

# **FROM HEGEMONY TO PLURALISM: MANAGING RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY IN MODERNITY AND POST-MODERNITY**

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*The societal norms regulating religious diversity in western societies have gone through several phases since 1648, most of which have seen religious diversity as a problem to be overcome rather than a resource to be used and valued. The issue of managing religious diversity arises at personal, organisational, societal and increasingly at global levels. Using an institutions perspective, this paper examines the social history of the management of religious diversity at the level of western national societies. Following centuries of repression of religious diversity and the organisation of religious diversity through state church monopolies, and then oligopolistic cartels of denominations which while different each promoted dominant values, the emergence of multicultural and religiously plural societies in the late 20th century mark the emergence of a major change in their institutions of religious diversity.*

## **Introduction**

The focus of my work this decade has been a cross-national study of the management of religious diversity starting with an appreciation of Australia's multicultural society as compared with Canada, USA, UK, New Zealand and France and Germany. Following earlier work on the migration of Reformed Christianity from the Netherlands to the United States, Canada and Australia (Bouma 1980; 1981; 1989) and different patterns of diasporic Anglicanism (1998b) my research this decade has involved studies of diasporic communities of Islam and Buddhism in Australia. Much of this research is published under the rubric of 'religious settlement', a term I coined to refer to the processes by which a religion moves from one place to another (Bouma 1997). Religious settlement involves patterns of individual concerns with motives, adaptations, struggles, victories, delights; community issues of identity, cultural and social infrastructure, harassment, acceptance/rejection, and the organisation of health, welfare, education and religious services; societal issues of the transformations occasioned by including a new cultural group; and religious issues of the transformations occasioned by 'singing the lord's song in a new land', by operating in a different social and cultural context. I bring to

this research certain experiences and orientations. I am a migrant. Having been raised in the United States I migrated from the mid-West to the East coast for post-graduate education and then to Canada where I taught at Dalhousie University for 10 years and in 1979 I migrated to Australia. I am also the grandson of migrant grandparents. I am also a religious person and a religious professional - an Anglican priest. I have also been religiously migrant - from (Dutch) Reformed to Presbyterian USA to Quaker to United in Canada to Anglican. Thus, I have experienced diasporic religious communities and draw on that continuing experience. Being from a religiously mixed family in an area where religious identity was totalising and unitary, I am familiar with negotiating identities in contested territories. The experience of migration has also tempered my views of conversion, identity formation and the relationship between religion and society.

My study of Islam in particular brought me face to face with the role of women in the process of religious settlement. I had written the first draft of a book on Mosques and Muslim Settlement in Australia and had sent copies to representatives of the communities involved. By return fax came the demand for an audience from the Muslim Women Association of New South Wales. I was greeted by six young women all in black - like industrial strength nuns and instantly I knew I was in deep trouble. They liked what I had said about the role of women, but I had not put one section sharply enough. When they realised that I was only too delighted to hear what they had to say and to include their story more clearly, we had a great time. The issue at stake centred on their role and relationship with the mosque. They had helped build it, but on completion there was no room for them except for a broom cupboard full of builders' rubble that might be available. They now own the house next door for their own Koranic school.

Thus, issues in the management of religious diversity arise at personal, organisational, societal and increasingly at global levels. As global migration continues, conversions occur and religious intermarriage increases, individuals face issues of managing religious diversity in their own lives as they encounter a wider diversity of religions in the people they deal with daily and as they negotiate issues of identity, familial practice and being part of minority cultures in culturally diverse societies. Religious organisations, once accustomed to internal consistency, or at least once more able to present an image of internal consistency are now almost as internally diverse as the worlds in which they are embedded.

The management of religious diversity has been and continues to be a hot issue facing many societies from Islam in Germany to Pentecostals in Latin America; from a rich diversity of religious groups in Australia to Catholic/Protestant divisions in Northern Ireland; from new religious movements in America to Muslims in China. Given the ubiquity of attempts to control, suppress, overcome or deny religious diversity it is expected that societies will have distinctive patterns of the management of religious diversity. This paper reviews the history of the social institution of the management of religious diversity in European and American societies, reviews

Australia's post-war move toward a multicultural and religiously plural society and asks questions about macro-trends from fearfulness through toleration toward appreciation of religious diversity as at least aesthetically pleasing and possibly a useful resource. This paper uses the recently revitalised concept of social institution as an organising and illuminating device/key theoretical construct in an examination of the social history of the management of religious diversity at the level of Western national societies with occasional non-Western comparisons.

## **Social Institutions**

Since my association with the Re-shaping Australian Institutions Project with a brief to examine Australia's religious institution, I have been wrestling with the contemporary understanding of social institutions and the utility of that understanding for public policy. The new institutions theory is an important recapture of some of the critical insights about the nature and operation of the social (Goodin 1996, Petit 1996, Bouma 1998a). I have made clear the necessity to distinguish institutions and organisations in another paper (Bouma 1998a). Institutions are sets of norms governing some aspect of human social life. Organisations are structures of relationships set up to accomplish some end. Social institutions as examined here obtain at the societal level, although they may emerge from, be reproduced and changed by interactions among individuals and collectivities. This approach is not consensualist but assumes that people, groups and organisations closer to the centre are more likely to espouse the dominant values, norms and expectations of their social institutions. It does assume that each society has at the level of society values, norms and expectations related to ongoing issues of social life. Once distinguished the relationship between institutions and organisations can be discussed. Taking this revitalised social institutions perspective on board has been particularly challenging for a sociologist of religion. The sociology of religion has a deeply seated propensity to identify institutions with formal organisations and to move glibly from one to the other losing much of the explanatory capacity to be found in distinguishing them (Bouma 1998a).

Although institutions theory is often seen as a subset of the theory of organisations, organisations operate within an institutional environment which shapes what they do and the likelihood of their success. An example from the sociology of religion may help to clarify what I mean here. Religious organisations - churches, mosques, synagogues and temples - operate within a society's religious institution. A church which seeks to increase member commitment and enthusiasm will find that job more or less difficult depending in part on the norms in the society's religious institution dealing with appropriate levels of intensity in religious belief and practice. Australia has a norm of 'low-temperature' religions which explains why Pentecostals find it harder to grow in Australia than in the United States. China also has norms of religious 'low-temperature' given the background of Confucian rationality and Communist enforced secularity combined with some negative experience of religious

excess. Certainly the Chinese Communist Party seems to prefer 'low temperature' religions to those which are either more demanding or likely to set themselves over against the state (Brown in Leung 1996).

A society's **religious institution** refers to those norms and expectations which shape among other things: the intensity and style of religious practice and belief; the preferred styles of religious devotion and practice - rational, experiential, hierarchical, the degree to which worship focuses on words, ritual, activities, the individual or community. There will also be norms and expectations about relations among religious groups and the salience of religious difference. These norms set the context within which a particular religious group operates. They will make some aspects of religious life more or less difficult. For example, given that the United States has higher norms of church attendance we would expect reported rates of church attendance to be higher there than in Australia (Kelley and DeGraaf 1997). Similarly a society's religious institution will have norms shaping the role of religion in identity. Is a person expected to be religiously singular/unified/holistic, or are people allowed to be religiously plural/diverse and allowed/expected to have several religions? Is religious identity totalising or just a part of a larger picture, or irrelevant?

One of the major dimensions of a society's religious institution will centre on issues related to the management of religious difference like the following: Is religious difference at the group level tolerated/persecuted; permitted/encouraged? Is religious difference celebrated/enjoyed/valued/employed, or a matter of indifference? Is religious difference politicised? Does politicisation occur within the religious group/within the society? Is religious difference a basis for the allocation of the good things of life such as jobs, education, housing location, health and welfare? Is religious difference noticeable? Is the degree of noticeability due to individual choice, religious community choice, or societal regulation?

Each society will have a bundle of norms related to issues such as those just outlined, norms and expectations regulating the ways in which religious organisations, ideas, practices, activities are related, valued, permitted and expected. A group of these norms and expectations will deal with religious diversity. These make up the society's **institution of religious diversity**. These institutions can be observed and over time change in them can be discerned. Any change including intentional change usually requires substantial periods of time to occur and to observe. The focus here is on the organisation of relations among religious organisations, in particular religious diversity and competition. By examining this area of institutional concern the nature of institutions and institutional change will become clearer enabling an analysis of the contemporary transitions.

### **Three Great Institutional Transitions**

This section presents a descriptive analysis of a series of religious institutions of religious diversity characteristic of Western societies. Each institutional arrangement has implications for the style of religious organisation most suited and

each institutional change is marked by considerable inter and intra-organisational conflict, predictions of the end of religion and society. Indeed each change did bring an end to a particular social arrangement between religion and society.

There have been at least three great transitions in the institutional arrangements relating to religious diversity in Western societies since the 17th century. Each ushers in a different social contract between religion and society. The focus is on society and not the state, because the social is more than the state which is only one of a range of other institutions with which religion is differently linked in these contracts. The focus is on those norms and expectations at the societal level which shape the activities of organisations within the society. Each compact characterises a period of time in which a particular pattern of church-society relations obtains, characterised by patterns of religiosity, relationships of power, legitimacy and influence. The nature and management of religious conflict varies between each compact. While some reference will be made to parallel developments in Europe and China, the focus will be on the British-American experience. In particular, data will be drawn from the UK, USA, Canada and New Zealand. This is not because these experiences are in any way normative, they simply follow my own exposure to them.

**1400-1650 - Religious Conflict:** Preceding 1648 was a period intense religious conflict resulting in the repression and expulsion of diversity, especially religious diversity. I find this period of world history fascinating as it appears to be a time of global repression of diversity; a time when previously multicultural societies 'regress' and assert racial and religious purity, a time of the assertion of a new form of society with singular, totalising national state, religious and other institutions. Ferdinand and Isabella's Spain and the Spanish Inquisition is but one example and there were similar ones in China (Leung 1996). It was during a 16<sup>th</sup> Century repression of Islam in China that women's Koranic schools were formed. These subsequently gave rise to women's mosques lead by female *ahong*. A pattern which continues to this day and features interestingly in the management of religious diversity in China.

**1648-1820 - State Church Hegemonies:** With the Peace of Westphalia, the wars of religion which had ravaged Europe for over a century came to an official end. Part of this peace was the agreement that the principle *cuius princeps, eius religio* defined the relationship between religion and society and provided the basis for the management of religious diversity. One religion, organised by one religious group was to unite each society and, in some cases demarcate that society/nation from its neighbours. Should the prince convert, the people were to follow suit. The focus of social life was on the courts and the official calendar. The emergence of this institution of religion was part and parcel of the emerging nation state. Very little view of local social and village life is available. It may well have been seething with local 'popular religion' (Parker 1998) full of vitality, diversity creativity and carefully managed conflict. But the view here is of the apparent, the official, the hegemonic, the normative, the institutional.

In this social institution visible religious dissent was forbidden and punished

both within the society and within the religious organisation. All aspects of religious life were regulated by a central authority which not only legitimated the state but used the state to enforce the regulation of religious life and the repression of diversity. Only one religious organisation could be legitimate, could operate. Others were violently repressed. Religious diversity was known from the experience of the wars of religion to be dangerous, a risk to life, limb and public order. The Church of England, established a few centuries earlier as a national state church, free of the international interference of Rome, is the transitional harbinger and icon of this compact between religion and society which spawned other state churches in Lutheran and Reformed states. This new compact stretched the universality of Catholicism by creating de facto state churches in Spain, Portugal, France and the Catholic remnants of the Holy Roman Empire.

The norms and expectations of the institution of religious diversity in this period called for one religion expressed through one church in each society. Only one ultimate was seen as possible in the religious/sacred sphere for individuals, groups and societies. Nation states were too fragile to bear diversity. This pattern characterised Europe until the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Examples of the mode of operation of these national monopolistic state churches include the requirement through this period in England of membership of the Church of England in order to attend university, be a public servant, and to this day to be the monarch. At the time of the Peace of Westphalia, England was actively persecuting the dissenters and the Puritans. Meanwhile in the Americas, the Massachusetts Bay Colony was 28 years old and had its one established church - The Congregationalists (Puritans). Until the Revolution, most other American colonies also had state churches. Rhode Island was founded for Unitarians who had fled religious persecution in the colonies of Massachusetts and Connecticut.

The exception in this period, the nation whose social life points to the next compact was Holland. While France had granted the Huguenot freedom of worship in the Edict of Nantes in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, this was revoked in the 17<sup>th</sup>. Holland in the 17<sup>th</sup> century was the first nation to grant lasting religious freedom, foreshadowing the relationships between religion and society which would spread throughout Western societies in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

**1820-1970 - Tamed Populism - Mainline Religion:** By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century state church hegemonies were unravelling in the face of revitalisation movements and the rise of new religious movements. This new religious diversity led to a new social institution – oligopolistic denominationalism (Beyer 1996). In 18<sup>th</sup> Century England and America the Wesley brothers revitalised Christianity among miners, agrarian and industrial workers. This eventuated unintentionally in a new religious organisation Methodism. Their appeal was to those not served by the existing state church, the newly emerging working class whose interests were in conflict with the landowners and capitalists and whose life world was not integrated into that promulgated by the vicars and curates of village England (Knight 1995). They were economically and socially other, and became religiously other. While originally

agrarian and mining in origin with the industrialisation and urbanisation of Europe, this kind of religious movement was instrumental in Christianising the new urban working class. Thus, in this case the changes to the existing religious institution stemmed from changes in social and economic structure. Methodism is the transitional harbinger and an icon for the next contract between religion and society. Methodism is loyal to the state, sensitive to social issues, sufficiently pietistic to feed the emotional side of parishioners and equipped with a modern organisational structure. Successful denominations between 1820 and 1970 look like Methodists, tamed and well organised populist movements with a warm heart. That is, religious groups with evident, visible, or apparent diversity but which are each loyal to the state and which socialise members into the dominant values and institutionalised norms and expectations (Johnson 1961).

Methodists were not the only populist religious movement of the era. There were hundreds more. The period 1820 to 1850 witnessed revitalisation movements throughout Western societies included the 'recatholicisation of Europe', the Oxford Movement and the Evangelical Movement in England, and the *afscheiding* in Holland. Everywhere I look in this time frame I find movements of religious revitalisation. These movements often took the form of denominational schism spawning a spate of new religious organisations often splinters from 'state churches'. The *Hevormde Kerk* gave rise to the *Gereformeerde Kerken* and the *Christlijke Gereformeerde Kerken*. From The Church of England were formed Methodism, the Salvation Army, and the Churches of Christ. The Presbyterian Church splintered into the We Free, The New Light, the Old Light, and the Orthodox Presbyterian. The Dutch Reformed Church of the USA divided over time to form the Christian Reformed, the Protestant Reformed, and The Orthodox Protestant Reformed. Each of these seceding groups declared its parent body to have succumbed to comfort, liberalism at this time, meaning deism and mechanistic theologies, and to be lacking in fervour. Each new religious group reached back to either the early church, to the Reformation or both to legitimate its claim to be the correct way to be a Christian community and to criticise the errors of the parent body. These groups were diverse in theology, liturgy and ethics. By the 1850s most of these groups promoting revitalisation of Christianity had formed denominational structures among Protestants and new religious orders among Catholics and Anglicans. The specific national history of these movements varies somewhat depending on national circumstance and whether they occurred in churches with episcopal, presbyterial or congregational organisation.

In addition to splinter groups, new religious groups also emerged at this time, the most notable, in retrospect, being the Church of Christ: Latter Day Saints (Mormons). The early 19<sup>th</sup> Century rivals the 1960s and 1970s for the production of new religious movements. Those which last become increasingly like Methodists, like other denominations in terms of their organisational structure and their relationship with the society.

The Catholics at this time were seeking to reclaim Europe and to establish themselves in the places associated with the empires of Catholic European states. They had a head start in this, but had spent a great deal of energy on converting the indigenous peoples and now had to develop programs to minister to migrants. In Catholic countries, except France, the church - state tie was strengthened. In France the relations between church and state were and would remain problematic given the French Revolution and the Napoleonic excesses. Without state support, the church was less triumphal in France, but it achieved substantial popular hold.

What was going on elsewhere in the world and in other religions? The rise of Baha'is in Persia has many parallel features and prompted a massive repressive reaction. Other parallels may be found in Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism at the same time. In Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the USA, as waves of migration brought increasingly diverse settlers, ethnic varieties of European churches were established as were representatives of the various conflicting sub-denominational streams, Welsh Baptists, Irish Presbyterians, Scottish Presbyterians, German Lutheran, varieties of Dutch Reformed. Such a range of denominations is also evident in other out-posts of Empire such as Hong Kong. At the bottom of the University of Hong Kong I noticed Chinese Anglican, Chinese Catholic (Salesian), Chinese Presbyterian and Chinese Rhenish churches.

Splinter groups, new religious groups and new orders within Catholicism each introduced diversity into societies with institutions of religious diversity which did not support diversity. This diversity was not welcomed by the previously monopolistic state churches which at the beginning of this transition used the powers of the state to repress and then to manage this diversity. An echo of this is heard in the fact that the State Church of Denmark still must give its approval to any other religious group wishing to operate in Denmark. Groups as diverse as Scientology, Anglicans and Buddhists must apply to the Lutheran Church for permission to practice as religious groups. Permission is not given lightly. In this transition from state church monopoly to denominational competition the fact and experience of diversity preceded the institutionalisation of diversity in new norms and expectations about religion. During this time the norms emerged which essentially declared that diversity was acceptable so long as the group and its religious practice and belief supported, or at least did not threaten or undermine the social order. Religion was emerging as a functionally separate domain. This separation is seen by some as secularisation, or as a weakening of the power of the church. As a result the church was no longer at the apex of a hierarchically ordered society, but following Niklas Luhmann it may be more appropriate to say that religion was emerging as a functionally distinct order/domain of social life. It could also be said that the nation state had become sufficiently confident, strong and economically differentiated to no longer need religion to be uniform, unitary and hegemonic.

In the face of this new and vital religious diversity societies were faced with a choice between policies of repression or toleration. Catholic societies had less diversity

and the church was able to embrace within itself a wider degree of diversity than were other religious groups. In these societies the decision to repress or to contain diversity was made by the Catholic Church. One of the geniuses of Catholic church order has been the ability to contain within itself the reactions, rebellions and creative energies of a wide variety of types of movements through its religious orders. The compact between Catholic Church and Catholic societies was such as to maintain the appearance of uniformity by the inclusion of diversity. The high water mark of this arrangement being the First Vatican Council and the passing of it was marked by the Second Vatican Council.

Most other Western societies made the choice, sooner or later, to move toward social institutions promoting or allowing tolerance of some level of religious diversity so long as the groups were supportive of the state and society. The Church of England relinquished much of its legal hegemony in the 1830s (Knight 1995:201-2). Similar reduction of the hegemonic reach of state churches have occurred with Lutherans. In 1998 Sweden disestablished the Lutheran Church finally secularising the registration of births, deaths and marriages. For the United Kingdom this relinquishing on the part of the state church happened just as the social orders of significant British colonies were being established. In Australia, Canada and later New Zealand, the privileges of the Church of England were early dispensed and were never constitutional.

Nineteenth century empire building and migration reshaped this contract by moving people and bringing disparate groups into contact. Chaplaincy religion, at first limited to the Church of England was extended to include other groups, played a vital role in the British Empire, part of its civilising mission both legitimising the goals of Empire and providing comfort and direction in far flung parts of the world. The Cross and Crown, God and Country/King themes climax in the First World War and find an echo in the Second World War, but the decline caused by the unseemly debacle of the First began the erosion of the compact between religion and society and lead to its collapse in the 1960s. The necessity to support the society unconditionally became less palatable and with increasing diversity in all aspects of life less possible.

The nation that leads the way in the development of denominational societies is the USA. The decline of the Church of England after the revolution gave way to the emergence of a Protestant Establishment which became the ruling coalition of denominations until the 1980s. Religious diversity was acceptable within a set spectrum, so long as each supported the state, motherhood and the American Way of Life (Herberg 1956). Each in their own way were seen to "socialise in dominant values" as Johnson (1961) proclaimed after studying holiness groups in the USA. Of course, groups which did not do this are subject to persecution, elimination, derided as cults and legislated against or have their children removed often by competing churches. We need only recall the debacle of Waco and the unseemly removal of children from a group called The Family by social services personnel in

Victoria and New South Wales in 1996 (Sheen 1997).

The Dutch, however, take a completely different path through this period of time. From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Dutch society became organised according to the principle of *verzuiling* in which religious difference structured all other aspects of social life. Each *verzuil*, or pillar/column was associated with a religious identification. The main ones were the Catholic, the Hevormde (the state church), The Evangelical Protestant and the Secular. Each *verzuil* had its own church, newspaper, universities, social welfare agencies and other elements of social life. Religious diversity differentiated the society into pillars, each of which was self-contained within the larger society. In a sense Dutch society internalised the previous system of dividing groups on the basis of religion. In this case the division was among sub-groups in a society rather than among nation states on a continent. This system has begun to break down in the past 20 years.

### 1900 to 1970: Secularity and the Age of Ecumenism

Two major movements have shaped much of 20<sup>th</sup> century change in expectations and norms of Western institutions of religious diversity. There has been the assumption by many that by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the force of religion would have dissipated through the unstoppable advances of secularisation. At the same time there was an assumption among religious leaders, particularly Protestant leaders, that religious differences themselves would be overcome, or worked through to a universal form of Christian faith and practice. In either scenario the problems posed by religious diversity disappeared. That by 1999 both of these assumptions are seen to be utterly false does not deny their impact on the move toward new institutions of religious diversity in societies like Australia, Canada, New Zealand and lately the United States.

Partly as a response to missionary work and to the increased diversity threatened by the populist religious movements a new mode of managing religious diversity began to arise in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and has dominated the 20<sup>th</sup> - the Ecumenical movement. Ecumenism has been a deliberate attempt to re-shape the institution of religious diversity. Public opinion was managed and directed toward the acceptance of a wider diversity and formal organisations established to promote the causes of **ecumenism** - the World Council of Churches, the Reformed Ecumenical Synod, and various National Councils of Churches. Core to this movement was a denial of difference and a call to those who insisted on seeing differences where there were none, or none that were legitimate in the eyes of God, to stop and return to the one true church - liberal Protestant Christianity. Protestant unity was asserted in the first place over against apparent Catholic unity and later the unity of all Christians was asserted against the evil empire of Communism. This compact was a return to one nation, one religion, one church but now writ on an international scale - one world, one God, one church. With the collapse of the common enemy diversity became more tolerable.

This Century of Ecumenism has witnessed the general decline of religious inter-group hostility particularly since the 1950s. Inter-Christian sectarian rivalry in the United States has declined to the point of being nearly undetectable since the Presidential election of 1960 and in Australia since the demise of the Democratic Labor Party. The old hegemony of East Coast mainline liberal Protestants has been broken. Many more kinds of Protestants are now seen as OK, even Catholics are OK and after Vatican II Catholics see other Christians as OK (maybe). Indeed the current issue is whether to include Mormons as OK. However, this altogether amazing transformation of America's religious landscape has not reduced diversity, but has changed its management.

In this Century of Ecumenism some denominations have merged. Major examples include the formation of the United Church of Canada (1925), The Church of South India (1948), The United Churches of Christ a major milestone of American ecumenism (1962), The United Presbyterian Church, USA (1958) in which several Presbyterian denominations joined under one denominational banner, the United Reformed Church of England (1970), and the Uniting Church of Australia (1977).

There has also been since 1966 a massive decline in mainline Christianity. How the mighty liberal Protestant establishment denominations have fallen - Presbyterians, Methodists, Anglicans and the United Churches of Christ - each a mere frazzle of their former selves. This century has seen an enormous decline in 'product loyalty', in the importance of denominational identity. This is partly a product of religious mobility, partly a product of decline in competition. Nothing boosts and develops brand name loyalty like competition. Finke and Stark (1992) accounts for the demise of Episcopalians from 1790 - 1990 by their failure to compete due to smug complacency. They were politically incorrect in a revolutionary age and developed an elitist social class orientation. Where religion was strong in the USA, in the Bible Belt, religious competition was rife. In addition there were schools, camps, youth groups and beaches specific to each denomination.

Running parallel with the Ecumenism story has been the story of **secularism**, an ideology of the relationship of religion and society grounded in Enlightenment understandings of knowledge, faith and rationality. In this case the changes in the institution of religion and religious diversity were not deliberate. They were seen as the logical working out, the inexorable conclusion of the force of reason. From the Enlightenment through Darwin, Freud and the founders of sociology the assumption has been that with the expansion of science, the sphere and power of religion would decline. Falling church attendances have been used as evidence to support this, although the data have not been systematic and secularists tend to overlook pockets of growth. Secularisation, a bedrock tenet of 20<sup>th</sup> century social science has blinded policy makers to the role of religion and the re-emergence of religion as a force in many areas.

The functional differentiation of societies lead many to conclude that religion is dead, rather than observing the changes in the ways in which religion is internally

organised, differentiated and propagated and the changes in the ways in which religion is related to other aspects of social and personal life. Once again we encounter the fact that theoretical perspectives cast light enabling some things to be seen, but also cast shadows obscuring the view of other important developments.

Now, of course, only the blind, the ideologically committed secularist would try to argue that religion is a dying phenomenon and that religious differences were likely to decline in importance or influence. This is as true in the West as it is elsewhere. The forms vary, old organisations may change in shape and size, some disappearing altogether. Liberal, rational Protestantism is on the way out, but charismatic, evangelical and Pentecostal groups rise to fill the space. Anglicans read their horoscopes, have their palms read, engage in Zen meditation, do Tai Chi and hire Feng Shui consultants to arrange their furniture. We are in an age of cultural and religious bricolage. Religion is popping up everywhere, religious meaning is being sought in myriad ways.

## **Religion and Society after World War II**

After World War Two religious organisations found themselves increasingly operating in a world they could not dominate or control. Ecumenism did not produce the monolithic global structure of sufficient power to stand up to the forces of evil and secularity. While inter-religious conflict declined, competition increased. A new religious institution was emerging as demographic factors re-shaped the religious profiles of many societies, commodification and differentiation changed the way religious goods were marketed and diversity enabled a marketplace of continuous choosing to replace a fixed allegiance market-place of little choosing.

The decline of Catholic hegemony in Europe begins early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, has a violent resurgence in Fascist Spain, suffers a king hit in World War II and then finds its own level in the Post-Vatican II turn from organisational dominance to a focus on personal and familial religion/spirituality. The present Ratzinger regime sees the Catholic church adopting a strategy of head-on competition and hard edged self definition in a world in which religious competition is rife. The aim is no longer monopolistic control, but internal unity in intense competition with other groups in a free religious market place. In response to an increasingly hostile and diverse world Catholicism has moved to define itself over against the world, rather than to control the world. It also defines itself over against the other religious cultures of the world - seeing a few as siblings, the rest as competitors or enemies. There has been a hardening of relations with 'separated brethren' and recent re-assertions of the closed nature of its Eucharist by re-enforcing prohibitions against non-Catholic reception and by Catholics not in a state of grace. This is a massive shift from the world dominating position the Catholic church assumed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and strove for until the early 1960s.

Similarly, the 1950s were the last gasp of that form of the religion and society compact established in England in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. In retrospect, the pathetic

attempt of the British to resuscitate its Empire after World War II provided its last flowering. Coventry Cathedral is its great symbol, ecumenism its aim and undoing. 1950s migration filled the churches in the former colonies, Billy Graham attracted large crowds and white, male, Brits had their last heyday, although the tinkle of ice and the bursting of Schweppervesence is still faintly echoing in the ageing lounges of some colonial gentlemen's clubs. The continuity of religious life with some post-war rebuilding in Britain was characterised by immense organisational inertia carrying a huge church forward doing what it had always done, at least since the high Victorian era, but unsupported by the masses. But the global Church of England was fragmenting with de-colonisation and losing the basis of its hegemonic relationship with local power structures by the passing of the power of Empire. There is a faint echo of this compact in the way in which chaplaincy is run in Britain today (Beckford 1998). The Church of England controls the access of all chaplains to hospitals, prisons and other chaplaincies. It is trying to define itself as the default religion - able to meet the needs of any person be they Anglican, Methodist, Muslim, Orthodox, Buddhist or Mormon. Needless to say they are meeting stiff resistance to this notion which amounts to self-aggrandising inter-faith imperialism in an attempt to continue to be the state church, the default religion of what remains of the realm. There was also an echo of this in an address a few years ago by Prince Charles who wanted to be the supporter of all faiths and not just defender of 'The Faith', *i.e.* the Church of England. The role of local, now national, post-colonial versions of the Church of England varies depending on the society in which they now find themselves. A worthy study needs to be done soon of the varieties of the compacts these post-colonial remnants of empire have struck with their societies and the stances or poses taken within these societies and their rationales.

As the British Empire crumbled, the great post-war migrations began to reshape global demography. Refugees in large numbers traversed the globe clinging to new places and putting down religious and cultural roots in unlikely soil. Those tired of warring Europe and the struggle of reconstruction left for new dreams elsewhere finding mixed welcomes in Australian, Canada, and New Zealand. In Europe Sartian existentialism carried the day and any return to religion was local and a phenomenon of the minority, often newly arrived ethnic and religious minorities.

Meanwhile in the United States the pride of winning World War II and emerging Super Power status provided a burst of popular confidence in all organisations including religious organisations. This popular enthusiasm is in stark contrast to the European and British experience. The United States was a nation on the rise. Its churches and synagogues enthusiastically supported this and cooperated with US hegemony to further their own global reach. Anything could be done, all dreams were realisable, American know how, as opposed to British engineering, would Christianise the world incidentally making the world a better place by spreading the 'American Way of Life'. Like the Gospel, the American Way of Life was considered so inherently attractive that merely offering it, making it available, would attract

enthusiastic converts world-wide. The US kept the 19<sup>th</sup> century compact alive the longest. The 1950s were a time of great church building, organisational adumbration and program development including moves into active support for and involvement in human rights activities.

While Kennedy symbolised this dream he also sowed the seeds of the demise of this confidence by embroiling the US in Vietnam. The failures of Vietnam, the intractability of racial and class divisions, the failure of many efforts to promote social justice and finally the impact of the increase in the price of oil combined to end the post-war era of confidence and brought many into conflict with the established order, including many in the churches. The Reagan-Thatcher era was supposed to have rekindled that confidence, but it was basically a period of economic self-cannibalism which undermined rather than increased productivity. With the demise of the Evil Empire symbolised by the tearing down of the Berlin wall, their braggadocio became less relevant and tinny. The decline of the 'Evil Empire' also reduced the need for internal consistency among Christians paving the way for increased differentiation and competition.

The 1960s and 1970s brought a crescendo of radical criticism of the Western social orders and gave birth to movements of liberation as the colonisers sought to shake off the shackles of colonisation, modeling their efforts on those of other subjugated peoples in Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America. The Beatles, drugs, sex and rock and roll provided diversion while fundamental socio-cultural change was occurring. The assumptions of cultural uniformity and policies assimilation, covered with/united by a polite religious veneer maintained by intellectual and social elites was unraveling as real differences refused to go away and began to re-gain visibility. In this era the churches began to be more confrontational of the state in key policy areas and not just areas of polite morality. This brought the last gasp of the 19<sup>th</sup> century religion and society compact to an end as religious groups violated the norm of unconditional support for the state, by no longer holding decency and middle class respectability paramount and by differentiating themselves from social power.

The high-water mark for religious organisational involvement in the USA occurred in 1967. From that time on the mainline denominations were less and less able to fund and motivate their view of the world. The chorus of secularists began a crescendo seeing in the falling attendances the proof of their ideologies. Efforts by churches and religious leaders to promote social justice alienated the pre-boomers and attracted the baby boomers for only a short period of time. The 1960s provided a brief period of religiously legitimated social justice action in the USA Civil Rights campaign, in the UK and parts of the empire. The energy of these movements was secularised as religious differences were 'overcome' by the lay ecumenism of 'we all work together at the same coal face'. Formerly religious leaders became political figures, learned the secular language of the parliaments. This transition robbed the churches of the people they had trained and inspired but who had secularised their

vision and cut themselves loose from its religious sources. Doing this was often greatly assisted by church leaders who engaged in reactionary conservative pushes, or who cast out the religiously inspired leaders (Leonardo Boff) and declared as heresy their theologies. In its anticommunist excesses the church broke its connection with the life force of social action it generated and was unable to take that force back within itself. Even Methodism lost its identification with the marginalised in the early days of industrialisation and became middle class and suburban.

Formally organised religious life following this era shifts relentlessly to the conservative as liberal efforts are disowned by churches or are secularised by their leaders and new spiritualities are seen as foreign if noticed at all. The Boomer young fail to attend in large numbers, not finding in the churches an answer to their cosmic angst in the face of nuclear war. The post-Boomers appear even less inclined to church participation (Bouma and Mason 1996, Bouma and Hughes 1998). What is the point of delayed gratification if it is all to be blown away, what is the point of investment when there is no future. This view reaches maturity with the Boomers and is expressed in a culture of economic rationalism which might be better described as a culture of economic narcissism. Cathedrals are replaced by casinos.

### **1980 - ? The Newly Emerging Postmodern Religious Institution: Religious Diversity, Vitality and Competition**

Today religious life in Australia, like most Western cultures and increasingly around the world is fragmented, diverse, competitive AND very much alive. Active participation in formally organised religion, churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples is a feature of the minority, the remnant, and the diaspora. Some are clinging to the former compact, but even the way that that is done is changing. Various religious groups provide enclaves of meaning, community and cultural expression. Some serve as retreats from or protests against postmodernity (Lyon forthcoming). But as diversity becomes pervasive, no group provides an all embracing over-arching community of meaning coterminous with the boundaries of the society or globe. Diversity is now so pervasive that religious groups are internally diverse and many do not provide embracing, overarching, totalising meaning for their adherents. Their meanings have become one set among others, which is made even more complex by the rise of profound levels of internal diversity within religious groups. Those who insist that religious groups speak with a single voice are harking back to the former order.

Certainly before 1947 and until the mid-1970s Australians were given all-encompassing meanings by their religious communities - communities which were internally more consistent than is now the case. Similarly Australians until recently were identified by a few totalising and exclusive categories which they achieved, such as work; chose, such as a Footie team; or were born to, such as religion. Now identity is determined more by what Australians consume, religion being one of the products available for identity consumption. This explains in part the appeal to

some of religious groups which demand or promote practices which make their adherents noticeable.

The term replacing religion is spirituality, and more often spiritualities which include more and more people daily. Spiritualities seem to be more private, personal, subject to choice, not totalising, inclusive rather than exclusive, expressible in a wide diversity of ways, at different times and in different seasons. Anglicans consult their horoscopes, practice Tai Chi, use Transcendental Meditation to calm their nerves and borrow bits from Pentecostals to spark-up their worship. No inconsistency, or conflict is felt. It is just the way things are. Elements and aspects of spirituality, or spiritual technologies have become commodified and are available in the religious market place, a market place no longer regulated by a monopolistic state church, nor by a cabal of denominations. This aspect of Australia's religious institution has changed. Individuals are now free to consume religious commodities freely and organisations are free to make them available with minimal regulation. What a massive change from the First Fleet when only Anglicans could offer religious services and everyone had to consume, or from 1947 when the Church of England was the default religion of the Empire and all others somehow less legitimate, less powerful, less able to deliver the goods. If you were Church of England no further explanation was required, unlike being Baptist.

Australia's current religious institution of diversity is part of the institution of Multiculturalism. Religious and spiritual commodities are available as cultural goods in an unregulated market-place. The norms of multiculturalism have been variously stated and re-stated even in Australia's 'post-M-word times'. Australia expects certain commitments from ALL members of the community, regardless of their background:

1) to share an overriding loyalty to Australia, its interests and future. 2) to accept the basic structures and principles of Australian society -- the rule of law, tolerance, equality of opportunity, Parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and religion, English as the national language, and equality of the sexes and races, and 3) to acknowledge that the right to express one's own culture and beliefs involves a reciprocal responsibility to accept the right of others to express their views and values.

And Australia makes these commitments in return: 1) to ensure equity of access, opportunity and participation in the social, political and economic life of Australia, unimpeded by barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, gender or place of birth; 2) to ensure that our institutions, especially government processes and programs, reflect and respond to Australia's cultural diversity in a fair and equitable way'; 3) to ensure that the potential contribution of all Australians is recognised, and 4) to provide opportunities for all Australians to acquire and develop proficiency in English and in languages other than English and to develop cross cultural understanding. (Our Nation 1995:2).

This was modified by the Liberal government to read: "While accepting diversity, the Government does not accept a diversity of (civic) values. Specifically, it believes that all Australians, regardless of their backgrounds, have the same civic rights and obligations and should give their first loyalty to Australia. They should accept the basic structures and values of Australian democracy--the Constitution, and the rule of law, tolerance and equity, parliamentary democracy, freedom of speech and religion, English as the national language and equality of the sexes."

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission under Chris Sidoti has produced *Article 18* proposing new legislation for Australia related to religious diversity and freedom. This is an excellent example of the attempt to manage religious diversity through legislation. I cannot ascertain whether behind the rhetoric of tolerance and openness to diversity lurks a nastier agenda seeking to regulate some aspects of the religious marketplace. This effort follows in the steps of The Law Reform Commission, Report No 57 on *Multiculturalism and The Law*, which managed to avoid all discussion of religion.

Meanwhile in Canberra, The Centre for Christianity and Culture provides a vision of the new way for religious organisations to relate under the emerging religious institution of diversity and competition. The Anglican Diocese of Canberra/Goulburn has decided to sponsor on its tract of land in Central Canberra a Centre for Christianity and Culture, rather than build a cathedral. According to Sir Ninian Stephen it will "be a place for encounter and dialogue between Christian denominations and between Christianity, Judaism and other religious faiths". The centre is intended to "recognise, celebrate and nourish the spiritual journey of all Australians. The lack of an area which is holy but entirely non-sectarian in Canberra will be remedied by this centre" (*Anglican News*, April 1999, p 3). The Centre aims to support a wide diversity of spiritualities and other religious activities under a gentle Christian umbrella since a cross features although does not dominate. The hospitality offered is wide and generous, but hospitality comes from a place, a home not just anywhere, or everywhere. The Episcopal Cathedral of St John the Divine in New York City offers similar hospitality in its side chapels, but the dominance of Christian and Episcopal symbols is much heavier. By contrast Bishop Browning's vision places diverse spiritual interaction at the centre of the space. A space owned and dominated by no one group and useable by all. This may well be a fitting symbol for the role of organised religion in the next century, present, initiating and leading but not dominating. It is a great challenge. Spiritual places become so by being set apart and then by being used as such. A place of prayer is prayed into existence. A place of the practice of spiritual diversity becomes such only if used as such.

Various Australian organisations exist to promote religious harmony and tolerance, some within particular religions, like the state and national Councils of Churches; some between specific groups, such as between Christians and Jews; and others more widely ranging such as the World Conference on Religion and Peace.

## **Limits to Diversity**

Whatever the pact between religions and society, whatever their social institution of religious diversity, there are limits to diversity. Not all are acceptable. Some beliefs, practices, orientations are beyond the pale as they violate some more general institutional norm. Perhaps a norm associated with what are referred to as Universal Human Values, which of course would be seen in this perspective as a global social institution. Islam poses a problem in Australia and elsewhere for its treatment of women. This raises fascinating problems of plurality and relativism. What right have Western feminists to judge Muslim women? How effective are appeals to universal human values? The practice of female genital mutilation while officially denied as a religious practice is often associated with ethnic groups who are also Islamic. This practice finds near universal condemnation. Or, take the example of 'Mormon Polygamy' while officially condemned by the Church of Jesus Christ Latter Day Saints, it is practiced in some places, attracts widespread condemnation, much of it prejudicial and ethnocentric. Some practices meet with wider condemnation than others. Not all practices will be acceptable in any society.

Australia's religious plurality presumes that religious commitment will be at a low temperature. This element of Australia's religious institution continues to be strong. Australians are more likely to be concerned with how religious a person is rather than what religion they are. There is evidence that migrant religious groups tend to become more reserved, that is, more 'Australian' as they settle in Australia. Thus, what appears to be a high level of toleration for religious diversity has some preconditions, some prior rules about the level of importance of religion and the intensity of religious belief and practice. Religion in Australia is most tolerated where it is not obvious, not worn, not demonstrable, does not interfere with ordinary life by dietary or feast/fast days, or special clothing; so long as it is private and unnoticeable (Bouma 1995).

Thus, institutions of the management of religious diversity become not so much assessable by good or bad, or even open or closed, but rather they are to be described along a variety of dimensions. Religious plurality may or may not be associated with ideologies of pluralism. Demographic change toward increased religious diversity may see the rise of pluralistic ideology, but it may just as well see the rise of neo-Nazi, Pauline Hansonist reversions to hegemonic ideologies of racial purity. In Australia ideologies of pluralism have and continue to have the upper hand but are not without challenge and require strong leadership to maintain. Germany is a different picture in which economic recession fuels divisiveness and scape-goating.

## **Some International Comparisons**

There are moves in various parts of the globe toward institutionalising the kind of multicultural norms governing religious and cultural diversity which

characterise Australia. While they can be seen in Canada and New Zealand both of these countries are foundationally bi-cultural rather than multicultural. The United States is more uni-cultural - centred on the 'American Way of Life'. So long as you subscribe to the 'American Way of Life' you can be what you wish. Alternatively, American religious diversity was institutionalised as Protestant, Catholic and Jew as expressed in the 1950s by Will Herberg. So long as you were one of these you were OK. It is this institution which is now undergoing massive change as groups which do not fit that liberal rational Protestant institutional framework become irrepressibly visible and do not pay allegiance to the former religious masters of the US. Some of these groups are associated with more recently arrived ethnic groups, others emerge as existing religious groups differentiate and become more diverse.

What is true of Australia seems also true of Hong Kong. There is and has been a great deal of religious diversity with minimal conflict, healthy interaction at official levels among leaders of religious groups, and the existence of social structures as well as a religious institutional framework promoting inter-religious harmony. Given that the same cannot be said for Singapore (see Hill in this volume), it is interesting to ask what makes the difference. I have already noted that Australia is different from Canada and New Zealand for the lack of a history of ethnic warfare. Canada and New Zealand are bi-cultural and attempting to overcome a bitter history of internal conflict with religious and cultural dimensions. Singapore suffered a number of serious religious conflicts immediately after World War II and has had a government which is intolerant and repressive of religious difference. The post-war orientation to religion in Singapore is one of fear and moral panic. China is different again. There religion is carefully and vigorously managed and religious diversity officially limited to the practices of a small number of state approved groups. This is a step forward from the times when all religion was actively repressed. Boyle and Sheen (1997) provide a world-wide summary of the state of religious freedom.

A remaining issue is whether Australia is multicultural or uni-cultural with a vast array of differences that make no difference; differences which may be aesthetic, but inconsequential; differences which have been de-hierarchicalised by reference not to a higher cultural canopy but by pragmatic norms of giving each a 'fair go', being 'laid back' and letting nothing interfere with the good life. Increasingly, Muslims, Pentecostals and conservative Catholics do not fit this mould. Will they cease to cooperate, or will they continue to support the system that provides the funds for schools necessary to maintain their distinctive ethoi.

The management of religious diversity remains a vital and fraught issue for societies. Institutions of religious diversity are changing in many ways. Do differences that no longer make a difference worth fighting over, cease to be important in social life? This seems to be the argument of the secularists. The essential question here is, important to whom and for what. Religious diversity no longer threatens many societies. For whom and for what is the diversity important? Will religious diversity continue to be seen as a problem to be overcome, or a diversity to be tolerated, or are

we moving to a time when religious diversity in itself will be valued, celebrated and recognised as a cultural resource essential to human social life? Are societies now developing religious institutions which expect diversity and see religious difference as normative for social life?

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