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ASIA PACIFIC**

*AUSTRALIAN SOUL:*

21<sup>ST</sup> Century Religious and  
Spiritual Challenges to Christian  
Life Community Australia.

Source: Gary Bouma, *Australian Soul: Religion and Spirituality in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, Cambridge University Press.  
2006

# BASIC ARGUMENT

- **AUSTRALIAN RELIGION IS CHANGING**
  - MORE DIVERSE
  - REVITALISED
  - DIFFERENTLY LOCATED
- **THESE CHANGES CHALLENGE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES BY:**
  - CREATING A DIFFERENT SOCIAL / CULTURAL CONTEXT for MINISTRY
  - DIFFERENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR BUILDING COMMUNITY

# BASIC FEATURES of AUSTRALIAN RELIGION

- Laid Back, Low Temperature
- A shy hope in the heart (Manning Clark)
- Infrequent attendance
- One person, one religion
- Distrust / avoidance of
  - organisations
  - professionals
- Religion to be personal, peripheral, undemanding, part of the background

# DRIVERS OF RELIGIOUS CHANGE

1. INCREASES IN RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY
2. REVITALISATION OF RELIGION
3. CHANGING SOCIAL LOCATION OF RELIGION
4. A CULTURAL SHIFT FROM RATIONAL TO EXPERIENTIAL MODES OF AUTHORITY

# 1. INCREASES IN RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

- **Migration – Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus**
  - Catholics - substantial growth since 1947
- **Conversion – Pentecostals, Spiritualities**
- **Rise of Spiritualities – census info**
  - Spiritual not religious
  - Spiritual questing
- **Note Aus m/c for 40,000 years**
  - > Has practised inclusion rather than exclusion

# AUSTRALIA'S RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY I

## IN 2006 National (Adelaide) {Melbourne}

- Catholics 25.8% (22.1) {28.3} - slight decline
- Anglicans 18.5% (14.0) {12.1} Note decline
- No religion – 18.5% (24.0) {20.0} return
- Not stated – 10% (11.6) {11.1} (do not treat as 'None')
- Uniting – 5.7% (8.4) {4.0} very aged
- Lutheran – 1.3% (3.1) {0.7}
- Presbyterian – 3.0% (1.2) {2.3} aged, changing
- Orthodox – 3% (3.8) {5.9}
- Salvation Army – 0.34% (0.3) {0.2} 1891 = 1.1%

# AUSTRALIAN RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY II

## IN 2006

- **More Buddhists (2.1) than Baptists (1.6)**
- **More Muslims (1.7) than Lutherans (1.3)**
  - In Adelaide: Uniting > Orthodox > Lutheran > Baptist > Pentecostal > Presbyterian > Muslim > Hindu = JWs
  - In Melbourne: Orthodox > Uniting > Buddhist > Muslim > Presbyterian > Hindu > Pentecostal
- **More Hindus (0.7) than Jews (0.4)**
- **More Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Salvationists, Seventh Day Adventists (0.3) than Churches of Christ or Sikhs (0.1)**
- **4 X witches than Quakers**
- **2x Salvos (64k) than atheists (31k)**
  - but are growing (29% 2001 - 2006)

# A CLOSER LOOK (e.g. Adelaide)

- **% 55+ IN AGE**    **2006**    **1996**
  - UCA                    43.1% 33.7%
  - **ANGLICAN**        41.6% 33.7%
  - Baptist                33.0% 27.5%
  - Lutherans            30.6% 26.2%
  - **CATHOLICS**    27.2% 22.6%
  - Pentecostal         20.6% 14.8%
  - **Salvationists** 44.0% 32.8% **very aged**
  - **ADELAIDE**        26.7% 22.9%

# COPING WITH RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY

- **MAJOR ISSUE = SHIFT FROM CHRISTENDOM TO RELIGIOUS PLURALITY**
  - Old Anglican, Empire Religion domination passing (in decline since 1926). Loss of a cultural 'normal'
  - Rise of Pentecostals, Spiritualities, Muslims, Buddhists and Hindus. Diversity = new normal
  - The new normal is also Roman Catholic not CofE
- **ISSUES RAISED**
  - How to incorporate and include many religions?
  - How to accommodate a wider range of legitimate religious needs?
  - Role of Christian Communities in new environment?

## 2. REVITALISATION OF RELIGION

- **Religion is back on the agenda**
  - Policy, politics, values debate
  - People searching, but as consumers
  - DaVinci code, TV series, books
- **Resurgence is happening everywhere**
  - Asia, Africa,
  - Removal of repressive regimes
  - Taking new forms, challenging old
- **EXCEPT Mainstream Protestants + Catholics**

# WHY REVITALISATION?

- **HISTORICAL CYCLICAL PATTERN**
- **IMPACT OF DIVERSITY**
  - Salience of religious identity
  - Increased participation
  - Religious voices in politics
- **FAILURE OF SECULAR HUMANISM**
  - To produce happiness
  - To end oppression, motivate social justice
  - To deliver on its promises
  - Winding back of 'welfare state'

# RELIGIOUS COMPETITION

- **DIVERSITY *PLUS* REVITALISATION WILL BRING INCREASED:**
- **COMPETITION**
  - Seeking converts
  - In shaping policy
  - Internal rivalries over theology, worship, ethics
- **CONFLICT**
  - Challenges to rights to exist/practice
    - > Opposition to mosque building, entry to country
  - Vilification
    - > Dehumanising the other, demonising, fear mongering
    - > Role of Christians in countering vilification

# REVITALISATION LEADS TO FUNDAMENTALISATION

- **INCREASED INTENSITY**
  - More emotional / passionate (Scary)
- **INCREASED NEGATIVE LITERALISM**
  - Read scriptures harshly / Angry God
- **INCREASED DRIVE TO APPLY**
  - Competitive Piety
- **INCREASED ENGAGEMENT. WHY?**
  - NEW CONVERTS MORE INTENSE
  - COMPETITION WITH OTIOSE LIBERALS REQUIRES MARKET DEFINITION

# FUNDAMENTALISM DOES NOT LAST

- **HISTORICAL TREND**
- **THE LIBERALISING CORE MESSAGE OF THE RELIGIONS OF THE BOOK – GOD’S GRACE, FORGIVENESS, SHARING – SUSTAINABLE VALUES**
- **EG CROMWELL, GREAT AWAKENING, SAVANAROLA, INQUISITIONS, IRAN**

# 3. CHANGING SOCIAL LOCATION OF RELIGION

- **From Centre to Margins 1947 to 1975**
  - Secularisation of liberalism, social justice in Anti-Vietnam War Protests
- **From Margins to involvement 1985 –**
  - Evangelicals no longer quiescent
  - Muslims seeking ability to practice
  - Will the 'liberals' please stand up
  - Congregational focus as *IMPLOSION*
- **From Organised to dispersed**
  - The end of vertically integrated groups
- **From medium sized to huge or tiny congregations (Catholic parishes always big)**

# SECULAR SOCIETIES

- **SECULAR DOES NOT MEAN IRRELIGIOUS**
  - Secular vs secularism, secularist
  - Secularism as an ideology / perspective
    - > Not objective, independent, or neutral
- **In secular societies religion is Privatised**
- **‘out of control’ of both the state and religious organisations.**

# 4. The Cultural Shift to Experiential Authority

- **AUTHORITY - GIVEN / NOT POSSESSED**
- **THREE BASES OF AUTHORITY**
  - TRADITION
  - REASON/LAW
  - EXPERIENCE/FEELING
- **FROM TRADITION TO REASON**
- **FROM REASON TO EXPERIENCE**

# THE CURRENT SHIFT FROM RATIONAL TO EXPERIENTIAL MODES OF AUTHORITY

- From sacramental objectivity - feeling
- From preaching to 'aerobic' Christianity
- From reading to watching
- From sitting to moving
- From altars to pulpits to platforms
- From books to video screens
- From concordances to the internet
- From permanence to impression

# EXPERIENCE AND CATHOLICS

- **WORSHIP AS ENGAGING GOD**
  - NOT PREACHING AT, TALKING WITH
  - SACRAMENTS – THE PRESENCE / GRACE OF GOD
- **BUILDINGS AS SACRED SITES**
  - CONNECTION WITH TRANSCENDENT / SPIRITUAL
  - RE-CREATING NOSTALGIC PAST
  - RECRUITING / ALIENATING
- **MEANING MAKING**
  - LINKING PAST WITH FUTURE THROUGH PRESENT
  - GROUP / PERSONAL – HOPE
- **JUSTICE CREATING**

# EXPERIENCE AND APOSTOLIC ACTION

- **POINTS OF SPIRITUAL CONTACT**
  - SACRAMENTAL ROLE
  - RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCES
- **COMMUNITY BUILDERS**
  - KIND? HOW? VIRTUAL? WHEN?
    - > E.G. USE OF 'FACE BOOK'
    - > USE OF 'SMS' NETWORKS
- **WHERE DOES OLD SPIRITUAL TECHNOLOGY FIT?**

# Roman Catholics and Authority

- **Catholic Church**
  - Uses a ‘traditional’ hierarchical authority
  - Redolent with imperial / monarchical imagery
    - > Slightly tempered by rational/legal
  - This fit well in past
    - > Well respected as disciplined
    - > Familiar/universal/objective
- **The Shift to experiential Authority**
  - What implications?
    - > What experience is offered, is had

# 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY SOCIAL CONTEXT

- **RELIGION is FREE OF RELIGIOUS ORGANISATION / CONTROL**
- **SPIRITUALITIES THRIVING**
- **NO ONE VIEW / GROUP DOMINANT, OR PRIVILEGED**
- **OPEN TO THE WIDEST DIVERSITY OF VOICES, VIEWS, EXPERIENCES**
- **BIASED NEITHER TO THE RELIGIOUS NOR THE NON-, OR ANTI-RELIGIOUS**

# A NEW RELIGIOUS CONTEXT

- Recent changes have made for
  - A more religious / spiritual context
  - A more contested and conflictual context
    - > With shared values, ideas, orientations
    - > With greater diversity of groups and cultures
    - > Ethnicity/religion/spirituality less connected
  - Religions more of an independent force
  - Emergence of new alliances
    - > Pell and Jensen