming loss of Junior Young People in the AASS (*Queensland Baptist* February 1970: 15). Schull was committed to the view that the SBC had achieved significant growth through the AASS approach and such

phenomenal growth would be possible for the Union, if the Union used the Australian version of the AASS concept, the WORD & LIFE curriculum. However, the expectations about the impact of the AASS curriculum on the Baptist Union never came to fruition. Sales of WORD & LIFE steadily declined between 1974 and 1979 (*BUQ Yearbook*, BUQ, 1974: 138).

Attendance in the AASS itself declined during the period of 1976 to 1983 (*Queensland Baptist* December 1976: 6; Maycock, 1983: 7). Different reasons were given for this decline, such as the secularisation of Sunday or the over-concern to evangelise adults rather than children. The effectiveness of the AASS was rarely questioned. When it was questioned, the Reverend Len Maycock (1983: 7) Associate General Superintendent (1980-87), strongly defended the AASS approach. According to Maycock, the decline was not due to any inadequacies of the AASS but to the lack of vision on the part of the Baptist Union. Maycock was convinced that the SBC success with the AASS would mean the same success was possible for the Union as long as the American technique was followed. However, by the late 1980s the enthusiasm for the AASS was being replaced by interest in another American movement, the House Church movement (not to be confused with the home church movement which is anti-institutional in foundation). In the same way that the AASS had been seen as a vehicle for increased growth in the Union, it was now hoped that the American styled mid-week small group (House Church) strategy might bring both quantitative and qualitative growth within the Church. However, the House Church movement was merely a shift of Christian education

for the church family from the Sunday School class to a mid-week house meetings.

A far more innovative American development had replaced the role of AASS, not within Sunday School system, but in the general schooling system. A new type of church school was introduced into Queensland during the 1970s, the American-founded independent low-fee Christian school.

The new low-fee Christian schools have been named "themelic schools" (Long, 1996) to avoid the pejorative implications of the label "fundamentalist" and to better capture their distinctive nature. The label "themelic" comes from a Koine Greek expression (root *-themelios*) used in the New Testament which appears in the biblical language used by these particular schools to justify their position. The term literally means "Christ is the foundation". The term "themelic" refers to a new kind of conservative Protestant collaboration that has emerged as Christians of many conservative Protestant theological traditions have begun to establish low-fee schools in Australia in a common system. Many of the theological groups involved in this new system of schooling have had no previous historical involvement in schooling.

Since the Scopes Trial in 1925, American evangelicals have sought to control local school boards in order to censor the educational material that their children were receiving. In particular, parents were concerned to censor out references to evolutionary theories, explicit sex education, and modern educational theories which shift education away from what evangelicals have considered religious, moral, and patriotic beliefs. This collection of ideas and

concepts which were deemed as unacceptable, according to this worldview, was given the label "Secular Humanism". The Humanist tradition, with its belief in the human capacity without reference to God, was blamed for increasing secularisation and irreligious behaviour (Liebman and Wuthnow, 1983: 133-137). The heart of American independent Christian schooling was the Accelerated Christian Education system.

In the mid-1970s, a group of right-wing fundamentalists in Queensland began to advocate the establishment of ACE schools. These fundamentalists were political lobbyists who had close association with certain members of the National Party Queensland Government, in particular the Premier Joh Bjekle-Petersen, and the Education Minister, Lin Powell, who were themselves fundamentalist Christians. One of the leading fundamentalist advocates for the ACE program was Rona Joyner, who gave ACE support in her *Stop Press* periodical. In one issue of *Stop Press* Dr Allen S Roberts (1980), National Director of Accelerated Christian Education Australia stated:

Every subject can be taught from God's point of view. There are no secular subjects. All truth is God's truth and the only vantage point for integrating learning is that provided by God's revelation of truth, the Bible. When the Bible is excluded from education and God's revelation is replaced by man's reason, education becomes distorted and meaningless. Teaching is no longer controlled by the Spirit of Truth but by the spirit of error. Australia needs an education system which restores the Bible to its rightful place. Our children not only need the right answers to life's questions about origins, purposes and values, they also need a curriculum which

treats every subject from the Biblical vantage point of God's truth.

The Bjekle-Petersen government was sympathetic to this philosophy, and provided the legislation to allow the establishment of ACE schools by local churches. The Federal government, as a result of the Karmel Report, also provided the grants and recurrent funding to make the construction of ACE school buildings possible. The first ACE school in Queensland was Heritage College run by Christian Outreach Centre in Mansfield. In January 1978, Calvary Temple Christian College in Townsville became the first Australian Assemblies of God school (*Australian Evangel*, 35, 6. June 1978: 2-3). The school ran on the ACE program.

Other groups of themelic schools of different pedagogical and theological structure were also established during this period which also looked to America for inspiration and help. These schools were members of Christian Parent Controlled Schools Ltd (CPCS) and Christian Community Schools Ltd (CCS). It is important to note that the model of schooling adopted by different groups tends not to be defined along traditional denominational lines and as a model of schooling ought not be confused with the schools in Australia which were established in the 19th century on the pattern of Thomas Arnold. The set of schools discussed at present are from conservative Protestant origins which have previously not sought to establish schools. All themelic school groups have the doctrines of the inerrancy and/or infallibility of the Bible as their primary doctrinal platform for membership and association (CSAQ, member *Application Form*; *CPCS Memorandum and Articles*

of Association: 8; CCS Confession of Faith Memorandum of Association 5a; Application for ACE International Program, Statement of Faith and Practice point 7).

The first CPCS school to be established was Westside Christian College (formerly Goodna Christian School) which commenced in 1977. The early influence behind the establishment of the CPCS group was from Dutch Reformed immigrants, but is now more influenced by the American reformed and evangelical tradition which is evident in the exchange CPCS schools have with North American scholars and institutions.

The first CCS school was established in 1981 at Dalby. The rationale of the CCS followed the American independent Christian school movement. Their founder the Reverend Robert Frisken adapted aspects of the ACE system with his own ideas about curriculum. The CCS stated that secular education and Christian education formed two contrasting views on the subjects of God, Man (humanity), Life, and education (Second Annual Report of the Christian Community School Limited. 1979: 9). Secular education was said to be based on "secular humanistic ideals", such as the theory of evolution, whereas Christian education was biblical, therefore Godly and righteous. The CCS rationalised independent Christian schooling totally on the Americanised fundamentalist mythology about humanism.

Secular education is based on the humanistic ideal that man is an independent and rational being, who is essentially good, and with proper training, capable of moral autonomy (the capacity to make his own moral decisions). Man is viewed as being in a state of continual progress as part of the natural evolutionary process.

The Christian educator, however, sees man as a part of God's creation and wholly dependent on his creator. While made in the image of God at creation, he has fallen through deliberate sin and his mind and will have been corrupted. This corrupted man must be born again in order to change his ways and cannot be reformed through education. (ibid)

The watershed in the establishment of thematic schools was the MACOS/SEMP (Man a Course of Study; Social Education Materials Project) controversy of 1978 (Gowers & Scott, 1979). MACOS is a commercially distributed primary school Social Studies course which is taught to students of around the age of eleven. Conceived by Professor Jerome Bruner, a noted cognitive psychologist, the MACOS course is guided by a pedagogical model based on Bruner's research into how children learn. The fundamentalist backlash to this course, in the USA and Australia was a reaction to supposed evolutionary and "secular humanist" assumptions of the course as well as to the psychological and pedagogical model itself. On 17 January 1978, in the parliamentary recess and during school holidays, the then Education Minister, Mr Val Bird, announced that MACOS was banned from Queensland schools by Cabinet. All sets of MACOS materials had to be withdrawn immediately. A furore developed between the state government and the Queensland Teachers Union (QTU), which was addressed by the state Industrial Commission on 2 February 1978. The situation eased for a moment while Mrs Joyner, the state government and the union were in a phase of conciliation. However, on 23 February 1978, after considerable debate with the Queensland Council of State School Organisations (QCSSO) and the QTU, the

State Government shocked all concerned with the announcement that it had banned SEMP. The QTU immediately called for a Royal Commission into government interference in education. The next day the Federal Education Minister, Senator Carrick, and the Federal Opposition Education spokesman, Senator Button, became involved. Senator Carrick arranged to have SEMP materials displayed in Parliament House, and Senator Button took public issue with the Queensland Premier with an interesting reference to the Scopes Trial. Senator Button stated:

I don't know whether the Premier wishes to take Queensland back to the 1925 'monkey case' in Tennessee, and feed Queensland children on a diet of peanuts, or forward to a 'brave new world' of 1984. (Courier-Mail Brisbane, February 24, 1978).

Three days after the banning of SEMP, Mrs Joyner announced that she would now pursue the high school course called Study of Society, particularly the book called Desert People. The Premier made his hard-line intentions clear to any government employee who did not obey cabinet's decision. Schools, teachers and education centres feared reprisals and funding cuts if they commented publicly against the Premier. The Premier in writing to the *Goondiwindi Argus* (the political epicentre of the League of Rights) made it perfectly clear where he stood. He declared his government to be supreme in the matter and made it a point of political defiance stating

... many strange things arise in Canberra, especially if they were percolated during the Whitlam era ...which sustains the secular humanism of both the socialist and national so-

cialist ideologies (Townsville Daily Bulletin 1 March, 1978).

The decision to ban SEMP, a product of the Curriculum Development Centre in Canberra, must not be overlooked and is consistent with Bjelke-Petersen's political tactics for a decade. It just so happened that this incident and the campaign of STOP and SEMP suited his political opportunism. The moment had suited Bjelke-Petersen and his right wing strategies, which had turned out to be a national and international political success. To some degree, this whole episode reflected the mood of the time which Bjelke-Petersen endeavoured to exploit but, by the 1987 federal election, the "Joh for PM" campaign was too late. However, a level of humanist and communist/socialist anxiety was generated through the prominence of the Premier, and this controversy was something which triggered concern in the minds of thematic people. No individual incident in the past in Australia had so targeted the conservative church-going population.

The lengthy debate over MACOS/SEMP in 1977-78 received considerable national media coverage, including segments of ABC "PM"; an article in *Australian Women's Weekly*; feature articles in the *Brisbane Courier-Mail* and other leading capital city and provincial tabloids; and an hour-long live debate on This Day Tonight on ABC national prime time television between Mrs Joyner, Dr Goodman, Mr Kay (Queensland Council of State School Organisations, QCSSO) and Dr Richard Smith, a pro-MACOS speaker from the University of Queensland's Education Department; as well as numerous public meetings.

Of all the thematic schools which currently exist in Queensland more than 68% were started in the seven years following the MACOS controversy (CSAQ Directory 1995). In these seven years following the MACOS controversy thematic schools grew at more than 30% annually which was more than fifteen times the national average enrolment change in government and other non-government schools (Connell, 1993: 101). In 1983 there were 18 thematic schools in Queensland with a student enrolment of 1585 students (Mullaly, 1992, *Census of Students in Christian Schools 1983-91*). By 1989 twenty-five thematic schools formed the Christian Schools Association of Queensland (CSAQ) with over 6,000 students enrolled. (Mullaly, 1989). In 1995 CSAQ represented 40 schools numbering more than 12,000 students, 720 teachers with a growth rate of 11.8% (CSAQ Directory 1995). This represents 20% of all thematic schools in Australia (Long, 1996: 15). CSAQ makes corporate representation to the Queensland government and has considerable input into the development of government policy on education. In addition to these developments has been the commencement of Christian Heritage College (CHC) in 1985 which is a tertiary teacher's college awarding state accredited degrees in teaching. The CHC has approximately 300 tertiary students.

It seems clear from the evidence that this debate assisted in informing and focusing the concerns of a large proportion of Christians of thematic persuasion who gathered together in a united manner because they were disillusioned and confused about the state of the education system.

The majority of the population had been brought up on school anthems, school prayers, oaths of loyalty to the Queen, the cane, desks in rows, an agreed morality and clear taboos; but these actions and beliefs which provided the populace with the notion that they lived in a distinctly Christian society that had now apparently disappeared. The “shock of the new” was to blame for society’s supposed ills. The story of themelic schools is a story of how one section of Protestantism responded to the threatened loss of the old faith, to what Manning Clark called “the decline of the faiths”. The polemical language used in themelic circles to describe the movements in society at the time reflected a simplistic approach to the nature of society in general.

Hill (1983: 74) states the case accurately when he says:

Some Christian school advocates, particularly those heavily influenced by the biblicist right wing in America, propound a conspiracy theory according to which a well-integrated atheistic humanist lobby is taking over the state school system, and the options have now boiled down to two: Christian schools which teach the Christian view of life (and therefore, of course creationism), and state schools which teach atheistic humanism (and therefore, naturally, evolution). The Christian’s choice, be he teacher or parent, is therefore clear.

The anti-MACOS rhetoric provided a clear explanation for themelic Christians, articulating simplistically the demise of Australian social morality in general in the 1960s and 1970s and the waning influence of the church. The increase of activity by conservative Christians in reaction to social and moral changes confirms Home’s observation that the “wowsers” had been in “retreat” during

this period. One example of an area where the conservative Christians has been silent was in the arts and music. The setting up of the Australian Film Development Corporation (ADFC), which provided financial backing for Australian film-making, caught conservative Christians off guard. Theatre productions such as *Hair*, the music of the Beatles, TV entertainment such as *The Mavis Bramston Show* and films (supported by the newly-created Experimental Film Fund) like *Walkabout*, *Wake in Fright*, *Libido*, *Alvin Purple*, *Stork*, *The Naked Bunyip* and *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie* all serve to symbolise the social and moral changes which were “popular” and visible to conservative Christians. The 1978 MACOS controversy assisted in bringing these cultural as well as educational changes into focus.

Smith and Knight (1978: 226) note:

Like the modernist fundamentalist fights of the 19th century and early 20th century in the USA, the MACOS controversy illustrates a reaction against theological modernism, social liberalism, evolution theory and the rapidity of social change in urbanised society.

Mayer noted the reactionary trend when he stated perceptively:

Very few educationalists or academic students of education would wish to be seen near Mrs Joyner and all she stands for. They do not wish to look too closely at her. They do not wish to face the possibility that the sentiments she manipulates and exploits are widespread and are held, to a degree, amongst many people who would not articulate them the way she does but yet feel that in some ways she speaks for them.

In the face of declining numbers of scholars in Sunday Schools during the

1940s, the AASS was seen as the way to strengthen the Church. The assumption that numerical success in the USA in a Christian education technique established the validity of adopting the same model in Australia is apparent in the way in which the AASS model was adopted with such vigour. The manner in which Australian Christians tend to look overseas for inspiration reflects an underlying disposition of colonial inadequacy. The home grown product is rarely attractive. In Christian and secular education circles Australians continue to embrace Americanisms without critical reflection. Subsequently we tend to inherit the weaknesses of ideas from overseas and historically tend to "patch" or "add on" appendages to American ideas in order to make them more palatable to Australians. This has been the case in the adoption of the ACE school system. The trouble has been that the underlying assumptions of the American idea have been rarely questioned and many associated problems such as an individualist mentality have been infused into the life of the Australian church. This article has attempted to show that the adoption of an American technique has been embraced to provide an answer to the declining interest in church and Christianity in Australia. When the AASS failed, thematic schooling came to rescue the Church from its demise. As the success of AASS declined the rapid growth of thematic schooling began. In both cases, Queensland Protestants failed to understand and relate to the Australian secular culture, seeking instead a conservative religious culture that belongs to another country.

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