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RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIAN

PUBLIC SCHOOLS

———

A Thesis

Presented To

Dr. Ralph D. Mawdsley

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———

In Partial Fulfillment

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———

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

## Statement of the Problem

In 1972 the Education Act of South Australia was revised so as to make compulsory the teaching of religion in public schools. The major church leaders in South Australia held pro-Christian views about the form the new religious education should assume. Certain factors, most obviously a vigorous humanist campaign conducted during 1974 and 1975, wrought a dramatically different religious education syllabus. Convinced that the Christian religion was not being accorded its proper place, the church leaders finally lodged a united complaint with the Education Department of South Australia in 1979. The problem confronting all concerned South Australian Christians in 1982 is this: what should be the Christians' attitude towards the current public school religious education program and what action, if any, should they take?

## Statement of Purpose

The present study seeks a dependable answer to this question through a critical analysis of the problem in its historical setting. Such an analysis must explore

the following areas. What specific aspects of the religious education program are causing concern to South Australia's Christians? Are their concerns valid? In what manner did those aspects of the program evolve? What force or forces gave rise to this evolution? Is the program therefore likely to be changed so as to meet with Christian approval? These matters having been covered, the stage is set for attempting a solution to the problem facing the Christians of South Australia today.

## Statement of Importance of the Problem

Since 1977 the religious education designers have enjoyed approval of their approach by an official evaluation committee. By all appearances the churches have been fighting a losing, if not lost, battle. With the overwhelming majority of Protestant children attending public schools (most private schools are Roman Catholic), quite understandably the Protestant churches in particular are worried. Not only are they worried about the harmful effects they think the new religious education is having upon their children's Christian convictions; they are also worried that the courses are innoculating unbelieving children against espousing the Christian faith.

## Statement of Position on the Problem

The present writer considers that the current public school religious education program is a fair

reflection of the prevailing majority attitude of modern
South Australian society towards religion. Therefore
the syllabus is unlikely to be changed, it is justifiable
that secular schools teach it, and the Christian churches
should resign themselves to its continuing presence.
Christian concern about the alleged detrimental influence
of religious education upon children at public schools
invites scientific investigation, for while the concern
remains in the realm of theory, the justification for
radical counteraction is arguably small. It is not pos-
sible for this thesis to include such an investigation.
Assuming that there is in fact a valid concern for the
spiritual welfare of these children, the obvious solution
would be to educate them at schools where the offending
religious education is not taught. However, the present
writer believes that the concern ought to extend beyond
an offensive religious education. A general education
lacking Christian content actually indoctrinates against
Christianity. Therefore, whether a school should run a
possibly harmful religious education program or whether
it should provide no religious instruction at all, it
cannot be settled for by the Christian parent who believes
that God's Word directs him to indoctrinate his child
thoroughly in all areas of its life with the Scriptural
principles.

### Delimitation of the Problem

This thesis is not aimed at relating a general

account of religious education in South Australian public schools; it aims to examine the subject from a particular standpoint, that of the concerned, conservative Christian. The subject matter involves several dimensions--historical, educational, political, cultural, legal, theological. Regardless of the balance these might receive in a general account, in the present study they are included or excluded, emphasized or de-emphasized, developed or left undeveloped, in accordance with this standpoint and also with the above-stated problem. The historical, educational, cultural, and theological dimensions assume greater prominence than the political and legal.

Of all the Christian churches in South Australia, the Lutherans have been the most persistent and vociferous about religious education. While sharing the main objections leveled by the other denominations, they have developed a peculiar and intriguing contention of their own. Therefore it was expected that the files of the Lutheran Church of Australia--South Australian District would contain a wealth of primary source material belonging to the debate between Christians and religious education developers. The entire religious education file was kindly handed over by the South Australian Lutheran President for some six months and the investigator's expectation has not been disappointed. The libraries of local teachers colleges, theological colleges, and private individuals furnished adequate secondary and background

material.  Selective personal interviews rounded off the
data-collecting process.

### Theoretical Framework

Several key terms used in this study require
definition.  "Special religious instruction" refers to
Christian instruction along denominational or inter-
denominational lines, given regularly within public school
hours by clergy or other denominational representatives
and sometimes by volunteer public school teachers as well.
"General religious instruction" is Christian instruction
performed by public school teachers as part of the public
school's secular education.  "Religious education" is a
broad term covering courses in religion as a subject
within the formal school curriculum--the courses that have
been replacing special and general religious instructions
in most Australian states.

"Secularism", as employed in the forthcoming
pages, is not the "Secularism" (with a capital "s")
described by Harvey Cox as "an ideology, a new closed
world view which functions very much like a new religion"
(Marxism is an example).[1]  It is the cultural conditioning
carefully differentiated by Cox and called by him "secu-
larization"--"a historical process, almost certainly

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[1]Harvey Cox, The Secular City: Secularization and
Urbanization in Theological Perspective (Bloomsbury Street,
London:  SCM Press Ltd., 1965), p.21.

irreversible, in which society and culture are delivered from tutelage to religious control and closed metaphysical world views."[2] Secularization, or secularism, merely moves towards social environment characterized by openness and freedom; it prescribes neither religion nor irreligion but mutual toleration, and so in itself it is not anti-Christian.

Several other commonly-occurring terms call for definition. "Pluralism" (in religious education) refers to the inclusion of more than one religion. "World religions" is a term that restricts such religions to the traditional systems like Christianity, Hinduism, and Buddhism. In the South Australian religious education syllabus, "religion" is defined broadly enough to include such non-supernatural life views as Humanism and Communism.[3] "Existentialism" (in education) is the method whereby students are encouraged to develop their own individual capacities, perceptions, and opinions as they are confronted with an array of alternatives and given a minimum of guidance. A "humanist" is one who believes in the innate ability of man to answer all questions about existence and life without reference to any external absolutes.

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[2]Ibid., p.20.

[3]South Australia, Education Department, Religious Education Syllabus, R-12 (Adelaide, South Australia: Government Printer, 1978), p.5.

The term includes, but is not limited to, members of the Humanist Society of South Australia. Finally, "conservative Christian" is another broad term, used for that which seeks to preserve the core traditional, orthodox Christian doctrines and values.

<div align="center">Review of Related Literature</div>

Overseas Religious Education Background

Teaching of religion in public schools has been under review in several Western countries for a number of decades; consequently, a large body of published material is now in existence. Since the present study was never in any explicit way a study of recent teaching of religion discussion worldwide, most of this literature could be ignored. A few key works by overseas writers seemed especially important as the historical development of a religious education philosophy for South Australia was explored. These were consulted and are included in the Bibliography. The most outstanding is Michael Grimitt's, What Can I Do in R.E.?[4]

Australian Religious Education Background

So far only one comprehensive volume on recent Australian developments in teaching of religion has appeared: Religious Education in Australian Schools, by Graham Rossiter. This is helpful for seeing the specific

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[4]Complete information regarding books and journal articles referred to in the text of chapter 1 may be found in the Bibliography.

subject in its general national context and, being a
comparatively recent publication (November 1981), it
also provides up-to-date information on religious educa-
tion happenings in the other states. Other, smaller
books dealing with Australian public school teaching of
religion are Alan Black's, <u>Religious Studies in Australian
Public Schools</u>, and Brian Hill's, <u>Called to Teach</u>.
Several articles fitting into the same general area have
been published in the Australian <u>Journal of Christian
Education</u>. Peter Wellock's, "The Search for Educational
Respectability--Religious Education in Australian Govern-
ment Schools in the Twentieth Century," is a comprehen-
sive history to 1977. The others are of a more introduc-
tory nature.

## South Australian Religious Education

For the actual South Australian focus, an extremely
valuable publication is the P.C. Almond and P.G. Woolcock
edition, <u>Dissent in Paradise</u>. It might be called the
textbook for teaching of religion in South Australia's
public schools to 1978. Of special value is chapter
three, which comprises 293 pages of reproduced primary
source material--statements, letters, newspaper articles,
and radio and television transcripts--from the 1974-75
humanist-instigated controversy. Once this original
public debate had passed, very little further mention of
religious education was made in the South Australian
media or indeed in church publications. Religious education

now became lodged within the machinations of the State
Education Department. From that time until the present,
the battle between curriculum designers and church leaders
has been waged almost entirely behind the scenes through
meetings, and unpublished statements and correspondence.

## Historical Antecedents

Not directly relating to teaching of religion in
South Australian public schools, but essential for under-
standing why religious education has become what it is
and how South Australian Christianity should regard it,
are works dealing with the history of general education,
religion, and culture in Australia during the nineteenth
century. Allen Roberts' little book, Australia's First
Hundred Years, emphasizes the initial Christian schools
monopoly and subsequent government school takeover.
Maurice Schild's article, "Christian Beginnings in Aust-
ralia," in the Lutheran Theological Journal, outlines
secularism's rise to dominate Australian culture in the
second half of the nineteenth century. J.D. Bollen's
lecture series titled, "Religion in Australian Society:
An Historian's View," weighs the Christian influence in
Australian society from the beginning in 1788 until 1973.
J.S. Gregory traces the give and take in church-state
relations, especially in Victoria from 1851, in Church
and State. Manning Clark's, A Short History of Australia,
is also useful in a general way.

## Christian Schools

Two articles in the Journal of Christian Education support the concluding recommendation concerning Christian schools--Douglas Blomberg's, "If Life Is Religion, Can Schools Be Neutral?" and Noel Weeks', "In Defence of Christian Schools." Arguing against it is Brian Hill's, "Is It Time We Deschooled Christianity?" also published in the above journal.

## Research Design and Procedures

The investigation began with a cursory reading of the P.C. Almond and P.G. Woolcock edition, Dissent in Paradise, which provided a general understanding of the particular problem in its historical context. Then came a thorough exploration of the debate between the religious education curriculum writers and their Christian critics, by means of an examination of the primary source material. The writer carefully sifted through the Lutheran Church file on religious education and extracted the documents, statements, and correspondence which would comprise the backbone of a history of the debate. Through this the aspects of religious education that had caused concern to the Christians could be precisely discerned. From the same sifting came material that facilitated a tracing of how these aspects had evolved. The latter led back behind the initial 1972-73 enquiry into teaching of religion in South Australia's public schools to the preceding Tasmanian enquiry, which was the first in Australia. A steady

evolution was found extending from 1969 in Tasmania
through 1976 in South Australia.

It was seen that reactions from several diver-
sified sectors in the schools and in society had been
responsible for the evolution in South Australia. This
suggested that the developments in religious education
were a conforming to the nature of South Australian cul-
ture with regard to the place and influence of religion
in it--South Australian culture as it inclines away from
a Christian bias to a pluralistic, free-thinking one.
The primary inference to be drawn from this cultural ex-
planation, in relation to South Australia's Christians,
was that they would do well to recognize the new religious
education as something that was inevitable ever since the
old religious instruction failed.

Before such a claim could be made, it needed sub-
stantiation. Thus a study commenced of the total histo-
rical context concerning connections between education,
religion, and culture in Australia from the first landing
in 1788. The histories consulted built a picture of a
Christian school system being overrun by secular education,
as secularism gradually asserted its ascendency over
Christianity in the struggle for cultural determination.
Hence the first cause behind the development of the cur-
rent religious education in South Australia, and similar
developments in most other Australian states, could be ex-
pounded as secularism firmly established in a culture

which once gave the appearance, at least, of being Christian.

Basically, all that remained at this point was to fill in some of the historical details and to devise some recommendations as to concrete measures that South Australian Christians might adopt in relation to the current religious education.  The latter would involve a prior assessment of the strength and validity of the Christian arguments in light of the entire investigation.  To ensure that both sides in the controversy between curriculum writers and Christians had been fairly apprehended, selective personal interviews were conducted--with the Lutheran President as the main focus of the Christian side, with the Churches of Christ State Minister as representative of the other churches, and with the Religious Education Project Team Co-ordinator on behalf of the curriculum writers.

CHAPTER II

RELATIONS BETWEEN RELIGION AND EDUCATION
IN AUSTRALIA, 1793-1972

Education, Religion and Culture
in Australia, 1793-ca.1900

Early Christian Schools

Formal general education in Australia began in a church-run school five years after the 1788 landing of the First Fleet. For approximately the next half-century, the vast majority of schools were started by clergymen and were funded predominantly by grants from religious bodies and missionary societies. These schools existed to inculcate morals, Christian doctrine, and fundamental literacy.[1]

The unique impetus for setting up schools in early Australia was the essential nature of the colony as a penal settlement. Of the first thousand settlers 750 were convicts, and for the next thirty-five years an average of one thousand convicts a year were transported to Australia.[2] In 1821, the Reverend Samuel Marsden wrote:

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[1]Allen S. Roberts, Australia's First Hundred Years: The Era of Christian Schools (Baulkham Hills, New South Wales: The Australian College of Christian Education, n.d.), pp.1-7.

[2]Maurice Schild, "Christian Beginnings in Australia," Lutheran Theological Journal 15 (May-Aug. 1981): 70.

"The future hopes of this Colony depend upon the rising generation--Little can be expected from the Convicts [sic] who are grown old in vice, but much may be done for their children under proper Instructions."[3]

Growing Government Involvement

From the beginning, the need for some kind of government involvement in education had been recognized. In 1805, Governor Bligh had received this instruction from the homeland:

> In a settlement where the irregular and immoral
> habits of the parents are likely to leave their chil-
> dren in a state peculiarly exposed to suffer from
> similar vices, you will feel the peculiar necessity
> that the government should interfere on behalf of
> the rising generation, and by extension of authority
> as well as of encouragement, to educate them in
> religious as well as industrious habits.[4]

At first the government was content to provide monetary support for the church schools. After an unsuccessful bid to have funds channeled exclusively to the Church of England, so making it the established church religiously and educationally, the Church Act of 1836 directed that equal support should be afforded all churches. However, in the government's eyes, the denominations were proving unequal to the educational task. The essential

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[3] J.D. Bollen, "Religion in Australian Society: An Historian's View," (The Leigh College Open Lectures, Winter Series, 1973, Series II), p.35.

[4] J.S. Gregory, Church and State (Sydney: Cassell Australia, 1973), p.40.

cause was a difference in aims-- whereas the aim of the churches was to educate <u>some</u> children in their own confessional tenets, the government wanted to see <u>all</u> children receiving a general education.[5]  In 1844, Governor Bourke enunciated the principle which, for most Australians, has become inextricably associated with the concept of democracy:  "I may without fear of contradiction, assert, that in no part of the world is the general education of the people a more sacred and necessary part of the government."[6]

Bourke would have liked the government to be fully in control of education, but with many Anglicans still favoring an established church and Roman Catholics fearing that a state-run educational system would be dominated by Protestantism, compromise was necessary.  After the introduction of National (public) Schools in 1847, the Dual System was inaugurated the following year.  This system provided two government-appointed boards, one to control government schools and the other to supervise and administer the distribution of state funds to private schools. While the Dual System represented a compromise, it also heralded the beginning of an eventual government takeover of education.[7]

The educational servicing of Australia's children was little improved under the new system.  Both boards were not providing enough schools to keep pace with

[5]Ibid., pp. 40-41.    [6]Roberts, p.13.    [7]Ibid.

population growth, the quality of instruction in both
sets of schools was often sub-standard, and sectarian
strife persisted and worsened.[8]  Some churches became
actively supportive of government involvement in
education:

> The Wesleyans in 1855 covered their retreat by re-
> solving: "Much as we prefer schools of a denomina-
> tional character, yet considering the scattered
> condition of the rural population and other prac-
> tical difficulties in the way of the Denominational
> System, we feel it to be our duty to assist, to
> the utmost of our power, any system of Education
> which may be established by the Colonial Legis-
> latures."[9]

## The Secular Challenge

The 1851 discovery of gold in Victoria had an
important consequence:  "Her aggressive, radical newcomers
were producing a society which was more irreligious, more
anti-clerical, than any other in Australia."[10]  During
the 1850s and 1860s, there occurred in that state a
gradual swelling of agitation for the cessation of govern-
ment aid to the churches.  This could not be termed a
wholly anti-religious movement, for many of its leaders
were deeply spiritual churchmen with voluntaryist atti-
tudes to church-state relations.[11]  Nonetheless the gold-
rush period substantially reduced the influence of

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[8]Manning Clark, _A Short History of Australia_, 2d ed.
(London:  William Heinemann Ltd., 1969), pp. 147-51.

[9]Bollen, pp. 37-38.

[10]A.G. Austin, _Australian Education, 1788-1900:
Church, State and Public Education in Colonial Australia_
(Melbourne, 1961), p. 22, quoted in Roberts, p. 14.

[11]Gregory, pp. 73-74.

religion upon Victorian society: "The Church remained a powerful and important influence, but relatively its position in Victorian society had changed greatly, so that it was becoming simply one voluntary association, albeit the greatest, among many others."[12] When Victoria showed the way to a secularized educational system with its Education Act of 1872, this reflected the emergent secularism in Victorian society: "The passage of secular legislation in these years was, fundamentally, the recognition in law of that secularization of life and thought which was going on in society at large."[13] (The Victorian Act, and the subsequent corresponding acts in the other Australian states, will be described in later sections.)[14]

## The Public School Takeover

In 1866 the Dual System was abolished, signaling the start of a marked trend from church to government schooling. In New South Wales, the period from 1867 through 1879 witnessed an increase in public school enrollments from twenty-eight thousand to eighty-eight thousand, with a simultaneous plunge in church school attendance from 317,000 to thirty-three thousand.[15]

So it was that the church school system all but capitulated to government-run education. The only church to respond to the challenge with lasting broad effect was the Catholic Church:

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[12]Ibid., p. 92.　　　　　　　　　　[13]Ibid.

[14]See pp. 20-21 and 25 below.　　[15]Roberts, p. 14.

In determined response to the challenge, Catholicism . . . performed an outstanding work. In the brief span from 1866 to 1871 the number of Catholic schools and of pupils trebled in South Australia. Nationally, the Catholic episcopate saw itself as involved in a vital struggle with the secular State school system.[16]

## Secularism Takes Charge

The Protestant churches in general embarked on a divergent course:

In the two decades beginning with 1870, Protestantism doubled in size and membership, church buildings, Sunday-school pupils, and clergy. The emphasis falls on revivalist-type preaching, on so-called personal religion in a committed life, on living piety and, most conspicuously, on strong support for the Sunday-school movement.[17]

This growth had been to a great extent dependent upon the economic expansion and prosperity of the times; thus the end of ecclesiastical growth coincided with the economic depression experienced by all colonies at the end of the 1880s.[18] The churches changed direction and attempted to remedy the resultant social ills. Traditionally the most vital and revival-conscious strain in the Australian religious scene, even Methodism went along with the trend: "'The Methodism of our fathers,' the Rev. E.J. Rodd announced from the Presidential seat in 1898, would not do: there was 'need to promote a social environment favourable to the birth of the spiritual life and its after growth.'"[19]

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[16]Schild, p. 74.

[17]Ibid.

[18]Bollen, p. 41.

[19]Ibid., p. 45.

The sequel to this was decisive for the character
of Australian society:

> It began to appear, however, that the <u>State</u> and
> its institutions were about to undertake the re-
> ordering of society. . . . It was the time when,
> as T. Sutter wrote: "Secularism, by an unseemly
> paradox, came to occupy the place of an estab-
> lished, a favoured religion, in a position to
> define the premises of public discussion, and so
> disguise its own arbitrary origins."[20]

This leads Schild to submit:

> Nor was the achievement of the churches such as to
> forestall the serious question whether this conti-
> nent may not have produced 'the first genuine post-
> Christian, secularized society.' . . .
> Ronald Conway maintains: "The real Western para-
> dise of pluralism has been Australia . . . ," and:
> "There is no evidence that religious faith has
> ever been deeply, and practically professed by
> more than a small minority of Australians." . . .
> And in the opening volume of "A History of Austra-
> lia," Manning Clark can write that in association
> with some of the Protestants the sons of the Enligh-
> tenment "had secularized the state, and had created
> a society unique in the history of mankind, a
> society of men holding no firm beliefs on the exis-
> tence of God or survival after death."[21]

How was it possible that the churches permitted this
eventuality?  Several causes may be cited.  Most of the first
settlers were convicts, and the remainder as a whole did not
come for religious reasons.[22]  The unfriendly Australian ter-
rain, with its isolating enormous expanses dominated by the
desert interior, did not encourage home mission activity.[23] Missionaries
sent from Britain were those who had remained after the best had gone
to more exotic lands, and few of Australia's early clergy felt a
special call to colonial service.[24]  This point, however,

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[20]Schild, p. 75.   [21]Ibid., p. 76.   [22]Bollen, p. 17.

[23]Schild, p. 74.   [24]Bollen, p. 7.

highlights the root problem:

> It should also be remembered that the great time
> for classic revivals in England and America was
> past by a century now, and that the Christian
> forces at work in Australia were themselves the
> fruit of the evangelical awakening in those lands.
> They were forces already ecclesiastically harnes-
> sed if not subdued, content to work within the
> given, even the State-supported structures of the
> new colonies. . . . Australian churches and
> groups were never called upon to be anything but
> distinctly conservative replicas of whatever they
> represented in Europe or America, standard reflec-
> tions of what was tried and developed elsewhere,
> not indigenous to this continent.[25]

## Religion in South Australian Public Schools, 1875-1972

### A Nonconformist Secularism

The South Australian Education Act of 1875 laid

the ground rules for government-run education in that co-

lony. Basically, all instruction would have to conform

to an acceptable definition of "secular." Local histori-

an Brian Condon describes this original legislation as a

"nonconformist act."[26] In colonial South Australia, the

English tussle between established church upholders and

dissenters continued, with the balance now tilted decidedly

in favor of nonconformism due to the relative strength of

dissenters. Manning Clark writes, "The greater number of

dissenters, the numerical weakness of the Anglicans and

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[25]Schild, p. 75.

[26]Brian Condon, "Dissent in Paradise: Religion
and Education 1840-1940: An Historical Outline," in P.C.
Almond and P.G. Woolcock (eds.), Dissent in Paradise:
Religious Education Controversies in South Australia, 2d
ed. (Magill, South Australia: Murray Park College of
Advanced Education, 1978), p. 6.

the Catholics, allowed religious education to be sacri-
ficed on the altar of secular education."[27]   The noncon-
formist ideal of a complete separation of church and state
had given rise to the withdrawal of government funding
for church schools in 1851, and the same ideal produced
the requirement that all instruction in government schools
be "secular."   A century later, this specification would
be quoted by humanist objectors to compulsory religious
education in South Australia's public schools as the pri-
mary ground of their grievance.   The original fear of a
particular Christian denomination becoming identified with
the state would be paralleled in their case by a fear of
all religious indoctrination.

## Christian Frustrations

From 1880 discontented Anglicans were in the fore-
front of a determined drive to have systematic religious
instruction introduced into the public schools, but the
campaign was to meet with no lasting success until 1940.
The chief single blockage (among many blockages) was the
inability of the denominations to achieve unity of opinion
and to carry their members when a referendum was called
in 1896 to decide the issue.   The referendum contained two
propositions relevant to this study.   The first was for
"the continuance of the present system of education in
state schools," the second, for the introduction of "Scrip-
tural instruction" in state schools during school hours.[28]

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[27]Clark, p. 90.                    [28]Condon, p. 8.

The electors endorsed the first proposition by a majority
of three to one and rejected the second by two to one.
"Kingston [the South Australian Premier] had thus secu-
larized the relations of government and religion in one
public stroke," writes Condon.[29]

## Unexpected Success

It came as something of a surprise when suddenly,
in 1940, a Bill was passed allowing right of entry to pub-
lic schools for ministers or their nominees for half an
hour a week to give religious instruction to children of
their denominations, or by agreement among heads of churches,
in pan-denominational groups. How can this development be
accounted for? Alan Black suggests: "The moral fervour
engendered by the second world war probably helped to secure
the successful passage of the measure."[30] Hedley Beare
agrees: "This wave of public reaction to the war . . . pro-
duced a new emphasis on religious instruction, a new impera-
tive that the children forming the rising generation should
be given a grounding in religion and moral values."[31]

Of special note also was the fact that, for the
first time, no major Christian denomination was opposed

[29]Ibid., p. 9.

[30]Alan W. Black, Religious Studies in Australian
Public Schools:  An Overview and Analysis (Hawthorn, Vic-
toria:  Australian Council for Educational Research, 1975),
p. 2.

[31]Hedley Beare, "Religious Education in the State
School Setting," Journal of Christian Education, o.s. 15
(Dec. 1972):  148-49.

to religious instruction in public schools. This unprecedented consensus rested in part on the Bill's very limited nature; it eliminated Bible-reading by government teachers during school hours and general religious instruction as well, thus representing the lowest common denominator between the churches.[32]

## Subsequent Problems

Two fundamental problems soon appeared. For the churches, a further burden was placed on their clergy with religious instruction being added to the normal parish duties; for the state and the churches, public schools were opened to people untrained as teachers, who often had to cope with up to eighty pupils crammed into a single small classroom. Pressure increased with the post-war boom in school enrollments, especially in high schools. Despite various endeavors to alleviate a steadily worsening situation, "the system staggered on in virtually its original form until the Methodist Church delivered a virtual _coup de grace_ to the scheme by its 1968 withdrawal."[33]

The decision of the Methodist Conference to cease special religious instruction at the start of 1969 had far-reaching consequences, for about one fifth of South Australians then claimed to be Methodists.[34] During 1969 the Baptist Union, the Churches of Christ, the Congrega-

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[32]Condon, p. 34.          [33]Ibid., p. 39.

[34]Peter Wellock, "The Search for Educational Respectability——Religious Education in Australian Government Schools in the Twentieth Century," _Journal of Christian Education_, n.s. 58 (June 1977): 36.

tional Union, and the Presbyterian Church followed suit.

This left Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and Lutherans still

exercising their right of entry but now only about half

the school children in South Australia continued to be

involved.[35]  Schools were faced with the difficult ques-

tion of what to do with the many students not taking

part.

<div align="center">Enter Religious Education</div>

In October 1971, the Methodist Conference again

took the initiative when it passed this resolution:

> That we request the South Australian Education
> Department to introduce a course on religion into
> school curricula, and to make further provision
> for the training of teachers equipped to teach
> such a course.[36]

Thereupon the Minister of Education recommended a com-

mittee of enquiry.  On August 4, 1972, the leaders of the

major churches accepted the Minister's invitation to

appear on this committee.

The constituency of the Committee was as follows:

Committee of Heads of Churches (5), South Australian In-

stitute of Teachers (4), South Australian Association of

State School Organisations Inc. (1), and Teachers  Col-

leges (1).  Churches represented were Roman Catholic,

Anglican, Lutheran, Baptist, and Methodist.[37]  Mr. J.R.

Steinle, Deputy Director of Education, was appointed

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[35]Ibid., p. 37.          [36]Ibid.

[37]Unlike the situation in America, there is only one
group of any significance representing each major Chris-
tian denomination in South Australia.  Throughout the
present study, the reference is to these singular bodies.

Chairman. The terms of reference for the Committee were:

(1) the teaching of religion in Government schools;
(2) the possibility of a course in religion replacing the present form of religious instruction;
(3) the use of clergymen, teachers and lay representatives in the teaching of any course;
(4) the possibility of certain material being provided centrally on videotape and distributed to schools;
(5) proposed amendments to the Education Act.[38]

The Committee for Religious Education in State Schools first met, October 19, 1972.

### Religion in Public Schools in the Other Australian States, 1872-1969

#### Christian Infiltration

Legislation similar to the 1875 South Australian Education Act was enacted in each of the other five Australian colonial parliaments in the period from 1872 through 1893. All were designed to establish "free, compulsory, and secular" education in the public schools; "however . . . each of these terms was, either at the outset or in due course, interpreted in a qualified rather than an absolute way."[39] Thus the Acts of New South Wales and Western Australia both stipulated that "secular" education should "include general religious teaching as distinguished from dogmatic or polemical

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[38]Report of the Committee on Religious Education in Public Schools to the Minister of Education in South Australia (Steinle Report), (Adelaide, South Australia: Government Printer, 1973), p. 7.

[39]Black, p. 1.

theology."[40] In these two colonies special religious instruction through denominational right of entry was also provided for, forming a two-tiered approach.[41] The other four colonies left "secular" undefined, but while Tasmania permitted right of entry, South Australia, Queensland, and Victoria forbad the use of public school buildings for teaching of religion during school hours.[42] When a referendum in 1910 led to the introduction of right of entry into Queensland public schools, South Australia and Victoria were left as the most "secular" of states.[43] The campaign in South Australia to bring religious teaching inside school hours was rewarded by the above-mentioned 1940 right of entry Act. Similar efforts in Victoria finally bore fruit in 1950.[44] Thus, by 1950, all six Australian states permitted right of entry for special religious instruction and several provided for general religious instruction as well.

## Nationwide Reappraisal

During the 1960s, it was being recognized from coast to coast that the existing systems were falling

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[40]New South Wales, Public Instruction Act, 1880, Section 7; and Western Australia, Elementary Education Act, 1871, Amendment Act, 1893, Section 20; quoted in Black, p. 1.

[41]Wellock, p. 44.          [42]Black, p. 1.

[43]Ibid., p. 2.          [44]Wellock, p. 32.

ever further behind the demands of the public schools.
Various surveys in the individual states indicated the
decline.[45] An Australia-wide study in the early 1960s
concluded that there were "frequently serious problems
such as large classes, irregularity of attendance by
instructors, student apathy or resentment, and discip-
linary difficulties."[46] The situation continued to
depreciate. In Victoria the portion of eligible high
school students receiving religious instruction dropped
from 76.8 percent in 1965 to 22.6 percent in 1973.[47]
By 1975 only fourteen percent of Western Australian ele-
mentary public school children were receiving special
religious instruction, and only about half the elemen-
tary public schools were offering any general religious
instruction.[48]

In every state it seemed to many that things
could not be allowed to go on unchanged. Usually at
the instigation of a majority of the major churches,
sometimes consequent upon state government reports on
school education generally, official committees of en-
quiry were established in all the states beginning with
Tasmania in 1969.

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[45]Ibid., pp. 32, 34, 39, 41, 44.

[46]Black, p. 3.    [47]Ibid.    [48]Wellock, p. 44.

CHAPTER III

REVISION OF RELIGION TEACHING IN AUSTRALIAN
PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 1969-1981

Controversy over Religious Education for South
Australian Public Schools, 1972-1981

The Conservative Christian Request, 1972

Following the establishment of the Steinle Com-
mittee, the South Australian Heads of Churches Committee
submitted a statement agreed on at its meeting of August
4, 1972.[1] On the Heads of Churches Committee were lea-
ders of Anglicans, Methodists, Roman Catholics, Lutherans,
Presbyterians, Greek Orthodox, Churches of Christ, Bap-
tists, Congregationals, and Salvation Army. The state-
ment was remarkably representative of historic Christi-
anity, considering the doctrinal and theological diversity
among these groups.

The pattern for this statement was a 1970 submis-
sion by the churches in Tasmania to the committee of
enquiry (the "Overton Committee") in that state. The
Tasmanian churches had been unable to cooperate fully on
an agreed syllabus for Christian instruction in the pub-
lic schools, but in 1970 "a breakthrough came when the

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[1]The "Steinle Committee" is the term which will be
used to denote the South Australian Committee for Reli-
gious Education in State Schools, which met under the
chairmanship of Mr. J.R. Steinle.

major denominations appreciated that the range of their agreement, and the manifestation of that degree of unity, were of far greater significance than the upholding of the differences."[2] The precedent of a united approach had been set when the South Australian churches came to consider their position.

The Tasmanian churches' submission had consisted mainly of an orthodox creedal statement called "The Assertions of the Christian Faith," which itself had come from the religious education scene in England.[3] A short preamble expressed what the churches thought should be the aims of "religious education" in government schools and explained that the Assertions had been adopted "in order that these aims may be more clearly understood."[4] The actual "aims" clearly foresaw a general religious instruction type of religious education:

    (1) to explore explicitly the place and signifi-
        cance of religion in human life;
    (2) to make a distinctively Christian contribution
        to each pupil's search for a faith by which
        to live;
    (3) to avoid the extremes of both proselytism and
        indifferentism in showing a united approach to
        Christian education in Government schools in
        which an agreed syllabus will be taught in a
        class by accredited teachers within the gene-
        ral curriculum.[4]

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[2]Report of the Committee on Religious Education in Public Schools to the Minister of Education in Tasmania (Overton Report), (Hobart, Tasmania: Government Printer, 1971), p. 2.

[3]See appendix A to this study for a reproduction of the Assertions.

[4]Overton Report, p. 17.

While almost duplicating the three "aims," the
South Australian statement rather envisaged a world
religions type of approach.  In aim three "Christian
education" had become "religious education."  The expan-
ded preamble, now also a list of proposals, stated that
"while any such syllabus should deal predominantly with
the Christian Faith, reference should be made to the
history and principles of other religions"; furthermore,
"the responsibility of Christian education rests with
the Churches, who appreciate the co-operation and use
of facilities of the Education Department in presenting
the mainstream of Christian tradition in this country."[5]
The Steinle Committee's terms of reference mentioned no
particular approach, but the terms of reference for the
Overton Committee had specified:

> The aim of the programme should be to give the
> knowledge essential to an understanding of our
> Christian heritage, of other great religions
> and of the relationship between religion and
> the significant experiences of life.[6]

As official documents go, the South Australian
statement bore the marks of adaptation.  The three "aims,"
wholly transposed but for one word, did not parallel the
development in the proposals.  Nonetheless with the
Tasmanian aims for Christian education virtually intact,

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[5]South Australian Heads of Churches Committee,
"Statement Regarding Religious Education in State Schools
Agreed upon by the Heads of Churches on 4 August 1972"
(unpublished statement, August 1972), p. 2.

[6]Overton Report, p. 1.

and the proposal that the religious education syllabus "where it deals with the Christian Faith, must be consistent with the Assertions," it was abundantly clear what the South Australian Heads of Churches Committee had in mind--a pluralist course resoundingly centered in orthodox Christianity; that scant attention was to be given to religions outside the Judaeo-Christian tradition was inferred in the seemingly unenthusiastic concession that "reference should be made to the history and principles of other religions."[7]

In view of a later point of controversy, the wording in the first "aim" is important: "to explore explicitly the place and significance of religion in human life." The term "explicitly" was not defined, but undoubtedly it meant what it would signify in the future debate over whether religious education should be confined to an objective study of the history, doctrines, and practices of the religions (the "explicit" approach), or whether it should lead students to explore the religions existentially and comparatively while being encouraged to develop a philosophy of life (the "implicit" approach). The Heads of Churches Committee wanted the explicit approach alone.

The Official Diplomatic Response, 1973

Having quickly decided that the existing scheme of special religious instruction in the public schools should be superseded, the Steinle Committee turned its

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[7]South Australian Heads of Churches Committee, p. 2.

attention to the Heads of Churches Committee request that a single course be established, based upon The Assertions of the Christian Faith. It agreed that "this would result in an inflexible, prescriptive course, lacking in the flexibility available to teachers of all other subjects" and suggested that "instead of one course several courses should be provided which would allow a choice between fairly prescriptive courses and those based on the needs and interests of children"; it further suggested that "there was no reason to suppose that any number of courses could not all be consistent with 'The Assertions of the Christian Faith'."[8]

The Heads of Churches Committee accepted this proposal "in principle." To its eventual dismay, however, only one course would ever be produced, and this course, in the Committee's opinion, would not represent Christianity according to the Assertions.

A comparison of the respective "aims" in the Heads of Churches Committee statement and in the Steinle Report reveals that in general import the two sets of aims do not significantly differ.[9] The Heads of Churches Committee would have been pleased when the broad aim was determined: "to enable children and young people to have a proper understanding of what is meant by a religious

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[8]_Steinle Report_, p. 8.

[9]See appendix B to this study for reproductions of the Heads of Churches Committee "aims" and the Steinle Committee "aims."

approach to life, and for most people in this country, the centre of this understanding will be the Christian approach . . . ." Among the subsequent itemizing of eight individual aims, numbers four and five establish the centrality of Christianity: "To enable students to appreciate the Judaeo-Christian heritage which played such a powerful role in their culture," and, "To inform students about the life and teachings of Christ and the growth of the Church to modern times." Other religions, by contrast, receive only this mention in aim seven: "To help provide students with an understanding of beliefs other than Christianity, by which people live." The Heads of Churches Committee would contend that this balance, or rather, warrantable imbalance, had not been adhered to in the eventual syllabus and curriculum development.

In two of the aims there exists a basis for the existential and integrated approaches that would be taken. Aims two and three state: "To assist students to develop a deeper understanding of themselves and others," and, "To assist students to develop good relations with other people and a concern for the world in which they live." This describes what was to become the entire thrust at lower elementary levels. Such purely sociological material could readily be made the foundation for an existential framework and be integrated with a course like social studies.

Further on in its report, the Steinle Committee

explicitly recommended integration:   "There will be oppor-
tunities for religious education to be integrated into
the various general studies courses already operating in
the school.   We believe that the opportunity should be
accepted to bring unity to the curriculum."[10]   Some incon-
sistency is apparent when this is contrasted with the
following:

> Because the place of religion in State schools has
> been, and remains for some, a matter of contention,
> the school must respect the right of those who do
> not wish to study this aspect of human experience.
> These rights are protected by the provision in the
> Education Act which allows for exemption from
> religious education on conscientious grounds.[11]

Was right of withdrawal in practice consistent with inte-
gration?

Though purporting to present some justification
for the inclusion of religious education in the general
education curriculum, appendix C to the Steinle Report
comes across very much like an exploration into the philo-
sophy of religious education.  The bulk of it comprises a
lengthy quotation from a booklet put out in 1971 by the
English Schools Council.  This statement stressing a
pluralist approach is quoted from the Religions and
Cultures Panel of the Birmingham Community Relations
Committee:

> It should be part of general education today to
> become aware of the diverse forms both of human
> culture and of religious faith.  In the field of
> religious education, this means that children

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[10]Steinle Report, p. 20.          [11]Ibid., p. 15.

should not be ignorant (as too often they have been in the past) of the main features of the major world religions; and that in Birmingham, more specifically, Christian children should know something about the Hindu, Islamic, Judaic, and Sikh faiths which are part of our pluralistic scene, just as children of these various faiths should know something both of Christianity as the majority faith of the country, and of the other minority faiths.[12]

Considerable space is also given to discussing the "explicit" and "implicit" in religious education, and the Steinle Committee argues:

Some educational theorists see religious education mainly in terms of the first--the study of religion as an historical, social and psychological phenomenon, with the study of various forms of religious expression. Others see religious education mainly as promoting and assisting the personal quest for meaning and purpose. It is our view that, all the way through the school years, in ways suited to the understanding of the children, religious education must be concerned with both of these fields, and that the one reinforces and interprets the other.[13]

After this, much discussion was to take place about how religious education should handle Christianity in relation to a pluralist approach, and whether the type of implicit approach that had developed was suitable for public school education. Definite provision for pluralist, implicit (existential), and integrated approaches was made in the Steinle Report. On the other hand the impression was also given that Christianity--traditional Christianity--should preponderate over against other belief systems and take central position. Seen as a unit, the Report was wholly ambiguous. In it were the seeds

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[12]Ibid., appendix C, p. 9.    [13]Ibid., appendix C, p. 11.

of whichever opposing sort of growth in religious
education might subsequently be desired.

### Humanist Revolt and Christian Unrest, 1974-1975

The Christians were not the first to react. In
fact their thunder was almost completely stolen by a
vocal humanist minority group called the Keep Our State
Schools Secular Committee ("KOSSS"). Starting in August
1974, a concerted campaign began by condemning the intro-
duction of religious teaching into the general curriculum
of South Australia's "intentionally secular" public
schools. Then the focus shifted to getting the alleged
religious bias of the program reduced and humanist and
other non-supernatural philosophies accredited with alter-
native status. The campaign lasted the best part of a
full year and drew to its assistance some of the leading
intellectuals in South Australia. As recommended by the
Steinle Committee, a Religious Education Project Team
had been established early in 1974, primarily to develop
a philosophy of religious education and prepare a syllabus
and curriculum materials. While this group, consisting
of religious education specialists and public school
teachers, was preparing and implementing trial courses,
KOSSS launched its attack. Thus a large portion of the
Project Team's early activity was taken up in defending
itself against humanists and trying to correct resultant

misapprehensions among the public.[14]

To some degree this rather superficial debate was
caused by the incompleteness and inconsistency of the
Steinle Report.  Historian Basil Moore views the total
situation this way:

> Given 100 years of bitter wrangling over the
> place of religion in the state schools; given
> also that in all those 100 years hardly anyone
> thought that religion was anything other than
> Christianity, and Christianity as the sole
> foundation of moral behaviour, it is hard to
> believe that a decision was taken to introduce
> "Religion" into the state school as a compulsory
> subject without making it absolutely plain what
> was being introduced and justifying its intro-
> duction as a discipline of study.  Despite this
> need for precision in the context of the history
> of religion in the state school we were presented
> with a vague generalization about man's universal
> "religious dimension".  Neither the 1972 Act nor
> the subsequent Steinle Report gave South Austra-
> lians the opportunity to debate anything other
> than their preconceptions or biases.[15]

Moore's criticism of the Steinle Report may be a
little harsh.  The only precedent in Australia in 1973 was
the Overton Report, produced two years earlier in Tasmania.
The latter contained a mere twenty pages and was shallow
by comparison with the fifty-five-page South Australian
Report.  The next religious education report, the Victorian
"Russell Report," showed that the lesson had been well

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[14]This particular controversy is fully documented in
P.C. Almond and P.G. Woolcock (eds.), Dissent in Paradise:
Religious Education Controversies in South Australia,
2d ed. (Magill, South Australia:  Murray Park College of
Advanced Education, 1978), pp. 42-333.

[15]Basil Moore and Sandra Mitchell, "Whatever Happened
to the R in R.E.?:  Religious Education in South Australia
1975-1978," in Almond and Woolcock, p. 337.

learned by its total of 343 pages and a comprehensive,
penetrating analysis of a religious education philosophy
for Victorian public schools. If there had been, as must
be suspected, an amount of disunity within the Steinle
Committee, this too would not have tended towards consis-
tency and precision.

The 1972 Act to which Moore refers replaced the
previous Act covering right of entry. The portion dealing
with religious education simply said:

(1) Regular provision shall be made for religious
education at a Government school under such
conditions as may be prescribed at times
during which the school is open for instruction.
(2) The regulations shall include provisions for
exemption from religious education on
conscientious grounds.[16]

Clause one was immediately portrayed by radical
humanists as a direct contradiction of the original 1875
Act, which specified that all instruction in public schools
be "secular." However, the historical fallacy of this
argument has been clarified in chapter 2 of this study;
Christian nonconformist, rather than humanist, pressure
had given rise to the original specification.

As to clause two, it is somewhat ironic that huma-
nists would raise no such uproar when it became clear
that integration was normative for religious education at
elementary level.[17] Some church people, by contrast,

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[16]*Steinle Report*, p. 13.

[17]In an interview with the present Project Team Co-
ordinator, Mr. Rod Kuchel, Adelaide, South Australia, on
Feb. 11, 1982, it was ascertained that all the two
hundred-odd elementary schools teaching religious education
in 1981 used the integration method in some form.

have been disturbed that clause two is made impossible of
fulfillment when religious education is intermixed with
other subject areas. The humanists' silence would indi-
cate their satisfaction that the course has been reduced
to an acceptable innocuity as regards its overtly reli-
gious content.

KOSSS put tremendous pressure on the Religious
Education Project Team during 1974 and 1975. That its
activity was an important reason why the Christian con-
tent of courses did become substantially diluted after
the trial period, is attested by the first Project Team
Co-ordinator, Alan Ninnes, in an appraisal written just
before his resignation in 1979:

> It [one of the first trial courses] became the
> focus of a considerable amount of criticism,
> particularly from the Keep Our State Schools
> Secular group who were a persistent, well orga-
> nised and vocal lobby. . . . It became obvious
> that this approach could not be pursued as it
> was not publicly acceptable. While only a small
> minority were making these claims, they had the
> power to create misunderstandings and distrust
> in the community and in schools about the
> materials.[18]

Rumblings could also have been heard quite early
within some South Australian Christian circles. An
August 1974 internal review of Project Team material by
the faculty of Lutheran Teachers College contained this
reaction, among others:

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[18]Alan Ninnes, "The Aims of the Steinle Report and
Religious Education 1979" (unpublished statement, 1979),
p. 1.

The resource material, while it is intended to be situational and experiential, is drawn heavily from situations, experiences and cultures "foreign" to the Australian student--this could easily cloud rather than clarify meaning. While Western culture is the context of the intended student, there is an interesting scarcity of material that arises from the Christian religion, and that which does appear is presented in a way that violates the integrity of Christianity . . . . Sketches of religious belief are presented in such a way that their exclusiveness is modified--they are presented as "reasonable", perhaps with the thought that this will be palatable and acceptable to the student.[19]

Here is an early criticism of the pluralist approach employed so as to displace Christianity from its accustomed dominance among religions in Australia, meanwhile robbing the religions, Christianity in particular, of their claims to uniqueness.

Taken to its logical conclusion, Christian criticism of a pluralist approach in religious education will demand a form of Christian instruction. While the professors at Lutheran Teachers College did not reach this conclusion, some elements at parish level--again mainly Lutheran--did and were making their feelings known to the Project Team in often impassioned terms. Nonetheless the fight for solely Christian teaching was never for the winning, given the provision for a pluralist approach in both the Heads of Churches Committee statement and the Steinle

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[19]Faculty of Lutheran Teachers College, South Australia, "Some Observations on, and Reactions to, Religious Education Materials Produced by the South Australian Project Committee" (unpublished statement, Aug. 30, 1974), pp. 1-2.

Report--not to mention KOSSS. Further, when pluralism in religious education was joined by existentialism and integration, all hope was utterly lost.

## A Shifting Curriculum Philosophy, 1974-1975

A shifting philosophy on the part of the Religious Education Project Team may be traced by examining material from the first two numbers of the Religious Education Bulletin, a circular put out regularly by the Team to keep interested parties informed of its thinking and progress.

Bulletin, number one, produced in November 1974, reflects overall the "Christian," rather than the "pluralist," emphasis--both represented in the Steinle Report. The cultural argument for Christianity is mentioned thus: "Much of our tradition and culture depends on an understanding of our Judaeo-Christian heritage and an educative perspective on this heritage can be achieved by an understanding of other heritages."[20] The importance of The Assertions of the Christian Faith is recognized: "The Assertions are listed in Appendix A of the Report as a statement of what the Churches in South Australia believe are the main teachings of Christianity. They are there so that traditional Christianity is not mis-represented by

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[20]South Australian Religious Education Project Team, Religious Education Bulletin, number 1 (Adelaide, South Australia: Government Printer, Nov. 1974), p. 3.

those who do not personally subscribe to them."[21]  Although some Christian critics would not have agreed at this time that these statements had been faithfully reflected in the material produced, as simple statements of policy they do incline definitely towards the Christian emphasis--much as the Heads of Churches Committee statement had depicted it two years earlier.

The second Bulletin, which appeared in February 1975, contains an almost overwhelming stress on the pluralist approach to religious education coupled with an interesting appeal for universal tolerance, as reflected, for example, in this statement:

> An understanding of other religions will lead to social and international tolerance.  This becomes more important as our society becomes multicultural and our world becomes more "the global village" to use McLuhan's phrase.  We do live in a pluralistic society.[22]

"A greater tolerance of the beliefs of others" has now become a desired outcome of the courses, and here those beliefs are defined as "Christian, non-Christian, and non-religious."[23]  The addition of non-religious beliefs to the former bipartite classification tells of the successful humanist campaign for equal recognition to be given to such non-supernatural world views as its own.

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[21]Ibid., p. 6.

[22]South Australian Religious Education Project Team, Religious Education Bulletin, number 2 (Adelaide, South Australia:  Government Printer, Feb. 1975), p.3.

[23]Ibid., p. 10.

No one cause was absolutely responsible for this incipient evolution in the Project Team's outlook. There was the influence of KOSSS and other humanists. Naturally the Team was doing a lot of reading, and one particular book exerted probably the greatest influence of any. Here it is enthusiastically recommended in the Nov. 1974 <u>Religious Education Bulletin</u>:

> For those interested in the subject of Religious Education in State Schools, there are many books available . . . . One recently published, that Dr. Graeme Speedy of Sturt College says is "the best book on Religious Education for a decade" is "What Can I Do In R.E.?" by Michael Grimmitt.[24]

Grimmitt's book was to figure in the coming conflict between Project Team and Christians and will receive attention below.

Other causes were cited by Alan Ninnes in 1979: "A major factor in changing the approach, therefore, was the response of the teachers"; "teachers thought that this [original] approach was incompatible with their classroom aims."[25] This reflects the modern educational philosophy which swept through South Australian schools during the first half of the 1970s, due largely to the kinds of views inculcated by the then Director-General of Education in South Australia, Mr. Albert W. Jones.[26] In a paper on the purposes of schools, Jones listed the following purpose first among eight:

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[24]Project Team, <u>R. E. Bulletin</u>, number 1, p. 2.

[25]Ninnes, p. 1.

[26]Colin Thiele, in a Foreword to Albert W. Jones, <u>Ebb and Flow</u> (Adelaide, South Australia: Government Printer, 1977), pp. 1-2.

> Schools should assist children to understand them-
> selves, others, their own culture, and other
> cultures . . . . As well as assisting children
> to understand themselves . . . schools need to
> make a conscious effort if understanding and tole-
> rance are to be developed in children so that they
> may find happiness in a pluralistic society and in
> the pluralistic world in which they have to live.[27]

Ninnes claims one more causative factor:

> Further evidence for the need to change the
> approach came from a greater awareness of what
> students know about religion and about their
> attitudes to religion. In general, it was found
> that there was extreme ignorance in the commu-
> nity and with students about the broader issues
> of religion . . . . Experiences in schools not
> only indicate an ignorance, they also indicate a
> somewhat negative attitude to thinking about reli-
> gion and, in particular, about the Christian
> religion.[28]

### Curriculum Writers versus Christians, 1975-1976

Early in October 1975, the first draft of a reli-

gious education syllabus for South Australian public

schools was sent to church leaders for their individual

comment. This resulted in the first written exchange be-

tween the President of the Lutheran Church--South

Australian District, the Reverend Clem I. Koch, and the

Project Team, then led by Alan Ninnes. From that time

until the present the Lutheran President and some of his

members, especially in several country areas of South Aus-

tralia with a concentrated Lutheran population, have been

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[27]Albert W. Jones, Ebb and Flow (Adelaide, South
Australia: Government Printer, 1977), p. 37.

[28]Ninnes, p. 1.

a constant source of frustration for the Project Team.
The Lutherans have stood virtually alone; for while the
Heads of Churches Committee compositely has begun to com-
plain, the other denominations individually--excepting
to some extent the Anglicans--have demonstrated quiescence
at the official level.

Towards the beginning of this first Lutheran-
Project Team exchange, an official pronouncement came from
the Heads of Churches Committee and was printed in the
major local newspaper, the Advertiser, October 25, 1975.
At this stage the Committee merely wished to reaffirm its
support of "the general principles contained in the Steinle
Report." Briefly, these were stated as follows: (1) reli-
gious education should be entirely under the control of
the state; (2) it should not be seen as a promotion of
Christianity, which is the churches' responsibility; (3) it
should produce a deeper understanding of "the religions
that belong to the culture of Australia and her neighbours";
(4) "it may bring to the attention of children religious
ideas which stem from religions other than Christianity."[29]
The latter stress, coming just after the humanist campaign,
was meant to assuage any suspicion that the churches were
out to proselytize through the public school system. The
tone of the pronouncement was totally benign, but future

[29]The statement is reproduced in P.C. Almond and P.G.
Woolcock (eds.), Dissent in Paradise: R.E. Controversies
in South Australia, 2d. ed. (Magill, South Australia:
Murray Park College of Advanced Education, 1978), p. 332.

pronouncements, in no small way due to Pastor Koch's dis-
quiet, would register alarm.

The Lutheran leader's response of October 29, 1975,
criticized the syllabus to its very roots.  He demonstra-
ted a basic distrust of the existential method associated
with supposedly neutral religious education in the public
school:

> Can you teach about varying religious beliefs or
> a lack of them in the "affective area" as outlined
> without entering into value judgments?   . . .
> It seems to us to be outside of the province of
> the Education Department to determine such values.
> This surely is the province of the home and not
> the school.  . . .  We believe that it is naive
> to expect such neutrality when dealing with affec-
> tive (feeling) aims.  We believe a degree of neu-
> trality is possible in the cognitive area.[30]

Pastor Koch also alleged a displacement of Christi-
anity:

> Christianity is certainly not dealt with to the ex-
> tent that it should be because of its role in the
> formation of western society.  The original aim
> for religious education as outlined in the "Steinle
> Report" recognized the significance of Christianity
> and certainly implied that Christianity would be
> dealt with in some detail, while other religions
> would be given their due in terms of background
> and in relation to their role in Australian society.[31]

Several other criticisms were leveled, but those quoted here
were the ones which would be emphasized and developed by
the churches as time passed.

The Project Team Co-ordinator reacted quickly.  He

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[30]Clem I. Koch (President, Lutheran Church of
Australia--South Australian District), in unpublished cor-
respondence to Alan Ninnes, Oct. 29, 1975, pp. 1-2.

[31]Ibid., pp. 3-4.

dealt with the two main issues, existentialism and the place of Christianity. Regarding the second came this rejoinder:

> While it is true that this syllabus does not seem to give the emphasis to Christianity that we see in the Steinle Report where it is singled out for special mention, neither do we see this special place for Christianity in the statement from the Heads of Churches printed recently in the Advertiser and presented at the last meeting of the Standing Committee. I think both represent a growth in understanding of what is possible and publicly acceptable for Religious Education in State schools.[32]

This last judgment would be proved extremely doubtful by later Heads of Churches Committee declarations.

The other main issue, that of existentialism, was taken up at greater length. Ninnes correctly pointed out that aims two and three of the Steinle Report "have a large component in the affective domain "; other main points were, that similar "affective" areas were already part of related school subjects, and, that "there is a distinct difference between value judgments and value clarification procedures."[33] Undoubtedly there is a difference between a course that merely sets out a range of material from which the student may distil some values for himself and one which prescribes the student's values for him, but for the Lutherans, as will be seen, the very structure of the

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[32] Alan Ninnes (first Co-ordinator of the South Australian Religious Education Project Team), in unpublished correspondence to Clem I. Koch, Nov. 4, 1975, p. 2.

[33] Ibid., p. 1.

religious education syllabus was value-prescriptive.

The existentialism debate was extended by Ninnes' inclusion of a photocopied six-page section from Michael Grimmitt's book, What Can I Do in R.E.? concerning "Depth Themes." Pages fifty-four through fifty-nine in Grimmitt begin with a reference to the work of Ronald Goldman. Goldman's "Life Themes" were similar to Grimmitt's Depth Themes, but were for use in a Christian instruction type of religious education. Grimmitt criticizes this usage, claiming that it is impossible for the modern child to bridge the gap between everyday experiences (Life Themes) and "distinctly 'religious' subject matter, especially traditional Christian teaching "; Depth Themes, by contrast,

> are not designed to lead the child towards a particular religious position or to provide him with knowledge of traditional religious ideas or teaching. Rather they are designed to provide him with an opportunity to practise a particular skill--that of reflecting at depth on his own experiences.[34]

The child is developing insight into himself and his feelings and into other people and their feelings and thus into what constitutes a distinctly human relationship between self and others.[35] So far the process is purely secular and sociological, but Grimmitt continues:

> If children are learning to think at depth, seeing new dimensions in their experiences and forging out for themselves both meaning and purpose in what they encounter and what they do, then the

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[34]Michael Grimmitt, What Can I Do in R.E.? (Great Wakening: Mayhew-McCrimmon, 1973), p. 55.

[35]Ibid., p. 57.

activity in which they are engaged is also 'theological'. Not only is it equipping them with insight and understanding which they can eventually bring to bear on traditional religious concepts, but it is actually involving them in the crucial task of expressing 'religious' ideas in terms which are meaningful and relevant to 20th century man.[36]

The foregoing strongly suggests that Grimmitt has based his advocacy of Depth Themes on an acceptance of modernistic theology and rejection of traditional theology. This is quite patent in an earlier chapter, where twentieth century "theological change" is depicted as providing one of the impeti for change in religious teaching in the school. Names such as Bultmann, Tillich, Robinson, and Altizer appear, and their "insights" are accepted for religious education: "Such radical changes in the way in which the Christian faith is expressed and interpreted must inevitably find their way into the classroom."[37]

Modern theology has taken as its predominant concern the problem of communicating religious concepts in a way which has meaning for modern man. In this sense modern theology should have greater meaning for modern man than has, for example, New Testament, Patristic, Medieval or post-Reformation theology. . . . If we can overcome the initial barrier of its unfamiliarity (and it is only unfamiliar because we are only familiar with pre-20th century theology!) we will find that modern theology has much to offer us in our task of devising a form of R.E. which is meaningful and relevant to the children we teach. Its contribution, though, may be even greater in terms of approach than in terms of content.[38]

The latter turns out to be the existential approach.

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[36]Ibid., p. 58.    [37]Ibid., p. 6.    [38]Ibid., p. 7.

The Lutheran President came back at Ninnes on
December 2, 1975:

> We object most earnestly to that kind of existential approach which, using the "Depth Theme" method or other similar methods, focusses on the child's experience <u>as the validation and basis for forming religious concepts</u>. . . . The existential approach is valid when used as the basis for effective <u>communication</u> of the message, but not when used to determine <u>what</u> the message is. Grimmitt seems to go from the concern of communication over into the area of determining the what and in so doing we believe, that what he suggests fits a church school situation where this view is espoused rather than in a State school situation.[39]

He then demonstrated that Lutheran concern about
the second main issue, the de-emphasizing of Christianity,
was intimately connected with the concern about an abuse
of the existential method. The problem was not the amount,
but the nature, of the Christian content. The Steinle
Report specified that all Christian content (even in those
courses not included among the "fairly prescriptive" ones)
be "consistent with The Assertions of the Christian Faith."
Grimmitt advocated a theological approach which makes
truth relative to individual experience. Hence there is
no longer a historic, truth-for-all Christianity, but a
"man-centred and man-created," "truth-for-me" approach.
"Our deep concern is that in all the materials presented
so far, we have the impression that in this connection,

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[39] Clem I. Koch (President, Lutheran Church of Australia--South Australian District), in unpublished correspondence to Alan Ninnes, Dec. 2, 1975, p.3.

the Project Team basically agrees with the suggestions of
Grimmitt."[40]  What kind of Christianity <u>was</u> the Project
Team putting forward in its program?  What it wanted tea-
chers to put forward in 1979 may be gauged from a teacher's
guide on teaching about Christianity, which is treated
later in this study.[41]

No reply to this second letter of Pastor Koch's
was forthcoming--perhaps because the second draft of the
<u>Religious Education Syllabus</u> had already been produced a
few days beforehand.  The existentialism issue remained a
live one after 1975 and would be shown by an Education
Department investigation, conducted during the next year,
to be a vital concern also for some people outside Pastor
Koch's Lutheran fold.

In the first half of 1976, the members of the Pro-
ject Team produced a series of articles which were publi-
shed in a document called <u>Soundings</u>.  <u>Soundings</u> shows
quite clearly that the Team had no intention of swerving
from the essentially existential, pluralist, tolerance-
oriented course for which it had opted.  Dr. Adrian Brown
writes:

> Initially, in years one to six the syllabus places
> an emphasis on self awareness.  Self awareness is
> a preparation for children to listen to other
> points of view; views about life which may or may
> not be familiar.  If the acceptance of social di-
> versity and tolerance of another's point of view
> is to become reality then a child must be prepared
> for it.  We already live in a pluralistic society
> and adjustments to living in that society call for

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[40]Ibid., p. 4.        [41]See pp. 59-60  below.

such acceptance and tolerance. The presence of
world views requires that they be accepted for
what they are and not as one's cultural back-
ground might presuppose or imagine it to be.[42]

Different religions are viewed as belonging to
these different cultures, and in a multi-cultural society
polarization is likely to occur....

> Polarisation is a divisive influence on the prac-
> tice of community and undermines its growth. The
> more pluralistic the world becomes the more pola-
> risation is likely to occur, unless it can be
> avoided by improving the avenues of communication
> and understanding so that differences can be ac-
> cepted. Because of the role which worlds of
> meaning play in informing cultural and social
> identities, appropriate knowledge of worlds of
> meaning can provide real potential in undermining
> both the possibility and effects of polarisation.[43]

Does this mean that religious polarization is to be
undermined for the good of society? What are the implica-
tions of a tolerance-oriented approach for presenting the
differences between the religions and their claims to uni-
queness? Regardless of whether a stress on tolerance and
a highlighting of the differences can successfully be com-
bined, what will a student deduce from a heavily pluralistic
course, about the claims of the individual religions upon
his own life? Subsequently these kinds of questions would
become fundamental to the dominant Lutheran concern.

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[42]Adrian S. Brown, "Religious Phenomena and Depth
Issues," in South Australian Religious Education Project
Team, Soundings: Some Views on Religious Education in
South Australia (Adelaide, South Australia: Government
Printer, 1976), p. 12.

[43]Ibid., p. 15.

## The Curriculum Writers
## Crowned, 1976-1977

With the continuing discontent of some members of
the public, it was decided to set up a committee for an
evaluation of religious education as it had so far pro-
gressed in South Australia.  As a consequence three evalu-
ation procedures were adopted:  (1) critical analyses of
the Project Team documents by experts outside of South
Australia; (2) an empirical investigation by the Education
Department's Research Branch; (3) submissions to be sought
from teachers, parents and interested bodies.  The results
of these procedures, conducted during 1976, were publi-
shed in February of the following year.  All members of
the Evaluation Committee were secular educationists in one
sphere or another.  Their report commenced with a list of
seventeen summaries and recommendations based on the in-
vestigations.  These acted, in effect, as a stamp of ap-
proval on the Project Team's work.

In the subsequent summary of the public's submis-
sions, a quite large segment dealt with comments on the
existentialist approach.  Not surprisingly the Lutheran
Church had presented the most poignant case:

> They saw the syllabus as "espousing a specific
> religious point of view", in that, according to
> them, it tends to promote a "synchretistic ap-
> proach which consigns all religious belief into
> a 'common pot' out of which the individual draws
> his own self-made 'religious stew'."  They argued
> that the syllabus outline "appears to seek the
> development in the individual of a religious con-
> sciousness which will enable the person to create

his own interpretation of reality and his own framework for living.[44]

This point of view was to be expounded more fully in a statement prepared four years later.

Among submissions from the other churches, the Anglicans seemed to echo at least the kernel of the Lutheran idea: "The Anglican Diocese of Adelaide saw the inclusion of depth issues as a risk of bias towards humanism rather than towards any particular theistic position."[45] On the other hand the Joint Council on Religious Education in Schools, comprising representatives from all major churches except Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and Greek Orthodox, lent support to the use of Depth Themes.[46]

In response the Evaluation Committee penned the following diplomatic, but firm, reply:

> A number of submissions received argued that the course is based on an existentialist philosophy allowing the student the right to question and evaluate during his learning about religion. This is seen most clearly in the aspects of the programme referred to as the "depth issues". This leads some to suspect that the likely outcomes of the course are that students will see the formation of a philosophy of life as an individual responsibility, and that it may become increasingly difficult for them to hold any absolutes. The committee appreciates the coherence of this argument and also recognizes that such an approach is somewhat incompatible with some religious positions. We do not, however, see the existentialist nature of the courses to be a fault,

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[44] Report of the Committee for Evaluation of Religious Education in Public Schools to the Minister of Education in South Australia (Adelaide, South Australia: Government Printer, 1977), p. 33.

[45] Ibid., p. 29.

[46] Ibid., p. 35.

but rather an inevitable characteristic of courses designed for today's state schools.[47]

With regard to the other major area of Christian concern, the summary of submissions reported: "The Christian churches that made submissions supported the aims as outlined in the Steinle Report, but most thought that Christianity, 'as the overwhelming influence in shaping society . . . needs to be stressed more than is apparent in the Syllabus.'"[48]  While the Lutherans continued to press their contentions about existentialism, the cultural argument for Christianity remained the basic, common stress of the churches generally.

Having acknowledged that "there are good reasons, both cultural and pedagogical, for giving special mention to Christianity," the Evaluation Committee made this concession to secularism:

> However, one of the most fundamental changes in Western culture in the present century is that for the first time there is a substantial number of people who seek to answer questions about ultimate meaning and value in ways that are not traditionally religious (e.g. humanism, existentialism, socialism).  These should be major topics in the senior levels of the programme.[49]

The Committee, therefore, while giving cognizance to the typical  Lutheran concerns about existentialism and eclecticism, defended these as inevitable dimensions of a religious education course for South Australia's modern public schools.  Further, while token recognition

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[47]Ibid., p. 9.    [48]Ibid., p. 29.    [49]Ibid., p. 8.

was accorded the arguments for "giving special mention
to Christianity," emphasis was placed on magnifying the
non-religious philosophies of life.

Three months later the Anglican Archbishop of Ade-
laide, the Most Reverend Dr. Keith Rayner (also Chairman
of the Heads of Churches Committee), wrote down his per-
sonal comments on the Evaluation Report:

> The Report clearly indicates that there has been
> a movement from the aims and content of a reli-
> gious education course as envisaged by the
> Steinle Report to the aims and content of the
> Syllabus prepared by the project team. This re-
> port approves this movement and indeed advocates
> that it be pushed further. . . . The proposed
> course is a far cry from what the Government
> led the Heads of Churches to believe would fol-
> low the abandonment of the old R.I. course.[50]

Had the Project Team "got its way"? Certainly the Evalu-
ation Committee had ruled in its favor, but the churches
were not all about to give up.

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Continuing Christian Resistance,
1978-1981

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In 1972 and 1973 church leaders made up almost
fifty percent of the Steinle Committee. After the Steinle
Report was completed in September 1973, they retained their
dominance in the Steering Committee, established to pre-
side over implementation of the new religious education.
However, with mounting suspicion in the community that they

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[50]Keith Rayner, "Comments on Evaluation of Religious
Education 1976 (Report dated 28th February, 1977)"
(unpublished statement, May 24, 1977), p. 2.

had been responsible for orienting the proposals of the
Steinle Committee to the Christian religion, "it did not
take the churches long to realize that their continuing,
direct, ex officio involvement was counter-productive and
by the end of 1974, the Steering Committee had virtually
voted itself out of existence."[51]

Two years following, the Evaluation Committee re-
commended the formation of a regular Religious Education
Curriculum Committee. While the Project Team continued
to exist it was to be responsible to this body. When the
Curriculum Committee came into being in 1977, it comprised,
like the Evaluation Committee before it, only secular edu-
cationists. This led Moore and Mitchell to affirm:

> The direct say of the churches in determining
> the R. Ed. curriculum has virtually disappeared.
> . . . From having orchestrated the introduction
> and early implementation of R. Ed., the churches
> are now little more than interested observers.[52]

Doubtless "little more than interested observers"
would not be the description, if Moore and Mitchell were
writing today instead of three to four years ago. Especi-
ally does it not fit the President of the Lutheran Church.
The Anglican Archbishop was not content with complete
capitulation either.

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[51]Basil Moore and Sandra Mitchell, "Whatever Happened
to the R in R.E.?——Religious Education in South Australia
1975-1978," in P.C. Almond and P.G. Woolcock (eds.) Dissent
in Paradise: R.E. Controversies in South Australia, 2d ed.
(Magill, South Australia: Murray Park College of Advanced
Education, 1978), p. 351.

[52]Ibid., p. 355.

Late in 1978, Dr. Rayner wrote to Alan Ninnes to
correct a reported assertion by Ninnes that the Heads of
Churches Committee endorsed the religious education sylla-
bus. He said: "While I speak only for myself and not as
Chairman of the Heads of Churches Committee, I believe
that the views set out below would be shared by many mem-
bers of that Committee "; the views then expressed re-
volved around the statement that in Australia "the majority
of the population professes to be Christian."[53]

Replying to Dr. Rayner's letter, Ninnes gave some
statistics intended to refute the notion of an insufficient
emphasis on Christianity in the curriculum. For Years
One through Five, about ninety percent of content will be
about Christianity because it starts with what is within
the child's experience and community. He concedes that in
the middle years students are "exposed to a wider range
of religious expression" but hastens to add that for upper
high school students, for whom much of the course has to
do with questions of meaning and purpose in life, "most
of them are questions that arise only in a Judeo-Christian
tradition," and five times more space is given to discus-
sing the Christian perspective than that of any other
single religion.[54]

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[53]Keith Rayner (Anglican Archbishop of Adelaide), in
unpublished correspondence to Alan Ninnes, Nov. 16, 1978.

[54]Alan Ninnes (first Co-ordinator of the South Aus-
tralian Religious Education Project Team), in unpublished
correspondence to Keith Rayner, Nov. 23, 1978, pp. 1-2.

The debate here brings to mind Pastor Koch's contention on behalf of the Lutherans that not the amount, but the nature, of Christian content was the actual problem area. In February 1979, an opportunity was given to gauge what was the intended nature of the content when the Heads of Churches Committee secured a draft copy of a high school teachers' guide called, "Teaching about Christianity."

"Teaching about Christianity" analyzes Christianity into the six categories of Ninian Smart--myth, ritual, beliefs, ethics, social organization, and religious experience. In the section on Beliefs, the depreciated status of The Assertions of the Christian Faith is clearly expressed:

> Christians vary in the degree to which they take statements of faith literally or symbolically. Some hold firmly to literal statements of the faith that correspond closely to early formulations such as the Apostles Creed. . . . Others would see these early statements as a starting point of a developing understanding. The Korean Creed . . . is a statement that has less of a supernatural element. The Assertions of the Christian Faith . . . , a joint statement of the Heads of Churches in South Australia, provides another perspective.[55]

This is later amplified in the following manner:

> That is, while the majority of Christians can affirm a set of statements such as the Assertions of the Christian Faith . . . there may be great diversity in the way in which various Christians understand or interpret these affirmations.[56]

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[55] South Australian Religious Education Project Team, "Teaching about Christianity," (unpublished teachers' guide, 1979), p. 14.

[56] Ibid., p. 19.

The Steinle Report specified that "where any course deals with the Christian Faith, it must be consistent with 'The Assertions of the Christian Faith.'"[57]  In the excerpts above, the Assertions are treated as only one type of creedal approach which, like creedal statements in general, is subject to varying interpretations be they literal, symbolical, or developmental.  Plainly this modifies the Steinle instruction, which can hardly be seen to have implied anything but a traditional Christianity.

A study of "Teaching about Christianity" reveals that the writers have made a valiant attempt to register as broadly but as concisely as possible not only denominational, but also critical-theological, differences.  So, for instance, it is explained:

> Christians believe that in some way Jesus was more than an ordinary man.  For some the term "Son of God" actually means a human manifestation of God.  For others he was a man who lived an incredibly good life because he was so in tune with God whom he called "Father."[58]

As one reviewer put it:  "The whole document seems to give equal weight to contemporary liberal views (here today, gone tomorrow) and to the doctrines of classical Catholic Christians."  This aspect of impartiality differentiated the Project Team's approach from Michael Grimmitt's unqualified departure from traditional Christianity.

In March  1979, the Heads of Churches Committee for

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[57]Steinle Report, p. 10.    [58]Project Team, p. 15.

the first time produced a united complaint about the developments in religious education. A submission to the Education Department contained this central statement:

> The present Course is seen by our Churches to be inadequate for many reasons, including the following:- (a) Sections on Christianity are often treated superficially and comparatively, rather than as a belief system which has a prominent place in Australian Culture. (b) The Course is likely to encourage an eclectic attitude toward Religion, listing many alternatives but without identifying any one alternative clearly. Such an underlying approach may depreciate a student's religious faith rather than support it. (c) There is a lack of choice in curriculum materials which prevents schools from choosing between alternatives.[59]

The eclecticism concern here present had not been shared by all the churches, and it was destined not to reappear in the more definitive Heads of Churches statement of 1981.

A reply from the Education Department was drafted August 23, 1979. The first paragraph quashed the complaint by saying that "in the light of the immense effort already expended on material and of the consequent slowness of implementation of programmes in schools, it is intended that the next phase of this programme should be one of implementation rather than further materials development."[60] The Department categorically denied the churches' first allegation and then concluded diplomatically:

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[59]South Australian Heads of Churches Committee, "Submission to Education Department on the Implementation of Religious Education in Government Schools" (unpublished statement, March 1979), p. 2.

[60]Education Department of South Australia, "Response of Education Department to Submission from the Heads of Churches Committee" (unpublished statement, Aug. 23, 1979), p. 1.

The distinguishing feature of the student material
is a measured even-handedness in which there are
yet many features of Christian faith and practice
which can be identified by people in a predomi-
nantly Christian culture.[61]

At the end of 1979 on the eve of his resignation,
the first Project Team Co-ordinator decided to settle the
accusation of a change from the Steinle Report proposals.
His paper engaged in some hair-splitting in trying to
prove "that the shift is one in method and approach, and,
to a lesser degree, content, rather than aims."[62]  A glance
at the Steinle aims and the Syllabus aims in appendix B to
this study shows why he is not altogether convincing.
Though it is true that the main points in the Steinle aims
appear again in some way in the Syllabus aims, there are
significant developments in the latter.  The third aim in
the Syllabus introduces "traditionally non-religious sys-
tems," and the fourth brings in the concept of "tolerance."
Christianity does receive much less emphasis in the Sylla-
bus aims--compare its aim three with the introductory aim
and aims four and five from the Steinle Report.  All this
has the effect of changing the original aims.  Ninnes
contends, however, that since the relative importance of
each Steinle aim was never specified, the Project Team was
at liberty to place the emphasis where it was necessary so
as "to produce an educationally valid programme, acceptable

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[61]Ibid., p. 2.

[62]Alan Ninnes, "The Aims of the Steinle Report and
Religious Education 1979" (unpublished statement, 1979),
p. 2.

to parents, teachers and students."[63]

The team saw fit to alter the complexion of the Steinle aims for various reasons. Humanist parents were fearful of religious indoctrination. Teachers did not see the original courses matching their classroom aims. Students, most of whom knew very little about religion, were not particularly interested and sometimes were anti-pathetic, especially towards Christianity.[64] Ninnes concludes:

> One of the most significant things we have learned from this whole exercise is just how little religion is regarded by the majority of the community, both inside and outside the school. In fact, there is a strong resistance to any approach that seems to be "pushing religion down their throats."
> If there has been any shift in emphasis in the Religious Education programme from the initial plans, it has been to counter this resistance.
> "It is not the purpose of Religious Education to bring about a commitment to the Christian Faith, but rather to create a sensitive understanding of the Christian faith and other beliefs by which people live." We believe that the approach, methods, content and aims of the current Religious Education programme are more likely to achieve this end than a programme that has a more overt religious or Christian component.[65]

Given the fresh data and the consequent revised direction, the new plan may well have been more suited to the task, but for some the new plan introduced an insidious form of indoctrination. A pastoral concern about such indoctrination finally prompted the Lutherans to issue their formal statement entitled, "A Brief Response to the Religious Education Programme in South Australia, March

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[63]Ibid., p. 4.     [64]Ibid., p. 1.     [65]Ibid., p. 4.

1981."

This document expounds the Lutheran concern in terms of indoctrination by curriculum design. The Church favors a moderately pluralist religious education and supports the concept of objectivity in the public school. While the Project Team has tried to achieve objectivity, "we believe that clearly <u>a particular religious belief underlies and is expressed in the design employed.</u>"[66]

The fault with the curriculum design is expressed thus: A range of alternatives is presented from which the students

> are invited to choose and develop their own re-
> ligious concepts and beliefs, suitable to their
> present needs. <u>Such a comparative phenomenological
> presentation is not neutral</u> but in fact presents
> a humanistic view reducing all religion to human
> choice and selection. Subtly, yet most plausibly
> to the immature, <u>it communicates a particular view
> about religion</u>—all are equally valid options.[67]

Two undesirable outcomes may occur: (1) the student with an existing religious commitment may become confused, and (2) students may be discouraged from commitment to any single religion.[68]

If the Project Team felt a degree of frustration when confronted with the Lutheran document, it could not have been blamed. Having striven to avoid indoctrination

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[66]Lutheran Church of Australia—South Australian District, "A Brief Response to the Religious Education Programme in South Australia, March 1981" (unpublished statement), p. 7.

[67]Ibid., pp. 8-9.      [68]Ibid., pp. 9-10.

by means of an even-handed pluralist approach, the Team found that this approach was now being attributed with indoctrination because of its very nature. Was there a solution? The Lutherans considered that they had one:

> [The Lutheran Church] upholds the concept of the Steinle Report that Religious Education should treat religions as separate, discrete entities to be dealt with individually for the purpose of providing information, study, and research, according to appropriate age levels.[69]

This appears to be an interpretation, for the Steinle Report did not specify that the religions be treated as separate, discrete entities. The suggested solution was in fact contrary to Steinle Committee principles, in that it recommended the kind of "inflexible, prescriptive course" rejected by the Committee at the outset because it did not agree with modern general educational practice.[70]

On November 24, 1981, the Heads of Churches Committee produced another statement, gathering up the points expressed on previous occasions. The eclecticism issue--despite the vehemence of the Lutheran Church--no longer received a mention. This statement differs from the 1979 statement, in being intended to inform the public rather than to petition the Education Department. Doubtless, therefore, it represents the settled judgment of the Heads of Churches Committee which is not likely to alter in the near future, and for that reason it is reproduced in

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[69]Ibid., p. 14.

[70]Steinle Report, p. 8.

appendix C to this study.

The question at present is how the churches, individually and collectively, will respond to the latest Project Team initiative.[71]  The Team is proposing that religious education be included as a subject for Matriculation, the Education Department-run examination to assess Year 12 students' readiness for university studies. The proposed syllabus structure may be viewed in appendix D below.  One topic would be taken from each of sections one and three, and two from section two.  While the Project Team is suggesting that a balanced choice be made from the list of religions in section two, theoretically Christianity could be omitted.  A Roman Catholic suggestion to make Christianity a separate section has been soundly vetoed by the Public Education Board Committee on Religious Studies.

## Developments in Public School Religion Teaching in the Other Australian States, 1969-1981

Since the establishment of committees of enquiry in the other Australian states, beginning 1969, revision of the teaching of religion in public schools has varied from state to state.  The process began in Tasmania and reached a peak of thoroughgoing analysis in Victoria; but in words expressed by an independent English evaluator in

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[71]This plan was explained in a personal interview with the Project Team Co-ordinator, Mr. Rod Kuchel, Adelaide, South Australia, Feb. 11, 1982.

1979, "It is probably true to say that more professional thought and attention has been given to development in the field of religious education in South Australia within the last ten years than in any country visited."[72]

Western Australia has followed South Australia's lead and developed a similar program, although with a deliberate concentration on integrating religious education with the rest of the school curriculum.[73] When religious education of a pluralist nature was trialed in Tasmania in 1974, immediate public reaction brought about its hasty withdrawal. One sector did not want compulsory religious studies in the public schools and another did not want a pluralist approach. Hence special religious instruction is still current in many elementary schools, but it is uncommon in high schools. For high schools Tasmania has devised a religious studies course as a subject for Matriculation. The syllabus has three parts of equal standing: (1) a comparison of the major world religious traditions, (2) a critical study of the Old Testament and first three gospels, and (3) a study of some secular world views.[74]

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[72] Education Department of South Australia, "Response of Education Department to Submission from the Heads of Churches Committee" (unpublished statement, Aug. 23, 1979), p. 1.

[73] Graham M. Rossiter, Religious Education in Australian Schools: An Overview of Developments and Issues in Religious Education in Australian Schools with Descriptions of Practices in Different School Types (Canberra, Australia: Curriculum Development Centre, 1981), p. 82.

[74] Ibid., pp. 70-71.

Since being removed from under the educational-administrative umbrella of the New South Wales government in 1974, the Australian Capital Territory has made provision for the whole range of teaching of religion practice in individual schools and has also developed a matriculation course similar to Tasmania's.[75]  The New South Wales committee of enquiry has only recently completed its report, and the exact direction that will be taken in that state is not yet evident.[76]  Upon achieving self-government the Northern Territory introduced its own Education Act in 1979, stipulating that if parents wanted their children to receive special religious instruction they would have to submit a written request.  This was a complete reversal of the previous right of withdrawal provision.[77]

The Victorian "Russell Report" of 1974 has been the most radical to date in advocating a pluralist, existential religious education.  Backlashes from churches and unwilling public school teachers forced a retainment of the former pattern of inter-denominational special religious instruction at elementary level (with Catholic and Jewish children taught by their own churches separately), and a critical Biblical Studies course for Matriculation in the high schools.[78]

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[75]Ibid., pp. 51-52

[76]Ibid., p. 55.

[77]Ibid., p. 56.

[78]Ibid., pp. 73-77.

In Queensland the Department of Education is attempting to resuscitate the traditional right of entry practice by providing supplementary volunteer public school teachers and in-service training for them and for clergy, and by employing church people to prepare curriculum materials. The courses are non-denominationally Christian at elementary level, while a trial matriculation syllabus broadens the scope yet remains predominantly Christian.[79]

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[79]Ibid., pp. 58-63.

CHAPTER IV

EVALUATIVE ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## A Conservative-Christian Evaluative Analysis of the History

### Secularism and Education in Australian Society

In a given problem situation, the problem often has two levels; there is an immediate problem, and a root problem. When the nineteenth century transition from church to government schooling in Australia is perceived in a conservative-Christian perspective, the history lends itself to this scheme. The immediate problem was that whereas the government wanted to see all Australian children receiving a basic general education, the churches on their own were unable to achieve the government's ideal. Various factors such as insufficient funds contributed to the failure, but the root problem, stated very simply, was this: a generally complacent Protestant Christianity was no match for rising secularism in Australian society. "Secularism," to quote Sutter again, "by an unseemly paradox, came to occupy the place of an established, a favoured religion, in a position to define the premises of public discussion, and so disguise its own arbitrary origins."[1]

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[1] See p. 19 above.

In the 1870s and 1880s Protestantism as a whole opted for ecclesiastical growth to the exclusion of Christian day schools. Few Protestants saw in the public school system a threat to the Christian cause in Australia; indeed, some openly welcomed it as they themselves withdrew from education. By contrast, the Roman Catholics made a determined effort to shield their children from the new system. The driving force was Catholic consciousness of being a Protestant-oppressed minority, and its tendency to identify government education with Protestantism. Nevertheless the cause was not so important, but the effect. After Protestant ecclesiastical growth had stopped and the churches were "high and dry" educationally, Catholicism retained a tight rein on itself through the total religious indoctrination of its rising generation in the Catholic schools. In a democratic environment it was master of its destiny. Meanwhile Protestantism's fate was now partially out of its own hands, as the majority of its children became subject to what Archbishop Vaughan described in 1880 as "godless education," consisting of "schools which the church knows from experience will in the course of time fill the country with indifferentists not to speak of absolute infidels."[2]

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[2]Allen S. Roberts, _Australia's First Hundred Years: The Era of Christian Schools_ (Baulkham Hills, New South Wales: The Australian College of Christian Education, n.d.), p. 16.

Secularism and Australian Public School
Religion Teaching

Secularism's rise was not homogeneous throughout
the nation. It was quickest and crassest in Victoria du-
ring and after the 1850s gold-rush period. Perhaps the
fact that Victoria, in 1950, was the last state to intro-
duce systematic religious instruction inside normal school
hours is more than coincidental. South Australia contras-
ted with Victoria when a similar movement towards the sepa-
ration of church and state began there. Mainly responsible
in South Australia were the Christian nonconformists--not an
increasingly irreligious society. Once again, however, the
effect was more important than the cause, and the effect--
the secularization of education--was the same. Nonconfor-
mist and irreligious components then functioned separately
in South Australia to keep religion outside of public
school hours until 1940. Following the collapse of reli-
gious instruction in the late 1960s, South Australia has
led the field in developing a religious education which
effectively shuts out a Christian influence from the public
schools.[3] Christian nonconformists had nothing to do with
this latest process; their place was taken by KOSSS and
the other humanists involved in the 1974-75 campaign. Even
so Christian nonconformism has helped to make South Austra-
lia one of the most secularist of Australian states.

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[3]The churches are permitted to hold a cooperative
half-day seminar three times a year in the public high
schools, but this must be regarded as almost inconsequen-
tial as far as Christian presence in the public schools is
concerned.

As nationwide reappraisal of the old systems con-
tinues, South Australia and Western Australia most reflect
Australia's secularist culture in their religious educa-
tion programs. Whereas in South Australia secularism de-
feated both the radical humanist and the Christian challenges,
roughly the same kinds of challenge have so far hindered
the secularization of public school teaching of religion in
Victoria, and somewhat less successfully also in Tasmania.
Traditionally the most conservative state, Queensland is
attempting a semi-compromise with a surviving Christian
bias. The Australian Capital Territory is applying a less
controversial version of the secularization process through
tolerating the entire range of teaching of religion approa-
ches and leaving the choice to individual schools. Northern
Territory's change from the parent's right to withdraw the
child from special religious instruction, to the parent's
right to permit the child to participate, is a significant
move in a secularist direction.

<div align="center">

Secularism at Work in South Australian
Religious Education
</div>

South Australia's early settlers had come from an
entrenched Christian culture, but when the colony's own
culture had established itself as secularist, inevitably
a certain central principle would clash with the Christian
heritage; that principle was free thought. While the 1875
"secular" Education Act was nonconformist-inspired, if it
is used by a group like KOSSS in today's post-Christian

climate to support a platform of "no religious indoctri-
nation in our secular public schools," this is pragmati-
cally, if not legally, valid.

As the principle of free thought clashes with the
Christian heritage in a secularist society, victory will
eventually be gained in every area by free thought. This
is what happened, for example, when the 1976 Evaluation
Committee uneasily juxtaposed a recognition of the "good
reasons, both cultural and pedagogical, for giving special
mention to Christianity," with the overriding assertion
that, despite offense to some religious groups, it saw "the
existentialist [i.e. free-thinking] nature of the courses
to be . . . an inevitable characteristic of courses designed
for today's state schools."[4]  Free thought will be the
"hidden curriculum" of the public school, and it will strive
to exclude any dogmatic representation of a certain thought
system.

The two essential components of free thought in edu-
cation are pluralism and existentialism. It is not by
chance that these were the main issues contested by the
South Australian religious education developers and their
Christian critics. Free thought demands that all thought
systems be reduced--or raised as the case may be--to parity.
Thus, Christianity was reduced in emphasis and Humanism
was raised in emphasis. Not only must each thought system
be presented as just one of many alternatives, but students

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[4]See pp. 54-55 above.

must also be encouraged to explore critically with maximum
intellectual freedom through the existential approach to
education. Hence, the Steinle Committee rejected the Heads
of Churches Committee's "inflexible, prescriptive course,"
and the Project Team adopted Michael Grimmitt's Depth
Themes.

Whatever the reasons cited by Alan Ninnes in 1979
for the changed approach over the previous five years, it
was again a matter of there being two levels to the prob-
lem. The immediate problem was that the initial less plu-
ralist, less existential courses proved unacceptable to the
public, to teachers and to students. The root problem,
however, was the secularist culture of which the attitudes
of all three were merely symptomatic. When the Project
Team decided on an even-handedly pluralist and pervasively
existential approach to religious education, it was the in-
strument, so to speak, used by secularism to squeeze the
syllabus and curriculum into secularist shape.

The secularization of teaching of religion had in
fact begun much earlier. First, the reappraisal of reli-
gious instruction Australia-wide was hastened by student
apathy and resentment, and by uncommitted instructors.
Next, the Tasmanian churches' plan for an inter-denomina-
tional Christian instruction was rejected in favor of a
world religions approach. Then, the Steinle Committee re-
buffed the South Australian churches' proposal of a Chris-
tianity-centered world religions course, but produced a

report ambiguous as to a recommended Christian or secularist bias for religious education. Finally, the Project Team brought to fruition a secularist bias, while the Christian emphasis withered away.

## Religious Education and South Australian Christianity

Christian criticism of religious education in South Australia divides itself into two main categories. On the one hand there is the mainstream contention that Christianity is not given its due emphasis in the courses. On the other hand there is the typical Lutheran concern that the existential framework combined with a "measured even-handedness" may confuse religiously-committed children and inoculate others against a religious commitment, while encouraging all to take an eclectic approach.

Two variant arguments are used for a greater emphasis on Christianity. The more common is that historically the Christian religion has played an important part-- certainly much more important than that played by any other religion--in the formation of Australian culture. This argument must be accorded some strength, but the question is whether secularism has not played a greater part than Christianity. The devisers of religious education for South Australia had to choose between recognizing Christianity, which once dominated society (after a fashion), and acknowledging secularism, which clearly predominates today and has already predominated for several decades. They

chose the latter.

The second variant argument is that in Australia the majority of the population still professes to be Christian. The argument is not particularly strong; whereas over ninety percent of Australians will declare themselves adherents of one denomination or another in a census, less than twenty percent, perhaps as few as ten percent, attend church regularly.[5] By tradition Australia is a "Christian" country--hence the usual census statistic, but in actuality it is not. The history outlined in this study describes how this came about, and present indications, such as declining church memberships, are that traditional Christianity's influence upon Australian society continues to diminish.

The Lutheran Church's characteristic contention suffers because it is based upon suspicion or intuitive conviction, lacking substantial evidence. Pastor Koch implied as much when he wrote recently: "There appears to be little unequivocal research data to indicate that a religious education programme of the kind being tried by South Australia has no injurious effect on the student of the Primary or Lower Secondary level who has prior religious

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[5]Alan Ninnes (first Co-ordinator of the South Australian Religious Education Project Team), in unpublished correspondence to Clem I. Koch, December 12, 1978; and J.A. Barrie, "The Non-educational Justification of Religious Education," _Journal of Christian Education_, n.s. 53 (September 1975): 21.

commitment."[6] While the Lutherans want empirical evidence that religious education is not harmful to their young people, the lack of empirical evidence to the contrary may be cited as reason enough to ignore their concern.

## Recommendations for South Australian Christianity

A Realistic Attitude

The question may be asked whether the current religious education in South Australia would have evolved had there not already been a similar development in teaching of religion overseas, especially in Britain, whence most of the Project Team's explorative reading came. The present study suggests that in view of secularism's ascent to rule Australian society in the second half of the last century and in view of the intrinsic character of the current religious education as a product of that secularism, once religion got inside school hours in 1940, religious education as it is now practiced was inevitable.

This further suggests that while the churches are duty-bound to maintain their stand against the new religious education, Christians, in a sense, need to accept its presence and learn to live with it. Certainly now that religious education has replaced a broken-down

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[6]Lutheran Church of Australia--South Australian District, "A Brief Response to the Religious Education Programme in South Australia, March 1981" (unpublished statement, March 1981), p. 12.

religious instruction, the latter is not about to make a comeback. Nor can Christians reasonably expect that Christianity will be allowed to receive a greater emphasis again. Nor will the course be changed so as to portray the religions as "separate, discrete entities" according to Lutheran desire. The current religious education is here to stay. Secularism ensured that it received a seal of approval from the Evaluation Committee in 1976, and that the Education Department effectively closed discussion in 1979 when it declared, "it is intended that the next phase of this programme should be one of implementation rather than further materials development."[7]

## Concrete Measures

Whether the perceived problem is a de-emphasized Christianity or an indoctrination by curriculum design, the common perceived outcome is that children are being fed fundamental misconceptions about the Christian religion in public schools. Several measures to combat this may be adopted by South Australian Christianity.

In the very first place, an empirical investigation might be conducted with a view to substantiating what so far is mere opinion about the effects of the course on public school students. Students have now been exposed to religious education for as many as seven years, which would seem long enough for reliable conclusions to be

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[7]See p.61 above.

reached. Assuming the results would support the suspicions, some objective evidence would help to convince Christians that something must be done to help these young people. On the other hand, in light of secularism's sway in South Australian society, such evidence could not be expected to affect either educationally or legislatively the current religious education program.

The remaining measures are of two types. The first type involves leaving church children exposed to religious education but trying to counteract its effects. The parents of these children might be systematically instructed by their church in how to deal with religious education (and other dubious subjects like sex education) at home. Church youth groups, particularly those containing large numbers of public school students, could have periodic sessions dealing with what is being taught in religious education (and other dubious subjects) and treating specific personal difficulties created by these courses. As a general observation, parents and relevant church group leaders and teachers need to be instilled with an attitude of constant wariness as to what students are being taught that may be detrimental to their spiritual understanding and faith.

The second type of solution involves removing church children from the sphere of influence of religious education. Since integration effectively nullifies right of withdrawal, one option is left: the establishment of

more Christian schools. This mainly means more Protestant schools. With eight to ninety percent of private school enrollments being at Catholic schools, the great majority of Protestant children attend public schools, especially at elementary level. The last few years have witnessed a trend from public back to private education. In 1980 Australian public school enrollments fell by 18,641, while private school numbers rose by 16,272.[8] In South Australia 1982 public school enrollments are down 2,570 on 1981, while private school attendance is up 2,500.[9] At the present time, however, most mainline Protestant denominations are sticking to their traditional support of the public school system, and the newly-founded private schools are in the main run by smaller religious bodies or parent groups.

This is not the place to engage in a lengthy discussion about Christian schools, but a few simple comments are appropriate. First, the recommendation that problems with religious education (and other dubious subjects) may be solved by the establishing of more Christian schools, is made with the realization that there is great variety in Christian schooling. At one extreme are schools almost indistinguishable in curriculum and atmosphere from their public counterparts. At the other extreme are schools

[8] "Pupil Numbers up in Private Schools," Advertiser (Adelaide, South Australia), August 29, 1981, p. 1.

[9] "More Go to Private Schools," Advertiser (Adelaide, South Australia), March 13, 1982, p. 4.

using thoroughly Bible-oriented curricula and continuously bathing their pupils in prayer.

Graham Rossiter makes the broad observation (concerning Catholic and Protestant schools) that "there would appear to be a convergence occurring between approaches to religious education in both denominational and secular settings."[10] This is mainly in regard to treating the teaching of religion as part of the formal curriculum instead of an extra, but "there is also some convergence on a life-relevant approach to religious education as opposed to an approach characterised by description of religious phenomena."[11] Among the apparent reasons for a more "life-centred" approach in Catholic schools are student demands for greater "relevance" to life, and "the prominence of practical existentialism or 'here and now-ism' in Australian culture."[12] Some church schools in South Australia are actually utilizing the public school religious education curriculum.

Obviously the Christian school that will best counteract the (presumably harmful) effects of public school religious education is not the one whose religious program resembles the public school version. Rather it will be the kind of school that has as its primary

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[10]Graham M. Rossiter, Religious Education in Australian Schools: An Overview of Developments and Issues in Religious Education in Australian Schools with Description of Practices in Different School Types (Canberra, Australia: Curriculum Development Centre, 1981), p. 40.

[11]Ibid.        [12]Ibid., p. 115.

objective indoctrination in some form of traditional Christianity--the kind of school that may be termed "evangelical." In this context "evangelical" does not necessarily imply evangelization, but it does infer Christian nurture. The evangelical school, of course, has its critics, like the prominent Australian educationist and professing Christian, Brian Hill. Hill's criticism is many-pronged, but principally he dislikes the notion of "garrisoning" children against their environment, thus inhibiting social involvement and inculcating an escapist mentality, while forcing upon them a fixed, narrow view of Christian doctrine and practice. He does not regard the Bible as explicitly commanding a Christianity-oriented general education and thinks Christians should leave general education to the state.[13]

To a large extent the current trend from public to private schools is due to dissatisfaction with teaching, academic, and disciplinary standards. In theory these problems in the public schools could be rectified, and there are indications that the very forsaking of government schools is making them try to lift their standards. The permanently relevant motivations for preferring Christian to public schooling are positive as well as negative. They are exemplified in the articles by Blomberg and Weeks

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[13]Brian V. Hill, "Is It Time We Deschooled Christianity?" Journal of Christian Education, n.s. 63 (November 1978): 5-21.

and may be summarized as follows.[14]  The overall Biblical
testimony is that for the Christian community, life is to
be seen as a totality--general education included--all
under the lordship of Creator God, and illuminated and
guided by the teaching and principles of Scripture.  The
public school system does not cater for this but, in fact,
indoctrinates against it both by omission and by commission.
Therefore Christian discontentment with the religious edu-
cation program in South Australia may result from more
than one motivation:  negatively, that the course misre-
presents Christianity and may be detrimental to the faith
of Christian children while discouraging others from es-
pousing Christianity; positively, that the Christian reli-
gion will be accurately, traditionally, and forcefully
portrayed, and Christian children will have their commit-
ment strengthened and their home and church training
enhanced, through attending evangelical Christian schools.

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[14]Douglas Blomberg, "If Life Is Religion, Can Schools
Be Neutral?" Journal of Christian Education, n.s. 67 (July
1980):  5-20;  and Noel Weeks, "In Defence of Christian
Schools," Journal of Christian Education, n.s. 67 (July
1980):  21-29.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

The primary question this study set out to answer
was what attitude South Australia's concerned Christians
should adopt towards the current public school religious
education and what action, if any, they should take.
The specific problem areas were pinpointed. The immedi-
ate social causes of the evolution of these areas were
then viewed in their wider causative context--the develop-
ment of Australian culture in relation to education and
religion, from its Christian beginnings to the entrenched
dominance of secularism today. Thus, it was demonstrated
that no kind of reversal in the areas of concern to Chris-
tians is probable. Reinforced by an assessment of the
presently-used Christian arguments as not especially com-
pelling, this negative conclusion produced the recommen-
dation that Christians should realistically acknowledge
that the current religious education is here to stay. An
empirical investigation to ascertain the actual spiritual
effects of the courses upon public school students was
suggested as a means of testing the Christian standpoint
and possibly strengthening it. The agreed minimal criti-
cism of religious education, that it conveys to students
a misconstrued Christianity, was met with some suggestions

for counteractive measures. These consisted of ways to combat the effects of religious education while leaving students exposed to it, and the way to remove students from its influence, namely, providing more evangelical Christian schools.

APPENDIX A

THE ASSERTIONS OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH
(From Steinle Report, appendix A)

1. Concerning God

A.   God the Father--that He is the Father of all;
He is the Almighty Creator of all things and of
all men:
His character is righteous, merciful and loving.
(i)   This assertion rests primarily on the reve-
lation contained in the Bible culminating
in the Life and work of Jesus Christ.
(ii)  It arises also from our understanding of
the natural world, of the conscience of man,
of natural law and of history, interpreted
in the light of that revelation.
(iii) God, who is active through His Spirit in
Creation, is also creatively active in all
men's search for truth, beauty and goodness.

B.   God the Son--that Jesus Christ is the Son of God:
(i)   That He lived in Palestine in the first
century.
(ii)  That in Him God truly and fully became man
and lived in the perfect human life.
(iii) That He died on the Cross, which is the
point at which perfect love encountered
evil and sin.
(iv)  That He committed Himself entirely to His
Father in His life and especially in His
death.
(v)   That He rose from the dead, but in doing so
His body was changed so as to be freed from
the limitations of the human flesh.  After
ascending to the Father the glorified Christ
now makes His presence and power continually
available to His people.
(vi)  And so God delivered man from ignorance, sin
and death.

C.   God the Holy Spirit--that He is God active in:
(i)   The bringing of men to repentance, faith
and goodness.
(ii)  The creation of the fellowship which is
the Church, and in sustaining and empowering
it.

(iii) The understanding and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.

(iv) The illumination of human minds and conscience with the knowledge of God's will.

D.   The Holy Trinity--The Christian belief in God who is Three in One springs from the experience of the first Christians. Conscious of being sons of the one Father and illuminated by the Divine Spirit, they worshipped the divine Christ. The doctrine of God, Three in One, proclaims the perfection of the Divine Love and has its warrant in Holy Scripture.

2.   Concerning Man and His Life

That:
(i)   Man is made 'in the image of God', i.e. having a capacity for creativity, love, community, self-direction.

(ii)  That image has been spoiled by man's wrong choices and has remained undeveloped because of man's persistent disobedience. The weight of this disobedience is a legacy handed down from generation to generation.

(iii) Individually and collectively, man is capable of being recreated in God's image, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

(iv)  This can only be as he recognizes his own limitations and failings and turns to God through Christ in repentance, trust and obedience.

(v)   The consequent new life--the 'eternal life' of the New Testament--is a dynamic relationship with God through Christ into which the believer enters here and now, and is more than mere survival after death.

(vi)  For the person thus 'alive to God' the death of the body is not the end of life but the entry into a fuller life of fellowship with God in Christ.

(vii) In rejecting God's offer of eternal life, man brings judgment upon himself.

3.   Concerning the Christian Life

That it is a life of love for God and for one's neighbour, exemplified in:
(i)   Personal response to the love of God in Christ.
(ii)  Obedience to the known will of God.
(iii) Growing awareness of God, nurtured by every truly educative process and by public worship and membership in the Church, family life, private prayer and practical service.

(iv) Involvement in the workaday world, into which
the Christian brings Christian insights and
incentives.

4. <u>Concerning the Church</u>

That it is the 'household of faith', the community
of those who are united to Jesus Christ as Saviour
and Lord. That:
(i) Though broken and divided, it is still the chan-
nel through which the Spirit of God primarily
works for the salvation of the world through:
   (a) Preaching and teaching;
   (b) Worship, public and private;
   (c) The special signs of divine life, primarily
       the Sacraments of Baptism and Holy
       Communion;
   (d) Witness and Social Service.
(ii) Though the divisions in the Church are deep
and admit of no simple solution, the area of
agreement is much wider than that of disagree-
ment; and the essential reconciling nature of
the Church, the body of Christ, is shown by its
growing and working together in divine love.

5. <u>Concerning the Kingdom of God</u>

(i) The ground of the Christian hope is in the reign
of God, which was revealed in the life of Jesus
Christ.
(ii) This reign is being realised in the lives of all
who know and serve God.
(iii) It will be fully established in God's own time
and in His own way, when Christ, in a final act,
will complete the process of history, and all
things will be transformed.

APPENDIX B


THE THREE SETS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION AIMS


## The Heads of Churches Committee Statement, 1972

We believe that the aims of religious education in Government schools should be:-

1.    to explore explicitly the place and sig-
      nificance of religion in human life.
2.    to make a distinctively Christian contri-
      bution to each pupil's search for a faith
      by which to live;
3.    to avoid both proselytism and indifferentism
      in showing a united approach to religious
      education in Government schools in which
      an agreed syllabus will be taught in a
      class by accredited teachers within the
      general curriculum.


## The Steinle Report

### The General Aim of Religious Education in State Schools

In broad terms this may be stated as follows:

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

### Aims
1.    To create conditions in which students can
      develop an understanding of the religious
      dimension of life and its interpretation.
2.    To assist students to develop a deeper
      understanding of themselves and others.
3.    To assist students to develop good relations
      with other people and a concern for the

world in which they live.

4. To enable the students to appreciate the Judaeo-Christian heritage which has played such a powerful role in their culture.

5. To inform students about the life and teachings of Christ and the growth of the Church to modern times.

6. To help provide students with an understanding of religious symbols and language.

7. To help provide students with an understanding of beliefs, other than Christianity, by which people live.

8. To help students recognize the challenge and practical consequences of holding a particular religious belief.

## Religious Education Syllabus, R-12

After twelve years of religious education, some outcomes for the students should be as follows:

1. An understanding of the presence and influence of religion in the life of people and in society.

2. A development in the students' understanding of themselves and of their own beliefs.

3. A sensitive understanding of the religious systems by which people live, including Christian, non-Christian, and traditionally non-religious systems.

4. A greater respect for and tolerance of others and their beliefs.

## APPENDIX C

### THE HEADS OF CHURCHES COMMITTEE STATEMENT, NOVEMBER 1981

1.  We strongly reaffirm the principle of Religious Education in State Schools and the need to take seriously the religious experience of mankind in developing an education programme.

2.  We believe, however, that the Religious Education course as it has been developed has departed in some important respects from the principles of the Steinle Report which were agreed to by the Heads of Churches. While we understand that the Religious Education Project Team believes that subsequent developments necessitated changes of principle, we point out that these were never explicitly discussed with the Heads of Churches. Our endorsement of the principles of the Steinle Report does not therefore imply endorsement of all the principles underlying the present R.E. programme.

3.  In particular, we believe that certain basic elements of the Christian faith are neglected, or even by implication denied, in the sections of the course dealing with Christianity, for example, the revealed nature of the Christian faith and the uniqueness of Jesus Christ. While we do not expect the teacher to teach these as doctrines which every member of the class must believe, it should be made clear that this is what Christians believe. We also think that in a society grounded upon the Judaeo-Christian tradition a much larger proportion of the course ought to be devoted to Christianity than is the case, particularly at the primary level. We think that the "comparative religion" approach is confusing to young children and through trying to cover too much ground leads to superficiality and trivialisation of the religions studied.

4.  We fully endorse the principle that it is inappropriate for a Religious Education programme, taught by departmental teachers, to set out to proselytise or indoctrinate.

5.  We welcome the provision in the Regulations for periodic seminars conducted by representatives of the Churches, either separately or in co-operation.

6.    We recognise that the approach of the Project Team
represents a sincere attempt to grapple with the complex
issues involved in developing a Religious Education pro-
gramme for State Schools.  In none of these comments do
we intend to question the competence, integrity and enthu-
siasm of present or past members of the R.E. Project Team.
We recognise that they have produced much excellent and
imaginative material and have worked diligently to create
a climate for its acceptance in school environments which
are sometimes suspicious or apathetic.  We also appreciate
some of their difficulties, including those resulting from
the financial constraints of the present time.  While we
cannot endorse all aspects of the course, we reaffirm our
desire to co-operate as fully as possible with the staff
of the Education Department in developing and improving
the Religious Education programme.

7.    We understand that the Project Team may be unable, for
financial reasons, to produce further curriculum material
in the near future.  We believe there is need for additional
material which could provide further alternative resources
for teachers.  We would be willing to request our Religious
Education specialists to make a recommendation to the Depart-
ment as to additional materials which might be of value to
teachers of the Religious Education course.

APPENDIX D

PROPOSED MATRICULATION SYLLABUS STRUCTURE

Section:  1.    Topic:  a.  Religious Phenomena
                        b.  Philosophy of Religion
                        c.  Issues in Religion

          2.            d.  Australian Aboriginal
                            Religion
                        e.  Melanesian Religion
                        f.  Hinduism
                        g.  Buddhism
                        h.  Judaism
                        i.  Islam
                        j.  Christianity

          3.            k.  Individual study
                            (20 suggested topics
                            supplied)

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