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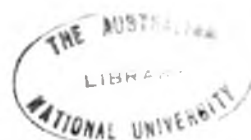
Methodists and the Social Conscience
in South Australia
and New South Wales, 1949-1972.

by

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Except where otherwise acknowledged in the text,
this thesis represents my original research.

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Abbreviations

ACC	Australian Council of Churches
ALRASA	Abortion Law Reform Association of South Australia.
AMA	Australian Medical Association.
CLM	Church and Life Movement.
DCC	Department of Christian Citizenship.
LCL	Liberal and Country League.
SAA	South Australian Archives.
SAM	South Australian Methodist.
SQD	Social Questions Department.
SSD	Social Service Department.

INTRODUCTION

Along with Protestant Churchmen¹ of other denominations throughout the Western world in the 1960s, many Australian Methodists felt obliged to re-assess the nature and place of the Christian Church in an increasingly affluent, liberal and secular society. From the mid-1940s to the 1960s consistently fewer Methodists could respond affirmatively to the question put shortly after World War Two by the Director of the South Australian Methodist Church's Department of Social Service, the Reverend E.H. Woollacott: 'Are we dedicated to the task of making society conform to the will of God'?² Woollacott perceived the 'will of God' in terms of the Nonconformist conscience which in Woollacott's day was the cornerstone of the Methodists' thinking and activity on social questions. From at least the 1880s the political and social questions which interested Australian Nonconformity 'were generally those which had plain moral implications'.³

After 1945 restrictive social legislation such as six o'clock closing was under threat as many more prosperous Australians rejected the ascetic legacy of late nineteenth century Protestantism. Numerous Methodists, too, rejected the Nonconformist conscience and eventually even the institutional Methodist Church rejected Woollacott's call. In 1966, when the Church had lost sight of Woollacott's question and the terms in which it was framed, the Reverend John Barrett confessed on behalf of the Annual Conference of the South Australian Church that 'we are often the Church that does not know what to say'.⁴

Previous research on Protestant Churchmen and society has concentrated on the formation, nature and intolerance of the Nonconformist conscience and whether or not it was appropriate to Australian conditions. Walter Phillips concluded that Protestants emerged from the 1880s confident that a 'Christian Australia' was a feasible goal, a goal belatedly abandoned only in the mid-1960s.⁵ David Bollen, at one time a candidate for the Methodist ministry, was anxious

1 Churchmen includes both clergy and committed laity.

2 SAM (South Australian Methodist), 30 July 1950.

3 Ibid., 19 January 1952.

4 Daily Record (SA), 13 October 1966.

5 Walter Phillips, Defending 'A Christian Country': Churchmen and Society in New South Wales in the 1880s and After (St. Lucia, Queensland, 1981), pp.xiii-xiv.

to tease out a social conscience among Protestants between 1890 and 1910 in New South Wales which stood apart from late Victorianism and expressed concern for social conditions.⁶ Recently, after analysing pastoral care, evangelism, ecumenical movements, controversies over Christian ritual, sectarian conflict and moral reformism, Richard Broome challenged Bollen's argument that the 'dominant' interest of Protestantism was 'social, not moral reconstruction' and was highly critical of the Protestants' reform crusade which, he said, 'deteriorated into the excesses of cant and coercion which became known as wowserism'.⁷

Little research has been completed on the experience of the Protestants' social conscience after World War One. A partial record is Ken Dempsey's Conflict and Decline which examined the relations between the clergy and laity in the local circuit. Dempsey concluded that after World War Two 'disagreement and, on occasion, open conflict between laymen and clergy was a fairly common occurrence in the Methodist Church and in a number of other Protestant Churches as well'.⁸ A major factor in the distancing of clergy from laity was the 'revolution in theological thinking throughout the western world concerning the role of the ministry and the laity, and the relationship of both to the community'.⁹

Prior to World War Two, and for some years after, Churchmen sought to dominate the community according to the dictates of the Nonconformist conscience. When domination could no longer be sustained the Nonconformist conscience faded, but the reaction of the institutional Church to the changes of the 1950s and 1960s in this context has not previously been analysed or documented in detail.¹⁰ This thesis will

6 J.D. Bollen, Protestantism and Social Reform in New South Wales 1890-1910 (Melbourne, 1972).

7 Richard Broome, Treasure in Earthen Vessels (St. Lucia, Queensland, 1980), pp.xi, xiii and 164.

8 Kenneth Dempsey, Conflict and Decline: Ministers and Laymen in an Australian Country Town (Sydney, 1983), p.172.

9 Ibid., p.173.

10 Methodist clergy participated in the study by Norman Blaikie of Victorian clergy in 1969. See his Plight of the Australian Clergy: To Convert, Care or Challenge (St. Lucia, Queensland, 1979). A quick overview of South Australian Methodism is in Dean Drayton, Five Generations - Evangelism in South Australia: a Study of the Methodist Church. 1836-1976 (Adelaide, 1980).

examine the experience of the Methodist Church in South Australia and New South Wales, and will argue that the decline of the Nonconformist conscience was a two-fold event. First, there was the overall decline in the Methodist constituency to which various external factors contributed: immigration, declining fertility, apostasy and the failure to attract the young in the early 1960s. Secondly, a number of Churchmen were alive to public disenchantment with restrictive social legislation and thus further weakened the commitment of the Church to the Nonconformist conscience.

Methodism remained committed to success in the face of decline. From the viewpoints of evangelism and the social conscience Bollen neatly described the Methodists' predicament:

[They] are now well into the great crisis of their history: the encounter of Churches committed to growth within a society that is subjecting them to decline.¹¹

On the one hand, fewer Australians appeared to believe in a transcendental being as a basis on which to build and experience answers to questions of existence and meaning. On the other, Methodism committed itself to making purposeful contributions to all aspects of social and political life largely consistent with contemporary secular liberalism. Thus the Church redefined the meaning of success, from dominating society through restrictive social legislation to inquiring into and pronouncing upon public policy. The weakness of this impulsive social conscience was shown when the Church drew back from resolutely attempting to influence government administration despite occasionally thorough research and sound recommendations. As they improvised a Methodist social conscience in the 1960s the inner circles of the Church acquiesced in modernity and were not alert to the declension of the Church's religious identity which - in part - had attracted the laity week by week for generations. Ironically, as the case study on abortion shows, to the extent that the Church consented to contemporary life and morals, modernity was indifferent to the Church because, in this context, the Church was largely redundant.

¹¹ J.D. Bollen, Religion in Australia (Sydney, 1973), p.63.

The principal sources used to demonstrate this argument have been manuscript materials; only a few of the insights of the Reverend Dr. Arnold Hunt into the post-war experience of the South Australian Methodists have been available;¹² his general history of South Australian Methodism has not been sighted but is due for publication before the end of 1985. The most important sources have been the minutes of the permanent social questions committees of the South Australian and New South Wales Conferences and the Daily Records of Conference. Little correspondence is available and most of it dates from the late 1960s and early 1970s. The journals and minutes of District Synods¹³ are important when attempting to gauge the moods and responses of local Methodists on contemporary issues. New South Wales sources have been more spare than those from South Australia. For example, no journals of District Synods were kept in that State, nor was the Daily Record of Conference quite as detailed as similar documents in South Australia. Social questions committees were not as thoroughly minuted either.

The records of para-Church or inter-Church^{agencies} have generally not been consulted, either because they could not be located or they were deemed to be not particularly relevant. For example, no records after 1946 of the United Churches Social Reform Board representing the Free Churches in South Australia appear to have survived. The minutes of the Temperance Alliance in South Australia are stored in the State Archives but remain unsorted. Few amendments to the record were expected to flow from a time-consuming search of them. In Sydney the same records have simply disappeared. They are said to have been taken from the Alliance offices to the Mitchell Library but there is no record that they actually arrived. This is unfortunate because relations between the Methodists and the Alliance were complicated by differing perspectives on the nature of temperance in the 1950s and 1960s.

No private papers of the Reverend E.H. Woollacott, nor of his successor at the South Australian Social Service Department, the Reverend

12 Interview: Reverend Dr. Arnold Hunt, 18 June 1984. Dr. Hunt was Principal of the Methodists' theological college in South Australia and editor of the SAM during the 1960s.

13 Each State Conference was divided into a number of districts. They followed the geographical character of the State.

M.C. Trenorden, appear to have survived. To some extent these deficiencies have been overcome by personal interviews with respective colleagues and friends.

The connexional journals, the South Australian Methodist and the Sydney Methodist, have been significant sources of basic data and impressions by contemporaries. Both were official organs but did not often document official transactions, although Synod and Conference reports were provided by them. The respective editors, by the nature of their faith, understanding and representation of the Church in the world, have influenced the nature of contemporary Methodism which is represented in the pages of their papers.

Clearly, then, the thesis is based on the relics of articulate Methodists who, with few exceptions, were the opinion-makers of the institutional Church. In chapter One committed Methodists are distinguished from nominal adherents of Methodism. Committed Methodists may then be divided between those who refused to cut their social consciences in the fashion requested by their Church, and those who felt comfortable with modernity. The problem of the quality of the individual Methodist's articulation is not confined to (absent) reactions by Church members to official resolutions on social questions. It extends especially to the spiritual condition of the Church, for example, which has been an unknown quality in post-war years and the subject of impressions only.¹⁴ The problem of muted Methodists might have been better overcome, if not totally surmounted, if the thesis were based on sources for one State only.

The choice of South Australia and New South Wales as the locations for this study was guided by the demographic consideration that the Methodist penetration of religious and social life in the two States differed greatly. Whereas in New South Wales nominal Methodists accounted for around ten per cent of the population, in South Australia

14 See Dempsey, Conflict and Decline, p.173 where he says that 'unfortunately we lack any systematic study of the opinions Australian laypeople hold about the part played in local church life by their ministers'. This observation can be extended to cover many aspects of Methodist Church life.

in 1947 they constituted just over one-quarter of that State's population. It was the highest penetration by nominal Methodism of any State. New South Wales represented the lowest. Consequently, until the mid-sixties, Methodism had differing experiences as a part of the political community in respective States and different levels of access to legislative and executive arms of government.

In the latter parts of the thesis South Australia dominates for reasons which bear heavily on the conclusions of the thesis as a whole: government offered Methodism the opportunity to participate in decision-making. No similar opportunity was made available in New South Wales. The South Australian experience demonstrated that unless the Methodist Church was able to dominate the public agenda on social questions with 'plain moral implications'¹⁵ - as it had done in South Australia in 1940s and 1950s - its contribution would prove to be irrelevant and could be ignored even by members of parliament who were committed Methodists.

The political irrelevance of the Church on social questions among its own members¹⁶ and in public bodies is one reason for the small part given in this study to domestic reactions to the war in Vietnam. Methodists were deeply divided over the Australian commitment to the war, national service and the methods of protest. With rare exceptions, debate was couched in secular terms.¹⁷ While the war continued it remained a debilitating influence on numerous personal relationships. Once the war began to diminish and Australian and American withdrawal from Vietnam was imminent, debate disappeared from official Methodist circles. Simultaneously, Methodist fellowship improved greatly. As far as the Methodist social conscience was concerned, the war was a passing phenomenon.

Although the thesis ranges widely it is not a general history of the Methodist Church in either State. Much more detail on many more elements of Methodist life would need to be digested for that to be so. Reference to other developments which either reflected the changes

15 SAM. 19 January 1952.

16 Hans Mol, The Faith of Australians (Sydney, 1985) p.156.

17 See, for example, Methodist (Sydney), 19 November 1966. SAM, 21 October 1966.

occurring in Methodist thinking and activity on social and moral questions or illustrated the considerable variety of purpose that was encompassed by the Methodist Church is made as seems necessary. An exception has been Church union. To have considered union in this context would have extended the scope of the thesis impracticably, especially regarding the local church, although the discussions of the Basis of Union at Quarterly Meetings in 1964-54 could prove a most informative source for the Methodists' faith in the 1960s.¹⁸ More particularly, union can be dismissed from this thesis on the same grounds as Vietnam: it was not pertinent to the redevelopment of the Methodists' social conscience in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Further, this is not a history of Church-state relations although much time is spent enquiring into parliamentary responses to Methodist initiatives or attitudes. These matters are reported only insofar as they were relevant to the Methodists' own decision-making and activity or inactivity, as the case may be. In this context it is important to note also that no attention is paid to the Central Methodist Missions or other local missions. This thesis is concerned with the views of the Church on social questions, not the philanthropic works of the Church, an area in which the Church was often genuinely innovative and effective.

The thesis contains seven chapters. Chapter One attempts to identify Methodists and the condition of the Church in the late 1940s. It also introduces two clergymen who were given the responsibility by the irrelative Annual Conferences to defend the Nonconformist conscience and the legislative legacy of the early twentieth century. Chapter Two analyses the close association between Methodists and other Australians in the first post-war decade. On one hand, the threat which prosperity would later pose to religious sensibilities is here seen to have been overlooked by Methodists in their enthusiasm for economic security. On the other, the differences between Methodists on contemporary social questions can also be seen in embryonic form in the context of the Cold War. The third chapter continues the theme of prosperity contrasting the enthusiasm generated by the Billy Graham crusades in 1959 among many

18 See Alan W. Black, 'The sociology of ecumenism: initial observations on the formation of the Uniting Church in Australia' in Alan W. Black and Peter Glasner (eds.), Practice and Belief: Studies in the Sociology of Australian Religion (Sydney, 1983), pp.86-107.

ordinary Methodists with the presentiments of several clergymen of great uncertainties for the Church.

Chapters Four and Five observe the fading Nonconformist conscience in Methodism by an examination of the reactions of the Methodist Church to liberalised liquor licensing.

Chapters Six and Seven analyse the way in which Methodism improvised a social conscience in the 1960s and the early 1970s. Chapter Six considers the impact and coincidence of radical individualism, religious decline, conflict within the Church and Methodist decline according to several social criteria. The nature of the compromises made by at least some of the inner circles of Methodism with modernity is illustrated in Chapter Seven, a case study of the South Australian Church and the public issue of abortion.

In this order, then, this thesis observes the demise of the Nonconformist conscience among Methodists in the 1950s and 1960s and assesses the Church's (often passive) reactions to impatient secular demands for tolerance.

CHAPTER ONE.

THE IDENTITY OF METHODISM IN 1949

This chapter will examine the nature of the Methodist identity in the immediate post-war era. The object is to outline the faith and measure the commitment of the Methodists who entered the post-war world; to show that while they were at the same time generally homogeneous with other Australians their Church remained confident of the capacity of the Nonconformist conscience to dominate Australian leisure and social life; and, finally, to demonstrate how the Liberal Protestant tradition at once allowed Methodists to adapt to external change yet made Methodism vulnerable to secular influences.

The Methodist faith fitted comfortably into the Liberal Protestant as opposed to the Reformed tradition; it 'focus[ed] the event of salvation on the individual encounter with God - an encounter in which the emotive, non-cognitive element is dominant'.¹ Liberal Protestantism placed great emphasis on individual reason and allowed each individual or new generation to reinterpret doctrine and dogma when it appeared contrary to reason or morality; ordinary historical methods could be applied to the Bible and other sacred texts. Liberal Protestantism was optimistic regarding human progress and rationality.²

The roots of Methodism lay in European pietism and Arminianism. The German Pietists of the early eighteenth century, under their leader, Count Zinzendorf, provided the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, with a model of experiential religion which made the affective or psychological response in the believer rather than the authority of the bible or Church, to be the rule of faith. The word of God is to be experienced within the believer. Wesley's own record of conversion indicates the nature of the experience:

1 Anthony Dyson, 'Protestantism', in D.B. Fry (ed.), The Nature of Religious Man (London, 1982), pp.5-6.

2 Alan Bullock and Oliver Stalleybrass (eds.), The Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought (London, 1977), pp.347-8.

About a quarter before nine while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.³

The significance of this experience was more than emotional. Charles Wesley wrote: "My God, I know, I feel Thee mine"; the Wesleys and many Methodists with and after them had a sense of personal knowledge of the 'life of God in the soul of man'. Knowledge preceded experience. The English Methodist historian, Rupert Davies, was at pains to emphasise this point when writing of Methodist doctrine:

doctrine is derived from Scripture, but may be confirmed by experience; experience alone does not prove anything ... [The] emphasis is always on what God has done and continues to do.⁴

Arminianism was a 'theological reaction against the deterministic logic of Calvinism' and insisted that Divine Sovereignty was compatible with a real free will in man.⁵ Again, as Charles Wesley wrote: 'For all, for all, my Saviour died'.⁶ Wesley preached salvation by faith - for which he was indebted to Luther - counterbalanced by sanctification, a doctrine, ironically, with mainly Catholic antecedents.⁷ By sanctification Wesley meant 'the steady conquest of inward sin'. Backsliding was natural, for man was imperfect; the individual could not be condemned for his or her human falterings as long as he 'continue[d] in faith and the vision of Christ'.⁸ In the Sermon on the Mount, Christ had 'revealed the true meaning' of the Mosaic Law 'and laid it on us to keep'.⁹ The English Conference agreed in the 1770s that

3 Maldwyn Edwards, 'John Wesley', in Rupert Davies and Gordon Rupp (eds.), A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain (London, 1965), vol. 1, p.50.

4 Rupert Davies, 'The people called Methodists. 1. "Our doctrines"', in Davies and Rupp, A History of the Methodist Church, pp.149-50.

5 F.L. Cross and E.A. Livingstone (eds.), The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, second ed. (London, 1974), p.90.

6 W.F. Lofthouse, 'Charles Wesley', in Davies and Rupp, A History of the Methodist Church, p.121.

7 Jean Orcibal, 'The theological originality of John Wesley and continental spirituality', in Ibid., p.103.

8 Davies, 'Our doctrines', p.169.

9 Ibid., p.168.

The 'new man' had to strive to maintain holiness if he was to achieve sanctification at the time of judgment.¹⁰

Holiness remained the doctrinal objective of committed Australian Methodists in 1949. Methodists, according to the editor of the South Australian Methodist, the Reverend A.E. Cowley, believed that the writings of Wesley, to which all Methodist preachers were 'pledged to give their general assent', were in accord with holy writ. For Cowley, the hymns of Charles Wesley, 'the sweet singer of Methodism', were a 'splendid guide' to the evangelical doctrines of Methodism. And yet it seemed that too few Methodists knew of their Church's doctrines: Cowley recommended greater use of the hymn book for private devotions; 'there must be increased knowledge of divine things, and a better understanding of Methodist doctrine'.¹¹

Did many seek such understanding? Ken Dempsey, a Methodist minister who resigned from the ministry in order to take up sociology, concluded that for many Methodists in the late 1940s personal ethics were primary: sermon language, for example, was 'little more than ornamentation on an essentially secular message'. Personal salvation was of 'small account'. Such doctrine was 'other-worldly'.¹²

The editor of the Methodist, the Reverend Percy Black, also concluded that few now believed that 'this world is nothing more than [man's] temporary habitat'. Fear of judgment present in the deliberations of the English Conference in 1770 no longer acted as a 'powerful influence' on personal conduct.¹³ It seemed that not all who attended worship services could sing the words of one of Charles Wesley's 7,000 hymns:

Where the indubitable seal
That ascertains the kingdom mine?
The powerful stamp I long to feel,
The signature of love divine:
O shed it in my heart abroad,
Fulness of love, of heaven, of God.¹⁴

10 Bernard Semmel, The Methodist Revolution (London, 1977), p.49.

11 SAM, 24 October 1952.

12 Kenneth Dempsey, Conflict and Decline, p.86.

13 Methodist, 24 May 1947.

14 Edwards, 'John Wesley', p.61.

Wesley and the Church he founded - unintentionally - were both victim and beneficiary of Western social change in which religion became a private matter. In the eighteenth century Methodism could induce revivals in the midst of secularisation. Throughout the history of Methodism, the sacerdotal Church was not identifiable as a 'total' social institution with jurisdiction over economic and political institutions. Religion no longer possessed any 'over-arching' claims on other institutions. The Church was manifested by 'public rhetoric and private virtue'.¹⁵ Society had largely 'disengaged' itself from religion. Methodism itself contributed to the secularising process; it disciplined religious responses, eradicated random superstition, rationalised understanding and commitment and worked for a steady reduction of immanentism. Among her people Methodism also eliminated sacerdotalism and minimized mystery.¹⁶ For the purposes of this thesis two elements are relevant.

The first is an appropriate definition of religion. Employing a phenomenological approach, the Canadian religious philosopher Donald Wiebe doubted that religion could be neatly defined. He chose three elements which typify the phenomena which count as religious: transcendence, human limitation, and salvation.¹⁷ They were consistent with much that was essential to Methodism. In a work on the decline of the sacred, Sabino Acquaviva nominated similar elements as basic to a definition of religion but insisted that individuals' experiences of a 'wholly other' were irreplaceable for a religious experience.¹⁸ For the religious 'man-alone' is in some way incomplete. The 'wholly other' and Wesley's meaning of 'feeling' were largely synonymous: God, a transcendental being, reveals Himself to individuals. Thus the individual, as described above, senses 'the whole work of God' done in his or her soul.

In Australia in the 1940s this perception of religion remained at the heart of the Methodist faith. By the 1960s Australian Methodism shared the ambiguity common throughout Liberal Protestantism which doubted that

15 Karel Dobbelaere, 'Secularisation: a multi-dimensional concept', Current Sociology, vol. 29, no. 2, Summer 1981, pp.20-21.

16 Bryan Wilson, Religion in Secular Perspective (Oxford, 1982), p.152.

17 Donald Wiebe, Religion and Truth: Towards an Alternative Paradigm for the Study of Religion (The Hague, 1981), p.13.

18 Sabino S. Acquaviva, The Decline of the Sacred in Industrial Society (Oxford, 1979), p.13.

God was indeed transcendental, but suggested, rather, that He was working among people and institutions establishing His Kingdom. As far as this chapter is concerned that analysis was not yet present although it would prove to be an explanation of the second element: could the soul, as understood by Methodists, become spiritually dormant? Desacralisation was defined by Acquaviva as the 'loss of the capacity for living a psychological experience of the sacred'.¹⁹ Acquaviva permitted, by definition, a form of 'secularised religion' - it corresponded closely with Dempsey's description of the Methodists at 'Barool' - but questioned whether a religion, if 'deprived of its basic human and experimental psychological basis', can be any more than an intellectual attitude. When Percy Black cast his eye over the population of New South Wales he wrote in terms virtually synonymous with Acquaviva and from similar motivations. Black's vision of the Christian life was probably one which in post-war decades could not be easily grafted onto hedonist and utilitarian Australian life.²⁰ Sydney people were probably more indifferent than hostile to the claims of Christianity. Black suggested - or perhaps hoped - that Methodism was 'sometimes evilly spoken of'. Many Christians, he added, 'greatly' underestimated the strength of the opposition that was 'offered to Christ' in the modern world. Christ's opponents were identified only in the most vague terms - brewers excepted. With ardent conviction he argued that the Church should confront its enemies, permeate social life and seek conversions. 'Communion with God' was a 'primal human need', he wrote; Black was steeped in Methodist doctrine and evangelical perspective. He was also a realist. They may have been 'foolish' who rejected the Church or remained indifferent 'but even the spirit of God must have something upon which to work'. What was the 'worst feature' of the immediate post-war years?

[N]one other than the dying and fading out of the spiritual faculties in millions of people of all classes and grades of society. [The] spiritual faculties of men are becoming atrophied, and, if we are not careful, we shall have nothing to which we can appeal.²¹

19 Ibid., p.35.

20 Ronald Conway, The Great Australian Stupor: An Interpretation of the Australian Way of Life second ed. (Melbourne, 1985), pp.12-13.

21 Methodist, 17 and 24 September 1947 and 6 March 1948; Ibid., 24 July 1946, quoted in Raymond Wesley Hartley, 'Worship and liturgy in the Methodist Church of Australia, 1902-1976 with particular reference to New South Wales'. M.Th. Thesis, University of Sydney, 1977, p.50.

Black's observations were not contradicted by any correspondent to the Methodist. Evangelical Methodists agreed that atrophy of men's spiritual faculties could seriously *undermine* the life of the Church. How the Church responded to spiritual declension is discussed later in this chapter.

In South Australia the Methodist doctrines were restated in the early 1950s by the Reverend Clifford Symons. In his Our Fathers' Faith and Ours Symons did not point to the many doctrinal influences of higher criticism which had followed since Wesley's day. Generally, doctrines remained much the same, however, and remained consistent with general Christian doctrines with occasional Methodist emphases. Man, created in the image of God, was, by his own free will, corrupted by sin. God and man were 'estranged'. Sin, he added, could also be a social characteristic: individuals sin, therefore social groups, composed of sinful individuals, 'tend to be perverted also'. Whereas eighteenth century Methodists believed that man was totally depraved, the opposite could also be true: 'Men also inherit the good of previous generations and are benefitted by a good environment'.²² This vision of human potential was a secular influence, it was fundamental to temperance and could ultimately blot out the transcendental beliefs of several Methodists in the 1960s.²³

The Church, Symons wrote, was created by God who 'gathers into one fellowship all those who are saved'.²⁴ How was the Methodist 'fellowship' organised? On the nature of the Church Methodists seemed to sway between two opposites. On one hand, they expressed belief in the 'one Holy and Catholic Apostolic Church'; that Church pervaded all Wesley's writings. On the other, they were individualistic: Wesley also spoke of the Church 'where two or three are gathered in the name of Christ'.²⁵ The Church was the body of believers. For the edification of Methodists Wesley instituted the class meeting which usually consisted of around twelve members, under the leadership of a layman, who met weekly for fellowship, Bible study and personal testimony:

22 Clifford T. Symons, Our Fathers' Faith and Ours: an Outline of the History, Doctrines and Organisation of the Methodist Church (Melbourne, n.d.), p.63.

23 Brian Harrison, Drink and the Victorians: the Temperance Question in England 1815-1872 (London, 1971), p.185.

24 Symons, Our Fathers Faith, p.66.

25 Davies, 'Our doctrines', pp.173-74.

On these occasions 'advice or reproof was given as need required, quarrels made up, misunderstandings removed', and all in the atmosphere of praise and prayer.²⁶

The class meeting came to be regarded as the 'living heart' of the connexion, the particular organisational structure developed in Methodism. Should the class meeting fall into disuse 'dreadful things' were expected to follow, according to some late nineteenth century Methodists who observed declining participation in the class meeting.²⁷ The Reverend Dr. Soper of the English Conference was quoted in the South Australian Methodist in 1951 saying much the same thing: 'When the class meeting is dead the Church itself is dying';²⁸ but nearly 60 years previously the General Conference of the Wesleyan Methodists in Australia had abandoned the rule that members should attend the weekly class meeting.²⁹ Now the institution had generally passed from Australian life. The loss was 'deplored' by some and the fact that the Church tolerated standards of religious life that were 'too low' was said by one clergyman in 1948 to be known in the wider community: 'accordingly, there was a decline in the moral and ethical standards of the people'.³⁰ It was this assumption that the moral behaviour of the public was influenced by moral asceticism and deep religious striving among Church members, which was to be jettisoned by some Churchmen in the 1960s.

In 1949 the Methodist polity remained largely intact despite the decline of the class meeting. The Church's basic unit was the circuit which was a defined area in which were situated one or more churches or preaching places. Most circuits required only one minister but sometimes one or more assistants could be appointed to large circuits. The circuit Quarterly Meeting stemmed from Wesley's practice of issuing membership tickets at quarterly intervals. Although each church was largely

26 Frank Baker, 'The people called Methodists - 3. Polity', in Davies and Rupp, A History of the Methodist Church, p.223.

27 Kath Whitby and Eric G. Clancy, Great the Heritage: The Story of Methodism in New South Wales, 1812-1975 (Sydney, 1975), p.21.

28 SAM, 9 November 1951.

29 Walter Phillips, Defending 'A Christian Country'. Churchmen and Society in New South Wales in the 1880s and After (St. Lucia, Queensland, 1981), p.81; R.B. Walker, 'Methodism in the "Paradise of Dissent", 1837-1900', Journal of Religious History, 5(4), p.338.

30 The Reverend W.J. Douglass introducing the Conversation on the Work of God. Methodist, 13 March 1948.

responsible for its own affairs - through Leaders' Meetings - the Quarterly Meeting had the general oversight of the whole circuit and 'exercised oversight of some aspects of the minister's work'.³¹ It consisted of ministers and probationers stationed in the circuit, work and local circuit and Church officials and accredited local preachers. There were also annually elected representatives of each of the local churches in the circuit. Circuit stewards were the executive officers of the Quarterly Meeting.

Annual Conference was the central governing unit of the Church. By the mid-1940s, in Australia, it comprised ministerial members, lay representatives from each Quarterly Meeting; lay representatives of each Conference Department; and, often, other lay members specially invited by the President. The Ministers sat separately in 'Ministerial session' to decide affairs concerning ministers (such as ordination and stationing). Decisions affecting the whole Church were taken by the full Conference in 'Representative Session'. A minister was President and elected annually by the Conference. The term 'connexion' is a convenient shorthand for the general Methodist Church's administrative structure and leaders. More important, the term was used by Methodists to underline the fact that no single congregation or circuit was an entity in itself but derived its identity from membership in the whole denomination.

The ministry was specially set apart by the Church to devote its energies to the propagation of the Gospel and generally oversee all the activities of the Church. Ministers were also authorised to administer the sacraments of baptism and holy communion. Methodism accepted Luther's dictum of the 'priesthood of all believers'; ministers had 'no apparent ontological difference from laymen'.³² Thus Methodist theologians have rejected any belief in a 'special grace' bestowed at ordination. Nonetheless, Ken Dempsey did not deny for later generations his comment on nineteenth century Methodism that 'laying on of hands' during ordination was a 'mystical practice' which helped distance clergy and laity from each other.³³

31 Dempsey, Conflict and Decline, p.42.

32 J.M. Turner, 'Methodism in England 1900-1932', in Rupert Davies, A. Raymond George and Gordon Rupp, A History of the Methodist Church in Great Britain (London, 1983), vol. 3, p.338.

33 Dempsey, Conflict and Decline, p.71.

The Church - the Conference and the people - could only justify their fellowship, according to Methodist tradition, if it did the 'work of Christ':

The Church has to offer itself as a living sacrifice to God on behalf of men, seeking always to bring them to God, that they may be saved from their sins and saved to sonship through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.³⁴

In the decade following World War Two this inspiration was a profound motor of much activity in the inner circles of Methodism. Although the evangelical purpose of Methodism was to 'make the evangel of Jesus prevail everywhere', Methodist evangelism did not seek to poach conversions from other denominations; it sought to win for Christ those who, in answer to the religious question on the census form, wrote 'Methodist'. It was from within this body of nominal Methodism that the Church expected its believers to come; it should also provide the core constituency for the defence of restrictive social legislation.

Were there many nominal Methodists susceptible to evangelical enthusiasm and likely to defend, say, six o'clock closing of hotel bars? The 1947 census continued a tradition whereby census results 'afforded ... moments of celebration and assurance'.³⁵ It seemed to many Church leaders that great numbers of presently passive Christians would 'respond positively to some fresh and vital presentation of Christianity'.³⁶ In the 14 years since the last Census (in 1933) Methodist numbers grew most rapidly.

34 Symons, Our Fathers' Faith and Ours, p.67.

35 M. E. J. Stansall, Tasmanian Methodism: 1830-1975 (Launceston, 1975), p.9; Kath Whitby and Eric Clancy, Great the Heritage, p.16.

36 Kenneth T. Henderson, 'Religious institutions and aspirations', in George Caiger (ed.), The Australian Way of Life (London, 1953), p.116.

Table 1 Religious identification in Australia: selected census figures.' 1947.

A. Christian denomination.			B. Australian religion		
	No.	%		No.	%
Methodist	871,425	11.5	Christian	6,672,936	88.0
Presbyterian	743,540	9.8	Non-Christian	36,562	0.5
Anglican	2,957,032	39.0	Indefinite	18,708	0.2
Catholic	1,569,726	20.7	No Religion	26,328	0.3
Other	531,213	7.0	Not stated	824,824	10.9
<hr/>			<hr/>		
Total	6,672,936	88.0	Total	7,579,358	99.9
<hr/>			<hr/>		

While the total population increased by 14.3 per cent since 1933 the Methodist increase was 27.4 per cent which compared with a 21.8 per cent increase for Catholic, 15.3 per cent for Anglicans and 4.2 per cent for Presbyterians.³⁷

The Reverend Alan Walker attributed the Methodist rise to the intense development of youth work; the Home Missions system whereby strong circuits were linked with weak and embryonic ones; the unique fellowship of Methodist groups; and the Methodists' 'strongly developed' social conscience which gave 'their leaders a strong voice in those questions of public morality [to] which the Australian conscience is most responsive to religious leadership'.³⁸

Whereas South Australia was unique in entering the post-war years with one-quarter of its population nominally Methodist New South Wales had the lowest proportion of Methodists of all the States.

37 Ibid., p.116.

38 Ibid.

Table 2 Major Christian denominations in South Australia and New South Wales according to the census in 1947.

	South Australia		New South Wales	
	No.	%	No.	%
Methodist	170,513	31.3	246,876	9.4
Presbyterian	24,304	4.5	262,166	10.0
Anglican	209,151	38.4	1,293,964	49.3
Catholic	117,025	21.5	676,993	25.8
Other	24,376	4.5	142,168	5.4
Total Christian	545,369	100.2	2,622,168	99.9

According to the census, South Australian Methodism experienced greater growth than the national average between 1933 and 1947 which helped emphasise the unusual denominational breakdown of the State's population. For example, South Australia had the lowest percentages of Anglicans and Presbyterians. Only Tasmania had a smaller percentage of Catholics. In New South Wales the proportions of denominations other than Methodist were generally near national levels, although Presbyterianism was much stronger than in South Australia.

Were Methodists distinguishable from the general population of Australia by nature of their social background? Historians have often concluded that nineteenth and twentieth^{century} Protestantism (particularly in New South Wales) was unable to attract working class adherents. According to Richard Broome, for example, the 'great bulk' of active Protestants were middle class, the 'decent people'.³⁹ Michael McKernan assumed that the Methodists were, 'in the mass, upwardly mobile middle class' although this conclusion could 'not be supported statistically'. McKernan argued that it was demonstrated 'by the assumptions church leaders made about their people'.⁴⁰ The same assumptions also created anxiety among Churchmen. In the early 1950s, for example, the Reverend Ralph of the Glebe Methodist Mission and editor of the Australian Christian Commonwealth, bemoaned the 'conspicuous' absence of the working class from the

39. Richard Broome, Treasure in Earthen Vessels, pp.7-8.

40. Michael McKernan, Australian Churches at War: Attitudes and Activities of the Major Churches (Sydney and Canberra, 1980), p.7.

Methodist churches.⁴¹ Alan Walker suggested that they had been 'largely abandoned' by the Church 'the world around'.⁴² The President-General of the Methodist Church in Australasia, in 1947, discovered that of the hundreds of delegates to Annual Conferences, only two were also members of trade unions.⁴³

In earlier decades such an observation might have possessed a very different image in South Australia where, through its people, the Methodist Church was associated with working class and labour movements to an unusual degree.⁴⁴ For example, by the 1930s, at least four of the six Labor Premiers to that time were Methodists and Rechabites.⁴⁵ While the timing remains unknown, Methodist penetration of working class life probably weakened by the middle of the twentieth century. The South Australian Conference thought so in 1949 and sought a reconciliation between the Church and the 'ethical idealism' of the labour movement; at the level of individuals, Conference recommended that Methodist 'cells' be formed in places of employment.⁴⁶ Little seems to have come from the idea.

Nevertheless, other evidence suggests that since the turn of the century differences in religious behaviour between social classes were reduced. According to the Religion in Australia survey, the middle classes lost much of their religious devotion, with the effect that

41 Methodist, 11 March 1950.

42 Alan Walker, The Whole Gospel for the Whole World (London, 1958), p.15.

43 Alan Walker, God and Australia (Glebe, N.S.W., 1948), p.11. Of course, as R.B. Walker observed for nineteenth century South Australian Methodists, 'it could be wrong to assume that the lay representatives were a cross-section of the congregations'. 'Methodism in the "Paradise of Dissent"', pp.34-43.

44 'It is plain that Methodism flourished in such working class areas as Port Adelaide and amidst the poorly-paid copper miners at Moonta.' Ibid., p.342.

45 They were Thomas Price (Premier from 26 July 1905 to 5 June 1909); John Verran (3 June 1910 - 17 February 1912); Crawford Vaughn (3 April 1915 - 14 July 1917); and R.S. Richards (13 February - 18 April 1933). At least two of them came from Yorke Peninsula, rich in Cornish and Methodist traditions.

46 Another motive was anti-Communism, although Conference was also guided by the anti-Communist and anti-capitalist statements emanating from the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in 1948. SA Conf. Mins., 1949, pp.83-84.

fewer differences came to exist between occupational groups than the historical literature implied. In the 1947 Australian Census, for example, the major Australian denominations showed generally similar occupational profiles which differed only slightly from the national distribution of occupations.⁴⁷ Methodists were no exception although, in a minor way, they were disproportionately associated with agricultural and non-manual pursuits.

Table 3 Religion compared with occupational order in Australia in 1947 (males) measured as a percentage.

Occupations	Methodist	Presb.	Anglican	Catholic	Total
Rural, fishing and hunting	21.6	22.0	16.5	17.4	17.9
Professional and semi-professional	3.3	4.3	3.0	3.3	3.3
Administrative	5.2	6.6	5.9	4.3	5.6
Commercial and clerical	17.1	18.8	16.6	16.6	16.5
Domestic and protective service	5.0	5.3	6.3	7.2	6.1
Craftsmen	20.8	20.1	20.8	17.3	20.1
Operatives	19.5	16.1	21.4	22.0	20.7
Labourers	5.0	4.2	6.4	8.1	6.4
Indefinite or not stated	2.6	2.5	3.3	3.9	3.3

	Total work-force
Methodist	278,015
Presbyterian	244,826
Anglican	980,892
Catholic	491,193
Australia (total)	2,479,269

These occupational characteristics were probably shared across State borders, perhaps with denominational variations from the national mean greater in one state than in another, but the available data do not permit conclusions.

47 Hans Mol, Religion in Australia (Melbourne, 1971), pp.81 and 114.

If Methodists were largely indistinguishable from the ordinary man in the street then to what extent did the answer 'Methodist' to the religious question in the census imply some degree of personal commitment to religious life?

A confirmed member was one who aged 15 years or over who, after a period of instruction, confessed his or her faith and agreed to accept the discipline of the Church. Members were expected to attend worship services and partake of the Lord's Supper, participate in the fellowship of the Church, be involved in personal stewardship, and consider the Church's policies and resolutions on social questions.

Table 4 Church members compared with adult nominal Methodists, 1947.

	Nominal Methodists		
	aged 15 years	Members	
	and over		
	no.	no.	%
South Australia	128,625	27,975	21.8
New South Wales	185,292	44,724	24.1

In South Australia in 1947, Church members accounted for just over one-fifth of nominal Methodist adults; in New South Wales, just under one-quarter, while the South Australian percentage given in Table 4 was declining.

In the early post-war years each successive set of annual statistics showed fewer members in the Methodist Church in South Australia. The largest falls were in the metropolitan area.⁴⁸ Much of the numerical loss may have resulted from intensive culling of membership rolls by Quarterly Meetings. Perhaps, too, the 'religious elan vital' of South Australian Methodists was 'at a low ebb' as Methodists were informed in February 1948 by the President and Secretary of the Conference, the Reverends G.W. Shapley and J.H. Pointon.⁴⁹ (Perhaps there was some truth in the

48 SA Conf. Mins. 1948, p.84.

49 Ibid, p.72.

comment of one delegate to the General Conference: 'If a sheep were brought into the fold of many of our Churches it would die of exposure'.⁵⁰ The Conference resolution on the 'Work of God' that year expressed 'God's' gratitude for the work done in the previous twelve months, but 'regret[ted] that something more decisive had not been achieved'. At the time the Church in South Australia was engaged in a Thanksgiving Memorial Crusade. The second report of the committee overseeing the crusade said: 'The losses across Australia during the past 30 years are such as to "stab us broad awake" making this crusade an imperative in the forefront of the Church's immediate programme'.⁵²

The membership statistics for New South Wales in the late 1940s made for only slightly less disturbing reading. Gratitude in the Conference for 'evidence of an awakened sense of Apostolic Commission' mixed uneasily with the 'tragic indifference to the work of the Church' reported from many 'new areas'.⁵³ In his Presidential address in March 1947, the Reverend G.E. Johnson observed that many of those who evinced indifference in 'moral and spiritual things' were 'living on the spiritual capital handed down to them by their fathers, and unless this is replenished it is likely soon to give out'.⁵⁴

The President-General, the Reverend Dr. John Burton, agreed. After a visit to the United States in 1946, Burton addressed meeting of the General Conference Committee on Evangelism. In February 1947 he presented his thoughts to the Annual Conferences in each State. He held that decreasing Church attendances reflected and promoted the 'existing moral degeneracy'. Materialism was a spreading phenomenon and secularism was increasingly popular. A revival of true religion was 'urgently needed'. He then presented his impressions of the 'Crusade for Christ' under way in the Methodist Churches in the United States of America. He could agree with those who said that religion could 'not be forced upon the people', but was encouraged by the ability of the American Methodists to gain 850,000 new members in one year. He was eager to see a similar movement in Australia - 'his heart burned with a contagious passion that Methodism across Australia engaged in a new

50 SAM, 6 July 1951.

51 SA Conf. Mins. 1948, p.84.

52 Ibid., p.330.

53 NSW Conf. Mins. 1948, pp.145 and 234.

54 Methodist, 1 March 1947.

aggression for the Kingdom of God' - and a process was set in train to achieve that end. The Commonwealth Crusade for Christ was authorised by the General Conference in May 1948 and was intended to result in - among other things - membership increases of 15 per cent in consecutive years from April 1949 and following a programme of local lay evangelism.⁵⁵

And within the Church there were some hopeful signs. In February 1948 the South Australian Conference had recommended that 'fellowship be inaugurated for the rediscovery and development of experiential religion'. Within two years the Director of the Crusade for Christ in South Australia, the Reverend Edgar T. Pryor, observed that 'in quite a number of Churches' Fellowship meetings had been revived 'and in some cases these have taken the form of cottage meetings'.⁵⁶ Forty thousand 'community survey' cards had been prepared seeking to identify nominal Methodists in the community. Interviews with the people whose names filled the cards seemed to indicate 'no hostility towards the Church'. Surveys were to be followed by visitation evangelism. For that reason, Pryor added, leadership 'must urgently' be taken by the laity. Revival was not possible unless members 'realise that the ministry is not the Church, but that every member of the Church has a place and a function within the Body of Christ'. For the manner in which it approached the Crusade, South Australia was described by the Reverend Irving Benson of Melbourne as the 'laboratory State'. There were hopeful signs but Church authorities observed that many ministers and congregations - 'hundreds' nationally - accepted neither the method nor the need for evangelism.⁵⁷

Were isolated individuals equal to the task of evangelism? The Superintendent of the Bulli circuit, the Reverend Robert Grout, informed his parishioners, for example, that the Crusade for Christ was the 'divinely inspired response' of the Methodist church 'to a desperate world

55 Lay visitation was an American method of evangelism based on house-to-house evangelism by groups of Church members. The practice dated at least from the 1870s when it was encouraged by the evangelist Dwight L. Moody. It was low-cost and unsensational, the emphasis was placed on action by local clergy and laity. SA Conf. Mins. 1947, p.71; 1949, pp.195-96; Gen. Conf. Mins. 1948, pp. 249-50; 1951, p.267; Methodist, 15 March 1948. On lay visitation see William G. McLoughlin, Modern Revivalism. Charles Grandison Finney to Billy Graham (New York, 1959), p.459.

56 SA Conf. Mins. 1950, p.358.

57 Ibid., pp.358-59; Gen. Conf. Mins. 1951, p.269.

situation'. After advising his members on how they could best serve the Crusade, he exhorted: 'And now to your knees and to your battle stations, Crusaders all'. Nine months later he reported increased circuit income, a 'wonderful success'. That the absence of a car was a 'big handicap' suggests that the laity had not taken Grout's call to evangelism enthusiastically.⁵⁸

The indifferent growth of Methodist membership figures implies that in South Australia and New South Wales few 'war-weary' Australians sought comfort in 'old-fashioned' religion as suggested by Professor Dexter Dunphy, a Methodist, in the Boyer Lectures for 1972.⁵⁹ Methodists with varying degrees of commitment to the faith were divided over the merits, necessity and urgency of evangelism. In 1949 Methodists possessed similarly diverse attitudes to the political legacy of the late Victorian conscience: opinion ranged from enthusiasm to apathy, but not to opposition; nonetheless, apathy often rendered impotent the connexional attempts to defend and even extend the legacy of Victorian reformers. The Nonconformist conscience aside, Methodists were also divided over the question of whether there were any social and political implications of Christian faith.

Differing perceptions of the Church's social conscience were a major source of tension between Methodists. Many preferred a non-partisan passivity, particularly as far as the Church was concerned. (Personal involvement in politics was otherwise commended.) In February 1951, Percy Black quoted with approval Dr Joseph Parker of London who, some seventy years earlier, wrote:

Above all, the immediate work of the Gospel is not the reconstruction of society, but the renewing of the individual man.⁶⁰

Black gave short shrift to people whose conception of the Kingdom of God was in any way less ethereal and so, in his view, less than totally dependent on God's grace. It was vain, he wrote, 'to put very much confidence in our legislators as a class'.⁶¹

58 The Southern Beacon, 1 (1), August 1949; 4, c. May 1950.

59 Dexter Dunphy, The Challenge of Change (Sydney, 1972), p.12.

60 Methodist, 17 February 1951.

61 Ibid.

The Reverend Alan Walker was more confident of the ability of Parliament to improve the lot of the poor. By 1941 he had already been approached twice to stand as a Labor candidate.⁶² Walker was a Methodist minister and would not be diverted from that path. He would, nonetheless, have had little sympathy with that little Methodist Church building in Tasmania which included among the conditions of hire:

To be let for entertainment and public meetings, but not for dancing nor for meetings and entertainment for, or on behalf of, the Labor Party.⁶³

As a vigorous scion of temperance, he might have been more impressed by the "Blind Church", also in Tasmania and built in 1866: 'The windows were on one side only. This is said to have been to prevent the services being disturbed by the sight of revellers issuing from the inn which was nearby.'⁶⁴ As demonstrated by his initiation of Lifeline, Walker did not expect Christians to pass by on the other side of the road. The Church, he wrote, should always seek to serve 'the least, the lowest and the lost'.⁶⁵ The local Christian should 'jump forward', passionately longing to make 'morality and ethics relevant in the contemporary world'.⁶⁶ Walker used John's account of the Last Supper as an illustration: After the distribution Jesus took the role of a servant and washed the feet of his disciples. 'You should do as I have done to you ... You also should wash one another's feet.'⁶⁷ Walker also injected his Christian hope and vocation with an international flavour. For example, on the recommendation of the Reverend Dr. J.W. Burton, President-General of the Methodist Church in Australasia between 1945 and 1948, and in the company of Burton's successor, the Reverend Dr. H.G. Secomb, Walker attended the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in August 1948. Walker was much impressed by the optimism and sense of liveliness of Asian Churchmen who attended Amsterdam. He found the great Reformed theologian Karl Barth pessimistic; after travelling through war-torn Germany on the way to Amsterdam he was not surprised.

62 Harold Henderson, Reach for the World. The Alan Walker Story (Nashville, 1981) p.51.

63 M.E.J. Stansall, Tasmanian Methodism: 1820-1975 (Launceston, Tasmania, 1975), p.20.

64 Ibid., P.55.

65 Alan Walker, God the Disturber (Waco, Texas, 1973), p.65.

66 Ibid., p.81.

67 John 13:14-15; Walker, God the Disturber, p.81.

In April 1949, on the invitation of the Australian Prime Minister, J.B. Chifley, Walker served as an adviser to the Australian delegation to the United Nations in New York.⁶⁸

Walker was vitally interested in the international stage of Christianity and led evangelical missions in many parts of the globe; he was taken by the growth of pentecostalism in South America. Few Methodists in Australia, however, sustained similar interests or devotion and some had ambivalent feelings about Walker. While Walker was perhaps atypical of Methodist clergy, he could not be ignored by the Church. His political activism put him at an opposite political pole from Black.

Each Annual Conference was committed to dealing in some measure with social questions. Small bureaucracies were organised to express the Church's concern at the prevalence of social evils and to promote social holiness. Methodists and other evangelical Churches, elevated the 'Nonconformist Conscience' to a place of great significance.

The phrase, the Nonconformist Conscience, was originally one of contempt for a political technique which dated from the 1830s in the United Kingdom. Later in the nineteenth century it came to represent a 'style that aimed at political goals with all the fervour of religious conviction'.⁶⁹ In 1949 the Australian Methodists' political goals were defined on the basis of intolerance to social evil. There were two ways in which evil might be defined: either disobedience to biblical ethics or what directly opposed the spread of the Gospel.⁷⁰ The Methodist interpretation of their conscience in 1949 centred on the integrity, morality and prosperity of the family. Thus the Church endorsed temperance: it preferred that members abstain from alcohol consumption and endeavoured to restrict the liquor trade.⁷¹

In the first years of peace in the 1940s Methodists were sensible to decaying public and private standards of morality. In February 1948, ^{McCutcheon,} the retiring President of the South Australian Conference, bluntly observed that

68 Henderson, Reach for the World, pp.75-77.

69 David Bebbington, The Nonconformist Conscience: Chapel and Politics, 1870-1914 (London, 1982), p.ix.

70 Ibid., p.15.

71 SAM, 18 January 1952.

the morality of all the classes alike shows signs of degeneration with the coming of each successive day.⁷²

The role of puritans - contrary to the opinion of some - was not to follow suit but

to stand firmly with Christ until our nation is willing not to be forced into doing wrong.⁷³

If, as David Bebbington wrote, the Nonconformist conscience 'developed in response to wrongs defined by evangelical criteria and revealed by public events' then, equally, it could wither as its ascetic and religious criteria became less pertinent in contemporary Methodist life. And it happened that for many Methodists the commitment to abstinence reportedly weakened during World War Two.⁷⁴

Many - perhaps most - Methodists remained total abstainers. Their determination to defend early closing or pursue local option, however, was wavering. A 'truce with Mammon', the Reverend P.C.W. Eckersley wrote in 1949, had weakened the spirit of Methodists' opposition to social evils.⁷⁵ He wrote bluntly: 'Maltsterised Methodism will never crusade for Christ'. Methodist farmers were 'commercially motivated' in their recent individual decisions to grow malting barley:

[they] have never attempted to estimate their degree of responsibility for accidental death, crime, disease and prostitution.⁷⁶

Were Methodists also the victims of the 'pleasure motive'? They were seen entering public houses on hot days; they were in danger of becoming

72 Ibid., 12 March 1948.

73 Ibid., 16 April 1948. The author on this occasion was Miss Elma Casely. It was her sister Edith who wrote under the pseudonym 'Suzie Salterton'. The Casely sisters performed a remarkable private ministry to men and women alcoholics in the city of Adelaide. The story is told of one Christmas morning when, on their way to Pirie Street Methodist Church, the Caselys saw a drunken man lying in the gutter; they picked him up, dusted him down, took him to Church and then home for Christmas dinner. Interview: Potter.

74 Interview: Reverend Archibald Simpson, 31 May 1984. Simpson was General Secretary of the Temperance Alliance in South Australia from 1965.

75 SAM, 24 July 1949.

76 Ibid., 18 March 1949.

'revolutionary rather than revolutionary'.⁷⁷ The Reverend Percy Chennell of South Australia anticipated evangelistic success if the Church were 'unambiguously abstinent'.⁷⁸

The director of the South Australian Methodist SSD (Social Service Department), the Reverend E.H. Woollacott, went further when he asked:

Are we dedicated to the task of making society conform to the will of God?⁷⁹

Under Woollacott's leadership those two goals - Methodist dedication and social restraint - were sought by the SSD. It was his vocation. Ernest Henry Woollacott was born on 20 November 1889 in the mid-northern town of Burra populated most notably by Cornish miners and their descendants. After local primary schooling and attendance at Prince Alfred College in Adelaide 'Harry' Woollacott undertook theological training. He was ordained in 1918 after four year's probation in as many circuits, and three years after the introduction of six o'clock closing of hotel bars. He may have been an uninspiring circuit minister but no more dreary than many others.⁸⁰ He developed a passion for social righteousness which was unremarkable among Methodists in the first decades of the twentieth century and which, after World War Two, made Woollacott appear increasingly eccentric.

A tall, thin man, Woollacott possessed 'craggy features, [a] gangling gait and a distinct flair for wearing untidy clothes'. His was 'a serious, pre-occupied face' which in later years became very thin and deeply lined. He wore no clerical collar except for funerals or other special occasions, preferring instead a dark grey suit and tie. He fidgeted, He travelled widely throughout Australia, but was a 'shocking', even 'ferocious' driver talking incessantly and always looking at his passengers as he did so. After an ulcer brought him low in 1945 his health was not robust; from that time on, he took powders with milk at meal-times. Woollacott married twice; his first wife died from a severe asthma attack. His second bore an only child, a son, in 1942. She died after a long and distressing illness in 1970. Generously, Woollacott put

77 Ibid., 20 August 1948, 27 May 1952 and 18 March 1948.

78 Ibid., 25 March 1949.

79 Ibid., 30 July 1950.

80 Interview: Hunt.

all his possessions in the name of each wife and paid probate twice. Unambitious for himself, he was not content unless achieving something. Enthusiastic without being fanatical, he relished his work for the connexion and enjoyed controversy: 'ours is a faith that must offend', he once wrote. He could express great anger without being abrasive. Although he spoke with passion and when greatly excited would sweep back his hair with both hands, he was not a good public speaker for his oratory was obscured by a slight speech impediment and absent-mindedness. His talents were realised in an administrative capacity and in lobbying politicians. As an ecumenist he had no truck with sectarianism; one of his confidants was Adelaide's Catholic Archbishop who despite age and ill-health, attended Woollacott's funeral in 1977.⁸¹

Like others before him, Woollacott sought to halt the 'slide downwards in public morals' which made 'our moral delinquencies appear virtuous'. He called on Methodists to 'answer the challenge of evil tendencies'.⁸²

Woollacott expounded his views in at least one issue of the South Australian Methodist each year for over 20 years until his retirement from the active ministry in 1959. In that year he summed up his efforts in this way:

Our mission is to seek the transformation of individual lives and the changing of harmful customs and indeed the whole social order.⁸³

Woollacott's first priority was to manipulate social customs through politics, social legislation and judicial enquiries. It was the Church's role to challenge and attack 'customs and systems that degrade man', to oppose 'all the enemies of the people and of God's purposes for them'.

81 Interview: Reverend T.R. Hayward, 1 June 1984. Hayward was vividly descriptive of Woollacott's features and personality and has a higher regard for his intellectual calibre than Woollacott's unassuming nature normally indicated. Interviews: Reverend Lionel Ashman, 31 May 1984 and Reverend A. Reginald Medson, 31 May 1984. Medson was Connexional Secretary from 1962 to 1974. Interview: L.P. Clarke. Clarke knew Woollacott for over four decades and wrote a short obituary for the annual magazine of Westminster School; Woollacott, as much as anybody, was responsible for its existence.

82 Australian Christian Commonwealth, 28 February 1936.

83 SAM, 17 July 1959.

It was probably beyond Woollacott's particular talents to effect individual salvation. Equally, social upheaval was not a great concern for a man with close associations with South Australian Liberals and who was a keen admirer of the long-serving Premier of South Australia, Thomas Playford. The sometimes narrow political path taken by the adherents of the Nonconformist Conscience was illuminated by their eloquence: the Church, Woollacott wrote,

lifts up her voice in public protest against all political suppression of those freedoms in which a man may find and express his own soul.⁸⁴

Never content with the irreverent nature of much conventional morality, Woollacott looked to individual 'spiritual transformation' as the foundation for social reform:

Reform has its roots in religion. It is by the power of God alone that we can create moral idealism and reform the nation in countless ways.⁸⁵

Social holiness became a 'necessary corollary of pure religion' and Woollacott quoted Dr. F.R. Barry:

Ideals remain ineffective and futile unless embodied in concrete policies. We must condescend to particulars.⁸⁶

The manner in which Woollacott stooped to particulars is indicated by the list of organisations for which he acted in an executive capacity. He was in constant demand for his organising ability; he was prepared to do the 'dirty work'.⁸⁷ Woollacott was concerned to improve social welfare, including the needs of the handicapped, aborigines and the homeless, particularly in the aftermath of the Second World War and in the midst of a marriage boom, materials shortages and a rapid influx of migrants. The State Government's decision in 1954 to subsidize Homes for the Aged resulted from Woollacott's 'leadership and organising' according to the SSD.⁸⁸ Several ministers looked on it as his finest achievement and,

84 Ibid., 5 November 1948.

85 Ibid., 17 July 1953.

86 SAM, 25 June 1948, 24 July 1949, 17 July 1953, 20 July 1956 and 17 July 1959.

87 Interview: Sir Thomas Eastick, 12 June 1984. Sir Thomas was Chairman of the Betting Control Board in the 1950s.

88 Minutes of the Social Service Department (South Australia) (S.A.A., Adelaide), SRG 4/1/34, 23 April 1954. (Hereafter Mins. SSD (SA).)

according to the Reverend Erwin Vogt of the Adelaide Central Methodist Mission, Catholics acknowledged the fact readily.⁸⁹ Censorship issues provided another occasion on which Woollacott worked in concert with disparate groups of people.⁹⁰ Woollacott was also an executive member of the Marriage Guidance Council from 1949 until 1960. He was concerned, too, for the welfare of prisoners and in May 1957 he was made for a short time the Chaplain of the Yatala Stockade and secretary of the Prisoners' Aid Association.⁹¹

Much of Woollacott's time was devoted to State Parliament: he looked to Members of Parliament either 'to combat the present hurtful social legislation' or preserve that which was deemed good in the eyes of Nonconformists.⁹² Woollacott was rebuffed in his first attempt to deal directly with government in 1937. He responded by standing a candidate against the premier, Sir Richard Butler at the subsequent State election. Said to have been something of an orator, Moses Gabb received 'ten times' as many votes as Butler expected him to. The result was not really threatening but Woollacott had demonstrated the electoral influence which he could at least potentially wield and was received more warmly by members of the government.⁹³

89 Interview: Reverend Erwin Vogt, 18 June 1984.

90 Interviews with the Chief Secretary, (S.A.A., Adelaide), GRG 24/214/1 24 October 1947. In the company of Sir Shirley Jeffries, Sir Stanton Hicks, a senior magistrate and three others, Woollacott presented the several findings of the South Australian Council of Social Services Film Committee regarding commercial films suitable for children. The Committee comprised social workers, educationalists and 'people of expert knowledge' and recommended, among other things, that a Documentary Film Library be established. (The Chief Secretary, Sir Lyell McEwin, replied that the danger with documentaries was 'politics'. On the subject of film classifications which the committee concluded were 'inconsistent', McEwin responded that 'until a little Christianity could be driven into the home these things were not easy to overcome'.

91 SAM, 17 May 1957.

92 Australian Christian Commonwealth, 12 February 1937.

93 Interview: Reverend Erwin Vogt, 18 June 1984. The results of that contest were: R.L. Butler (LCL) 2,463; K.V. McEntee (ALP) 558; J.M. Gabb (Ind.) 1,598; E.E. Craig (Ind.) 267; E.G.E. Willis (Ind.) 148.

Thereafter Woollacott was involved in pre-selection plebiscites for all subsequent State elections until at least 1959 and possibly a little longer. References in the SSD Minutes and the South Australian Methodist to his activities are oblique. His manner of working is not detailed in manuscript sources. Nor do they indicate much association with Labor Party pre-selection processes which were generally more centralised than those of the LCL. Nor is there any record of Playford's opinion of Woollacott.⁹⁴ No record of these matters from Woollacott seems to have survived either. Aside from his apparent enjoyment of political lobbying, his objective was to be able to report to his fellow Methodist, as he was pleased to do in 1950, that

from the viewpoint of social righteousness ... the new Parliament is as strong as the last.⁹⁵

In order to embolden and maintain the 'staunch attitude of our friends in Parliament', Woollacott now believed strongly that he and his fellow ministers should seek out and encourage 'the best possible people' to stand for Parliament. Men, 'good and true', mattered more than 'measures'.⁹⁶

By the late 1940s, Woollacott had been directing the SSD for ten years. In New South Wales a fledgling Department of Social Questions was seeking to establish an identity, purpose and machinery for presenting better-researched draft resolutions before Conference and for putting into effect the decisions of Conference. Since Methodists were proportionately much weaker in New South Wales than in South Australia it was unlikely that Methodists alone could take a dominant role in the defence of restrictive social legislation.

The New South Wales Social Questions Department had to cooperate with other denominations under the umbrellas of the New South Wales Council of Churches and the Temperance Alliance. Members of one were very often members of the other. Considerable cooperation and goodwill was required for an effective Alliance. The Methodist Conference

94 Interview: Dr. John Playford, June 1984.

95 SSD Mins. (SA), 21 April 1950.

96 NSW Conf. Mins. 1945, p.195.

generally agreed with the manifesto and action of the Alliance. The 'final objective' of the Church was the 'total abolition of the production and sale of intoxicants'.⁹⁷ The New South Wales Council of Churches was sectarian - and supported less than wholeheartedly by the Conference in its anti-Catholic attitudes. The Reverend Alan Walker, for example, had no truck with sectarianism. During the Eucharistic Congress in 1953, he tried to convince those of his fellow Methodists, who were inclined to accept the wild statements of a number of extremist Protestants who feared an evangelical Catholic onslaught, that the Congress was intended to raise the enthusiasm of Catholics as religious people, nothing more.⁹⁸

Intellectually isolated from much that was happening in New South Wales in the late 1940s, Protestants in the Council of Churches and the Temperance Alliance - and probably some others as well - were much heartened by the public re-affirmation of six o'clock closing of hotel liquor bars in the referendum of February 1947. Local Option, the stated vehicle by which the goal of prohibition might be won, was now pursued with renewed vigour. The Alliance was confident that

Once the Church of God is fully roused and united on this issue it will certainly be the end of the Liquor Traffic.

The Methodists Social Questions Department was doubtful if that was so, particularly when it observed that the Alliance was not receiving the public support for local option which it 'deserved'. The department was conducting its own enquiry into the liquor trade and could point to several areas which 'ought to be tackled' and pressure put on the government to enforce the existing law. 'Where does this pressure begin?' it asked. The President of Conference called on his fellow Methodists to give their 'wholehearted support' to the fledgling department, for it was 'rendering a signal service'. But Methodists' support for it was ever questionable.

The Public Questions and Social Service Department as the department was earlier known, first reported to Conference in 1945, at which time it was led by a part-time Director, the Reverend William Coleman. Coleman retired from the Department in March 1948. His place

97 SMH (Sydney Morning Herald), 11 April 1953. Alan Walker, The Whole Gospel for the Whole World, p.52.

98 Grit, March/April 1952.

was taken by the former Secretary of the Department, the Reverend William J. Hobbin. When the part-time status of the Director was re-affirmed by Conference in March 1949, Hobbin recommended that the Council of the Department be discharged. In his view its functions could quite easily be fulfilled by the Standing Committee of Conference. (Hobbin held that the Christian, and especially the clergy, should get into the community, not onto Church committees.)⁹⁹ His motion lapsed for want of a seconder. Later, Mr Victor E. Stanton, the Field Secretary of the Temperance Alliance initiated debate on Hobbin's role. Standing Orders were suspended and the nature and role of the Department subjected to considerable discussion of which very few details have survived. When it refused to refer the issue to a committee, Conference appeared determined to come to a workable conclusion of 'some knotty problems', according to the Methodist.

In the course of debate several smaller but official duties were incorporated into the Director's role. The Director was then appointed to the William Street Mission and the Department's name changed to the Social Service Department (SSD). Hobbin's role was re-affirmed in March 1950 and annually for the next two decades. Hobbin led his department into novel areas of service. Much of that service ended soon after his retirement.¹

The resolutions of the Annual Conference in each State mirrored those of the other, initially in the service of restrictive social legislation and national reconstruction after the war and: later in the 1950s and 1960s, with subjects such as poverty, 'quality of life' issues, peace and so on and so forth. For the time being in the 1940s there were little more than hints of division among Methodists about the way in which their Church's social conscience should be constructed and how it should or should not reflect current secular concerns and realities; a nervousness was developing that the post-war world would not take kindly to ascetic social and moral principles. Equally, Methodists themselves were not easily distinguishable from their fellow Australians by those same ascetic principles and socially they were

99 Interview: Reverend William J. Hobbin, 5 October 1984.

1 Daily Record (NSW), 1 March 1949 and 6 March 1950; Methodist, 19 March 1949.

virtually identical. Evangelism was pursued as the way by which the Church would regain a hold on the consciences and spirits of nominal Methodists. Numerically, it soon transpired that few were sharing Wesley's experience of the warmed heart. Nonetheless, in spite of setbacks Methodism continued to strive for evangelical success consistent with doctrines outlined at the beginning of this chapter. How Methodism was placed in the unsettled post-war years of economic growth and security, a sense of threat induced by communism and increased leisure is the subject of the following chapter; the significance of the religious element in the Methodist character is compared with the continuities of personal aspiration between Methodists and Australians generally.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODISM AND THE ASPIRATIONS OF THE PEOPLE IN
PEACE, PROSPERITY AND COLD WAR

As they accustomed themselves to the nature of the world in the late 1940s and early 1950s, committed Methodists were conscious that much in contemporary public life and leisure was antagonistic or simply beyond the reach of religious intuition as Methodism understood it. Yet they were keen to see economic security for all people, and they approved of immigration and commended national development. Methodist Conferences were also critical of niggardly governments and greedy trade unions in the face of severe housing shortages. It will be shown that the values of R.G. Menzies and the party led by him from 1944 roughly conformed to the optimistic Methodist image of the nature of man; Methodists generally agreed that government should not obtrude unnecessarily into people's lives: within a set of boundaries, the individual was the most worthy unit of society, not the state. There were divisions, however, particularly over responses to the Cold War which imbued many elements of Australian life with a sense of threat. This chapter goes on to argue that Methodism encouraged the very conditions of prosperity and the expansion of individual liberty and enterprise which provided tangible benefits to the Church in the 1950s and yet ultimately harmed Methodism in the 1960s.

In the immediate post-war years the Australian economy grew quickly and was free from serious fluctuations although slight recessions occurred in 1945/46 and 1948/49.¹ The Federal Labor Government feared relapse into economic recession as it oversaw the reintroduction of 700,000 ex-servicemen and women into the civilian work-force. There was no return to depression and at the end of the decade the growth rate of G.N.P. was over seven per cent; the post-war average for these years was around four per cent. Post-war policy and management in the 1940s and 1950s was dominated by Keynesian analysis although reactions to the Liberal-Country Party Budget of 1951 suggest that it was ill-digested Keynesian analysis.²

1 A.M.C. Waterman, Economic Fluctuations in Australia, 1948-1964 (Canberra, 1972), p.64.

2 Rodney Maddock, 'The Long Boom 1940-1970', Working Papers in Economic History. no. 29, (Australian National University, 1984), pp.19-23.

Between July 1950 and April 1951 the wool boom was largely responsible for a very positive balance of payments. Because the increased price of exports - and imported goods - outstripped the price-rises of locally-produced goods, demand was directed from those imports which were available 'towards home production' thus increasing import competition and favouring the export rather than the domestic consumption of exportables.³ By the early months of 1951, the effects were not always happy as Australia experienced overfull employment, abnormal dependence on latterly - and suddenly - available imports and extreme price inflation.⁴

Government action after the 1951 election was hampered by the refusal of the Country Party to countenance any policy which could hurt primary producers. Graziers' organisations condemned several mooted policies as 'class measures'. Revaluation, for example, was ruled out for this reason, although its utility in dampening inflationary expectations to the extent required has been doubted. The issues were bitterly fought - to the 'verge of dissolution' of the Coalition⁵ - by Country Party members with the support of several Liberal Ministers. Government thus disqualified itself from responding quickly to serious economic circumstances. The London Economist commented: 'Australia shirks the issue'.⁶ By the middle of 1951, action could no longer be avoided: the wool market had collapsed and enormous stocks of imports entered the country resulting in an 'insupportable loss' of foreign reserves.

Much of the excitement and agitation of economic life and debate at this time was due to overseas influence. The singular factor was the atmosphere engendered by the Cold War, heightened by the war in Korea and greatly increased defence spending by the United States' government. Enormous American imports of wool were intended to serve the army. Later, when the Defence Department reduced the American forces' wool order by 15 per cent and the Quartermaster-General cancelled contracts for 20 million yards of wool cloth (all this in the very month in which Australians went

3 Waterman, Economic Fluctuations, p.71.

4 Ibid., p.95.

5 A.W. Fadden, They Call Me Artie (Brisbane, 1969), p.116, quoted in G.C. Bolton, '1939-51', in F.K. Crowley, A New History of Australia (Melbourne, 1974), p.502.

6 Quoted in James R. Roach, 'Australia; expansion, rearmament, inflation', Far Eastern Survey, 20 (11), 30 May 1951, p.107.

to the polls) the wool market collapsed.⁷

In the Federal election campaign in April 1951 Menzies successfully diverted attention from economic to political issues and concentrated on communism and the hostile Senate.⁸ Subsequently, the Prime Minister called a two-day national conference in Sydney on inflation. For the Reverend Alan Walker who attended as a representative of the Australian Council of Churches, a major impression was the way in which 'sectional rather than national, interest dominated the discussions'.⁹ All present 'produced first-class arguments why their self-interest should remain untouched'.¹⁰ According to Waterman, the conference was intended less to receive advice than 'to prepare the public for a series of nasty shocks' which, despite broad and noisy denunciation following their presentation in the Budget of 1951, were not especially nasty. They did represent 'a belated lesson in Keynesian economics'.¹¹ They were not, as has been suggested, 'startling in their pre-Keynesian harshness'.¹²

The loss of confidence in economic prospects was reflected in the share price index in May 1951. Waterman's analysis suggested that the 1951-52 recession was the most serious of the four which occurred between 1949 and 1964 and has generally been 'underestimate(d)'.¹³ Unemployment among the available work-force may have exceeded four per cent, but few of those affected were trade unionists. Victims were recent immigrants, unskilled workers, married women and elderly or incapacitated people.¹⁴

The crisis was over by the end of 1952.¹⁵ There was 'reasonably' full employment, external balance, and firm economic growth. The Australian economy was in remarkable 'balance'.¹⁶ For the remainder of the decade, slightly higher rates of average annual growth coincided

7 Waterman, Economic Fluctuations, p.83.

8 P.H. Partridge, 'Issues in Australian politics', Far Eastern Survey, 20 (13), 27 June 1951, p.128.

9 Harold Henderson, Reach for the World. The Alan Walker Story (Nashville, 1981), p.86.

10 Alan Walker, Australia Finding God: the Message of the Mission to the Nation (Melbourne, 1953), p.58.

11 Waterman, Economic Fluctuations, pp.86-87.

12 Bolton, '1939-51', p.502.

13 Waterman, Economic Fluctuations, p.91.

14 Ibid., pp.92-3.

15 Ibid.

16 Ibid., p.99.

with slightly lower rises in population and work-force than characterised the preceding eight years.¹⁷

The housing shortage - about which Methodists and especially the South Australian Conference, annually expressed great concern in the late 1940s and the first years of the 1950s - was now much less serious than it had been. The characteristic determination of Australians to own real property was widespread and increasing. Occupancy of private houses by owners or mortgages increased from 58.5 per cent of all accommodation in 1947 to 68.98 per cent in 1954 for which the increasing practice of purchase by instalments was largely responsible.

Australians in the early 1950s were more secure in their daily economic lives than at any time since the war, and ex-servicemen and women were much better acclimatised to civilian life. A smaller proportion of income was spent on life's basics and household appliances were more often bought on credit.¹⁸ According to some Methodists, the

tides of continued prosperity have lifted yet further the shadow of past need and have encouraged not only justifiable optimism, but a less desirable dependence on things material.¹⁹

Even so, following high inflation and recession, it would be an exaggeration to describe Australian society in 1954 as affluent; that is, in the sense that the people abounded in riches.

Prosperity triggered increased demand for leisure facilities. Although the basic antagonism to gambling remained fixed in South Australian law, the number of race meetings gradually increased in these years. As the Chief Secretary, explained:

With the increasing population of the State, the public demand for amusement on Saturday afternoons is rapidly growing, and the Government has been requested to take steps to provide for an additional racing day.²⁰

17 David A. Kemp, Society and Electoral Behaviour in Australia: A Study of Three Decades (St. Lucia, Queensland, 1978), p.96.

18 R.M. Younger, Australia and the Australians. A New Concise History (Adelaide, 1970), p.702.

19 Journal of the Adelaide North Methodist District Synod, (SAA, Adelaide), SRG 4/22/2, 27 October 1954. (Hereafter, Adelaide North Journal.)

20 SAPD 1955, p.951.

How should Methodism respond to these increased demands for leisure? How petty could prohibition become before the public deliberately distanced itself from Methodist asceticism? Woollacott quoted William Temple for justification of his wide-ranging activities:

The call to individual conversion is not likely to be widely effective unless it is prefaced by evidence of social concern and ability to effect social change.²¹

Occasionally, he seemed to forget Alan Walker's observation that

Men do not rise to higher moral standards merely by being told that they ought to lead better lives.²²

For example, in March 1946, in the course of meeting a deputation²³ requesting prohibition of public entertainments on Good Friday and Christmas Day, the Chief Secretary, McEwin, pointed to the 'staggering' number of refusals for permits for Sunday entertainments during the year. McEwin asked the deputation which apparently wanted every theatre closed to get people to Church, 'what of the trains? No-one had made any reference to Sunday morning picnic trains.'²⁴

Later, Woollacott took the matter up with the Commissioner of Railways and reported to the Council of Churches in South Australia, that his letters 'had accomplished the desired end'. Picnic trains stopped running on Sundays.²⁵ Perhaps a petty result which demonstrated Woollacott's ability to convince others of the power of his convictions. Rarely did local Methodists wonder about the significance of resolutions which called for bans on Sunday sport; for example, the Whyalla Circuit Steward, speaking at the Mid-Northern District Synod in South Australia, argued that the Church should have 'something more attractive to offer'.

21 SAM, 17 July 1953.

22 The deputation was broadly-based and included Ken Bardolph M.L.C. (formerly of Lang Labor), Brigadier-General C.J. Brimblecomb of the Council of Churches, the Secretary of the Theatrical Employees Union, an Anglican Archdeacon, a Catholic *Monsignor*, and a representative of the Women's Christian Temperance Union.

23 Walker, Australia Finding God, p.27.

24 Interviews with the Chief Secretary, (SAA, Adelaide), GRG 24/124/1, 21 March 1946.

25 Minutes of the South Australian Council of Churches, (SAA, Adelaide), SRG 4/1/27, 1 November, 6 December 1948, 7 March 1949.

We have to use our brains in a consecrated manner in fellowship with Christ.²⁶

In later years it could follow that members of parliament would no longer listen to Wollacott and other Methodists if they believed that a decreasing proportion of the electorate supported continued restrictions and even prohibition of some activities.

Coincident with the search for prosperity and leisure in the late 1940s and early 1950s there existed a very present sense of threat. The Director of the Crusade for Christ in South Australia, the Reverend Edgar T. Pryor, reported to District Synods in October 1951, that the 'age' in which they lived was 'characterised by uncertainty and dissatisfaction'. Indeed, since 1914, the world had been 'in a state of ferment'. He continued:

Each world crisis has in turn merged into the next in a way that has never given the people a chance to settle down ... Never has peace and security been more longed for, and never have they been more hopelessly out of our reach. Never has man worked harder, or more ingeniously through the political and industrial movement to improve his lot and yet never has he been more dissatisfied with the outcome of his efforts, or more uncertain of what the future holds.

These same thoughts flowed through many Methodist reports and addresses in these years.

Historians have been reluctant to give much credence to any solid foundation on which a sense of threat originated. In the most recent description of these years the mood was ascribed to the 'orchestrated anxiety of the Cold War'.²⁸ Others have been more cautious: in the late 1940s the Liberal-Country Party Opposition 'perhaps ... intensified its

- 26 Journal of the Mid-Northern Methodist District Synod. (SAA, Adelaide), SRG 4/134/2, 27 October 1954. (Hereafter Mid-Northern Journal.)
- 27 Journal of the Eyre Peninsula Methodist District Synod, (SAA, Adelaide) SRG 4/17/2, 25 October 1951. (Hereafter, Eyre Peninsula Journal).
- 28 Stephen Alomes, Mark Dober and Donna Hellier, 'The social context of post-war conservatism', in Ann Curthoys and John Merritt (eds.), Australia's First Cold War 1945-1953 (Sydney, 1984), vol. 1, p.6.

efforts to tar the ALP with the brush of communism'.²⁹ In many accounts of Australian life and politics the Cold War appears as if from nowhere. Perhaps the reasoning is the same as that employed to explain the defeat of the 'Powers Referendum' in August 1944, for example, which seemed, to reconstructionist intellectuals intent on building a 'centralised state apparatus', to be the 'result of fear, prejudice and intellectual isolation from the rest of the world'.³⁰

The search for a prosperous and secure post-war world crossed national boundaries. The fear of depression and the implicit dangers to the social fabric arising from massive levels of unemployment, was shared by many in the West. Thus international financial institutions were created to help 'provide the prosperity which would reduce the temptation for states to solve their internal problems by war'.³¹

Liberal ideals fell victim to their own optimism: the size of the task of creating and maintaining an 'open world' was underestimated and the West overestimated the readiness of the Soviet Union to work with the West in the furtherance of liberal principles.³² Because of the cavernous differences in the perspectives of East and West, it is worth reflecting on the nature of those sources of the sense of threat which did indeed exist and, later, contrast them with the quite differing appeals made to Australians and the Liberals after 1944. The responses and reactions of Methodism and Methodists whose ideology did not advocate withdrawal from the world, can then be observed and put into context. In March 1946 Winston Churchill used the phrase 'the iron curtain' as a 'shorthand description of what had happened in eastern Europe' in the previous year or so.³³ The American scholar, Daniel Yergin, discerned two underlying questions facing American policy-makers in their search for a foreign policy strategy after 1946, questions which were equally relevant to Cold War debate in Australia. First, what was the connection between Marxist-Leninist ideology and Soviet foreign policy? Secondly, did

29 Bolton, '1939-1951', p.493.

30 Tim Rowse, Australian Liberalism and National Character (Melbourne, 1978), pp.175 and 185.

31 Michael Balfour, The Adversaries: America, Russia, and the Open World, 1941-1962 (London, 1981), p.25.

32 Ibid., p.31.

33 Daniel Yergin, Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State (Boston, 1977), p.10.

totalitarian practice at home produce a foreign policy totalitarian in intent and committed to overturning the international system and to endless expansion in pursuit of world dominance.³⁴ They were not questions foremost in the minds of some Australian policy-makers; indeed, 'the constellation of forces operating in the international environment' does not appear to have much impressed the Australian government. Evatt is said to have worked from another set of principles entirely. They in turn depended on a degree of rationality on the part of participants in international affairs which were unreasonable once the victors in Europe fell apart in 1945-46. There were Methodists interested in international affairs and involved in United Nations Associations who shared Evatt's optimism and were unimpressed by the depressing implications of the Cold War. Some - not only Methodists - would purposefully avoid attending to the consequences of the 'timing and sequence of events abroad',³⁵ many of which were pregnant with domestic political consequences. What were some of the events which aroused 'a sense of threat'? By the time of the Federal election campaign in 1949 and when compared with people of other nations, Australians were unusually fearful of world war breaking out sometime in the next decade. They had only recently been 'traumatised' by the 'belief that an invasion of the Australian mainland had barely been averted'. In the local region the end of war 'released new and ominously destabilising forces'.³⁶ In eastern Europe, Soviet forces were recently responsible for the destruction of a democratically-elected government in Czechoslovakia and within the Soviet Union, Andrei Zhdanov, Secretary of the Central Committee in charge of ideology, unleashed another round of terror aimed at uniformity in a way that Joseph McCarthy - later - could not hope to emulate. 'Titoist' elements were purged in eastern Europe. Many of the immigrants brought to Australia under the scheme set up by the Labor Government, knew of these things first hand, particularly the tens of thousands of Baltic refugees. The Berlin Blockade of 1948-49 was a source of very great tension between the powers; Menzies described the situation then as 'almost amount[ing] to a state of war'.³⁶

In April 1949, the North Atlantic treaty was signed committing the United States without reservation to the military support of western

34 Ibid.

35 Albinski, Australian External Policy under Labor. pp.1-2.

36 Ibid., pp.2-3.

Europe. In August, the Soviet Union detonated an atomic bomb. Further, in the eyes of many Western delegates and media reporters, the attitudes and behaviour of Soviet delegates to the United Nations were obnoxious. In the United States itself, in January 1949, the leadership of the Communist Party was convicted and gaoled on charges of working for the forcible overthrow of the government.

At the same time, Zhdanov also revived the Leninist policy of promoting revolution 'in the colonial and dependent countries' focussing on South East Asia.³⁸ Australians in 1949 could observe the continuing 'emergency' in Malaya. Fighting continued in Indonesia between the Dutch and local nationalists. Friction was increasing on the Korean Peninsula. In Indo-China, the Vietminh returned to harassing French military forces and precipitated the extension of the Truman doctrine of containment of communism to South East Asia.³⁹ On 1 October 1949, a Chinese communist regime was declared in Peking.

In Australia, in May 1949, the Victorian government set up a Royal Commission to investigate the history, aims, funds and objects of the Communist Party of Australia - The Communist Party itself, acting in the spirit of current cominform policy, as delined by Zhdanov,⁴⁰ gave further cause for concern. In June 1949, Lance Sharkey, the General Secretary of the party, was sentenced by the New South Wales Supreme Court to three years gaol, later reduced to 18 months.

Events elsewhere were not merely a 'suitable backdrop'⁴¹ for domestic rhetoric despite 'the farrago of personal abuse characteristic of Australian political debate'.⁴² A combination of international and domestic events and long-standing Australian attitudes brought the Cold War to prominence in Australia. Australians were 'unusually sensitive'

37 Frank' Cain and Frank Farrel, 'Menziess war on the Communist Party, 1949-1951', in Curthoys and Merritt, Australia's First Cold War, vol. 1, p.112.

38 Kylie Tennant, Evatt: Politics and Justice (Sydney, 1970), p.195.

39 Yergin, Shattered Peace, pp.404-405.

40 Robin Gollan, Revolutionaries and Reformists: Communism and the Australian Labor Movement 1920-1955 (Canberra, 1975), p.212.

41 Cain and Farrel, 'Menziess war', p.112.

42 Glen St. John Barclay, 'Australia and the Cold War' in Joseph Siracusa and Glen St. John Barclay (eds.), The Impact of the Cold War: Reconsiderations (Port Washington, 1977), pp.3-5.

about national security and intrinsically and consistently xenophobic in their outlook.⁴³ Not surprisingly, therefore, in a nation unsure of its grounds for security and not a 'hermit kingdom' in the style, say, of North Korea, the Cold War - never appreciated by Evatt⁴⁴ - steadily gained credibility in 1948 and 1949.⁴⁵ Consequently, and because it was involved in developing and testing long-range missiles for the British, Australia was a 'direct particip[ant] in an important aspect of the western world's defence effort'.⁴⁶

Western policy-makers, trying to analyse the objectives and capabilities of the Soviet Union were treading 'in the unfirm substance of the imponderables'.⁴⁷ In this environment, Sir Percy Spender, Minister for External Affairs in the Menzies government set out to achieve the ANZUS Alliance which laid one of the foundations of over two decades of Liberal-Country Party rule.⁴⁸ The other foundation was economic management; above all else, it is said, Australians wanted to 'become little capitalists; they would support the politicians who best helped this objective'.⁴⁹ The Methodist observer quoted above⁵⁰ was aware of the elements of the fear which permeated Australian life.

He was also aware that most were seeking quiet simplicity and economic security. A.M.C. Waterman summarised the aspirations of Australians neatly when he wrote that they were determined 'to settle in secure routines and comforts'. Shortages and inconvenience meant that they 'were often unable to do so'.⁵¹ The Coal Strike provided some of the most lean months of all.

The Coal Strike represented the most concerted effort by Australian communists to achieve 'hegemony' of the labor movement.⁵² Methodists were probably neither more nor less affected than other consumers of coal or electricity produced at coal-fired power stations. Some, in the

43 Ibid., pp.3 and 9.

44 Bolton, '1939-1951', p.474.

45 Younger, Australia and the Australians, p.659.

46 Ibid., p.658.

47 George Kennan quoted in Yergin, Shattered Peace, p.410.

48 O'Neill, Australia in the Korean War, pp.194 and 200.

49 Bolton, '1939-1951', p.479.

50 See p. 42.

51 Waterman, Economic Fluctuations, p.70.

52 Gollan, Revolutionaries and Reformers, pp.240-42; Phillip Deery, Labour in Conflict: the 1949 Coal Strike (Canberra, 1978), p.37.

ministry, especially, helped provide relief to those hardest hit.⁵³ Others sought also to provide means of reconciliation among the disputants. The Coal Strike was not merely a promoter of anti-communist feeling, a setback to the economy, or source of considerable distress. It also provided an opportunity for ^{Methodists} to show that doctrines based on reconciliation between God and man also provided means for better relations between men of differing backgrounds. It ought to be able to show that Christ's message was valid and the Church indispensable in community life.

In Adelaide a statement summarising the South Australian Methodist Church's attitude towards the strike was given to the Advertiser; it was signed by the President of Conference, the Reverend J.H. Pointon and the Director of the SSD, Woollacott. The arguments presented were consistent with much else the Church had been saying for some years on social questions and laid the basic responsibility for the strike on 'our failure to follow the Christian way of life'. Much of the strife and bitterness of the moment grew out of 'the selfishness, economic injustice, and indifference of the past'. The Church now called for a universal recognition of the right of all to justice 'and fair reward for arduous labour'. It insisted on the rule of law - it was a denial of the rule of law which, in part at least, sparked the strike. There was only a vague reference to communist influence on the coalfields when the authors observed that the use of force in such an issue and such a manner 'follows from a materialist outlook'.⁵⁴

The moderate Methodist statement was consistent with the nature of the Church's vision of industrial and social relations generally. Woollacott's own education on the coal strike was typically thorough as he acquainted himself as much as possible with the issues and the people during a visit of several days to the coal fields. He met miners and managers underground and elsewhere and 'gathered much food for thought'.⁵⁵ Few of his thoughts were made public in a way that guaranteed their survival. He did come away impressed by the 'lack of good leadership there' did but he did not elaborate. He felt especially concerned for the whole issue because 'statistically' Methodism was

53 Alan Walker, Heritage Without End (Melbourne, 1955), p.70.

54 Advertiser, 21 July 1949.

55 SA Conf. Mins. 1950, p.347.

strong on the coalfields and thus the Church was liable to a greater moral claim in the service of all involved.⁵⁶

The Council of Churches in South Australia for which Woollacott was serving as President, had intended to release a statement on 'unsatisfactory industrial relations'. It dithered or was perhaps stalled by Woollacott because a more rigid posture might have been taken which overlooked the historical background to the dispute which was noted by the Methodist statement prepared by Woollacott himself. At the meeting of the Council on 5 September 1949 it concluded that no statement was needed because 'the coal miners had returned to work.'⁵⁷

Woollacott's first-hand information on the coal industry and miners' society was gathered in Cessnock which, for five years until 1945, was the parish of the Reverend Alan Walker. In 1945 Walker completed a Master's thesis supervised by the anthropologist, A.P. Elkin, and later published as Coaltown. It was based on a series of long interviews with twenty deliberately chosen families studied closely through preceding generations and connected with the Cessnock circuit.⁵⁸ Later, in a short history of Australian Methodism timed to coincide with the Mission to the Nation, Walker would claim that the Methodist Church 'made a distinct contribution toward the settlement of the Coal Strike'. This, he wrote was the judgment of the New South Wales Coal Tribunal.

On an undated Monday morning in the depths of the strike, the President of the Conference, the Reverend Robert B. Lew, convened a meeting of all metropolitan clergy. Several from the coalfields were also present. A committee of four, including the Director of the SSD, Hobbin, went immediately to the coalfields and spoke with 'all parties in the dispute', including the Coal Tribunal, ACTU officials and miners' leaders. The coalfields were a hive of discussions as 'meetings of all kinds were being held'.⁵⁹ The Methodists came away with what they believed was a basis for a solution to the strike. According to Hobbin, the Presbyterian Church authorities were approached in order to extend the representative nature of the group intending to meet the Prime Minister. The Presbyterians, in Hobbin's account, spurned the offer. The Methodists

56 SSD (SA) Mins., 22 July, 26 August and 23 September 1949.

57 Mins. SA Council of Churches, 5 September 1949.

58 Henderson, Reach for the World, pp.53-54.

59 NSWPP 1950-51, no. 44, p.35.

went alone to Canberra. As Walker described the meeting, Chifley 'listened quietly' to the Methodists' 'plea for a conference, with the Churchmen present, to seek a solution, and to open up a route back to the Arbitration Court'. Thus the Church opened lines of communication between the disputants and 'mediation continued'. Walker made no mention of the use of troops to break the strike. Hobbin's account differs. Chifley, he agreed, 'listened quietly'. Dr. Evatt, whom Walker held in high esteem but did not mention in his account, did not. Evatt, loud-spoken and impatient, seemed particularly anxious for a quick resolution of the disruption by a swift and incontestable action. Chifley seemed to accept his colleague's position and the Churchmen left empty-handed.⁶⁰

Walker would argue that the Church provided a 'fellowship where class and rank have no meaning'. The Church worked 'down among the people, knowing their problems and needs'. Walker's five years at Cessnock greatly influenced the character of his ministry. His wide circle of contacts laid the basis of a sociological thesis and when he left the circuit

it was the pastoral ties which were the hardest to break. The people to whom he had ministered pastorally in times of great personal need had become the most devoted to the Church and loyal to him.⁶¹

It was this sort of devotion, as much on an institutional level as a pastoral level, that the Church needed to encourage.

In his inaugural address to the New South Wales Conference in 1948, the Reverend R.H. Doust stated the issue clearly and boldly:

We cannot allow the Church to be by-passed by the State as of little consequence in its affairs.⁶²

Walker was sufficiently impressed by the Churchmen's role during the Coal Strike to suggest that it 'proved again that [the Church] had a mighty role to play in the life of the nation'. He listed General Conference resolutions on social questions to illustrate the manner in which the

60 Walker, Heritage Without End, pp.71-2; Interview: Reverend W.J. Hobbin, 5 October 1984.

61 Henderson, Reach for the World, p.53

62 Methodist, 28 February 1948.

Christian Church - he rarely referred to Methodists alone - in Australia is 'really awake to the great issues of the time'.⁶³ Hobbin would have agreed were he more confident that the bulk of Church members supported the actions of senior clergy and laity.⁶⁴

Believers in the liberal concept of the civil freedom of the individual over against collectivism were more apposite to the mood of the times than perhaps for many years. Several Methodist commentators and Menzies' Liberals agreed on many things.

Menzies claimed that the name 'Liberal' was taken by the new party which emerged from the 1943 election debacle because

we are determined to be a progressive party, willing to make experiments, in no sense reactionary but believing in the individual, his rights, and his enterprise, and rejecting the socialist panacea.⁶⁵

In 1949, he appealed to 'the best people in the community' to reject the, 'overlordship of routine'. Who were these people? They were 'not those who "leave it to the other fellow", but

those who by thrift and self-sacrifice establish homes and bring up families and add to the national pool of savings and hope someday to sit "under their own vine and fig-tree", owing nothing to anybody⁶⁶

The 'ideas and determination' which Menzies held to be the 'essence' of contemporary Australian life and its future may not have been original, but they appealed to growing numbers of people for whom industrial stoppages and inflation were impediments to personal security and

63 Walker, Heritage Without End, p.73.

64 Interview: Hobbin.

65 R.G. Menzies, Afternoon Light. Some Memories of Men and Events (Melbourne, 1967), p.286.

66 Ibid., p.196.

67 Norman L. Cowper, 'Australia elects her Parliament', The Australian Outlook, 4(1), March 1950, p.8. Some country Methodists might not have agreed entirely because petrol shortages restricted Church activities; they preferred to draw the attention of the State government, 'to the wastage of petrol and manpower involved in the running of midweek race and betting meetings'. Journal of the Northern Methodist District Synod, (SAA, Adelaide), SRG 4/20/2, 26 October 1949. (Hereafter, Northern Journal.)

comfortable domesticity, and who were also a little greedy when they demanded more petrol for leisurely excursions.⁶⁷

While materialism received no sympathy from Methodism, the editor of the South Australian Methodist, the Reverend A.E. Cowley, seemed to agree with much of the substance of Menzies' philosophy. It had been an age in which 'the doctrines of government had been paramount', he wrote in reference to National Socialism and communism. Cowley, by contrast, was a liberal protestant who looked to humanism for much of his intellectual inspiration. While he had read little of the work of the Swiss theologian, Karl Barth - few readers of English had yet had the opportunity to do so - what little he knew of neo-orthodoxy he did not like. As Cowley understood it, according to Barth, man was required to 'accept a final Word and bow without question ... in unthinking obedience ... to Eternal Authority'. Nazism had therefore been the 'political counterpart of Barthianism'. Cowley would exalt the individual. 'A new conception of the values of life and the preciousness of the individual could be declared by the prophetic Christian. God had an interest in the worth of each person. He understood the Kingdom of God to be a 'Kingdom of consent'. The relationship between God and man affected political doctrines.⁶⁸

What was the essence of the nature of man? For the Liberal leader it was 'freedom':

The real freedoms are to worship, to think, to speak, to choose, to be ambitious, to be independent, to be industrious, to acquire skill, to seek reward. These are the real freedoms, for they are the essence of the nature of man.⁶⁹

Cowley and most Conference delegates could probably agree. They did not approve of 'laissez faire' markets but they had no truck with totally planned economies either. The South Australian Conference in 1949, for example, printed a statement to this effect from the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches.⁷⁰ Two years later, on the occasion of Australia's 'National Jubilee', the front page of the South Australian Methodist was festooned by a celebration of primary and secondary

68 SAM, 21 January 1949.

69 Menzies, Afternoon Light, p.196.

70 SA Conf. Mins. 1949, pp.182-83.

industry, commerce and science, and headed: 'The Methodist Church has ever sought to match Australia's development'.⁷¹

Cowley and Menzies shared a liberal vision of the individual. They - and Woollacott - commended prosperity. Thus Woollacott, for example, boasted that South Australia was the 'most prosperous and progressive State of the Commonwealth', essentially because there was 'more thrift and economic progress in the non-Lottery States'.⁷² They may also have agreed that, as Cowley wrote, there was a relationship in which decline in belief in God was 'often accompanied by the loss of a sense of human significance'.⁷³

Deeply-committed Methodists such as Cowley could only stand with Menzies supporters up to a point. In particular, Cowley could turn from the 'world' to divine things. Menzies, for many years, appeared pre-occupied with earthly matters, with 'abundant life'. (Manning Clark's description of the Prime Minister several years later standing at the graveside of Dr. Evatt contrasted 'material affluence and inner uncertainty and disquiet'.)⁷⁴ Cowley remained professedly confident in the assurance that, as Percy Black would have agreed, the present time was of little consequence in the greater scheme of things:

While on the surface there may be such a ferocious hurricane that trembling humans ask whether this is the end of the world, away beneath there is no sensation but that of the gentle swing of the regular tide. One of humanity's most characteristic conceits is this focus of attention on its own patch of race or history.

The evangelical in Cowley concluded:

The daily challenge of the regular disturbances must be met and may be met, only by the rest-giving excursions into the depths.⁷⁵

There was yet another side to Cowley's writings on contemporary life and predicaments relating to the question of 'human significance'. Thus

71 SAM. 9 February 1951.

72 Ibid., 16 October 1953 and 16 July 1954.

73 Ibid., 2 January 1949.

74 Manning Clark, 'The years of unleavened bread, December 1949 to December 1972', in his Occasional Writings and Speeches (Melbourne, 1980), pp.198-199.

75 SAM, 16 June 1950.

he denounced that patriotism which led to the use of the atomic bomb. In 1949, Cowley asked his readers if their reactions to the bombing of Hiroshima would have been any different had it been a Methodist Ladies College rather than a Japanese Methodist girls' school that was destroyed. Would it have been acceptable - as apparently the latter was? 'How can you liquidate men by the millions if you believe that each one of them is a 'brother for whom Christ died'?' he asked.⁷⁶

The Reverend Alan Walker developed his passion for pacifism in England in 1938 under the inspiration of the Reverend Dr. Donald Soper, and never agreed with the General Conference sympathy for the 'just war' position. Both views were deeply ingrained in Methodism although pacifism appealed only to a minority. Thus few agreed with Walker when, with the assistance and support of the Reverends Ralph Sutton of Glebe and Bertram R. Wyllie, Master of Wesley College at Sydney University, he made the first public statement by Australian clergy declaring opposition to the atomic bomb in August 1945. For Walker, 'moral issues of the utmost consequence have been laid bare'.⁷⁷

Methodists could hope that the bomb would never be used again even if they were grateful for its impact on the course of the war in the Pacific. The liberal vision of the United Nations elicited optimism from Methodists. Methodist clergy were disproportionately associated with United Nations Associations throughout post-war decades. The Reverend Bertram Wyllie was Honorary Federal Secretary of the Australian Association of the United Nations. He described the United Nations as man's noblest attempt ... to achieve unity, understanding and peace between nations'. He held that it was up to 'we, the people' to make it work. Three other Methodist preachers were chairmen of State divisions, including the Reverend W.J. Hobbin of the SSD in New South Wales from 1952 to 1954.⁷⁸ Hobbin was Federal President of the Association between 1954 and 1958, and Vice-President of the World Federation of United Nations Associations in 1958. In South Australia, the Reverend E.H. Woollacott represented the South Australian Conference on the State executive of the United Nations Association. Peace, he wrote in 1954, was 'extremely

76 SAM, 16 December 1949.

77 Henderson, Reach for the World, pp.64-66.

78 SAM, 8 August 1952.

urgent'.⁷⁹ In that same year, which followed several of great international tension, the South Australian Conference remained confident that the United Nations continued to represent the 'best means for developing and maintaining the rule of law among the nations, and for promoting the welfare of all the people'.⁸⁰

Although General Conference in 1948 dedicated itself to outliving and outthinking the 'rival' world view of communism,⁸¹ in some eyes its liberal point of view tended to overlook communism's open antagonism to religion. Glen Pearson, a member of the South Australian Parliament and brother of a South Australian Senator, a regular attender of Conference and member of several Conference committees, reminded Cowley of the importance which communists placed on destroying religion for the very reason that it was 'the deepest and strongest of the emotions'. More immediately, he wondered whether some of the correspondence and Cowley's own remarks were 'intended to create and maintain such an atmosphere of challenge' presumably to Federal Government policy. Pearson did not want the South Australian Methodist to be 'suspect' or a victim of 'misunderstanding'.⁸²

By the very nature of its doctrine of man, Methodism was given to defending and elevating freedom of conscience and thought. By the middle of 1951 the Liberal-Country Party government, frustrated by the High Court in its attempts to proscribe the Communist Party, submitted the issue to a referendum held on 22 September. The government argued that there were limits to which liberal democracies could permit freedom to those who were perceived, by their own propaganda and occasionally by their actions, to be subversive groups intent on destroying the very means by which liberty was guaranteed.

The referendum proposition was defeated in part because a number of Protestants who were previously loyal to the Liberals now concluded that the benefits of the Communist Party Dissolution Act were outweighed by the anticipated costs to personal liberty and common law traditions.⁸³ The

79 Ibid., 16 July 1954.

80 SA Conf. Mins. 1954, p.140; Methodist 8 January 1949.

81 Mins. Gen. Conf. 1948, pp.92-93.

82 SAM, 23 February 1951.

83 Cain and Farrell, 'Menzies war on the Communist Party', pp.131 and 133; John Warhurst, 'Catholics, communism and the Australian party system: a study of the Menzies years', Politics, 16 (2) November 1979, p.230.

Methodist General Conference of 1948 had denounced 'repressive legislation' harnessed to defeat communism. Meeting in May 1951 it re-affirmed that 'communism will never be defeated by a merely negative policy'.⁸⁴ At the local level the attitudes of Methodists to this liberal outlook are unknown although probably more than one Synod urged suppression of the Communist Party in 1948.⁸⁵ The degree of division between the inner circles of the Church and the local congregations is unclear although many Methodists may have preferred a more determined response to the international 'peace offensive' by communists in 1952 and so sympathised with the memorial to the New South Wales' Annual Conference from Shoalhaven circuit in 1954 which was strongly critical of clergy visiting communist countries and thereby making themselves open to exploitation in 'propaganda by the Communist Party'.⁸⁶ This was in reference to the decision of the Reverend G.R. van Eerde to ignore the refusal of the Ministerial Standing Committee of the New South Wales Conference to grant him leave to attend a preparatory Conference of Asian and Pacific peoples in Peking in September 1952.⁸⁷ Conference claimed to deplore any action which appeared to compromise the Church's attitude to communism yet it also declined to restrict ministers' thinking or private actions because, to use Walker's word, Methodists were not 'content with negation and denunciation' in the manner of the Catholic Church.⁸⁸ The Methodists deferred to individual conscience and refused to enforce an official policy on this particular social issue.

In those years of prosperity, inflation and growing division, how did Methodism fare numerically?

Throughout Australia between 1947 and 1954, nominal Methodists increased in number by over 100,000 but declined as a proportion of the total population. The increase was much smaller - in percentage terms - than the increase which occurred between 1933 and 1947. In South

84 Mins. Gen. Conf. 1948, p.93; 1951, p.114.

85 Mid-Northern Journal, 27 October 1948.

86 NSW Conf. Agenda 1954, pp.118 and 120; Robert O'Neill, Australia in the Korean War 1950-53 (Canberra, 1981) vol. 1, p.307.

87 Another of the delegates was the Methodist layman and Secretary of the Department of External Affairs, Dr. John Burton. Ibid., pp.307-10; Gollan, Revolutionaries and Reformists, pp.260-63; Minutes of the Ministerial Standing Committee of the New South Wales Conference, 5 May, 18 July and 10 October 1952.

88 Alan Walker, The Protestant Attitude to Communism (Melbourne, 1950), p.4; Daily Record (NSW), 1 March 1954.

Australia and New South Wales Methodism reflected the national figures.

The Methodist Church took little comfort from what may have been little more than statistical variations. Throughout the intercensal period 1947-1954 the South Australian Conference was aware that the membership was declining. In 1953 there were 763 (or 2.7 per cent) fewer members than in 1947 although 'some hundreds in more than 60 circuits were received into membership on open confession of faith'. (The increase in nominal Methodism indicated by the Census was mainly due to increased numbers of children.) The largest falls had been in the metropolitan area. Much of the numerical loss resulted from intensive culling of membership rolls by Quarterly Meetings; one circuit removed 99 names. In one year it only took drastic revision of two rolls to account for the overall connexional decrease. It suggested a 'healthy by-product' of the Crusade, according to the Director of the Crusade for Christ, as the meaning of membership had been strongly emphasised. Nonetheless, among members on the margins of Church life, there was a reluctance to accept the discipline of the Church. So while there were no definite signs of revival there were indications of 'movement of the Spirit in the Church'.⁸⁹ Critics reckoned that the Church seemed to be 'waiting for people to want Christianity' instead of acting as a 'salesman of the Gospel' but critics were relatively few.⁹⁰ As a proportion of nominal Methodists aged 15 years and over, Church members declined from 21.8 per cent to 20.3 per cent between 1947 and 1954. More clearly 'heartening' statistics did appear after 1953 when the total membership began to increase and optimists developed a sense of expectancy as they observed increasing numbers who were 'now more involved in the life of the Church'.⁹¹

The New South Wales Conference had more cause to rejoice over the condition of the Church, although the fears of some might not have been mollified by the admittedly small increases in membership and especially the slight decline - of 0.1 per cent - in the proportion of nominal adult Methodists who had been received into Church membership. The number of members increased by 2,634 or 5.9 per cent in the years between 1947 and 1954.

89 SA Conf. Mins. 1949, p.84; 1951, pp.254 and 259; 1952, p.56.

90 Northern Journal, 28 October 1953.

91 SA Conf. Mins. 1955, p.165; Mid-Northern Journal, 28 October 1953.

In 1953 the General Conference initiated the Mission to the Nation which was the third stage of the Crusade for Christ started in 1949. After considerable discussion within the Crusade Committee, the Reverend Alan Walker was chosen to lead what was originally intended to be a short six month national campaign to climax the Crusade. The Mission continued until 1956 and in its initial stages received some business and political support. (Money and pledges were received, for example, from Frank Packer and Dr. Evatt.)⁹²

Although the Mission to the Nation opened with what the Age called 'one of the greatest evangelistic events Melbourne has seen', the enthusiasm was not easily translated into membership statistics although there were gains in the numbers of Sunday School enrolments and, 'what is more satisfying', according to the Reverend M.C. Trenorden at the Adelaide North District Synod in 1955, 'a steep increase in the average attendance'. One significant intervening variable was the local congregation 'and its spiritual affinity with the ethos and emphasis of the Mission'.⁹³ 'Mission' was a much broader concept of evangelism than the 'limited connotation' which evangelism ordinarily implied. It included 'everything done by the Church in its locality as an act of service to men and women and to the community at large'.⁹⁴ It has been suggested that the Mission to the Nation remained largely an operation at the level of Conference rather than 'an affair of the local Churches'.⁹⁵

The status of the local Methodist Church was becoming more tenuous in these years. The Census indicates that growth of nominal Methodism was lagging behind State population growth rates. Whereas, for example, in New South Wales, nominal Methodism increased in number by 11.5 per cent, the State population increased by 14.7 per cent. In South Australia the difference was even more marked, 13.3 per cent growth in nominal Methodist against a 23.4 per cent increase in the State's population. Even in towns where Methodism was strong and local population growth relatively slight, Methodism declined. In Gawler, just north of Adelaide, for example, the population grew by 15.4 per cent but nominal Methodism by only 8.4 per

92 Henderson, Reach for the World, pp.92-95.

93 Adelaide North Journal, 26 October 1955; Henderson, Reach for the World, p.114.

94 Rupert Davies, 'Since 1932', in Davies, George and Rupp (eds.), A History of the Methodist Church, vol. 3, p.383.

95 Bollen, Religion in Australia, p.65.

cent, thus declining proportionately. In Campbelltown, on what were then the north-eastern outskirts of Adelaide, the population jumped from 5,233 to 10,586 or by 102.3 per cent. Methodism increased by less than half that percentage, 46.3 per cent. And in Enfield the growth was even greater. Enfield was then on the northern boundary of the city. Its total population more than tripled; after being 13,744 in 1947, it was 50,412 in 1954, a rise of 266.8 per cent. Methodism increased by 180.5 per cent and declined as a proportion of the total population.

On the one hand it appeared that rapid population growth was not conducive to Methodism holding - even nominally - its own. On the other hand, the major factor in its relative decline was immigration. In the three centres just mentioned - Gawler, Enfield and Campbelltown - the major factor making for differences between them was migration. Gawler received very few migrants, but the percentage of native-born Australians fell by just over five per cent. In Enfield, overseas immigrants were a significant factor in the increase of population, but internal migration may have been equally or even slightly more significant. The number of overseas-born rose from 965 in 1947 to 10,913 in 1954 but the number born in Australia increased by 26,720 or more than double the other figure. Most of the overseas migrants (59.9 per cent) to go to Enfield were British. In this situation Methodism fell from being the denomination indicated by 27.3 per cent of Enfield's citizens in 1947 to 20.8 per cent in 1954, a fall of 6.5 per cent. In Campbelltown that same fall was 8.5 per cent, from 30.72 to 22.2 per cent. Less than one-quarter of the migrants to go to Campbelltown were British. The bulk of the remainder were Italians, and Catholic. Nationally, it was observed that in 1954 the four main Protestant denominations (Church of England, Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist) had a 'higher proportion' of Australian-born adherents than any of the remaining religions. It was highest for Methodists at 94.2 per cent.⁹⁶ Too few Methodists emigrated from Europe and the United Kingdom for nominal Methodism to remain a constant proportion of the Australian population. There is no reason to suppose that in migrant populations Methodists were unrepresented although they may not have been equally distributed across Australia. For example, from those born overseas, according to the 1954 Census, and living in South Australia, just over

96 Jerzy Zubrzycki, *Immigrants in Australia: A Demographic Survey* Based Upon the 1954 Census (Melbourne, 1960); p.57.

three per cent were nominally Methodist; nationally, the figure was 4.4 per cent.

Although local Churches have rarely been credited with assisting with the assimilation of migrants,⁹⁷ the Methodist connexional bodies were involved. Each year a General Conference report on immigration was included in State Conference Minutes. Woollacott, for example, was an executive member of the Good Neighbour Council in South Australia, and pursued the Council's policies as vigorously as he did most things. Chaplains for migrants were appointed by Annual Conference. Methodist ministers also acted as chaplains on migrant ships. The Reverend Arthur Strange, Superintendent of the North Adelaide Methodist Mission, was often echoed by General Conference spokesmen, when he asked in 1949 whether Methodists were 'alive to the opportunities of bringing out the right type of migrants'? He intimated that Methodists were lagging because among the migrants presently accommodated by the Mission, 'easily a dozen single young women ... had been nominated by the Licensed Victuallers' Association'.⁹⁸

The public did not flock to Methodist Churches although attendances were increasing by 1952-53. Outside, among the public generally, prudent economic management was most desired by voters who savoured prosperity for perhaps the first time in many cases. Signifying this, personal debt increased. In the two months preceding the spring of 1955, balances outstanding in retail hire purchase agreements 'almost doubled'.⁹⁹ In this period generally Methodists were heartened by several improvements in membership and attendance and an intensification of spiritual life among many churchgoers. And yet this happy outlook was punctuated by divisions on social questions such as the Cold War. By placing its emphases on individual liberty and conscience the Church risked unbridgeable divisions on social issues for which members took their views from non-Church sources. The Secretary for the Mission to the Nation, the Reverend Rex Matthias, wrote that Christians should influence community identity by permeating their influence throughout the community, instead of seeking to dominate it in the manner practised

97 Jean Martin, The Migrant Presence. Australian Responses, 1947-1977 (Sydney, 1978) p.63.

98 SAM, 9 September 1949.

99 Roger Randerson, 'Hire purchase raises acute national problems', Australian Quarterly, 27 (3), September 1955, p.31.

by Catholics.¹ Woollacott, whose own work tended toward a dominating perspective, thought it was a 'distinction with little substance'.² As the debate over communism and anti-communism showed, it was not entirely clear that Methodists wished to permeate their communities in the way that Matthias intended. Agreement on a Methodist policy could not be reached. Further it was not clear whether the guiding principle was the first commandment or liberal and secular politics inspired by the peace movement. Conferences were confronting issues for which the narrow perspective of the Nonconformist conscience would prove incapable of providing any let alone a uniform answer. One important result was that Methodists in politics went in quite different directions, the majority followed the non-Labor cause while an articulate minority followed the ALP or socialism.

1 Rex Matthias, The Protestant Approach to Politics (Melbourne, n.d.), pp.4, 8 and 11.

2 SAM, 31 July 1955.

CHAPTER THREE: INTERREGNUM, c.1959.

In July 1959, the Reverend E.H. Woollacott gave thanks for the contributions made by the Billy Graham Crusade to community and individual lives. The Church and social questions were Woollacott's vocation and he was earlier disappointed with Graham's less than definite stand against drink and gambling.¹ Now he was greatly impressed by the evangelical power of the Crusades. Piety underlay Woollacott's work and he argued confidently that the Church

must continue to emphasise the inwardness of true religion and the need for individual regeneration and devotion to Christ; the religion of both the Old and New Testaments is the religion of the heart.²

Woollacott's ministerial colleague in New South Wales, the Reverend Alan Walker, had earlier heard Billy Graham preach in Maddison Square Garden in New York and been similarly impressed by the evangelist's ability to 'confront' people with Christ. Walker's criticisms of Graham remained, in his words, 'a limited conception of God, an inadequate interpretation of the Bible, a too literal eschatology and an almost complete absence of social conscience'. These shortcomings were overshadowed by Graham's facility to apparently bestow a sense of divine favour on churches, homes and people.³ Around 980,000 people attended Graham's meetings in Sydney alone during 1959. There were 56,780 'decisions', or as Graham tried occasionally to infer, 'inquirers'.⁴

The visible enthusiasm for the Christian (Protestant) communion sparked by the Graham crusades was offset by the criticisms from leading Churchmen against the validity of religious experience in contemporary secular society. And yet both the enthusiasts and critics could ignore each other. That they were free to do so in the face of overwhelming secularisation gives the latter years of the 1950s and the early years

1 Mins. SSD (SA), 13 February 1959.

2 SAM, 17 July 1959.

3 Henderson, Reach for the World. pp.154-55.

4 Faith Alleyne and Harold Fallding, 'Decisions at the Graham Crusade in Sydney: a statistical analysis', Journal of Christian Education, 3(1), July 1960, p.32.

of the 1960s a quality of interregnum. This chapter seeks to juxtapose the enthusiasm of Methodism for Graham's evangelism with the Church's anxiety during the 1961 recession. The experience of Methodism with the Wells Church Fundraising Organisation bears contradictory elements of religious communion, revival, prosperity and secular methods of religious accountancy. Methodists, it is argued, were more attached to the shimmer and convenience of affluence of this world than hopeful for the next. They continued to believe that the Church was an essential, normal and even potentially expanding part of Australian culture rather than a sub-culture in a post-Christian world.

By 1959 Australia was a settled, comfortable and affluent place; it was no longer encumbered by the sense of threat which permeated earlier post-war years. It was a time of political quietude. In the federal election of the previous year there were no national issues of any great moment. Controversy was as much within as between the major political parties. Whereas unemployment was an issue which nearly unseated the Liberal Country Party Government in 1954 the environment in 1958 was ideologically favourable to a government seeking re-election for the fourth time and on the basis of its record.⁵

Billy Graham's visit coincided with the final year of arguably the most prosperous and stable period in Australia's history. The advance in living standards was unambiguous despite a declining trade balance after 1951. Prosperity was possible because of greatly improved internal productivity, migration and capital inflow although most investment was based on local savings.

Both domestic and import prices were stable in these years. Consumer price inflation between June 1948 and June 1954 averaged 11.4 per cent per annum. For the remainder of the 1950s the rise averaged 2.5 per cent and after 1956 it was only 2.0 per cent. Real wages in the first period (1948/49 - 1953/54) rose annually by an average of 2.0 per cent and in the latter by 2.3 per cent. Internal productivity was greatly enhanced by the improved supply of goods and services by the basic industries - those which in earlier years were plagued by poor

5 D.W. Rawson, Australia Votes: The 1958 Election (Melbourne, 1961), pp.8, 22, 69 and 218-223;

industrial relations: utilities, transport and resource exploitation and development. Investment in private, non-basic industries grew particularly strongly. Productivity was spurred, too, by the demands of United States' affiliated firms whose own productivity in 1961/62 was calculated to be about 36 per cent higher than in Australian industry generally. By their requirements they effected appreciable improvements in quality and service which ultimately helped improve the standard of living of most Australians.⁶

Rapid development of the Australian capital market followed the dismantling or discarding of post-war controls and other long-standing regulations. Hire purchase registered the most dramatic growth.⁷ Methodists probably appreciated the facility as much as anybody although individual clergymen such as the Reverend Ralph Sutton condemned hire purchase as unethical, partly because he was a socialist but also because of what Sutton called, 'excessive' interest rates and multiple lending.⁸ In 1959, the SSD in New South Wales recommended to Conference that it urge the State Government to fix interest rates at a 'reasonable percentage' and thus help control inflationary trends.⁹ Not many agreed. Mr. G.W. Sneddon was the Lay Treasurer for the South Australian connexion and also South Australian Divisional Chairman of the Hire Purchase Conference. Sneddon denied Sutton's criticisms were true and extolled the 'tremendous' role played by hire purchase in post-war national development. Most Methodists seemed to approve economic development, they appreciated prosperity; Woollacott defended the prohibition of gambling and restricted liquor licensing for their presumed benefits to the prosperity of South Australian households. Hire purchase, Sneddon wrote,

... has enabled thousands of people to obtain the essentials of modern-day living which they would not otherwise have been able to afford; it has contributed greatly to the nation's standard of living; it has aided the growth of a wide range of industries, and it has directly or indirectly provided employment for some 400,000 people.⁹

6 Waterman, Economic Fluctuations, pp.99-108; A.G.L. Shaw, The Economic Development of Australia (Melbourne, 1973), p.192.

7 SAM, 14 July 1961.

8 NSW Conf. Agenda 1959, p.139.

9 SAM, 14 July 1961.

He did not discuss the possibility that these attributes of affluence might lead people to disregard the Church. Nor, it would seem, did his critics.

The Methodist connexions adopted financial methods which were strikingly similar to hire purchase, methods which were also trumpeted by the Wells Organisation. This American religious fund-raising body broadcast testimonies of enormous increases in parish or circuit finances following campaigns for pledged giving. It began operating in Australia just as the slump of 1952/53 ended and allowed many circuits to profit from economic growth. In January 1955, the President of the New South Wales Conference talked excitedly of a building boom in the circuits during 1954. New churches, halls and parsonages sprang up across the country and continued to do so for several years.¹⁰ Although greatly increased circuit income resulted in much improved accommodation it was questionable whether the Wells brand of stewardship deepened the spiritual life of local Methodists. Much contemporary church architecture seemed to bear this out. In many church buildings the emphasis was placed on choir and organ at the expense of sacraments and the Word.

A trustee of Pirie Street Methodist Church in Adelaide, Ray Beanland, complained that he knew 'full well that one can get very close to God in a barn, but many of our congregations have spent considerable sums of money in creating barns'.¹¹ Beanland took an active, amateur, interest in Church architecture and was little impressed by the results of even greater expenditure during the 1950s.¹² Fellowship predominated and sometimes at the expense of other important aspects of Church life.

Local church officials preferred the more regular income associated with Wells' stewardship to irregular voluntary giving; several South Australians complained, for example, that little finance came the way of

10 Methodist, 1 January 1955.

11 SAM, 1 October 1948.

12 Ibid., 17 May 1957.

the churches during the wool boom. Voluntary giving did not result in the personal challenge of discipline believed to inhere in the Wells' scheme.¹³ For many, the Wells' scheme was a 'great boon'.¹⁴

Doubts were expressed about Wells; Sneddon observed that it was no more than a means for circuits to go deeply into debt.¹⁵ By contrast, others were more hopeful, for less mercenary reasons. Could Wells be an instrument of revival? One New South Wales minister wrote: 'What we failed to do in the Mission to the Nation is now being done through this canvass'.¹⁶ Possibly: in 1973 the historian David Bollen whose own attitudes towards the Church in the world were developing in the late 1950s, reckoned that the period of enthusiasm for Wells was a 'truly pathetic episode in modern Christian history'. He denounced the principle of 'the heart will follow the cash pledge'.¹⁷

There may have been more truth in Bollen's description than Bollen would have preferred for the latter part of the 1950s was a time in which Church building was widely viewed as a community project.¹⁸ As far as the broader secular community was concerned the Churches were not a bad thing. In the study of city life by Oeser and Hammond the following sentiment was representative: 'I don't suppose I back up the Church as much as I should; its just as well everyone isn't like me. Because if we had no church we'd have no morals would we?' Many with few ties with the Church continued to consider themselves adherents of a particular religious denomination. Oeser and Hammond implied that spiritual indifference was not synonymous with hostility to religion and the Church. The Church was perceived to provide a good moral education for children.¹⁹

13 These comments came from Tusmore Church in Adelaide. Ibid., 29 June 1956.

14 Ibid., 31 October 1958.

15 South Australian Conference Representative/Ministerial Standing Committee Minutes. SRG 4/1/43. (SAA, Adelaide) 4 August and 17 September 1959. (Hereafter Mins. Rep. St. Committee. (SA).)

16 Bollen, Religion in Australia, p.65.

17 Ibid., p.67.

18 Interview: Reverend Maurice W. Wilmshurst, 12 June 1984.

19 O.A. Oeser and S.B. Hammond (eds.) Social Structure and Personality in a City (London, 1954), p.18.

While the 1950s saw solid economic growth and prosperity it was also inspiring for committed evangelical Methodists. After the dull religious atmosphere after the war the groundwork for better times was laid by the Crusade for Christ and the Mission to the Nation with its novel forms of evangelism, including Walker's insistence that 'neutral ground' such as a town hall was preferable to church property as a place for the Gospel message to be presented to nominal but uncommitted Christians. 'Drama with a Challenge' was broadcast by commercial radio networks across the country and received a good following, sometimes exceeding 20 per cent of the audience. Walker remains sure that by these and other means the message of Methodism was spread far and wide.²⁰ In the annual Pastoral Address following the 1957 South Australian Conference the Reverend Erwin Vogt said that the Crusade and the Mission had 'achieved more than we can calculate in the spiritual life and intention of our Church'.²¹

It is not possible to define a hierarchy of influence of the several missionary and stewardship ventures of the Church. They appear to have combined to provide an evangelical tone to religious life without resulting in revival. Methodists possessed widely differing attitudes to each venture. Whereas some saw the Wells scheme catalysing revival others denounced it and adulated the Mission to the Nation. And collective attitudes changed in the course of a campaign, for the Mission to the Nation was evidence of the divided attitudes within the Church to evangelism and the Methodists' social conscience.²²

In February 1954 the New South Wales Conference had seemed greatly impressed by the impact of the Mission to the Nation on the general community. A new sense of Christian responsibility was said to have been abroad.²³ The same enthusiasm was not apparent in the following year. Indeed, the Daily Record of the New South Wales Conference speaks of closing the campaign late in 1955.²⁴ The Mission continued for another two years. Walker was in the United States in July 1956 when

20 Interview: Walker.

21 S.A. Conf. Mins. 1957, p.64.

22 Henderson, Reach for the World, p. .

23 Daily Record (NSW), 26 February 1954.

24 Ibid., 28 February 1955.

the executive committee of the Mission to the Nation decided to bring it to an end. No reasons for this decision are available. In February 1957 the Conference expressed satisfaction at reports of Walker's recent successes in the United States and Canada. The Conference also concurred that when the Mission officially ended the Church should 'embark on a well-organised crusade to recover the absentee members' of the Church in New South Wales.²⁵ The language of this resolution was archaic, implicitly critical of the nature of evangelism which Walker and his associates had pursued and suggested that compliments to Walker on his recent overseas successes were more an expression of manners than conviction.

Walker was emphatic that religion and politics were indivisible. Many Churchmen who spurned the Mission to the Nation rejected Walker's politics even when they conformed to General Conference resolutions. Walker denied that the gospel could be preached without references to politics and social justice. Billy Graham's evangelistic style excluded politics and his mass meetings show that for many Christians politics and religion did not mix; for them religion was exclusive of politics, it transcended politics.

Billy Graham's visit to Australia was preceded by debate over the revivalist's effectiveness in bringing people back to the Churches. English evidence to the contrary was cited by critics such as D. Jenkyn in Nation to suggest that Graham's ability to spark revival was the 'worst-established statement in the Graham repertoire'.²⁶ Another hostile critic, Ken Inglis, writing in the same journal compared Graham unfavourably with the 'hell-fire and brimstone' founder of his profession, Dwight L. Moody. Graham would merely dispense spiritual tranquilizers and listening to him was about as exciting as watching Rocky Marciano play chess.²⁷ Expressions of doubt and ridicule could not, however, compete with the excitement fuelled by the Crusades in many parts of Australian Protestantism.

25 Ibid., 5 March 1957; NSW Conf. Mins. 1957, pp. 212-13.

26 D. Jenkyn, 'Dr. Graham's decisions', Nation, no.13, 14 March 1959, p.12.

27 Ken Inglis, 'Sydney, meet Mr. Graham', Ibid., no.15, 11 April 1959, p.14.

Yet the critics did have a point. A correspondent to the Sydney Morning Herald suggested that any assessment of Graham's influence on Church attendances should wait three or four months. On this basis the English data following a recent crusade in London was not promising. In general terms Graham later agreed and laid the responsibility for holding converts on the local churches themselves. In his experience, local clergymen would need to be aggressive in order to maintain their enlarged congregations.²⁸ At the time of the Crusades these were problems for the future. Admirers of Graham looked on him as the 'chosen vessel of the Lord' and were doubtless heartened when the morning papers provided photographs of great crowds - despite nasty weather - numbering 150,000 at the Sydney Cricket Ground and spilling over into the adjacent showgrounds or the 130,000 people who packed the Melbourne Cricket Ground.²⁹

In a statistical report on the crusades published in the Journal of Christian Education, the authors argued that what appeared to critics to be 'preaching to the converted' was in fact presenting to people who had received instruction in Christian faith the challenge of commitment to what they had been taught.³⁰ They also contended that it was those people who had received instruction who 'always provided the most fertile ground for the word of the Gospel', and who also stood firm in their conversion much better than people who did not know details of the Gospel. The authors hearkened back to the Reverend Percy Black's fears that a populace ignorant of the basic premises of Christianity would not be able to respond either positively or negatively to the call that came from the Church because they would not know how to respond;³¹ Wesley's experience of the 'warmed heart' could not have happened without some knowledge of the religious event.

At the end of the 1950s some knowlege of Christian doctrine, however vague, could be expected of most Australians. The Methodists who denied that this general knowledge would continue without replenishment expressed the muted opinion of a minority.

28 SMH, 11 May 1959.

29 Ibid., 13 February, 16 March and 11 May 1959.

30 Alleyne and Fallding, 'Decisions at the Graham Crusade', p.38.

31 See above, p.13.

In the second half of 1959 a widespread and confident outlook in Methodism sprang from a reinvigorated mood of fellowship and piety. Delegates to the Eyre Peninsula District Synod, for example, detected a quickened sense of stewardship among members of the Church who were increasing in number.³² The Reverend M.C. Trenorden who succeeded Woollacott as director of the SSD in January 1960, gave thanks for the 'evidence of spiritual hunger' in the Churches of Adelaide North District, a hunger greatly sharpened by the recent Graham Crusades. Stewardship, he added, had thus far served bricks and mortar; now it had to develop 'more efficient ways of propagating the word of God at home and abroad'. Several laymen at the same Synod, including Mr. D.E. Jones of Enfield, rejoiced that the Graham Crusades had been beneficial to local Churches.³³ Indeed, in the Enfield circuit 37 young adults were baptised in 1959. In one week 20 were baptised in the course of two services held four days apart in October.³⁴ At the Middle District Synod, the Reverend R. Haynes was grateful for the positive ecumenical experience provided by the Crusades and that many people were restored to the fellowship of the Church.³⁵ Elsewhere, others discerned, 'visible signs of a spiritual awakening'.³⁶ At the Adelaide South Synod the Reverend Maurice Wilmshurst who marshalled around 4,000 counsellors for the Crusades, expressed his gratitude for what had been realised over the long connexional year.³⁷ The Church should rejoice in the results of years of patient, faithful work in Christian Education, planning Church union, social witness and widening the outreach of Home and Overseas Missions.³⁸ The mood of gratitude prevailed for some time in South Australia for it was not until April 1960 after the financial details of the Crusade were completed that the Standing Committee of Conference wrote to Graham acknowledging his role in the 'cause for deep thanksgiving for so much accomplished'.³⁹

32 Eyre Peninsula Journal, 30 July 1959.

33 Adelaide North Journal, 29 July 1959.

34 Enfield Methodist Circuit Register of Baptisms, SRG 4/43/12 (SAA, Adelaide).

35 Middle Journal, 29 July 1959.

36 Mid-Northern Journal, 29 July 1959; South-Eastern Journal, 29 July 1959.

37 Interview: Wilmshurst. The date of Conference was changed from February to October thus making the connexional year consistent with the calendar year.

38 Adelaide South Journal, 29 July 1959.

39 Mins. Rep. St. Ctee. (SA), 20 April 1960.

Again, it is unfortunate that the New South Wales Synods did not keep Journals or print a resolution following the Conversation on the Work of God. Perhaps, however, New South Wales Methodist reactions were similar to the Methodist's ecstatic response: the Graham Crusade meetings 'have been so outstanding that Christianity has become real NEWS in all Australian newspapers'.⁴⁰

The Methodists were anxious about the life of their communion. This inward-looking attitude was criticised by some churchmen, most notably by the Anglican Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn, E.H. Burgmann. Burgmann was unimpressed by the great numbers making decisions because most were already professing Christians. The crusades, he wrote, were a challenge to the Churches rather than the world outside them; the world would continue much as before.⁴¹ Burgmann appeared to give the Church communion less significance than the social gospel; he seemed contemptuous of ordinary Christians enjoying or being emotionally moved by their faith. And yet Methodism had not intended to evangelise the unchurched before revitalising the local church; the local church was expected to be the key to contemporary evangelism.

Throughout the 1950s reviving and sustaining the local church was the limit of the institutional Church's capacity for evangelism. And when compared with Census data, Church membership statistics show the depth of the evangelist's problem.

In South Australia in 1961, of the 148,980 nominal Methodists aged 15 years or over, 31,873 or 21.4 per cent were members of the Church. The percentage figure indicated only a slight improvement on the 1954 figure of 20.3 per cent and also indicated the degree of commitment required to increase the membership proportion of nominal Methodism, even allowing for possible qualitative improvements in the religious lives of those who were already members.

40 'Billy Graham in Australia', Current Affairs Bulletin, 24(4), 22 June 1959, p.59.

41 SMH, 5 June and 5 September 1959.

Another factor arises in the data presented in Table 5. Between

Table 5 Nominal Methodist adults and children in South Australia

	Children		Adults		Total no.
	no.	%	no.	%	
1947	41,888	24.6	128,625	75.4	170,513
1961	67,789	31.3	148,980	68.7	216,769

1947 and 1961 the number of children rose by almost 62 per cent but adults by only 15.8 per cent. This trend was not unique in South Australia because although population growth was much quicker than that experienced by Methodism, nominal or confirmed, the resulting proportions of Methodist adults and children was on a par with State averages.

From the mid-1950s connexional departments anticipated an unusually large number of adolescents in the community: how could the Church convince the young people of its message, experience and fellowship?

The General Conference Youth Committee concluded that 'fundamentally, Christian Education is experience within the Church'.⁴² Were there sufficient numbers of trained youth leaders to counsel young converts, to train young people for membership, to provide leisure facilities and so forth and so on. The immediate answer was probably 'No' and a number of South Australian District Synods organised 'Youth Leadership Workshops' in 1960.⁴³ Initially the outlook was promising. In 1956 and 1957 leaders of the Conversation on the Work of God at District Synods mentioned an increase in youth interest in the Church, or reported an encouraging and definite growth in work. Youth Camps were popular and often seemed to result in a 'quickened spiritual life' for many young people.⁴⁴

42 Adelaide North Journal, 31 October 1956.

43 Eyre Peninsula Journal, 17 October 1957 and 30 July 1959.

44 Ibid., 18 October 1956 and 17 October 1957; South-Eastern Journal, 21 October 1956; Adelaide North Journal 1956 and 30 October 1957; Northern Journal, 31 October 1956 and 30 October 1957.

The Church's concern was not just with Sunday School pupils. It also sought to develop Christian character in the children who attended State schools. The Council for Christian Education in Schools (in New South Wales) which represented the interests of most Protestant denominations, held that the fundamental purpose of schooling was character-building and for it to be worthwhile Christian teaching was essential. The New South Wales Methodists' DCEIS (Department of Christian Education in Schools) was to the fore in presenting arguments to government on the religious components of State education. The DCEIS was ably led for nine years in the 1940s and 1950s by the Reverend Dudley Hyde. There was no equivalent body in South Australia, although R.I. (Religious Instruction) was commonplace. By the late 1950s many South Australian clergy questioned the value and efficiency of R.I. The South Australian Churches remained divided on the issues of R.I. until the mid-1960s when the Methodists decided to have no more of it and withdrew from any such involvement in State schools.

By contrast the New South Wales Council for Christian Education in School presented to the New South Wales Commission on Secondary Education in the middle of the 1950s, a common syllabus for R.I. The subsequent Wyndham Report accepted the principles of the Council and agreed that the aims of education which culminated in 'spiritual values' were attainable 'only on a religious basis and in terms of man's relationship with God'.⁴⁵ In 1959 the New South Wales Education Department incorporated Scripture into Social Studies courses.

A third additional way of serving the needs of young people stemmed from the growing incidence of juvenile delinquency. Writing in April 1959 the editor of the South Australian Methodist, the Reverend Phillip Potter, expressed concern at recent disclosures of juvenile delinquency in his State. He put the bulk of the responsibility for deteriorating moral behaviour at the feet of morally careless parents. He looked to the State Government for remedial action and was critical of the tardiness with which the rebuilding programme of the Magill Reformatory

45 'Editorial', Journal of Christian Education, 7 (2 and 3) November 1964, pp.59 and 61.

was being put into action.⁴⁶ He envisaged no direct role for the Church except in prevention which had much to do with parents. There was no role for the Church until and unless it was explicitly asked to act.

In New South Wales the Director of the SSD, Hobbin continued a Methodist association with the Magistrate's Courts which began with his predecessor, the Reverend William Coleman. With voluntary helpers the SSD worked at the Children's Court from 1950 as it attempted to help young people of nominally Methodist backgrounds avoid institutional confinement.⁴⁷ By 1957 Deaconess D. Heighway was employed by the SSD for full-time service at the Children's Court. In each instance - there were 237^{cases} in 1960 - the SSD corresponded with the minister of the circuit in which the children lived in order to encourage local contact between the child and the Church. By the end of the 1950s a house for teenage girls in Sydney and a training centre for boys on a farm near Young were operating. Parents also contacted the SSD in order to discuss the problems of children who were risking trouble with the law.⁴⁸ In their work the officers of the SSD reported that they had the 'ready cooperation of psychiatrists and other specialists'.⁴⁹ Hobbin did not envisage the work as overtly evangelical but allowed it to develop in the context of Christian education as it was defined in the mid-1950s: that is, relating to the whole life of the individual.

The local circuit was the expected agency for Methodism to be effective not only from the urgent perspective of helping youngsters escape the consequences of deteriorating anti-social behaviour and then develop a visible sense of self-worth, but also in developing the immediate youthful community of the Church. Programmes were often instituted at Conference level which depended for their success on the commitment of the local church. It remains beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse the nature, openness and religious and evangelical commitment of the local church community regarding, say, Christian

46 SAM, 17 April 1959.

47 NSW Conf. Agenda 1951, p.109; 1953, p.118; 1961, p.145.

48 Ibid. 1959, p.136.

49 Ibid. 1961, p.145.

education, although a glance at some of the relevant documents suggests that in the years which bordered 1959 the endeavour to recruit young people to Church life and witness was only partially successful.⁵⁰

The confidence which followed in the wake of the Graham Crusades in 1959 was short-lived. Criticisms of various aspects of Church and connexional life continued. Even the contentment could be disconcerting. For example, one reader of the Synod reports in the South Australian Methodist in 1960 was highly critical of that Synod which assured itself that it was 'matching the hour'; how 'misinformed' it was for if irregularity and apathy were the only laws governing membership, only tepid loyalty to the Church could be expected.⁵¹ It was also possible that stricter enforcement of the specifically religious rules of membership - such as re-institution of the class meeting - would drive some people away from the Church. There were other, newer predicaments as well.

First, in 1960 and 1961 Christian education of young people proved more difficult than anticipated. The hopes of 1956 and 1957 were blunted by growing indifference in 1960. It was soon apparent that a growing proportion of young people who passed through Sunday School were not continuing in the fellowship of the Church.⁵² The General Conference Youth Committee had defined Christian Education in a manner which explicitly stated that it could only be successfully carried on when every contemporary experience and problem is seen in its vital relationship to God's redemptive purpose'.⁵³ It was a tall order and the standards and appropriateness of youth activities remained a focus of controversy and worry in Synods, Conference and Quarterly Meetings.

Secondly, by the middle of 1961, local circuits retained little of the optimism for their respective financial positions which they had expressed in recent years. Connexional departments which requested

50 See below, pp. 147-148.

51 SAM, 2 September 1960.

52 J. Eyre Peninsula, 28 July 1960.

53 J. Adelaide North, 31 October 1956.

circuit levies, except perhaps Overseas Missions and one or two others, were a common cause of complaint. While there was growing acceptance of the concept of a total Church budget system there remained mixed feelings on establishing a department of stewardship largely because of the costs involved.⁵⁴

Thirdly, there was the attitude of the Church to social questions. For decades at Synod level, the Nonconformist conscience comfortably coped with traditional issues. From the early 1960s the respective SSDs were drafting resolutions on a much broader range of issues. In 1963 in South Australia there were eight different subjects embracing a change of name for the department, off-course betting, human relationships, nuclear war, Aborigines, industrial evangelism and chaplaincy, overseas aid and development and, only at the end, alcohol.⁵⁵ For Methodists generally, temperance had been a simple black and white issue. The new issues became increasingly controversial. Without considering overseas missions, home missions, local preachers, the ministry, superannuation of retired ministers, evangelism and numerous other Church concerns, Christian education, finance and social questions sufficiently represent the frustrations for many individuals seeking to serve the Church in the appointed tasks of witness, work and worship.

Worship remained the primary function of believers and liturgy will be taken further in chapter six. It is appropriate here to note that coincident with the broadening interests of the SSD in South Australia and New South Wales a (probably) small proportion of the New South Wales Church engaged in a search for authenticity of worship as opposed to imposed convention. This tendency was represented by the formation of a number of Methodist Revival Fellowships during 1959-60.

The few available comments on these groups imply a charismatic character. It is pertinent that one critic of the Fellowships severely disapproved any tendencies toward 'Pentecostalism'.⁵⁶ The criticism followed the explanation given by Robin J. Catlin, the Honorary General

54 SAM, 8 September 1961.

55 For example, as printed in Eyre Peninsula Journal, 3 August 1963.

56 Methodist, 23 April 1960.

Secretary of the Methodist Revival Fellowship, that its followers were 'longing for an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Churches'. They were convinced of the 'doctrines of Assurance and Scriptural Holiness' which suggests two motivations: first, a hearkening back to a Wesleyan doctrinal purity unhampered by higher criticism and secondly, and in contradiction of Wesley's own regular practices, a rejection of the inroads of sacramentalism and liturgical innovation - renovation might be more accurate - which could often seem to weaken the belief in the priesthood of all believers by removing the minister from that body to a level above humanity. The Fellowship was little concerned for the demands for changing conceptions of the demands for redeveloped forms in which the Christian hope could be expressed and communicated to non-Church people - including nominal Methodists. Such concern as it had was negative and even reactionary. It approached the problem of 'complacency' and the sense of comfort engendered by good repair to buildings, healthy finances and adequate congregations, in an inward-looking fashion. The Fellowship did anticipate the Charismatic revival of several years hence. It also anticipated the contemplation by a small number of Methodist clergy such as the Reverend C.T. Symons, that the Church should reduce itself to a much more sectarian existence - sectarian in the sense of distance from the world, not in antagonism with other religious groups.

In the absence of detailed histories of Methodism in the twentieth century it is not possible to claim that the Methodist Revival Fellowships were an unusual development or otherwise.

While the Methodist boasted the effect of Billy Graham on the newspapers and remained tightly wedded to a nonconformist outlook on social issues, in South Australia there appeared to be expressions of new concerns and alternative ways in which social and moral questions should be broached without in any way condoning evil. The Reverend Dr. Arnold Hunt remarked in October 1959 that Church people had sometimes had little say on social issues except on a 'limited' number of questions such as drink and gambling.⁵⁷ If the activities of individuals such as Woollacott and Hobbin, their respective departments

57 SAM, 2 October 1959.

and the General Conference statements on social questions as popularised by Alan Walker, for example, were put aside then there was undoubtedly much truth in Hunt's remarks. He later suggested that resolutions were passed by the relatively few members of Conference and thus were unlikely to be given 'indisputable authority' by all members.⁵⁸ (Given the emphasis in Methodism on free will and the individual's right to think for himself, that was hardly surprising.) In terms used by C.T. Symons earlier in the decade, Hunt recalled the doctrine of man's sinfulness which should have been known to most Methodists and pointed to the pervasiveness of sin in social life.⁵⁹ Hunt would not have stressed the point as strongly as the Reverend Rex Matthias who said that 'collective sin and moral transgression ... are structured into our society'. That Billy Graham did not draw attention to these things was said to be the 'real' weakness of the Crusades.⁶⁰ (For many it may have been a major attraction.) Later, in his role as editor of the South Australian Methodist, Hunt was strategically placed to confront Methodists with what appeared to be a more critical conception of the Church's social witness, although the degree of difference between the social questions of the 1960s and those of the 1950s should not be exaggerated. Critics of the limited perspective of the Nonconformist conscience in the Church overlooked the already broad nature of the Methodists' social conscience when, for example, they commended the SSD for introducing draft resolutions to Synods in 1961 on a wide variety of subjects.⁶¹ And yet throughout the 1940s and 1950s in the South Australian Methodist, under the pseudonym of Suzie Salterton, Edith Casely constantly provoked comment from Methodists on a great number and range of subjects, both domestic and international, to which she sought to bring a Christian perspective. For example, she provoked one incensed reader, the Reverend Arthur Hemmings, to recommend that the column should be expelled from the connexional journal for it 'too frequently treads on very dangerous ground'; there was widespread unease about Suzie Salterton's page.⁶² Although G.L. Griffith and the Reverend Arthur Oliver, as editor and deputy-editor of the Methodist sought to achieve something similar, their pieces were not as well-researched nor always as well-reasoned as those by Edith Casely.

58 Ibid., 23 February 1962.

59 Ibid., 28 July 1950.

60 Ibid., 16 August 1957.

61 For example, Ibid., 25 August 1961.

It was not entirely accurate, therefore, for the Methodist theological teacher, Eric Osborne, of Melbourne, to describe the 1950s as a period of 'ecclesiocentric piety'.⁶³ In 1959 'ecclesiocentric piety' made for perhaps the most satisfying year in the Methodists' post-war history. The quotations from Synods following the Crusades given earlier, were unusual in their sense of excitement, joy and confidence. Whereas the opening service of the Crusade for Christ during the General Conference of 1949 deeply moved those who were present they numbered just a few hundred - thousands of Methodists attended the Graham Crusades in 1959. And yet there was little time for sanguinity by Methodists - or had it passed already - for events well outside the Church's control would so impinge on Methodist life that the Church would have little opportunity or reserves of tolerance and compassion to calmly re-assess the contemporary nature of the many-sided relationship between the individual and his or her crucified God.

Questions were already arising: would legalist morality remain an adequate base from which to defend Christian compassion, discipline, identity and conscience? If Church people were exhorted to follow a higher, though hardly new level of discipline, to which relatively few could reasonably be expected to respond, should the institutional Church become more tolerant of differing perceptions of the meaning of life, humanist or nihilist or even epicurean perceptions?

The editor of the South Australian Methodist in the late 1950s, the Reverend Phillip Potter, had no doubt that more good would result from relations between people and institutions freed from injustice, intolerance and fanatical zeal. Even so, Potter did not provide any means by which the deepening question for the Church whereby evil could still be identified while its practitioners were openly demanding, even expecting, tolerance. To what extent could tolerance remain when tolerance itself was a moral quality which according to Potter, could 'not live where moral law is flouted'? Some of those who were even then demanding tolerance regarding liquor licensing or off-course betting facilities and later sexual libertarianism were encouraging behaviour and relationships which in Methodist eyes in the 1950s and early 1960s

62 Ibid., 28 July 1950.

63 'Editorial', Colloquium, 10(1), October 1977, p.5.

were incontrovertibly evil and contrary to received moral law. Would Churchmen not require a degree of fanaticism and perhaps a certain lack of charity in order to maintain a rigorous moral stance? In November 1960 Dr. Hunt hinted at the challenge facing Christians who relied on unthinking community acceptance of moral and social standards behind which there stood an authority to whom people owed allegiance. Was the community asked to obey the rules or the authority? Hunt came down on the side of authority. Thus, should some of the rules disappear or be refashioned that was no immediate cause for alarm for to ignore what had previously passed as Divine moral law was not necessarily to displace the authority of God.

Hunt probably had access by this time to the initial article on 'situation ethics' written by Professor Joseph Fletcher of the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Massachusetts and published in October 1959 in the Harvard Divinity Bulletin.⁶⁴ In his article, Fletcher outlined much of the field covered by a later book entitled Situation Ethics.⁶⁵ Hunt later reviewed that volume favourably although he remained sceptical of the ability of each individual to deal with the moral issues one by one without being swamped by detail and complexity or being caught up by enthusiasts for particular causes demanding tolerance but who were distinctly intolerant themselves. In 1959 Hunt gave little indication of the issues which Christians might have to subject to situation ethics. Generally, he remained steadfastly on the side of the rules for in his view it was only within the boundaries provided by rules that personality was free to develop.⁶⁶ Although the two may have possessed slightly differing perceptions of what the nature of the rules might be or what institutions should impose them, assuming that they could or should be imposed, Hunt and Woollacott agreed on the need for boundaries. They distinguished the Church from the world.

If Hunt could not predict the extent to which the boundaries would be dissolved in coming years he was nonetheless aware that sanguinity on the part of Christians was probably misplaced. Nevertheless, optimism

64 Simon Rae, 'Rule and context in contemporary Christian ethics', Colloquium, 4 (3), October 1971, p.29.

65 London, 1966.

66 SAM, 25 November 1960.

did prevail in some significant quarters. The President of the New South Wales Conference in 1959-60, the Reverend A.T. Roben, distanced the Church from the impatience and restlessness of much in secular life: surely the Church was its equal? Roben remained confident in January 1960 that the hopes and dreams of earlier years would soon come to fruition. Nineteen-sixty would be a year of harvesting, he wrote, or at least a starting point for the realisation of the objectives for which Christian people had long striven.⁶⁷ The editor of the Methodist, the Reverend A.J. Bingley, was even more confident when he saw the 'confused and fear-driven world'. When all the secular fears and revolts had passed away - just when he did not say - the eternal things 'on which the world rests' would remain: the Church, the Bible, the sacraments, the eternal drama of sin and redemption. Bingley remained truly loyal to traditional Methodism throughout the sixties - he edited the Methodist for the entire decade - but he seemed ill at ease on this occasion. Occasionally he wrote in an aggressive form and confused the boundaries of secular and sacred. Unlike Cowley or Black a decade earlier, Bingley did not so clearly distinguish between the two. In 1960 the Church triumphant was uppermost in his writing.⁶⁸

Roben's confidence, if not Bingley's, was soon punctured. After visiting many of the Circuits in New South Wales he expressed the conviction that Methodists throughout the State needed encouragement to think in terms of the changing task of the Church, to 'break through the barriers of the New Materialism'.⁶⁹ In South Australia, Dr Hunt urged fellow Methodists to be sensitive to the 'corrupting influence of wealth upon our sense of values'.⁷⁰ In neither case was there a plea for piety alone, but a request that members recognise, as the hymn-writer did long before, that 'a reformed church is always being reformed'; it was never placid and stagnant.⁷¹ Appropriately, then, the new director of the SSD in South Australia, the Reverend M.C. Trenorden, wrote of the winds of change, predicting that conditions would not remain static in South Australia.

67 Methodist, 9 January 1960.

68 Methodist, 16 April 1960.

69 Ibid., 23 April 1960.

70 SAM, 3 March 1961.

71 Ibid., 24 March 1961,

Whereas Trenorden referred to social and moral questions close to the heart of the Nonconformist conscience, Robens' 'New Materialism' received an unpleasant but relatively short-lived shock caused by the economic recession of 1961.

After several years of rising real incomes when the economy was 'steered comfortably between the Scylla of inflation and the Charybdis of recession', Australia was adapting to the style of an affluent society. Between the June quarter of 1959 and the September quarter of 1960, consumer demand rose dramatically. The reasons were several and cumulative. A five per cent reduction in personal income tax in the 1959/60 Budget was shortly followed by wage and salary increases granted by the Arbitration Commission. The business world was unusually sanguine about economic prospects and embarked on a private investment boom. Increased immigration further increased demand for goods and services. With the virtual ending of controls, imports surged into the country resulting in a drastic decline in international reserves from February 1960.⁷² The government's response late in 1960 was, as usual with each post war recession, properly deflationary but the measures were applied too harshly and too late. Unemployment rose to relatively high post-war levels although less severe than was assumed at the time. Waterman was highly critical not only of the 'most aggravating' large increases in the basic wage in June 1961 granted in the trough of the recession, but also the exaggerated views on the economic crisis given by most commentators. Waterman argues that the 'disturbance of smaller magnitude' in 1961 'evoked a far greater quantity of discontent' than the recession of 1952/53. His explanation was that the earlier slump took place instead of a widely anticipated return to depression. In the early 1960s economists and others expected a higher standard of performance.⁷³

For the same reasons which permitted much church building more people than previously were inconvenienced by economic recession: people were dependent on sustained and uninterrupted real earnings because of hire purchase and other budgetary commitments. They were vulnerable to

72 Waterman, Economic Fluctuations, pp.145, 161, 166-67 and 171-72.

73 Ibid., pp.114, 181, 187 and 197.

any losses of income. In the early 1950s Oeser and Hammond observed that Australians were concerned more for security than success. Now it was a matter of affluent security. Any frustrations in this regard were reflected in widespread dissatisfaction and most dramatically in the close survival of the Menzies Government in the Federal elections held in December 1961. Because of the low threshold of frustration 'almost every author from 1961 to 1964 exaggerates the seriousness of the recession'.⁷⁴ The inflated sense of crisis lasted for some time although consumer spending on living expenses which hesitated for the first two quarters of 1961, continued to grow 'as though nothing had happened'.⁷⁵

The economic crisis received mixed reactions from Methodist Conferences and especially Synods. In New South Wales the SSD expressed alarm and concern at the level of unemployment and recommended that Conference urge both the Federal and State Governments to embark on cooperative economic planning for full employment and stability.⁷⁶ By implication, affluence was commended. Synod responses to the SSD's urgent plea were varied. Six country Synods endorsed the plea as it stood. They represented just over one-quarter of the Church's membership. Three Synods, including Sydney Central and Parramatta, agreed, adding that the costs of the recession should be borne as equally as possible by all members of the community. They also wanted much swifter payments of (increased) benefits to the victims of unemployment. Newcastle Synod agreed with the SSD motion emphasising that the blame for unemployment lay squarely at the feet of the Federal Government which was responsible for 'the manipulation of the nation's economy'. Five Synods, including Sydney South and Sydney West and representing just under 30 per cent of the Church's membership, did not endorse the SSD's remarks on unemployment. Sydney North District Synod, alarmed by the unemployment situation, took an opposite view to that expressed by the Newcastle Synod and commended the New South Wales Government in its efforts to reduce unemployment in that State. It

74 Oeser and Hammond, Social Structure and Personality, pp.27 and 29; Waterman, Economic Fluctuations, p.197.

75 Ibid., p.186.

76 NSW Conf. Agenda 1961, p.147.

wanted this resolution sent not only to the State Government but to the Federal Government as well.⁷⁷ Most Synods, then, were unhappy with the performance of governments.

With one exception, South Australian Synods were divided along urban-rural lines regarding even mention of the recession. Adelaide North and Adelaide South Synods were both critical of the existence of high levels of unemployment. Each used the same language of the long-standing resolutions on alcohol. Unemployment was a moral issue and 'a dangerous malaise demands drastic treatment'. Neither Synod doubted that given the 'adequacy of the nation's resources' the problem was immediately remediable. Work was an inalienable right and if the private sector could not provide sufficient jobs then the responsibility fell on government to take its own employment initiatives.⁷⁸ The single rural District Synod which referred to the issue simply requested that State and Federal Governments should explore the means by which employment might be increased.⁷⁹ The other Synods made no mention of the recession.

In the Synod resolutions on the Work of God there was no longer the same confidence which was present in 1959 - revival was a word used sparingly indeed. There was much more a sense of struggle not only to maintain membership figures as a quantity but also the quality of Methodism. The recession buffeted the 'New Materialism' but affluence was generally unaffected. After rejoicing at the remarkable succession of events associated with the Billy Graham Crusades the Methodists were increasingly forced back on their own resources and a sense of unease permeated the connexion in South Australia and New South Wales within a year or so of Graham's departure. Prosperity, indeed affluence, in the 1960s would provide an environment in which the Church would be forced to retreat on several traditionally significant social questions and later compromise on several moral questions. Methodists now faced the

77 Ibid., pp.147-49.

78 Adelaide North Journal, 2 August 1961; Adelaide South Journal, 2 August 1961.

79 Middle District Journal, 3 August 1961.

problem of matching the 'rapid and many varied developments' of the day 'with a Christian answer' without compromising obedience to 'our Lord Jesus Christ' and the 'unchanging Gospel'.⁸⁰

80 Pastoral Address and Resolution on the Work of God, SA Conf. Mins. 1960.

CHAPTER 4LIQUOR LICENSING (1). THE DEFENCE OF EARLY CLOSING

Having sketchily observed the life of the Methodists between 1947 and 1961 and the general economic, social and political environment in which they lived, worked and worshipped, it is time to explore the Methodists' work and reflection regarding alcohol and liquor licensing. The Methodists were legatees of vigorous temperance (the most popular, influential and long lived social reform movement in the Western World).¹ On one hand, personal abstinence was expected of all members of the Church. On the other, members were expected to sympathise with the Nonconformist Conscience and thus support political activity to maintain restrictive liquor licensing. How would these personal and political expectations fare when many people in South Australia and New South Wales tired of restricted public drinking hours and longed for better drinking conditions from those believed to have been encouraged by six o'clock closing? After several years of conflict between drinkers and temperance would temperance equal Methodism?

The political situations in these two States differed markedly. Whereas the South Australian Liberal and Country League Government remained sympathetic to temperance the Labor Government in New South Wales was much more sceptical about the presumed benefits of restrictive liquor legislation and accepted social drinking as a legitimate leisure and social activity. What, broadly, was the outlook for temperance in these States between the mid-1940s and 1961?

In New South Wales the Liquor Act underwent major revision in 1946. A majority in the Parliament probably supported ten o'clock closing of hotel bars but the matter was put to a referendum in which the vote for six o'clock closing overwhelmed support for the later hour. In 1954 a second referendum was held. The temperance organisations, unduly sanguine, divided over tactics and propaganda, lost six o'clock closing.

1 James S. Roberts, Drink, Temperance and The Working Class in Nineteenth Century Germany (Boston, 1984), p.7.

Defeat was followed by an often bitter reassessment of the place of temperance in New South Wales. Government was unresponsive to any issues likely to further restrict public access to drinking facilities. Methodists and the Temperance Alliance turned to local option as a means toward prohibition. It was to no avail. By the end of the decade the Methodists generally eschewed political action in the cause of temperance.

In South Australia, despite some similarities, attitudes in Methodism reflected the continuance throughout the decade of six o'clock closing and the relative success of Methodists in fighting local option polls. Early in the decade the SSD tested local Methodist reactions to a proposed campaign to prohibit bar trading after one o'clock on Saturday afternoons. The responses were indicative of the indifference which ultimately sapped the will of temperance to vigorously defend already existing restrictions. Beneath the overt successes at the local option polls there lurked doubts that as a political philosophy temperance was either appropriate to the times or even credible beyond a personal attitude of abstinence, much as Methodists may have deplored alcohol abuse.

The New South Wales Liquor Act of 1912 consolidated all previous legislation related to liquor licensing. For temperance workers the most important sections were those which could be manipulated towards prohibition or, in the interim, the lowest possible consumption of alcoholic beverages: issues such as hours of sale, the quantity and quality or liquor outlets and local option which dated from the 1880s. In 1913 after many hotels were closed following option polls the number of liquor licences was fixed and local option suspended.

In 1916 the closing hour of hotel liquor bars was brought forward from eleven o'clock to six o'clock following a referendum in which 60 per cent of total votes recorded were given to six o'clock. Nine o'clock received half that vote. Although six o'clock was re-affirmed by Parliament on several occasions in the 1920s, temperance organisations were set on achieving prohibition. At a referendum in September 1928 prohibition was soundly rejected. Temperance was now obliged to defend, not extend its achievements.

The first post-war occasion on which six o'clock closing was challenged followed the introduction to the New South Wales Legislative Assembly of a 100 page Liquor Amendment Bill to amend and consolidate the Liquor Act. This major bill was intended to provide for a 'more equitable' distribution of liquor licences in New South Wales and improve accommodation standards and facilities for the supply of liquor. It also provided for a referendum on hotel and club closing hours at some unspecified time.²

Liquor licensing was a provocative public issue. Several Government members said that since the amendments dealt with general leisure activities they had no specific significance. Others feared its potential significance; 'we have no more outstanding problem than that of liquor', said one. Several Liberals reckoned that with the support of sympathetic Government Members the Bill could be defeated. Government Members would acknowledge 'the distressing consequences of the abuse of liquor' but warned the Temperance Alliance that attempts to curtail the drinking habits of the community were 'doomed to disappointment'.³

Temperance can be variously interpreted although just two positions were recognisable in this debate. On one hand, abstainers, rejecting prohibition, retained an 'uncompromising antagonism of the liquor trade' but acknowledged that people could be permitted to consume liquor in moderate quantities; moderation should be encouraged by education for they feared increased consumption would follow any increases in facilities. On the other hand, some, including 'virtual abstainers' questioned the efficacy of restriction. Extended facilities would not mean much increased consumption, if any increase. Surely, it was generally agreed, 'the proper' law would appeal to the majority of the Community.⁴

2 NSWPD 1945-46, pp.3040 and 3221-7.

3 Ibid., pp.3044-9.

4 Ibid., pp.3243-7.

In its moves toward less restrictive liquor licensing, the Parliament was abandoning the paternalistic premises on which the Liquor Act of 1912 was constructed. To be concerned for the victims of liquor abuse no longer implied imposing restrictions on all drinkers; self-denial could not be imposed. (Nor, as numerous critics in the House observed, was it encouraged.) With its moralistic baggage from the nineteenth century, temperance, as defined in New South Wales, was becoming archaic.

The question of clubs exemplified the new environment. The Premier pointed out that no club licences had been issued since 1916. Licences could only be obtained by purchase of an existing licence. From 1916 and in various guises the number of clubs had grown with the increasing population. Existing liquor licences became particularly valuable. Unlicensed clubs were not believed to have remained 'dry'; the subterfuge was 'impossible' to deal with and the strict provisions of the Act were 'extraordinarily difficult' to administer. 'Bona fide' clubs should now be free to apply for liquor licences. In the course of debate, distinctions were made between ex-servicemen's and other clubs. The former, it was said, should not be limited in trading hours by the provisions of the publican's licence. Even if a referendum should re-affirm early closing the clubs should be exempt from evening prohibition; 'otherwise there will be law-breaking because people will consume liquor'.⁵

The question of closing hours was put to the people in a referendum held on 15 February 1947. Voters were just under two-to-one in favour of six o'clock closing of bars mainly, it was thought, because many were apprehensive lest the six o'clock swill merely became the ten o'clock swill.⁶

The close association between temperance and democracy pursued by the prohibitionists appeared vindicated. According to a columnist in the Methodist this 'decisive victory' retained what was 'undoubtedly one of

5 Ibid., pp.3363 and 3365.

6 SMH, 17 February 1947. The aggregate returns were:
6 o'clock 1,050,260; 10 o'clock; 604,233 9 o'clock 26,954; Informal
15,183

the greatest, if not the greatest social reform of recent times'. 'With very few exceptions', according to the Methodist Conference held at the time, Methodists were believed to wholeheartedly support six o'clock closing.⁷

For temperance what should follow? Should it 'rest on its laurels', emphasise prohibition, or seek reform of the Liquor Act whilst keeping, 'as our ultimate objective the abolition of alcohol from our midst'? For many it was a question of what objectives were politically realistic. The Reverend Allan Blackert, a circuit minister stationed at Armidale, claimed to have spoken to many hundreds of people during the referendum campaign. They opposed excessive drinking, wanted drinking conditions improved but did not care for prohibition. Thus James Mahoney, the Publicity Officer for the SQD (Social Questions Department of the New South Wales Church), suggested to readers of the Methodist that 'it must not be assumed that a referendum on prohibition would go the same way'. Like the New South Wales Temperance Alliance which organised a deputation to see the Premier on the matter, Blackert urged the public to ensure proper enforcement of six o'clock closing.⁸

Whatever the level of support, the SQD and the Alliance believed they acted according to their supporters' wishes as they battled to 'counteract' the baleful influence of the liquor interests. Temperance demanded that the licensed clubs respect early closing. A decision of the Supreme Court cut them short. The law defined several classes of person who were exempt from prohibitions such as six o'clock closing, provided that the liquor was not supplied, delivered or consumed at the bar of the licensed premises. The exceptions included lodgers, travellers, servants and inmates. The term inmate was said to connote 'something in the nature of an indweller, ... an inhabitant or occupier'. The 'privileges' for inmates were continued in those sections of the 1946 Amendment Act regarding clubs. Acknowledging public distrust of the breweries and many hoteliers, the Premier had promised during the referendum campaign in February 1947 that clubs would exist under the same laws as hotels. Now, by a majority decision

7 Methodist, 4 and 25 January and 22 February 1947.

8 Ibid., 22 February, 1 and 23 March 1947.

in October 1947, the Supreme Court decided that Club membership provided the same status as hotel 'inmate': the judgment said that it was difficult to imagine who are the inmates contemplated unless members are included'. The decision was a severe blow to supporters of six o'clock closing.⁹

By 1951 Parliamentary dissatisfaction with the operation of the Liquor Act as well as the precarious hold on Government by the Labor Party resulted in the appointment of a Royal Commission, Mr. Justice Maxwell, whose brief was to enquire into the structure of the wholesale and retail liquor trade in which the breweries were commonly thought to have excessive control. The terms of reference were unambiguous - certainly the Commissioner believed so in his hostile encounters with the staunchly prohibitionist representative of the Temperance Alliance.¹⁰

Although the Alliance was representing the Methodist Church among others before the Royal Commission, the Methodists' SSD¹¹ had already acknowledged that prohibition was a futile hope. In 1951 in half-hearted fashion, owing to division among its members, the SSD tested District Synod reactions to possible campaigns for (a) local option and, in defiance of the Alliance, (b) the reduction of the alcoholic content of all intoxicating liquor. Only the South Coast District made no mention of the first of these. Most synods simply agreed that campaigns for local option be 'prosecuted in all circuits'. The second recommended campaign, implying as it did the permanence of public consumption of beverage alcohol was more contentious. Only two Synods appear to have agreed that alcoholic content was worthy of concern and one of these, the South Coast District Synod, reminded waverers that the Church remained 'committed to a policy of total abstinence and ultimate prohibition'. Maitland District Synod reckoned that campaigning for any reduction in alcoholic content compromised a campaign for local option. Intensified appeals for personal abstinence were preferred.¹²

9 Methodist, 16 August, 4 and 18 October 1947; NSW Conf. Agenda 1948, p.140; The Weekly Notes (NSW) vol. 64, 3 December 1947, pp.215-221.

10 NSWPP 1954, no.3, p.34.

11 The new name was given to the SQD in 1949.

12 NSW Conf. Agenda 1952, pp.110-111.

Whereas most committed Methodists refused to entertain doubts about 'abolition' others were becoming unsure whether 'unswerving hostility to the liquor trade' was a necessary part of the definition of the Methodist Church community or whether the Church was needlessly divorcing itself from much contact with contemporary life by maintaining such a distraction.

To the chagrin of the Alliance, Conference commended both local option and reduced alcoholic content. Philosophically, Conference remained faithful to abolition: 'wholesome social life and national well-being' were said to depend upon the complete eradication of liquor. Conference remained secure in the belief, reinforced by evidence tendered to the Maxwell Inquiry, that the Liquor Act clearly expressed the will of a 'very large majority' of New South Wales citizens and challenged the State Government to enforce the law; any suggestion that the law on six o'clock closing should be changed merely because it was disregarded by sections of the public, 'contained an extremely dangerous principle'. While the Conference agreed with other New South Wales temperance bodies that no changes to hotel closing times should be made without reference to a referendum, it seems that some of that 'very large majority' were now disregarding drinking restrictions in the manner predicted by a number of Parliamentarians in 1946. Conference had no wish to divorce itself from public life, particularly at a time when the Church was embarking on a major campaign of evangelism: whereas it commended habitual abstinence as a contribution to social betterment and recommended intensified temperance education for youth, Conference stopped short of making abstinence a condition of membership. Some ambiguity crept into Conference's resolve on temperance when it decided not to urge ministers to 'discourage' the use of liquor at weddings or deny permission for ministers to preside at functions where liquor was provided.¹³

In 1952 the SSD again pursued the question of alcoholic content of intoxicating drinks and recommended a gradual process of reduction taking five years. (To what level of alcoholic content it did not say.)

13 Daily Record (NSW), 3, 4, and 6 March 1952.

In part the response from Synods was familiar: increased efforts to discourage the liquor trade were demanded; any compromise with ravaging alcohol was unthinkable especially when there was an observed 'tendency on the part of many Methodists to compromise on the question of the consumption of alcohol'. But the SSD's views favouring pragmatic responses to the consequences of drinking were gaining popularity among Methodists. Ten of the 16 District Synods now agreed that the alcoholic content of liquor should be reduced, contrary to the express opinion of the Temperance Alliance but, in the case of beer, consistent with the views of the Royal Commissioner, Justice Maxwell.¹⁴

For Methodism in New South Wales these questions were matters more pertinent to the Church community alone than between the Church and Government. Church members were being encouraged to accommodate themselves to the secular environment in which shouts for prohibition - however exhilarating in the past - had dwindling social and political relevance.

In South Australia, however, Church encouragement of restrictive social legislation remained politically feasible. Part of the explanation was that the Reverend E.H. Woollacott did not seek unreasonable objectives. The Church contemplated only one more step to extend the restrictions of the Licensing Act. The Church was inspired to act when it received evidence of increased liquor consumption in the first years of the 1950s. Woollacott had been hoping to lead a campaign directed toward the closure of hotels at one o'clock on Saturday afternoons since at least 1951 in which year two District Synods, South Eastern and Northern, agreed to such a reform.¹⁵ Conference had maintained for several years that it was 'a highly desirable reform'. In February 1955 and in response to the 'fearful in-roads' of alcohol on social life, Conference resolved to investigate the possibility of such a campaign. Every circuit was urged to give the SSD full support to

14 Two Synods made no comment on liquor. NSW Conf. Agenda 1953, pp.120-3. Maxwell's comments are in NSWPP 1954, no. 3, p.15.

15 SAM, 16 September 1949; South Eastern Journal, 31 October 1951; Northern Journal, 13 October 1951.

that end.¹⁶ Replies from the circuits dribbled in to the SSD during May and June 1955. They suggested that reform of Saturday drinking was definitely desirable but concluded that public support would be minimal; a campaign was presently 'unwise'.

Government showed no sympathy with increasing restrictions. Cautious amendments to the Licensing Act passed in the 1950s were mildly liberalising. In a Bill introduced on 23 November 1949, for example, the Premier Thomas Playford, sought only to ensure that licences under the Act supplied food and lodging to bona fide travellers.¹⁷ Certain anomalies were the subject of a Bill in late 1953.¹⁸ Coincidentally with a campaign by wine-makers for single-bottle sales in grocers' shops,¹⁹ a much more extensive set of amendments was proposed in November 1954. That the States had differing licensing laws was reflected in the provision by which interstate and overseas lodgers in hotels could purchase liquor beyond six o'clock provided that it was for not more than six people, consumed on the premises in the presence of the lodger and supplied at his expense. The Independent Member for Stanley, Percival Quirke, one of whose chief concerns was the growth in markets for local wines, was unimpressed that 'interstate visitors can do for me in this State what I am not permitted to do for them'.²⁰ (It was a 'strange' argument, according to Woollacott.)²¹ In the debates on these amending Bills no divisions were called in the House of Assembly.

An attempt at liberalisation was made in the Legislative Council where Collier Cudmore, whose concepts of the 'health, comfort and happiness of the people', like Quirke's, differed from Woollacott's, sought to reduce the hours of trading from thirteen to nine arranged in such a way as suited individual establishments. He personally favoured the hours found in the English countryside, especially the break in trading during the afternoon and an evening limit of ten o'clock.

16 SAM, 18 March 1955.

17 SAPD 1949, pp.1554-1555.

18 Ibid. 1953, p.1796.

19 SAM, 15 October 1954.

20 SAPD 1958, p.1638.

21 SSD Mins. (SA), 17 December 1954.

Cudmore's Bill reached the committee stage without difficulty. The central clause changing liquor trading hours was over-whelmingly defeated by 16 votes to three however, and the Bill discharged at Cudmore's request.

The controversy over the trading hours of hotel bars seemed to benefit only the post office; very little mail supported Cudmore's bill. Cudmore said that much of the correspondence was from 'prohibitionists'. Even some of his opponents agreed, particularly when confronted by many pieces of mail which were offensively arrogant and self-righteous.²²

The Temperance Alliance had successfully charged local churches to protest against Cudmore's Bill. The South Australian Methodist recalled that in 1938 a similar attempt was made to 'undermine the expressed will of the people' which dated from 1915. It denied that there was any justifiable cause for complaint about the six o'clock swill; patrons began consuming liquor - 'whose properties never yet added to the dignity of men' - in the swill at four o'clock. Extended hours could only worsen the road toll. The answer to self-indulgence was not extended hours but self-denial.²³ The tenets of temperance were repeated by Woollacott as he directed the opposition to liberalisation: in the context of Cudmore's defeat, a minute of the SSD committee meeting a few weeks later boldly emphasised the importance of the SSD's 'work with respect to "politics"'.²⁴

In New South Wales no similar mobilisation of temperance forces - let alone victory - could be assured. An opportunity to demonstrate the vigour and tenacity of temperance was occasioned on 22 April 1954 when the Premier, J.J. Cahill, released the long-awaited report of the Maxwell Royal Commission into liquor licensing. The Sydney Morning Herald printed the Report in its entirety in a 'Liquor Report Supplement'. Significantly for the New South Wales SSD, Maxwell

22 SAPD 1953, pp. 393 and 751-3.

23 August and 4 September 1953.

24 SSD Mins. (SA), 25 September 1953. Woollacott 'heard a rumour that another bill against six o'clock closing was coming which would have' to be closely examined and a great deal of political lobbying done.

discussed the alcoholic content of liquor. Despite the observation that when Australian beers were compared with those of Britain and the continent the local brew proved remarkably potent he made no recommendations.

The Sydney Morning Herald, once a stalwart for six o'clock closing, was only mildly interested in the question of alcoholic content. For that paper Maxwell's 'most important recommendation' was the one, meriting the most whole-hearted support - the abolition of six o'clock closing with all its attendant evils, "which [in Maxwell's words] ought not to be tolerated in a civilized community".²⁵

Argument against six o'clock closing centred on the swill. Temperance representatives were at pains to deny that the swill was exceptional rather than typical of bar-room behaviour. Temperance emphasised traditional concerns. In 1952 Oscar Piggot was in his seventieth year when he gave evidence to Maxwell on behalf of the Alliance. Maxwell was not much interested in Piggot's single 'practical' reform - 'to wipe out the trade altogether'²⁶ - and observed that the aging prohibitionist was unable to read the terms of reference for the inquiry. Temperance relied almost completely for its intransigence at the inquiry on the great majority recorded for six o'clock closing in 1947. There were growing signs that public opinion was deserting the Alliance. A Gallup Poll in 1952 confirmed that six as against ten o'clock was 'probably' the preferred hour of a majority of voters.²⁷

Even before the Report was released the Methodist Conference condemned any 'conclusion' likely to favour later trading hours.²⁸ The Reverend Percy Black retired editor of the Methodist and a

25 SAM, 23 April 1954.

26 NSWPP 1954, no.3, p.75.

27 Gallup Polls nos. 865-74, July-August 1952.

28 Maxwell made no recommendation regarding later hours - despite his conclusions regarding six o'clock closing. A later Royal Commission into the sale, disposal and consumption of liquor in Victoria noted first, that Maxwell 'did not' recommend any particular hour to which trading should be carried on and second, that it is not easy to determine precisely what conclusion, if any, Mr. Justice Maxwell reached in regard to this basic controversy'. Vic pp.1964-1965, vol. 2, part 2, no.23, pp.6-7.

vice-President of the Alliance, convinced the Conference in February 1954 that it should 'indignantly' protest to the New South Wales Government against all those recommendations of Mr. Justice Maxwell which implied an extension of facilities for liquor consumption. The Methodists resented any references to six o'clock closing.²⁹ While early closing reflected the limited achievements of the reformers in the Methodist Church the resolution was not permitted to disqualify the Church from keeping some distance between itself and the 'entrenched' logic of the Alliance.³⁰ In the second week of the Conference proceedings in 1954 Ray Watson, a Sydney lawyer, successfully recommended that an 'expert committee' under the aegis of the SSD should 'investigate the heavy and rushed consumption of alcoholic liquor in New South Wales'. The committee was charged to present clear recommendations for 'reform' of the liquor traffic to the ensuing Conference.³¹ In March 1955 no such recommendations reached the Conference which could only lament the loss of six o'clock closing following the second post-war referendum held on 13 November 1954.

On that day 902,532 or 50.27 per cent of valid votes were cast in favour of ten o'clock closing of hotel liquor bars, 892,740 or 49.73 per cent preferred six o'clock closing.³²

Among temperance workers the unexpected result provoked loud recrimination. Although the Churches were said by the President of the Methodist Conference, the Reverend A.G. Manefield, early in November 1954, to have been 'four-square' on six o'clock closing, he warned against 'complacency amongst our own people'. Later, he blamed the daily press for the loss of much crucial support for six o'clock closing.³³ Some people may have changed their minds and were not so much apathetic as questioning inflexibly restrictive social policy. For example, a 'life long teetotaler' told the Sydney Morning Herald in April 1964 that he favoured later closing hours which would reduce

29 Daily Record (NSW), 24 and 25 February 1954.

30 The phrase was Hobbin's. Interview: Reverend W.J. Hobbin, 5 October 1984.

31 Daily Record (NSW), 1 and 2 March 1954.

32 NSWPP 1955-56, vol.1, no. 14, p.3.

33 Daily Record (NSW), 1 March 1955; Methodist, 6 November 1954.

consumption and end the 'swill'.³⁴ Others, new to the electoral roll since 1947, included young people and migrants many of whom chafed at the unaccustomed restrictions. While the Sydney Morning Herald denied that ten o'clock closing was a 'panacea to cure all the ills' of the liquor trade and ridiculed the suggestion of temperance that six o'clock represented the 'last safeguard of family life', it was aware that if the later hour was made law then probably consumption would increase and the 'calamity-howlers' could be justified in some of their arguments 'for a short time'.³⁵ Methodists were some distance behind the changing attitudes of many who previously preferred early closing; Methodists were only beginning to question the value in seeking prohibition when more people seemed to be drinking and were determined to change the dilapidated conditions of many hotels. Could a progressive policy of piecemeal reform lead to better drinking behaviour and less drunkenness - if not an 'environment of abolition' as Manefield suggested?³⁶

Early in December 1954 Hobbin and other dissenters from the Alliance, spurred by the defeat of early closing, arranged a meeting chaired by Coadjutator Bishop Hilliard at Chapter House beside Sydney's Anglican Cathedral in order to overhaul Alliance policy now that early closing had gone. There was 'much division of opinion', Manefield wrote later, which continued to be expressed for some weeks after the meeting. Percy Black was highly critical of publicly-expressed dissent; 'the situation is much too serious to permit of any internecine strife among opponents of the liquor traffic'.³⁷ True, sectional appeals to differing elements of temperance thinking would be of little effect compared with a unified organisation, but the Alliance was deeply divided over tactics, immediate objectives and the language of its propaganda.

34 SMH, 27 April 1954. The letter may not have been genuine, of course.

35 Ibid., 11 November 1954.

36 Methodist, 27 November 1954.

37 Ibid., 11 and 18 November 1954.

The Reverend Arthur Oliver, associate editor of the Methodist, noted that Methodists contributed 69 per cent of the Alliance's funds and some now questioned the return on that investment. Oliver argued that the Churches should have more control over the Alliance's expenditure of money;³⁸ a united purpose was commendable and 'a good place to arrive at, but to cross the bridge to get there means we have to remove men who behave like primitive berserkers when criticised'. If the Alliance was not prepared, for example to concede the need for a lower alcohol content in beer³⁹ as but one step towards the ultimate goal of abolition, the body should call itself the Prohibition Alliance. Temperance, Oliver continued and in contradiction of the Alliance, 'is moderation or self-restraint, especially in eating or drinking'. Oliver was indicating a permissive notion of temperance more in keeping with effecting changes in the attitudes and behaviours of drinkers than merely reinforcing the ideals and closed community of teetotalism and prohibition. He had no truck with the liquor trade nor much regard for the daily press which, in his view 'refused to take statements from our side'. The work must continue; 'with criticism of the Church and the Temperance Alliance, but with bitterness to no fellow worker, let us return to the fight'.⁴⁰

To which fight? The Alliance still had to choose between prohibition and what prohibitionists rightly called a compromise, reform of the Liquor Act. The resolutions of the Chapter House meeting suggest that 'ultimate' expectations - abolition - remained preponderant. It determinedly opposed amendments to the Liquor Act which could be construed as merely 'concessions to the liquor trade' and which gave 'no suggestion of genuine reform'. The central concerns of temperance remained largely unchanged: family life, the condition of youth and the moral and social standards of the community, all of which could only reach their fullest potential in a context of total abstinence. Evil inhered in liquor. The meeting observed and reminded Government that the community was then almost equally divided on the question of closing

38 Piggott, as General Secretary of the Alliance, kept these details very much to himself. Interview: Reverend W.J. Hobbin, 5 October 1984.

39 For Piggott this concern had appeal only 'to the lover of compromise; it was 'a dangerous and sidetracking idea'. Grit. April-May 1953, p.3.

40 Methodist, 11 December 1954.

hours it was unable to notice that many - perhaps including some abstainers - had questioned the merits of early closing and now lacked Church guidance for pertinent attitudes for reform.

Maxwell's basic premise which immediately put him off-side with Piggott, was that 'facilities for liquor in its various forms is something which is accepted by and part of the law of this land' and thus, for all practical intents and purposes, permanent. Moderate adherents of temperance agreed: the Alliance and probably a majority of those who attended the Chapter House meeting could not agree; Maxwell's Report was 'no more than the personal views of a judge whose suggestions are highly controversial'. Nevertheless, the Alliance understood the desires of the average Australian as well as Maxwell but denied that '10 o'clock would be a reasonable [closing] hour for the average Australian'.⁴¹ Because Maxwell questioned the effects of six o'clock closing he was charged by the Chapter House meeting with having ignored the sociological, economic and moral implications of the liquor traffic. Apparently, the Churches could not trust sympathetic Members of Parliament to do so either; the meeting determined that one of their own, the Coadjutator Bishop, could lend greater authority to the warnings of dangers inherent for society in the new legislation, if he appeared at the bar of the House.⁴²

The Reverend Alan Walker who alone requested a Government-appointed enquiry into the social consequences of its amending legislation, summarised the reformers' predicament in this way:

A Royal Commission with a pro-liquor bias, a slanted press, the vested interests of liquor, a weakly argued temperance case and complacent churches resulted in little consideration being given to the moral and social consequences of the extension of liquor facilities.⁴³

41 NSWPP 1954, no.3, p.77

42 Methodist, 11 December 1954; the petition is found in NSWPP 1954, vol.4, p.7.

43 Ibid., 18 December 1954.

The 'truth' was being shut out of public debate. Walker, as his work with the Mission to the Nation concurrently shows, remained confident that Australians could still realize the Church's vision of social morality - even in a secular society.

By his choice of language at a public meeting at the time, the Reverend W.J. Hobbin, on his own definition a reformer rather than a prohibitionist, demonstrated the practical limitations of his colleagues' positions. Hobbin seemed most bitter at the 'rebuff' by the Government when no Church representatives were permitted to speak at the bar of the Lower House. The Government, he said, had 'called for battle against the Churches': by attacking the truth the Government 'must surely break itself into pieces'.⁴⁴ But the Government was still in office when, almost a decade later, many of the same Methodists - excluding Hobbin - raged at a Victorian minister who recommended 'neutrality' on the question of bar trading hours.

The Alliance continued to believe that a majority of voters would still plump for six o'clock if a more resolute campaign were waged. In a 'Manifesto' published in January 1955 entitled 'No Compromise: No Quarter' the Alliance noted that a greater majority voted for six o'clock closing in 1947 than in 1916; the reversal suffered in 1954 could 'punctuate' but not 'terminate the story of temperance reform'.⁴⁵ Most temperance workers now turned to local option to provide the admittedly circuitous route to abolition.

For the South Australian temperance movement local option complemented early closing. Temperance workers believed that local option polls represented the people's will and helped contain trends toward 'large-scale drinking' pursued by the liquor trade. (Parliamentary critics, such as Quirke and Cudmore, denounced local option for being outmoded, a source of much skullduggery, undemocratic, unfair, ridiculous and uneconomic.) In some form local option dated from 1876 but by the 1950s it was a legacy of legislation passed in 1891

44 Methodist, 18 December 1954.

45 NSW Temperance Alliance, No Quarter: No Compromise: Manifesto (Sydney, January 1955).

and amended in 1908 when the House of Assembly districts were made the basis for local option districts. All those eligible to vote in House of Assembly elections were permitted a vote favouring one of the following: that the number of licences be (a) 'reduced', (b) 'not increased or reduced', or (c) 'that the Licensing Court may in their discretion increase the number of licences'. The number of licences in a district was either increased or decreased by one-third; a vote for a reduction in licences meant the automatic loss of those licences. Increases could be opposed in court by argument and the presentation of local memorials. The polls were held on the same day as State elections. The Premier complained that several electoral contests occurred for no other reason than to ensure that people attended a local option poll for which voting was not compulsory and in which people might not otherwise have had no interest.⁴⁶

Under these arrangements local option polls were held concurrently with State elections in 1947, 1950 and 1953; fourteen were held, two in the first year, four in the second and eight in the last. On no occasion did a reduction of licences occur. In 1947 there were no changes. In 1950 clear majorities again agreed to no change in two districts, Glenelg and Stuart. In Port Pirie and Semaphore a majority favoured an increase in licences, but only in Port Pirie did the licences eventuate - and then far exceeding the public demand.⁴⁷ In Semaphore when the numbers voting for the first and second questions were totalled - as was required - the resulting figure exceeded that seeking an increase and so no change was made. Semaphore and Port Adelaide voted overwhelmingly in favour of increased licences at the next poll in 1953. Six other districts made no change to the status quo.⁴⁸

In the wake of criticism of local option polls in 1953 the SSD expressed its intention to 'vigorously oppose' any moves to alter the procedure. When the Government agreed that 'anomalies' needed to be amended, the Methodists reluctantly accepted the fact.⁴⁹ Amendments to

46 SAPD 1954, p.508.

47 Ibid., 1953 p.499.

48 The results were published in SAPP no. 63 in 1947, 1950 and 1953.

49 SSD Mins. (SA), 24 July, 28 August and 22 October 1953.

the Licensing Act were introduced to the House of Assembly in November 1954 following discussions between the Premier and the Reverend E.H. Woollacott among others. Smaller districts - 'related to the area affected' - were envisaged and polls would be held at a time other than State elections. The questions presented to voters became more specific and related to the actual number and type of licence involved. Petitions for local option polls were to be presented at three-yearly intervals following March or April 1955 with the poll being held on the last Saturday in June after the presentation of the petition. Petitions were based on a quorum of electors, 500 or one-tenth of the electorate (whichever was less) to contain one resolution only and be accompanied by a fee of 50 pounds. Voting was not compulsory.⁵⁰ The Legislative Council ensured that Assembly districts would not have less than one licence of any particular type.

Woollacott was 'most disturbed' to observe, in line with these changes, a rise in the quantity of propaganda being distributed by winemakers who now offered help to interested local people in organising petitions for Storekeepers' wine licences by local option polls. By late 1955, 37 applications for new licences were lodged. In cooperation with the Temperance Alliance Woollacott determined 'to organise a strong "No" vote' in every district. By the end of May he had visited almost all relevant areas. How to get Church people and sympathisers to the polls puzzled the SSD. Having written to all local ministers asking them to secure a 'No' vote, Woollacott also appealed through the South Australian Methodist for 'strong and active' local committees to organise adequate cars to transport people to the polling places. The exercise cost him personally 180 pounds. He also believed that his considerable efforts were inadequate to counter apathy legitimated by a noncompulsory vote.⁵¹ Storekeepers' wine licences did not greatly increase.

50 SAPD 1954, p.1468.

51 SAM, 17 June 1955; SSD Mins. (SA), 14 January 1954, 4 February, 22 April, 27 May and 24 June 1955.

In this election, and again in 1958 and 1961, club licences were approved enthusiastically. In 1955 eight out of nine requests for extra publican's licences were approved.⁵² Unconvinced that people wanted to drink locally in, say, Whyalla, Bordertown or Tailem Bend (where no hotel previously existed), Woollacott reckoned that the 'wine interests' were most successful in those places 'where they were associated with the agitation for more hotel accommodation'. And yet in an Adelaide suburb in which he spent some time canvassing electors both questions (for two clubs and three storekeepers' Australian wine licences) were carried by strong majorities. Hotel accommodation was not the only attraction to a majority of voters.

Woollacott denounced the seemingly impenetrable apathy among Church-people which allowed the liquor trade to triumph once more. It could not be allowed to happen again, Woollacott told the District Synods later; he determined that the Churches must be 'galvanised ... to fight better', however baffled and beaten temperance may be after these 'disappointing' defeats.⁵³ Suzie Salterton commented tartly: 'social righteousness is no affair of the majority of Church people'. In the seeming absence of an 'awakened Christian conscience' an 'anxious Methodist' questioned whether the expenditure on the Mission to the Nation was 'worthwhile'.⁵⁴ Despite the danger presented by apathy Woollacott came away from the 1956 Conference believing that 'we had a lot to gain from non-compulsory voting'. A meeting of Heads of Churches concurred that each should assume more responsibility to strengthen the 'No' vote at the next local option polls due in 1958.⁵⁵

The low poll of 16.5 per cent in 1955 was viewed by some secular critics to be sufficient cause to end local option. According to Quirke it indicated that 'the people' believed that 'a change from the existing system is necessary'. Unmoved, the Premier suggested that people could express their preferences 'in a variety of ways'. The system was now much more flexible and while on this occasion they 'did not see fit to use the poll' it did not necessarily mean that the public desired 'to end the privilege'.⁵⁶

52 SAPD 1955, no. 45.

53 SSD Mins. (SA), 22 July 1955; SAM, 31 July and 21 October 1955 and 18 October 1957.

54 SAM, 1 and 15 July 1955.

55 SSD Mins. (SA), 20 April, 25 May and 28 September 1956; SAM, 30 May 1958.

56 SAPD 1955, p.454.

Temperance forces were given a fillip by the reaffirmation of six o'clock closing in a referendum in Victoria in 1956. A Gallup poll also suggested that half the South Australian electorate remained loyal to early closing.⁵⁷ The SSD remained anxious about Methodists and temperance, however, the SSD regularly received details of the way in which abstinence and certain Methodist laws regarding the presence of alcohol on Church property - where it was banned - were being ignored. One member of the SSD drew the committee's attention to the 'inroads of liquor into social life': weddings were often mentioned; so, too, was the increasing popularity of cooking with wine; it all contributed to the undeserved respectability of the liquor trade.⁵⁸ Although six o'clock closing was secure for the time being, the attitudes of people sometimes quite close to the core of the teetotalist constituency appeared to be less inclined to deny that any good came from alcohol.

Greater efforts by temperance workers were the only way to forestall the advance of the liquor trade. Thus local option polls were reportedly a subject of draft resolutions to District Synods in 1957⁵⁹ but only Adelaide South Synod - which Woollacott attended - called for active participation by Methodists in the coming year.⁶⁰ As petitions were being lodged for new licences, letters were sent from the SSD to suburban ministers and others on more than one occasion urging that 'every effort should be made to get people to the polls on 28 June A repetition of the shameful vote' of 1955 could not be permitted in 1958.⁶¹ Woollacott and the Reverend C.P. Hughes of the Churches of Christ and General Secretary of the Temperance Alliance in South Australia, planned to visit Port Augusta and Port Pirie at the northern end of the settled areas and also Mount Gambier in the south-east. Other metropolitan ministers also intended to assist in the Port Augusta canvass. Yet, again, apathy was soon obvious, 'even among Church people

57 Gallup Polls nos. 1127-42, November-December 1955. Forty-five per cent favoured 10 o'clock closing and five per cent were undecided.

58 SSD Mins. (SA), 13 December 1957.

59 Ibid., 18 October 1957. Adelaide South Journal, 30 October 1957.

60 Adelaide South Journal, 30 October 1957.

61 SAM, 31 May 1958.

.... more information should have been presented to the public'. Only one circuit minister was applauded for his enthusiasm and efforts by the SSD.⁶²

Despite some early fears, the results showed a 'definite improvement' for temperance when compared with the 1955 polls.⁶³ Thirteen of the 21 applications for extra licences were defeated. The number of voters remained, as the Reverend E.H. Woollacott put it, 'remarkably small' - relatively even fewer than in 1955. The SSD agreed that if the clergy would get the church-people 'to wholeheartedly write and vot "No"' then local option polls would not present a very grave problem.⁶⁴

Woollacott recognised the value of a voluntary poll even when it proved difficult to motivate Methodist voters. He was also aware of the significance for temperance and social righteousness generally of his work in Liberal and Country League preselection processes. Apart from stumbling in the 1955 local option polls, owing perhaps to misunderstanding by local Methodists of the approach required to secure victory in voluntary, local plebiscites, Woollacott's endeavours in the direction of political influence on liquor consumption were more successful than not, and perhaps most successful in 1958.

New South Wales Methodism and temperance generally was not so fortunate in personnel or circumstances - local option, for example, was not available. The Methodists' SSD and the Alliance were probably aware of Woollacott's methods and influence. The Reverend W.J. Hobbin, for example, knew Woollacott quite well from the late 1940s. Thus in 1956, in an attempt to remodel the Liquor Act, Methodist circuits were urged to take a campaign against government members of parliament at the general election 'much more seriously' than they did the referendum in November 1954. The Methodist Conference also sought another referendum in 1956 after the Alliance produced evidence based on court records that later closing hours were indeed producing increased drunkenness. No referendum followed. In its reports to Synods and Conference in the

62 SSD Mins. (SA), 18 April, 23 May and 27 June 1955.

63 SAM, 18 July 1958 and 17 July 1959.

64 SSD Mins. (SA), 25 July 1958.

second half of the 1950s the SSD claimed that it was cooperating fully with the Temperance Alliance but nowhere did it cite any achievements for temperance.

It was not clear that local and especially nominal Methodists were sufficiently concerned for the workings of the Liquor Act to want to put temperance above other political considerations in their choice of Parliamentary representatives. Further, a District Synod in the second half of the decade might request the SSD that it 'organise Methodist people in protest' whenever government appeared to be encouraging social evils but little followed in the wake of such concern. Nor was it clear that Methodists wished to hear of the virtues of temperance, at least in the teetotal and prohibitionist form which had characterised much preaching. All circuits were required by a Conference decision of 1956, to state during the June Quarterly Meeting what they had done in preparation for Temperance Sunday which was celebrated later in the year. Various responses followed. Some Quarterly Meeting minutes suggest that circuits may not have mentioned Temperance Sunday at all.⁶⁵ It was mentioned in Dubbo in 1960 but 'no instruction' was given by the meeting 'for our ministers to make special emphasis on this subject'.⁶⁶ The Alliance was particularly keen to send deputationists to local churches. The requests often fell on deaf ears.⁶⁷ Manly Quarterly Meeting discussed the issue for two years running. Deputations, it was finally agreed 'after some discussion', were not welcome but the circuit would contribute financially to the work of the Alliance.⁶⁸ Other circuits, including Ashfield and Wyalong were willing to receive a speaker from the Alliance.⁶⁹ Some circuits may have preferred a

65 For example, Wyalong, Liverpool and Lindfield-Roseville.

66 Dubbo Quarterly Meeting Minutes, 12 April 1960.

67 Gordon Quarterly Meeting received correspondence from the Alliance about a deputation but did not respond. Minutes, 15 July 1958.

68 Manly Quarterly Meeting Minutes, 16 July 1956 and 15 July 1957.

69 But not necessarily every year. Ashfield Quarterly Meeting Minutes, 4 July 1958 and 3 July 1959.

different message on temperance from the Alliance's; in 1958, for example, Cronulla Quarterly Meeting successfully asked Ray Watson Q.C. to 'take the pulpits' for Temperance Sunday.⁷⁰

At the time Watson was reconsidering the Church's approach to the Liquor Act which, in his view, was a 'hotch-potch of an Act'. There had been little attempt to reform it 'or consolidate the law into a workable whole'. He based several suggested reforms on what for temperance workers were controversial assumptions, the first of which had been stated by Maxwell and denied by the Alliance of which Watson was a member: hotels and clubs where liquor was sold were demanded by the people and therefore had a right to exist whether or not, as he implied, they were selling a 'poison'. These liquor outlets should be controlled by a licensing system and revenue taken from the industry by government. Watson critically discussed various sections of the Act making numerous recommendations for change as he went along. He was highly critical of the Licensing Court whose members, he said, lacked qualifications and judicial status. He also recommended that several retail and wholesale licence categories be abolished because there was no longer any demand for them; booth and stand licences ought to go but he recognised that there was a strong demand for their services. The matter of objection to licence transfers had arisen when local option was repealed by Parliament in 1946 and later among temperance workers who found the system particularly difficult, unsympathetic and expensive to manipulate. Watson stressed the importance of local referendums on local licences. Licence transfers should be abolished and new licences subjected to the process of local acceptance or rejection just outlined. Watson expressed an 'open mind' on six o'clock closing but stressed the importance of the 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. break in trading. Regarding clubs he recommended 'reform rather than abolition': remove poker machines; allow local objections to clubs in the same way as for hotels; club hours should be governed by the same rules as those for hotels. Thus, he rejected the notion that club members should be treated under the law as 'inmates'.⁷¹

70 Cronulla Quarterly Meeting Minutes, 16 July 1958. There was no mention of Temperance in other years.

71 SSD Mins. (NSW), 8 September 1958.

The SSD Council was 'unanimously' appreciative of Watson's efforts and resolved to call special Quarterly Meetings not later than April 1959 to consider his report. They would then be asked to distribute the proposals to congregational meetings. A small committee comprising the Director and three others including Watson was organised to 'handle the distribution' of the recommended amendments to the Act. A Liquor Central Action Committee would also be organised to deal with local licensing matters investigate the effect of alcoholism in the community, make recommendations for liquor reform and cooperate with other Churches and organisations to further the aims of reform. The SSD Council would also press for a reduction in the alcoholic content of beer.⁷² After the initial enthusiasm for Watson's proposals few efforts by the reformers can be charted. Thus in February 1959 no further action was reported. In May the SSD Council merely received a copy of the Victorian Licensing Act. That meeting confidently but, in the absence of any other details, enigmatically asserted that it was 'now possible to proceed with the review of outstanding matters'. Only the Conference Agenda indicates that Watson's recommendations were pursued. Although Conference ratified these recommendations Quarterly Meetings do not appear to have been involved at all and the few Synod resolutions on liquor did not reflect Watson's recommendations.⁷³

Watson's recommendations for reform of the liquor Act slipped from view but the SSD, unswervingly hostile to the liquor trade, could not be content merely with pronouncements and resolutions; 'however strong and sincere', were they enough? No! To condemn and make negative statements, as was the practice of the General Conference - according to members of the SSD - was not enough; a positive attitude and actions were needed. They could only follow from intensive study and research not only by the SSD but by the membership. What would be learned? First, for example, that the liquor trade had made the most of its

72 Previously all liquor was included in this recommendation. *ibid.*, 29 October 1958.

73 Hobbin believes that Synods and Quarterly Meetings accepted the recommendations but no evidence exists for this. Interview: 5 October. See SSD Mins. (NSW), 23 February and 25 May 1959, NSW Conf. Agenda 1959, pp.136 and 139; Daily Record (NSW), 20 October 1959.

freedom granted since 1946. Clubs could trade 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Second, social drinking at home was commonplace and Australian wines were heavily promoted. Third, the trade had been engaged in a public education programmed and its ubiquitous advertising had 'biased thinking', the SSD observed; it had turned the thinking of people from alcohol to alcoholism as a disease. Now, alcohol could take no blame for alcoholism which according to the liquor trade depended instead on the physical and psychological make-up of each person.⁷⁴

The SSD's appreciation of changing attitudes and behaviour was probably accurate and helped account for the lack of interest in Watson's reforms. Unswerving hostility to the liquor trade remained in existence but only among a relative few Methodists and not enough to raise great interest in Methodist forums. Methodists were probably not exceptional in this. Within months of the very close result in the liquor hours referendum of November 1954 and on the basis of a Morgan Gallup Poll sample, an increased proportion of New South Wales people appeared to approve ten o'clock closing. Early in 1958 it was found that eight in ten Australians agreed with the then new Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr. Woods, that there was 'nothing wrong in either moderate drinking or small tote bets'. (On drinking alone the figure was 86 per cent.) By 1962 nearly two-thirds of New South Wales people appeared to approve ten o'clock closing. Later that year Morgan Gallup Polls suggested that 83 per cent of men and 64 per cent of women in Australia took at least an 'occasional drink'. Only 17 per cent of men and 36 per cent of women remained abstainers.⁷⁵

South Australian Methodists would also digest these details. Before they did so, in 1959 they celebrated the retirement of the Reverend E.H. Woollacott from that role in which he actively sought to reduce or least limit the supply of liquor. At a 'complimentary social' gratitude was expressed for 21 years of 'outstanding service' in the cause of social righteousness.

74 Methodist, 16 July 1960.

75 Morgan Gallup Polls, nos. 1081-92, April-May 1955, nos. 1299-1312,

Owing to the tenacity and dogged persistence of Woollacott who helped deter Members of Parliament from publicly questioning the purpose and effectiveness of early closing in South Australia, the early twentieth century achievements of temperance remained in place. Things were changing nonetheless: inroads on abstinence evidenced decreasing commitment to the philosophy of teetotalism: in essence, that alcohol was an evil.

By contrast, in New South Wales the Temperance Alliance squandered the support for early closing which was demonstrated in 1947 by retaining for too long the vision of prohibition. A small number of Methodists sought to counter the decline of temperance by recommending specific reforms to the Licensing Act. Their pleas seem to have fallen on generally deaf ears either because of commitments to prohibition or, more commonly, because of indifference.

The reformers were unable to communicate their programme to their fellow Methodists or to government; they were unable to demonstrate a critical - even constructive - role for the Church on an important social and political question.

CHAPTER 5LIQUOR LICENSING (2)GRACIOUS IN DEFEAT

The New South Wales Methodists who, in the late 1950s, recommended a pragmatic approach when opposing the liquor trade were in a minority. This chapter shows that although they may have preferred to work for reform of the State's drinking laws they were constrained by the indifference among many Methodists towards abstinence. In 1960 the SSD worked to elicit commitments for abstinence from young Methodists. Radical opponents of moderation who preferred that the Church maintain an attitude of 'unswerving hostility' to the liquor trade probably concurred with this programme; only when early closing was rejected by a Victorian clergyman in 1964 did stalwarts of 'unswerving hostility' speak publicly. Although other skirmishes between the radicals and reformers occurred in the 1960s alcohol as a vital element of the Methodists' social conscience rarely surfaced.

In South Australia, Woollacott's supporters were probably decreasing in number, although the evidence either way is slight. After 1959 the questioners of the Nonconformist conscience grew in number and boldness - they were not merely apathetic, as Woollacott often complained. Rather they wished to remove the Nonconformist conscience from its place of official pre-eminence in Methodist social policy. In fact the changes to the licensing laws occurred quickly and liberalisation provoked little soul-searching among Methodists. There was no outspoken teetotalist-cum-prohibitionist rump in South Australia comparable with New South Wales. Abstinence became an overtly personal attitude rather than a condition of membership. The issues associated with alcohol in particular and the Nonconformist conscience generally meant a reassessment of the Church as a source of authority for Methodists regarding social questions.

For Woollacott alcohol alone caused the disease of alcoholism, 'not neuroticism'. Alcoholism was the 'most important problem in Western civilization'. He was contemptuous of moderate drinkers every one of whom was 'subsidising drunkenness'.

Not all agreed any more and a growing number were inclined to believe that despite Woollacott's relative success in the 1958 local option polls, for example, most Church people were 'governed far more by custom than by conscience'. Woollacott understood that well - the phrase was his - but increasingly the responses spurred by this realisation were not those which Woollacott preferred. For Woollacott and others of like mind, the impetus to reform could only follow in the wake of greater efforts to replenish the individual spiritual experience of Methodists.

Woollacott was greatly heartened by the Billy Graham Crusades in 1959. In December 1959 Woollacott retired at a time when in an affluent, secular society the Church could only contribute to private morality and identity formation and very rarely to social and overtly political causes. The Church could not for long expect to dominate: whereas in 1956 the South Australian SSD concluded that 'legislatively - and politically - the temperance position has been strengthened', the SSD also acknowledged the 'serious drift away from temperance standards'. It was suggested by the incoming President of Conference in 1957, the Reverend C.T. Symons, that the past 15 years had seen nothing positive result from the 'moral and spiritual protest of the Church against alcohol'.¹

It was into an environment of scrutiny and demur that Woollacott's successor at the SSD came in January 1960. The Reverend Mervyn C. Trenorden, trained as a blacksmith and only later entering the ministry, was by all accounts a very pleasant man, committed to the Nonconformist conscience. His academic training was slight. He could find few substantial arguments and means of communication with which to counter secular liberalism and libertarianism. His natural tendency was to argue extreme positions. Woollacott, in his early days as Director of the SSD, possessed supporters able to inspire by their oratory. They had since died and in Conference temperance was sometimes frustrated by prosaic speakers. In 1939, too, the Church's position was clear; Woollacott had the trust of the Church. By 1960 neither conscience nor

1 SAM 12 October 1956 and 14 June 1957.

trust remained constant. It was a time when, as Suzie Salterton observed, 'some Methodist homes feel on a higher social scale because they offer you a drink'.²

Trenorden did not feel at home in the constant public debate that extended for the length of his term at the SSD on matters such as alcohol, gambling, Vietnam and conscription. He did not enjoy controversy ^{but whereas he} was prepared to accept the inevitable if a vote in the Conference or the State Parliament went against him, he tended to fluster in the face of concerted campaigns such as that waged by the proponents of off-course betting in 1964.

Trenorden did not believe that the SSD was the Church's only connection with social issues; he did not see himself acting merely as a proxy for the membership, a lone campaigner in the way that Woollacott had been. Trenorden was a 'more evangelical and Biblical preacher' than Woollacott; he preferred to work within the Church than without; it meant that he spent less time than his predecessor within the precincts of State Parliament.³

Little opportunity was given to Trenorden to consolidate his position as a defender of restrictive social legislation. During 1960, after requests made by the wine industry, the South Australian cabinet prepared a series of amendments to the Licensing Act, the first in six years. Some single bottle wine sales were made permissible under Storekeeper's Australian wine licences; wine tasting was legalised; liquor was made available at Wilpena Chalet in the Flinders Ranges and it could be purchased in restaurants with meals until ten o'clock with thirty minutes grace. Hotels could also apply for permits to supply liquor in the evening for a 'social gathering at which dancing' took place. J.F. ('Fred') Walsh, the member for West Torrens and President of the United Licensed Victuallers Association, looked forward to an 'increasing tendency' on the part of hotel-keepers to take advantage of

2 SAM, 23 September 1960.

3 For their impressions and recollections of the late Reverend M.C. Trenorden, I am particularly grateful to the Reverends T.R. Hayward, Dr. A.D. Hunt, K. Smith, E. Vogt and M.G. Wilmshurst.

such opportunities and 'put on floor shows which provide for dancing'.⁴ Standards of service and behaviour were intended to exude a new sophistication.

The SSD was concerned about the new amendments; the Director corresponded with the office of the Premier 'requesting a conversation'. Messrs. Trenorden and Woollacott spoke with Playford and C.D. Rowe, the Attorney-General. Rowe was well-known to both men as a devout Methodist and member of the Board of the Adelaide Central Methodist Mission. The politicians were sympathetic to the Methodists' interests, but Playford had to take into account other more liberal attitudes present in Cabinet.

While few members deliberately criticised six o'clock closing several, previously sympathetic to temperance, were questioning restrictions. Steele Hall expressed his belief in 'certain restrictions' but Australia, he said, was 'one country and customs cannot be kept entirely within State borders'. Some of the restrictions were described by Condor Laucke as 'intrusions on the individual rights of people to an unnecessary degree'. Cyril Hutchens would once have agreed with Lloyd Hughes about the dangers of increased consumption flowing from liberalised trading hours. Now, he said, after interstate travel he was

convinced that where there has been an extension of trading hours there has been a more orderly consumption of liquor, and that there has not been the same undesirable swirl that we have in South Australia.

Hutchens now believed that not more but reduced intoxication would flow from longer hours in which liquor would be consumed with meals. Percival Quirke and Steele Hall both questioned the relationships between drinking, crime and driving on which temperance advocates now based much of their opposition to liberalisation.⁵

Criticism of the Licensing Act had become less muted and took on an overtly political complexion. Successive leaders of the Labor

4 SAPD 1960, pp.1729 and 1779.

5 SAPD 1960, pp.1779 and 1783-1785.

opposition expressed exasperation with restricted hours and local option. In 1958 Michael O'Halloran, the leader since 1949, disapproved of local option 'in principle'. The great area of some districts - notwithstanding the amendments of 1954 - was 'ridiculous'. O'Halloran was succeeded by Frank Walsh in 1960. During the election campaign in 1962, according to Trenorden, Methodist political involvement in the defence of restrictive social legislation was 'complicated' by Walsh's promise that a Labor victory would be followed by a referendum on local option. In March 1962, a float sponsored by a brewing company in the Festival of Arts procession depicted a church, and just weeks after the State election campaign in which the A.L.P. 'attacked the Premier with unprecedented vigour'.⁶

Practical complaints to the SSD about weakening Methodist teetotalism had come to take the form of more fundamental questions. Although Methodists had been giving and continued to give considerable thought and active attention to most of the major problems of social life, some worried that the Church

did not give deep and adequate thought to elucidation of the principles as they apply to the very structures of society or to major social issues.⁷

The anxiety was not new but was being expressed with increasing frequency. It could seem that the Church had little to say 'except on a very limited number of issues'. Upon taking up the position of Director of the SSD Trenorden was requested by a young minister 'to avoid if possible the old cliches and slogans'. Thus the Church should address itself to the doctrine of man's sinfulness and enquire into the 'pervasive power of sin in social life'; the Church's distinctive social witness on alcohol and gambling had proved inadequate. Some were pleased that in 1961 the SSD had made 'much of issues like prison reform, peace, industrial life, help for refugees and Christian marriage'. Despite this approval Trenorden would not be diverted from temperance. It was one of the many legitimate concerns of the Church and he now proposed to fight the liquor trade with 'weapons wrought on

6 Ibid. 1958, p.1038 and 1961, p.1003; SSD Mins. (SA), 23 February 1962; R.L. Reid, 'Political chronicle', Australian Journal of Politics and History, vol. 8, no. 2, 1963, p.237.

7 Reverend C.T. Symons in SAM, 23 October 1959.

[a] twentieth century anvil'. Without being alert to the changing views and modes of expression outside the Church, he said, Methodism would lose the 'rich heritage bought at tremendous cost by our fathers'.⁸

Whatever that cost the implications of the heritage were also being questioned. For example, single-issue politics were criticised: the 'practice of supporting political candidates on one issue alone' was already questioned in 1957. Further, what was the place of the pulpit in temperance? The SSD was prompted to discuss the matter after receiving a letter from a minister, the Reverend John Barrett, in which he commended a recent article in the South Australian Methodist and requested 50 reprints to distribute among his congregations. A teetotaler himself, he believed that widespread practice of the discipline was most desirable but concluded that moderate drinking did not imply disloyalty to the Church. Thus he would privately recommend abstinence but not preach it. He was chastised by the SSD for not standing 'fully behind what is required by the Methodist Church in regard to total abstinence'.⁹

The politics of the SSD were questioned. The place of moderate drinkers in the Church was assured by individual clergy. Yet there remained a solid core of Methodism which would continue to argue that 'total abstinence is an important standard and ought not to be discarded' meaning also, because of the context of the comment quoted, the Nonconformist pursuit of domination.¹⁰

Remarkably, after the years of Woollacott, some circuits were unaware how significant local option was for temperance. In 1961 the Willunga Quarterly Meeting enquired of the SSD the best way to further the cause of temperance: winning the forthcoming local option poll in their district was the reply. (It did.) In association with the Temperance Alliance and other Churches the SSD again campaigned against

8 Regarding 'sin' the quote is from the Reverend Dr. A.D. Hunt in SAM 2 October 1959. He later wrote: 'A reformed church is always being reformed'. It never becomes 'placid and stagnant'. Ibid., 24 February 1961. Also 15 July 1960 and 25 August 1961.

9 The 'single issue' criticism was made at the Northern District Synod, Journal, 31 October 1957; SSD Mins. (SA), 23 August 1957; SAM, 31 August 1962.

10 Northern Journal, 31 October 1957.

new liquor licences throughout South Australia, distributing 5,000 copies of an article in the South Australian Methodist on local option which, the SSD was at pains to point out, had 'nothing to do with prohibition or total abstinence'. Temperance was increasingly on the defensive.¹¹ Polls were conducted in 16 districts but in only six were temperance forces successful. The results suggested a loss of public interest in storekeeper's wine licences except in two rapidly growing areas, the semi-rural centre of Gawler and the satellite city of Elizabeth. All 14 applications for club licences - including five for the city of Adelaide - and ten out of 14 applications for publican's licences were successful. (Some further opposition to several of these was intended but neither it nor the results were recorded by the SSD.) Those 'terrible twins' - apathy and smugness - were said to be the chief opponents of temperance. The trend toward more club licences 'dis-quiet[ed]' the SSD. It 'has very great dangers and the Churches will need to give much more attention to stop this drift before it is too late'.¹² Neither the SSD nor any department of the Methodist Church was able to devise a means to attract people back to the Church. There is no way of telling whether an aggressive policy would not have given a more effective defence.

In October 1961, on the motion of Murray District Synod Conference called for a Commission appointed by the President to enquire into the Methodist attitudes on alcohol and alcoholism - 'in view of changing social patterns'.¹³ Groups around the State were organised to study the question early in the new year. The Reverend Dr. Hunt, editor of the South Australian Methodist, considered several aspects of the predicament for Methodists in March 1962. Temperance reformers were no longer alone in their concern about the effects and costs of alcoholism; there was 'widespread scientific and public interest ...; dries [were not] talking to themselves'. A degree of cooperation had developed between abstainers and moderates on alcoholism and total abstinence was losing practitioners. There were also ecumenical influences drawing

11 SAM, 9 June 1961.

12 SSD Mins. (SA), 28 April and 23 June 1961; SAPP 1961, no. 62; SAM, 21 July 1961.

13 SA Conf. Agenda 1961, p.90.

people together with different views on drink and gambling. Hunt concluded that there were risks associated with such a reassessment; the question was open to study which could end in 'altered viewpoints' but, he added, it could also lead to strengthened viewpoints.¹⁴

There was one attitude which would not be strengthened. It was the one with which the Methodists in South Australia and New South Wales entered the post-war period - that they could impose drinking habits on the public and expect minimal liquor consumption to follow as a matter of course. Further, the central tenet of the Nonconformist or late Victorian conscience - that there should be 'set up a barrier of prohibitions and customs, of things done and not done, between the withdrawn religious group and society in general' - no longer appeared to command Methodist support as an achievable goal.¹⁵

Society in general was having more effect on Methodists than Methodists were having on society: as the New South Wales SSD observed early in 1960, 'one has only to live under certain conditions for long enough to be immunised against the evil of them'. Among those indifferent to the ravages of alcohol some had taken up social drinking. Complacency within brought about the defeat of six o'clock closing; when prohibition was won in the United States, it had been said, temperance 'ceased to educate'. In the early months of 1960, then, the SSD prepared a campaign to educate the youth of the Church on 'the evils of the liquor trade, and the moral and spiritual problems involved'. The temptations put in the way of young people in 1960 were of a sort that older generations 'knew nothing of'. A response was 'long overdue'. An added impetus came from the post-1945 climate of ecumenism (the same climate to which Hunt referred in South Australia): within the community of the Churches the attitudes developed in the early 1960s, it was argued, would be taken 'into union in due course'. The circuits were expected to encourage their youth organisations to take advantage of discussion papers prepared by the Public Questions

14 SAM, 30 March 1962.

15 John Kent, 'Hugh Price Hughes and the nonconformist conscience', in G.V. Bennett and J.D. Walsh (eds.), Essays in Modern English Church History in Memory of Norman Sykes (London, 1966), p.185.

Division of the SSD which gave the 'facts' regarding alcohol and provided scientific and religious reasons for total abstinence.¹⁶ Would the circuits respond positively? Social Service Departments were among the least loved of the connexional bodies. Overseas Missions were much more popular; they seemed to stir the imagination in a way that public questions could not. In April 1960 the Treasurer of the SSD informed the Department that only half of the circuits in the State had paid the threepence per member per month allocation as resolved by Conference. For the 'Alcohol and Alcoholism' campaign to be successful the SSD needed 'the full support of our Church officers and ministers in every circuit'.¹⁷ Circuit attitudes varied greatly. Some may have been inhibited by financial difficulties; thus, if the 'Alcohol and Alcoholism' materials were not purchased, it need not be implied that the Quarterly Meeting was 'soft' on temperance. For example, in 1960 Liverpool circuit was in debt and no record of purchases from the SSD on liquor materials was made, but in 1963 the minister was given permission to speak from the pulpit on criticisms of the local council and hotel development made by the local Ministers' Fraternal. Two years later Liverpool Quarterly Meeting stipulated that a condition of Church union be that the other Churches 'must stand on the side of temperance in the cause of total abstinence'.¹⁸

By contrast, the Quarterly Meeting Minutes of Dubbo circuit indicate no interest in the campaign and, coincidentally, a motion presented by the younger minister in that circuit condemning the growth of the 'gambling evil' lapsed for want of a seconder.¹⁹ Others were enthusiastic even if their responses are curious. Wollongong Quarterly Meeting allocated £25 to the Alliance which was not involved and assured the SSD of its support for its campaign. Armidale, too, gave its unqualified support but was reluctant to provide the SSD with its allocation.²⁰ Few Minute secretaries noted that any correspondence from

- 16 Methodist, 2 and 23 April, 21 May, 11 June and 16 July 1960; SSD Mins. (NSW) 16 April 1960.
- 17 W.H. Bossence, Kyabram Methodism (Melbourne, 1974), pp.130-131; Methodist, 16 and 23 April 1960.
- 18 Liverpool Quarterly Meeting Minutes, 11 December 1963 and 13 July 1965.
- 19 Dubbo Quarterly Meeting minutes, 12 July 1960.
- 20 Wollongong Quarterly Meeting Minutes, 13 April 1960; Armidale Quarterly Meeting Minutes, 4 April 1960.

the SSD had been received.²¹ Because the materials were sent to local ministers the initiative in the campaign lay - in part, with the clergy, not all of whom may have been sympathetic or quick to show their sympathy.²²

For example, Manly circuit ordered materials 15 months later and Lindfield-Roseville decided only in January 1962 to hold 'combined young people's meetings' taking the form of question and answer sessions relating to temperance and social service.²³ Conference resolved that circuits should be urged to 'make provision' for the programme. In an end-of-year report for 1960, the SSD confidently asserted that the papers on 'Alcohol and Alcoholism' were 'well-received' and 'many thousands' of copies distributed to circuits.²⁴ How would the campaign be evaluated, if at all? A.C. Ward, a hard-headed teetotaler and local preacher who periodically corresponded with the Methodist, questioned the power of 'sane and scientific' education to affect the liquor trade 'so embedded in the community's life'. Nothing, he said, could happen unless Christians 'everywhere respond to the exhortation "ye who love the Lord hate evil"'. They must be actively biased and point to the evil 'which destroys both body and soul' and challenge it. There could be 'no discharge':

When every Christian platform, press and congregation presents an unequivocal front to politicians, demanding local option, then will our unspeakable shame give place to hope for many for whom at present there is no hope.²⁵

The SSD would have liked to agree. Without an enthusiastic membership little impact on public attitudes and government policy was likely. There remained that stock government reply to SSD deputations and correspondence that in the community there existed 'a strong weight of opinion in favour of the things we object to'. So, government took little note of Conference resolutions: 'as a matter of fact, who does'?,

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- 21 For example, Gordon Quarterly Meeting commended the material but did not acknowledge the source. 'Minutes', 4 April 1960.
- 22 C.f. Methodist, 11 January 1964 which contained a letter from a minister who refused to distribute a petition from the SSD regarding gambling because he disagreed with some aspect of the wording.
- 23 Lindfield-Roseville Quarterly Meeting minutes, 17 January 1962.
24 Methodist,
- 24 December 1960; Daily Record (NSW), 18 October 1960.
- 25 Methodist, 11 February 1961.

the SSD asked twelve months after beginning its youth education campaign; 'Do our own people generally'? If they did, queries about Methodist inactivity on social issues 'would scarcely be called for'. Any reforms in society for which the SSD worked depended upon electoral strength. Some cried: reinvigorate the 'weakened conscience' of Methodists! Local education programmes should 'awaken the conscience of the community'! But there were pamphlets remaining from the 'Alcohol and Alcoholism' campaign; how many availed themselves of these? Political weight depended on 'pressure in the electorates and on local MPs'; it depended on local organisation, not on the Conference or the SSD.²⁶

The SSD was worried, too, by the cacophany of official Church voices. It recommended an examination of the relationships of the New South Wales Temperance Alliance, the New South Wales Council of Churches - with both organisations the Methodists had disagreements - and the State Committee of the Australian Council of Churches in order to develop machinery better able to 'express real Protestant leadership in the community'. The SSD preferred one 'dynamic organisation which could provide the Churches 'with an efficient instrument for united action'. Synods were ambivalent and Conference discharged the motion.²⁷

If in New South Wales the SSD hinted at an identity crisis, in South Australia it remained very close to an active political past. How would the South Australian Methodist Church deal with the questions of liquor and alcoholism? The Reverend M.C. Trenorden feared that the enquiry would be content with a 'detached academic approach' merely providing statistics, which feel no pain'; he preferred to get behind facts and figures 'to the human suffering'. He feared for the prophetic voice of the Church - which should not fear being in a minority - and observed a 'tendency' by his generation, and most noticeably among Christians, to 'retreat from social questions'. Was it because many Christians no longer accepted the concept of evil? Yes; alcohol, the drink, was no longer recognised for 'the foul thing it is'. (As another wrote: alcohol was 'highly poisonous ... produced by rottenness'^(sic).) And by calling an evil such as alcoholism an illness the 'man becomes a

26 Ibid., 4 March 1961; NSW Conf. Agenda 1961, p.145.

27 Ibid. 1962, pp.146 and 150-151; Daily Record (NSW), 16 October 1962.

victim and not a sinner'. Was that not 'a little too naive' when in the majority of cases, 'their sickness was self-inflicted and at some stage in their drinking career they could have stopped'. Trenorden's supporters demanded that 'unswerving hostility' be maintained; any other attitude was disloyal to the conditions of membership.²⁸

Opponents of 'unswerving hostility' claimed that each argument depended upon the nature of the gospel: was it one of judgment or redemption? The traditional teetotalist view which six o'clock closing represented was the former. Critics reckoned that if the gospel was redemptive there was no role for accusation by others. Religious experience was another matter entirely if, when standing 'in the light of Christ's love', a person find himself judged. For the people of the Church to be judgmental of others was to distort the essential gospel: for was the Church not open to all; could a man with 'fundamental difficulties' be denied the 'full fellowship of Christ and His people'?²⁹

Despite Trenorden's fear of statistical anonymity the Commission's Report contained no numbers and was less than 1,000 words long. The Report indicated a range of local sources for its deliberations. None was overtly secular. The Report was based upon two premisses: the first was Christian love. Secondly, the Commission denied that certain scriptural words for wine referred to a non-intoxicating beverage. Thus, in the first paragraphs, teetotalism was dismissed. The Report then repeated the various arguments for total abstinence and moderation without comment. Significantly, the Commission believed that on any social issue practical concern 'must take into account all the realities present in a situation'. The rigorist ethics of teetotalism, along with the rationalisations mentioned above, were thus rejected and the Commission further denied that abstinence should be regarded, 'even implicitly', as a condition of membership. While it recognised the magnitude and complexity of the problems associated with alcohol abuse in modern society the Commission generally looked to the individual

28 According to the Reverend Frank Lade 'a sin that is tolerated loses its repugnance'. Interview: Rev. P.N. Potter, 23 January 1984; SAM, 13 April, 20 July, 17 and 24 August 1962 and 15 March 1963.
29 Ibid. 3 and 31 August 1962.

Methodist to make his or her own personal responses to beverage alcohol - rather than the Church. The Church, as a collective, should be seen to have formulated attitudes to specific issues involving the use of alcohol such as alcoholic content, trading hours, juvenile drinking and so on and so forth.

In the afternoon of Wednesday 17 October 1962 the Reverend Kyle Waters recommended that the findings of the Commission receive general endorsement. Immediately, several critics, notably the Reverend Everleigh Tregilgas, then President of the Temperance Alliance, sought to have certain words omitted, words which 'make it clear that total abstinence is not a condition of membership'. The crux of the problem, Waters replied - and the Commission was unanimous on this - was that the phrase "unswerving hostility" conveyed unfortunately wrong implications'. In the ensuing lengthy debate several speakers sought to draw both viewpoints together. When that failed the Report was referred back to the Commission for rewriting. There were 16 speakers, 14 of whom were clergy. Only three had been on the Committee of Details - of which there were five altogether - which considered social questions in preparation for Conference debate.³⁰

Twelve months later, in slightly amended form, the Report was accepted by Conference and printed in the South Australian Methodist. There was no change to the intentions of the Commission. On this occasion, according to the Daily Record, a quite different group of speakers discussed the findings of the Commission. Several of those influential in 1962 took no part in the debate in 1963. One speaker's name is not given in the Daily Record but by his contribution the Reverend E.H. Woollacott put the South Australian Methodist's Conference reporter in mind of an Old Testament prophet. Conference, generally 'satisfied with [the] realism' of the Report, agreed with the Reverend Arthur Jackson when he spoke of the need for all Christians, whether abstainers or not, to accept each other. In order that it be aware of changing community and political attitudes and modes of expression, and to remain abreast of research into alcoholism, the Conference recommended an ongoing Alcohol Advisory Committee.³¹

30 Daily Record (SA), 17 November 1962.

31 Ibid., 10 October 1963; SAM, 18 October 1963.

The Advertiser, reporting the bare details of the debate, noted the separate positions of moderates and total abstainers, but confused these positions with the actual policy which remained opposed to the liquor trade. Several Methodist teetotalists were appalled and greatly agitated by news of the mere existence of such discussion:

it showed poor conviction of our creed and an apathy about our responsibility to our fellow man and his salvation. Where liquor abounds, sin shall much more abound and the Church is here to reduce sin, not help it along.³²

Armed with this criticism, the Reverend A.C.L. Saunders, defended unswerving hostility: the Report obscured the issue, he said, and called on Conference to repudiate the news report and reaffirm Methodism's traditional attitude and idiom. Conference refused. But it could not reasonably be accused of giving 'its blessing' to moderate drinking; as Trenorden later remarked, critics had not read the Report carefully.³³

The South Australian Methodist Church modified its official attitude towards the liquor trade with remarkable equanimity considering the place in the Australian nonconformist conscience traditionally given to teetotalism. Nonetheless the subject remained capable of arousing great emotion. In 1964 the most unseemly ructions followed a statement given to an official inquiry in Victoria by a Methodist clergyman that the quantity of liquor consumed was 'not related significantly to the hours of trading'.

The Reverend John Westerman, President of the Temperance Alliance in Victoria and Director of the Methodist Conference's Department of Christian Citizenship in that State, questioned the longstanding presumption that adverse social consequences flowed from later trading hours for liquor. After considerable thought and research, he concluded that the only reasonable policy for the Churches on the question of liquor trading hours was neutrality.³⁴ He was confident that the Report and recommendations of the Royal Commission would usher in a new era of liquor reform and serve to reduce social damage stemming from liquor consumption.³⁵

32 Advertiser, 12 and 16 October 1963.

33 Daily Record (SA), 16 October 1963; SAM, 1 November 1963.

34 Methodist, 2 May and 13 June 1964.

35 John Westerman, The Methodist Church and the Liquor Question (Melbourne, 1965).

Westerman was disowned by many of his fellow temperance workers and brother clergy but rarely with such bitterness as flowed in New South Wales. The Reverend Alan Walker denounced ^{Westerman's performance} ^ as 'the most tragic betrayal of the temperance cause which has occurred in my lifetime'. He rejected outright any notion of neutrality which could only assist the liquor trade in its demands for liberalised drinking laws. Westerman had 'negatived' the Church's witness for social righteousness and provided no replacement.³⁶ 'Neutrality is so courageous' shouted the acting-editor of the Methodist, the Reverend Arthur Oliver, who saw himself representing authentic Methodist tradition. Oliver castigated the daily press which he claimed was biased towards the liquor trade; it censored clerics and contrary views; it had always distorted the Methodist image and now it commended the Church for its own distortion, neutrality: 'How sweet it is when the press smirks, smiles and flatters'. He admitted that temperance was not 'cutting much ice' and criticism and new ideas should be welcome, but 'surrender'? What was courage to some was to Oliver a betrayal of Methodist policy which was 'to confront the enemy, confine the enemy, push back the enemy, and destroy this foe'. Only the brewers 'who grow fat on human misery' would benefit from neutrality. Neutrality could never be a Methodist virtue. Oliver had

buried too many victims of ten o'clock closing to be polite either to the liquor traffic or to those who a concession to it.

He ended his protest 'sick with contempt'.³⁷

The issues were several and not easily distinguished one from the other. First and foremost, it appeared that Westerman had reneged on temperance ideology. Several critics tended to distance themselves from the general norms of contemporary social life and leisure. For example, Walter Lawrence, a former Liberal Member of the New South Wales Parliament, Deputy Commissioner of Police and Methodist layman who was almost immediately invited by the Reverend Sir Irving Benson to speak in Melbourne, contended that 'at every point in society compromise [was] replacing right'. Had the Church of Laodicea 'opened a branch in Victoria'?³⁸

36 Methodist, 2 May 1964.

37 Ibid., 25 April, 16 and 23 May 1964.

38 Ibid., 16 May 1964.

The 'truth' about which temperance had spoken in 1954 remained abolition; it was the vital element in the comprehension by teetotalists of their circumstances and their 'capacity to evaluate them and cope with them emotionally'.³⁹ Christian righteousness and not the conclusions of 'self-appointed social affairs experts' was juxtaposed against 'the moral and spiritual/bankruptcy of our community'. Perhaps some minor reforms were possible but abolition remained the ideal. Prohibition re-surfaced. Oscar Piggott, now aged 82 years, told wavering Methodists that the Australian Prohibition League was recently formed. Prohibition was 'just common sense', he said, like outlawing theft. Neutralists should come and 'fight the good fight' with 'courage and tenacity' and eschew the easy road of neutralism'.⁴⁰

Westerman said that he wanted to analyse the causal relationships between trading hours and adverse sociological consequences. His critics denied that the 'real facts' could be tabulated. Statistics could be made to talk many different languages. Westerman 'dogmatised' on the value of statistical samples; in his pathetic faith he was breathing only the 'rarified air of intellectual and ecclesiastical fantasy'; his was 'intellectual skullduggery'; was inquiry not a mere expediency for liberalisation; did Westerman now question the right of a minority to dissent? Had they not been minorities which questioned slavery, drug-peddling, exploitation of the weak and which instigated prison reform? Did neutrality mean that minorities should not have imposed their will and desires on the majority, even when it was for the common good? Westerman should 'really see and hear and know what is happening to us and others'.⁴¹ Abolitionists worked themselves into a frenzy so strongly did they identify with 'truth' and the victim; it was a cry from the losers. They were in the shadow of that despairing Methodist clergyman who told the Methodist in 1950 of that 'ghastly entail of crime and disease and misery'

39 Bryan Wilson, Religion in Sociological Perspective (Oxford, 1982), p.10.

40 Methodist, 13 June 1964.

41 Ibid., 2, 16 and 30 May, 13 June and 11 July 1964.

in that Land whose high intention and lofty idealism brought her a few years ago to the threshold of that Utopia where alcohol would have been kept from the lips of her people.⁴²

In South Australia the Reverend M.C. Trenorden was similarly disturbed: where Westerman advocated neutrality on the question of trading hours, Trenorden saw ten o'clock closing. How long would it be, he asked, before the trade requested yet longer hours? The New South Wales responses were reprinted in the South Australian Methodist and the Reverend Edward Harrison was pleased to observe that there remained some Methodists unwilling to 'bury their beliefs and social witness'. The General-Secretary of the Temperance Alliance, the Reverend C.P. Hughes, was astonished by Westerman's 'volte face'.⁴³

The radical temperance outburst was as provocative as Westerman's 'statement of neutrality. The Reverend Dr. A.D. Hunt denied that Westerman's statement should be dismissed as an 'about face' for it reflected 'honesty of a high order'. Were people being clear about the subject of the row: after all, Westerman remained explicitly opposed to the 'social evils resulting from liquor consumption'. Hunt's views coincided with Walker's when Hunt recognised that the incident would impose greater burdens on the Church as it opposed the machinations of the liquor trade. Hunt's appreciation of the affair was reflected in the comments of South Australian Free Church leaders who were generally moderate in their responses. The President of the Methodist Conference, the Reverend Bertram H. Phillips, told the Advertiser that he was 'most impressed by the calibre' of Westerman and that in the light of his claims the question of closing hours could be reconsidered. Phillips was personally inclined to remain opposed to extended hours.⁴⁴

Other responses sometimes affected shock: did sarcasm have any place in a Church publication? (Oliver replied that he was as 'full of faults as a dog with fleas'.) Westerman's data was not yet available: were critics not therefore obliged to look further than 'the superficialities we have so far been treated to'? Prejudice had apparently taken the place of reason and Oliver's had been an 'unloving

42 Ibid., 9 March 1950.

43 SAM, 24 April, 1 and 8 May 1964.

44 SAM, 24 April and 1 May 1964; Advertiser, 16 May 1964.

theme'; it had been 'hysterical ranting'; Oliver had forfeited all right to leadership and even to respect. The criticisms came from ex-Victorians, a South Australian and one New South Welshman. The Reverend Ralph Sutton, formerly of the New South Wales Conference and currently Superintendent of the Wesley Central Mission in Perth was particularly critical of the Temperance Alliance which, he said, had for years been constantly negative and defensive. Six o'clock closing, as Westerman himself stated, was no longer a reality; to give it any special significance was a 'self-deceit'.⁴⁵

Temperance had been permitted conditional domination in 1915 and 1916 when six o'clock closing was made law. Westerman was attempting to reshape temperance in a manner which mirrored Oliver's own definition of 1954. Westerman denied that the public took any notice of six o'clock closing; drink was available somewhere, legally, at any hour. As long as temperance continued to pretend that six o'clock closing had some unique ascetic power then a barrier would remain between the Church and many people in the community. Westerman did not quarrel with Walker's figure of 250,000 alcoholics in Australia who represented 'a vast and tragic problem, spelling endless defeat, depression and unhappiness'. Westerman was not questioning, 'unswerving hostility' nor did he deny that the real point of his concern was the consequences of liquor consumption. Westerman wanted a reconstructed temperance movement which emphasised education, abstinence and an updated role for the Church on social problems.⁴⁶

The idiom of Walker's initial response was biblical. Thus alcoholism began as a sin and later became a disease; it represented a failure of moral courage. The liquor traffic was 'a vast principality and power ..., [a] part of the kingdom of evil'. To view it in any other form was 'to be blind or repudiate the theological insight' of Methodism. Only a 'sick society' could permit such a trade the freedom it possessed and then give it more. In that idiom Westerman probably agreed with Walker. Westerman questioned the purpose which that idiom served.

45 Methodist, 16 and 30 May and 6 June 1964; 15 May 1964.

46 Ibid., 13 June 1964.

Later, Walker wrote in a prosaic style, this time in keeping with one which Westerman seemed to prefer - although he made no comment in the Methodist to that effect. Walker did not doubt that both forms could tell the same story; the religious idiom complemented the matter-of-fact language in which he now stated his preferred temperance policy. Walker demanded three responses. First, a crusade among young people for life long pledges to total abstinence; the entire temperance movement had to be rebuilt. Secondly, he urged a campaign to encourage earlier medical and psychiatric treatment for compulsive drinkers and alcoholics. Thirdly, Walker denied that trading hours were relevant for access to liquor should be restricted as an act of preventive medicine. There was no question about the sociological consequences of the liquor trade. Walker had observed a sharp rise in liquor consumption since ten o'clock closing was introduced. The incidence of drunkenness had moved from city to the suburbs where there was 'less police supervision'. In the city, there was, 'deepening alcoholism' and arrests for offensive behaviour had more than doubled. The city boasted greater prostitution and soliciting. More women were drinking, as court figures indicated. A greater incidence of family breakdown reflected night-time intoxication. Westerman's statistics, therefore overlooked 'uncontrolled variables' such as suburban growth and police policy regarding arrests for drunkenness; variations which coincided with the growth of licensed clubs which 'virtually never close'; thus drunkenness became less publicly and statistically discernable.⁴⁷

Walker implied that Westerman's expression of neutrality was not an isolated event. The Youth Director of the New South Wales Conference, the Reverend Dr. Gloster Udy, took the matter further and suggested that responsibility for the diluted public image of Methodism on the evils of liquor in recent years lay with the Victorian and Tasmanian Conference. In what way, he asked, was Methodism 'staggering into Union'? The recent Handbook for Church Union prepared by the executive - based in Melbourne - of the General Conference Church Union Committee, was biased towards an historically Wesleyan and thus moderate interpretation of the Church's attitude to liquor. The three other 'dynamic, ... less hierarchically dominated' and smaller Methodist

47 Ibid., 2 May and 24 July 1964.

Churches had strongly advocated total abstinence. Udy accused the authors of selective and naive quoting of Wesley on liquor; Wesley would not tolerate the 'compromised position' that after union Methodist-societies could make their own special rules of abstinence.

In 1960 the General Conference 'rightly rejected' a Victorian proposal that

Candidates for the ministry should not be required to make a declaration at Synod concerning the liquor traffic and total abstinence.

But three years later the standard of total abstinence was made explicitly voluntary for Methodist members at the suggestion of the General Conference Social Questions Committee. (Udy conveniently overlooked the fact that that committee was based in Sydney and chaired by the Reverend W.J. Hobbin.), 'Unswerving Hostility' was being cast aside: like Walker, Udy was 'obligated to maintain it'.⁴⁸

Voices carrying separate and sometimes entrenched views were raised in response to Westerman's contribution to a Liquor Royal Commission. The New South Wales Conference Department with specific responsibility for social questions such as the liquor trade, the SSD, took a low profile during the dispute over 'neutrality'. It made no statements but did organise a meeting in Sydney at which Westerman spoke with his critics and supporters. The Director of the SSD, the Reverend W.J. Hobbin, was among the latter mainly because of the difficulties of measurement outlined by Walker and especially the use of clubs on weekends which grown in number considerably; the two differed only on interpretation. Several years later Hobbin wrote a letter which further indicates his attitude toward teetotalism: here he spoke of 'zealots' and 'ardent anti-liquor people' who would seize any opportunity 'for a general rampage against the liquor traffic'. They seemed to be wandering in a paddock 'and firing the guns off in all directions thinking [they] are shooting rabbits, which might in fact be in a paddock ten miles away'.⁴⁹

48 Alcohol was the 'only ethical problem' discussed in the Handbook. Methodist, 13 June 1964.

49 Hobbin to Mr. D.H. Payne (Hamilton, N.Z.), 15 April 1966 and Hobbin to the Reverend T.R. Collis (Yass, N.S.W.), 24 July 1969. Both letters are in a file marked 'Alcohol' in the office of the Board of Social Responsibility of the Uniting Church of N.S.W. in Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

In 1964 argument among Methodists continued for only a short time (three months in New South Wales and even less in South Australia) and the whole question of liquor returned to the background of Church life for several years.

On 27 June 1964 South Australians attended local option polls for the last time and did so in the wake of the Westerman controversy. By that date the Director of the DCC (Department of Christian Citizenship, as the SSD was re-named at the 1963 Conference), Trenorden, reckoned that some 5,000 helpers had been enlisted throughout the State to restrict as far as possible any increase in liquor licences.⁵⁰ Voters in 30 local option districts were asked a total of 45 questions. Over one-quarter of a million people were eligible to vote. Just over 83,000 did so.

Petitions for eight storekeeper's and storekeeper's Australian wine licences were approved and 12 were disapproved. Voters said 'yes' to six and 'no' to eight applications for club licences; six were sought by league football clubs but only half were successful. Eleven publican's licences were approved and three rejected.

Table 6. Local option results 1955-1964.

<u>Valid votes</u>	1955		1958		1961		1964	
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
Yes	13,875	56.62	7,668	40.21	29,004	52.37	44,440	53.39
No	10,629	43.48	11,402	59.79	26,374	47.63	38,802	46.61
Total	24,504		19,070		55,378		83,242	

Licences

Approved	24	9	18	26
Rejected	10	12	14	19
Total	34	21	32	45

50 DCC Mins. (SA), 26 June 1964.

Although a DCC sub-committee later suggested that 'misinterpretation of the Victorian churchman's "neutrality" statement adversely affected the 1964 local option results', the results themselves do not reflect that. The 1955 results were poor from the point of view of temperance because its supporters had not accustomed themselves to the new, less restrictive system which became law in 1954. The polls in 1958 saw a determined effort led by the Reverend E.H. Woollacott in fewer districts. In the wake of the 1964 poll the Advertiser found no apathy on the part of those opposed to extra licences: 'their case was widely and effectively publicised'.⁵¹ Although relatively fewer votes were cast in 1964 they proved to be more effective than those cast in 1955 or 1961.

In 1963, for the first time in decades, the South Australian Conference had taken exception to the phrase 'unswerving hostility'. There were few critics of the decision but they remained undaunted even within the DCC and in 1964 may have been provoked by the Westerman crisis. F.D. Vawser condemned any compromise with evil. Away from the DCC, at the Adelaide North District Synod in July 1964 and with ministerial support, this uncompromising layman re-emphasised the inherently destructive nature of the liquor trade. He pleaded for a rejuvenated and 'unswerving hostility' to the liquor traffic. Conference was assured in October, however, that loss of this rhetorical tool would not lead to surrender of restrictive liquor laws which served the 'interests of home and family'. The view was a compromise, for the modernists within the DCC successfully retained a commitment that the committee would take 'full cognisance of responsible research and findings'. They wanted a constructive and not reflexive policy; the Victorian findings, for example, should not be prejudged - six o'clock closing remained the 'preferred' closing time for hotel bars. In the following year, with little ado, Conference accepted that the general rules for members regarding liquor should be expunged from the Methodists' book of laws. It was but one instance of that 'growing

51 Adelaide North Journal, 4 August 1965; Advertiser, 29 June 1964.

query' among Methodists throughout South Australian 'on how we can more adequately witness in these days' that the retiring President of Conference, the Reverend V.R. Secombe, noted a few days earlier.⁵²

There was no mention in the DCC Minutes of reactions among Methodists to the results of the State's general election held in March 1965. Sir Thomas Playford was no longer Premier and Frank Walsh became the leader of the first Labor Government in South Australia since 1933. Legislation designed to promote social righteousness was now conceivably seriously threatened. But the new government was not innately hostile to the Free Churches. Several Nonconformists were numbered and even featured in it, most notably Bywaters, Hutchens, Riches (who was made Speaker of the House), and Hughes. Hutchens, now Minister for Works and Marine, was invited to chair the annual United Churches Social Reform Board Citizenship rally in October 1965.

Early in 1966 Trenorden was alerted to the likelihood that a private Member's Bill seeking to change the closing time of liquor bars from six o'clock to ten o'clock would be introduced at a session of Parliament later in the year. The appointment of a Royal Commission Mr. Justice Keith Sangster, to inquire into all aspects of the retail liquor trade pre-empted that move.

In his approach to reforming the Licensing Act the Attorney-General, D.A. Dunstan, exaggerated the degree of commitment of contemporary nonconformity in general and Methodism in particular to restrictive social legislation. He gave three reasons for establishing the Royal Commission. First, he sought to dampen the expected public debate on the questions of trading hours and local option. It was Dunstan's view that these issues 'arouse[d] South Australians to passionate vehemence'. Second, he wanted to convince the public that 'reform was needed' because, he said, the Licensing Act was 'unworkable' even according to the Licensing Court itself. Finally, such an enquiry was needed to 'sort out some of the competing interests'.⁵³

52 DCC Mins. (SA), 20 November 1964; Adelaide North Journal, 5 August 1964; South Eastern Journal, 5 August 1964; Daily Record (SA), 19 October 1964, 13 and 19 October 1965.

53 Don Dunstan, Felicia: the Political Memoirs of Don Dunstan (South Melbourne, 1981) p.120.

In this environment the Church's task was 'difficult and exacting' according to Trenorden who acknowledged that legal restraint of drinking was giving way to 'educating for responsibility'. Perhaps doubting the efficacy of education and certainly aware of the apparent abandonment of Executive control of at least some of the workings of the Licensing Act evidence at the Royal Commission inquiry, Trenorden recommended 'the strongest attainable legal controls'. Temperance arguments should be reinforced by sound empirical research. He was irritated by media emphasis on 'hours', particularly in the News and the Advertiser. Even so, he saw no reason for Methodists to criticise the existence of the public inquiry, 'for this is surely the fair way'.⁵⁴

The Reverend Archibald Simpson, on leave from circuit work since his appointment as General-Secretary of the Temperance Alliance,

believed that the legislation which would follow from the report of the Royal Commission would define the conditions for the sale and disposal of liquor for the next fifty years at least. There was a sense of momentous change.

The inquiry opened on 17 May 1966 and for some months the South Australian public (like the New South Wales public over a decade earlier) was presented with front-page stories in the papers telling of illegal activities by interested groups. To representatives of temperance it appeared that the Nonconformist concern for potential and actual victims of alcohol abuse provoked little anxiety in the Royal Commission and even less to the many varied and often opposed commercial and sporting interests. The Churches were obliged to deal with a number of difficult and unexpected issues. These included 'widespread illegal practices, drinking by minors, and the difficulty of obtaining evidence related to increased outlets and whether increased drinking naturally followed'.⁵⁵ Trenorden sought and received much overseas evidence on these and other matters.

54 SAM, 25 February and 8 April 1966.

55 DCC Mins. (SA), 24 June 1966.

For the enlightenment of Methodists the South Australian Methodist printed regular reports by Trenorden and Simpson during 1966.

(Remarkably, no correspondence followed the progress of the inquiry.) With the exception of a paragraph in the annual reports to Synods, no other reference to the Royal Commission was printed. After several months experience of the inquiry Simpson vented the frustrations of temperance:

Does it really matter? That the theme of all parties is: that the public should have supplies of intoxicating liquor at all times and in all places. This is a progressive step towards becoming an alcoholic-minded community. A condition which is undesirable economically, physically, mentally or spiritually.⁵⁶

By July the language of the DCC was apocalyptic and reminiscent of Hobbin in 1954:

Evidence of illegal trading, exploitation and an almost entire disregard for social consequences flowing from the misuse of alcohol prompts us to predict a day of reckoning and judgement upon our society in the not too distant future.⁵⁷

Was the South Australian Methodist belief and practice regarding alcohol ambiguous? Probably, and where sample polls of Methodists were suggested they were rejected. Synods were appreciative of Trenorden's efforts and did not wish to chance his authority before the Royal Commission by permitting outsiders to doubt the Methodists' sincerity of purpose. Local option, as 'a democratic right of the people', for example, had to be safeguarded. A referendum on that subject might have seemed consistent with that argument but after the ignominious defeat of the nonconformists in the State Lottery referendum in November 1965,⁵⁸ the major planks of restrictive social legislation were probably better lost in the Houses of Parliament than in the raucous marketplace of a

56 SAM, 17 June 1966.

57 Ibid., 15 July 1966.

58 The results were: Yes 344,886 65.74%
 No 142,196 27.1
 Informal 37,576 7.16
 Total 524,658

SAPP 1965-66, no.108, p.3.

referendum.⁵⁹ Thus one participant reflected later that the Methodists' defence of six o'clock closing in South Australia was 'a bit tongue in cheek'.⁶⁰

In January 1967 the Royal Commissioner presented his report to the Governor and recommended radical changes to the Licensing Act generally consistent with those who rejected restrictive social legislation. He rejected the 'one-sided' law as it had existed - and to an ever-increasing extent been avoided - since the turn of the century. Counsel for the Royal Commission noted that 'the local option system had no defenders before the Commission'.⁶¹

The DCC met twice as it prepared a response to the findings and ^{recommendations} of the Royal Commission. Having 'favoured' the appointment of the enquiry the committee found many recommendations 'most desirable and enlightened'; others were 'entirely unacceptable'. The likely abolition of local option was one source of anxiety; although expensive and cumbersome, it was believed to have prevented a proliferation of licensed outlets in South Australia thus containing increases in consumption. The DCC preferred that extended trading hours be considered 'experimental' until the changes were shown to be to the benefit of the community. Personal responsibility for the consequences of individual behaviour was emphasised by the Royal Commission and, as an ideal, applauded by the DCC. It now agreed that social drinking, 'is

59 Adelaide North Journal, 2 August 1966;
Adelaide South Journal, 3 August 1966;
Daily Record, 12 and 17 October 1966.

60 Interview: Rev. P.N. Potter, 23 January 1984.

61 Item B58 from the Inspector, Places of Public Entertainment, Chief Secretary's office, Adelaide, to the Royal Commission stated:
'Consequent on the amendment to the Licensing Act in 1960 ... whereby the holder of a permit under the Collections for Charitable purposes Act was able to obtain a permit to allow the consumption of liquor in hotels while holding a dinner, banquet, social gathering, dance, entertainment or other engagement, there has been an enormous increase in the number of entertainment functions held in hotels.

'In 1965 15,805 such permits had been distributed. The result was an enormous increase in night patronage to hotels. Many hotels now cater for hundreds of patrons to night functions, whereas prior to 1960 night trading of this nature was virtually nil'.
The document is in papers relating to the Royal Commission collected by the W.C.T.U., SRG 186/17 (SAA, Adelaide).

not the appropriate object of restrictive legislation'. Irresponsible drinking, with its consequences of 'drunkenness, disorderly behaviour, crime and dangerous driving of motor vehicles' was mentioned by the DDC but only in an undeveloped association with underlying causes such as 'domestic and employment tensions, frustration and escapism'. Alcohol was no longer an inherently evil substance.⁶²

The DCC opposed Sunday trading on sabbatarian grounds and because the road toll was lowest on Sundays. An even priority was given to the apparent fact (which also influenced the government) 'that the majority of the community are not in favour of liquor trading on Sundays'.⁶³ Only rarely in the past did the Church specifically allude to public opinion; now, it took an increasing hold on the nature and content of Church pronouncements and was reflected in an editorial comment in the South Australian Methodist in October 1966:

What is crucial for the Church in a changing society is that it should realize what issues are really important and not to spend its resources in fighting for things it is never likely to gain.⁶⁴

In its review of the report into the Licensing Act by Commissioner Sangster, the DCC did not invoke apocalyptic language.⁶⁵ When the Alliance used apocalyptic language it had been of 'reduced value' to the Commission; it could still communicate with members of the Alliance most of whom, in all likelihood, were Methodists.⁶⁶ Simpson confidently foresaw the fruits of the Commission in 'nothing less than economic, moral and spiritual decadence'. Throughout the hearings, he reported, a constant phrase was: 'I see no evil'. The report embodied 'the betrayal of South Australia'.⁶⁷ The aging Reverend E.H. Woollacott probably agreed. Not three months before he had sought to exalt the decades of 'outstanding' leadership of Sir Thomas Playford. The past-Director of the SSD and founder of the UCSRB which was now being dismantled, wanted Conference to

62 SAM, 11 June 1965.

63 DCC Mins. (SA), 1 February 1967.

64 SAM, 14 October 1966.
SSD Mins. (SA), 10 December 1948.

65 Unlike the Alliance.

66 SAPP 1966-67, no.104, p.105.

67 SAM, 27 January 1967.

express its sincere appreciation of the quality of his service, of the firm stand which he took on social and moral issues and of the great progress made by the State during his years of leadership.

He withdrew the motion. Conference was not about to antagonise anybody on politics and religion.⁶⁸

The withdrawal of a sagacious old man's homage presaged the widespread indifference and sense of impotence among Methodists to the Licensing Act Amendment Bill which was introduced by the Attorney-General to the House of Assembly on 1 March 1967. The Government accepted most of the Royal Commissioner's findings and recommendations.

All members were informed by the DCC of the official reaction to the Commissioner's report. Two thousand copies were also distributed throughout the State. Quarterly and Leaders' Meetings were requested by the President to swiftly inform local Members of 'decisive' Methodist attitudes. Many were ambivalent. Of those circuits known to have responded, Mount Gambier Quarterly Meeting only discussed the issue of Sunday trading.⁶⁹ Modbury Quarterly Meeting referred the matter to local Leaders' Meetings and mentioned only correspondence received from the Temperance Alliance.⁷⁰ The Member for Wallaroo reported receiving several pieces of correspondence from Moonta, Kadina and elsewhere on Yorke Peninsula.⁷¹ In Kingston S.E. the Quarterly Meeting agreed in July 1967 to express its objections to any increase in liquor licensing and requested the cooperation of the local Member, Des Corcoran (A.L.P.) in the matter.⁷² Quarterly Meetings of four of the largest South Australian circuits - Kent Town, Payneham, Malvern and Enfield - appear not to have discussed the issue.⁷³

68 Daily Record (SA), 12 October 1966.

69 Mount Gambier Q.M. Minutes, SRG 4/67/2 (SAA, Adelaide) 3 January 1967.

70 Modbury Q.M. Mins. SRG 4/112/6 (SAA, Adelaide), 6 October 1966 and 12 April 1967.

71 SAPD 1966-1967, p.4011.

72 Kingston S.E. Q.M. Mins. SRG 4/57/2 (SAA, Adelaide), 7 July 1967.

73 Kent Town Q.M. Mins. SRG 4/55/1; Payneham Q.M. Mins. SRG 4/72/2; Malvern Q.M. Mins. SRG 4/119/1; Enfield Q.M. Mins. SRG 4/43/45. All in the South Australian Archives in Adelaide.

In the course of the Parliamentary debate on the Licensing Act some reference was made to the disregard for the existing law by sporting and other recreational clubs. A number of bowling, golf and League football clubs, often in a considerable way, were breaking their licence provisions. That was when the club had a licence: no RSL

sub-branch possessed a liquor licence, 'but all sell and supply liquor to their members on monthly club nights'.⁷⁴ All these activities were well-known to the police. On the subject of police tolerance, the Royal Commissioner wrote:

I was appalled by the nature and extent of the illegal practices actively or tacitly allowed to grow up in our community.⁷⁵

The Secretary of the Australian Hotels Association later expressed gratitude for the tolerance shown by the police.⁷⁶ The Labor Member for Enfield, Jack Jennings, observed:

I believe that it is obvious that some recommendations made by the Royal Commissioner would not have been made except for the illegal practices that had grown up and had been accepted by the previous administration. I believe it is intended in the legislation to make provisions that are less satisfactory than would have been the case if the illegal practices had not been condoned by the previous Government, as a result of its lily-livered refusal to face up to the consequences of liquor reform.⁷⁷

Any number of Methodists, especially nominal Methodists, were members of those organisations, none of which by their nature challenged the Church except regarding matters dear to the nonconformist conscience but some did require greater personal commitment. To what extent had the SSD and later the DCC, been aware of the illegal activity? In 1955 the Reverend Eric Nicholls, not long from England and stationed at Whyalla, asked the SSD whether it was an offence for a barman to serve a man 'under the influence'? He also sought to understand the nature of the 'lax way in which extensions of hours were often issued'. The Chief

74 SAPP 1966-1967, no.104, p.7.

75 Ibid., p.6.

76 Advertiser, 27 August 1967.

77 SAPD 1966-1967, p.3877.

Secretary informed the Reverend E.H. Woollacott that these matters were 'not easy to police' and depended greatly on the 'attitude of the press'.⁷⁸

Throughout the 1950s the SSD was informed of alcohol abuse at Easter bowling carnivals.⁷⁹ Woollacott was incensed when the Sunday Mail reported in June 1956 that the President of the Licensed Victuallers' Association was known to be delivering ducks to the police barracks.⁸⁰ The questions of 'liquor booths' at football finals in a country town was discussed with police, but no outcome was recorded.⁸¹

To a certain extent the Premier, Thomas Playford, manipulated an accommodating Woollacott and the SSD and thus minimised both public controversy and debate within Cabinet where not all members were guided by principles of teetotalism although Playford was an abstainer himself. For example, in April 1960, members of a temperance delegation discussed with the Premier the presence of children in beer gardens and the possible closure of hotels on Christmas Day. Playford promised to take the matter to Cabinet if so requested 'but warned that it could be disastrous to the temperance cause'.⁸² Compromise became widespread: the permit system for hotels began later that year and illegal activities developed rapidly during the first half of the 1960s.⁸³ The executive branch of government, notably the Chief Secretary and perhaps even the Attorney-General (C.D. Rowe), turned a blind eye toward remarkably widespread illegal activity, shook off requests for liberalised drinking laws and thus maintained a tenuous balance between competing and otherwise noisy forces.⁸⁴

78 SSD Mins. (SA), 22 July and 26 August 1955.

79 SSD Mins. (SA), 27 July 1951 and 22 April 1960.

80 Ibid., 28 June 1957.

81 Ibid., 22 April and 26 August 1960.

82 Ibid., 22 April 1960.

83 SAPD 1967, pp. 866-867.

84 There were 20,000 bowlers in South Australia in 1967. SAPD 1967, p.869.

The Church did not seriously seek to test its credibility on the issues affected by an amended Licensing Act, in particular regarding closing hours and local option. Methodists appear to have concluded that no good would follow public rancour; the result was inevitable. Several interested politicians noted the fact. J.R. Ferguson from Yorke Peninsula told the House that he had received no personal approaches from people wanting to retain six o'clock closing. Perhaps they were indifferent or unconcerned, he commented.⁸⁵ This was only partly true, but with the result in little doubt Trenorden believed that it was no 'time for grizzling'.⁸⁶ Glen Pearson who had been assisted in his election to Parliament in 1951 by Woollacott, observed that the opponents of ten o'clock closing 'have decided that it is inevitable'.⁸⁷

The discipline of personal abstinence and the ideals associated with temperance could no longer compete successfully with scorn and derision from the liquor trade and its supporters. For example, Percy Quirke told the House in July 1967:

I look forward to the time when we can be grown up, get out of the short pants of our juvenile existence in South Australia and let people have a drink when they want to. That is done in other parts of the world.⁸⁸

Therefore it occurred to Mrs. Joyce Steele to observe that although the Churches had loudly criticised the introduction of ten o'clock closing in Victoria they had not been heard there since.⁸⁹

The people of the Church felt that recent South Australian social legislation, of which the new Licensing Act was but one piece, was forcing them 'to examine more critically the basis of [their] concern for others'.⁹⁰ To a number of Church people in 1966 and 1967 it seemed that their role was that of a 'caretaker ... awaiting the discovery of new patterns to meet the needs of our people'.⁹¹ Church people had been

85 Ibid., p.942.

86 Advertiser, 28 August 1967.

87 SAPD 1967, p.940; SSD Mins. (SA), 27 April and 2 June 1951.

88 SAPD 1967, p.870.

89 Ibid., 1966-1967, p.4034.

90 Adelaide North Journal, 2 August 1967.

91 Middle District Journal, 28 July 1966.

apathetic towards understanding their faith, according to the Reverend Dr. Hunt and others involved in a discussion on the DCE (Department of Christian Education) in 1967 just eight years after the great successes of the Billy Graham Crusades in 1959 and in the same year as the American evangelist's second visit to Australia. The problem was not confined to the DCE but was 'general throughout the Church'.⁹² The Church lacked commitment, sacrifice and vitality; many clergy lamented incompetence and timidity which thwarted and frustrated the Church's work and witness. What to some was betrayal was to others preparation of a clean slate for the social conscience and life of the Church generally. After one discussion of such matters the elderly Reverend J.J. Kilmartin said that

he could not recall when such honesty has been vocalised and where there has been such hope for the future.⁹³

The amendments to the Licensing Act - and other liberalising actions by the South Australian Labor Government - were a contributory factor in the existence of new 'hope for the future' by regularising common practices to which Methodists had accommodated their philosophy of temperance some time before. Secular agencies helped the Church rid itself of nineteenth century baggage. How the Church reconstructed its 'much vaunted social conscience' - Dr. Hunt's phrase - assuming one was necessary, is one of the subjects of the next chapter. Potentially the Church could represent its public face to indicate that within the Church was a source of inspiration and spiritual solace, emphasising a transcendental perspective, rather than a priggish moral guardian.

92 Adelaide South Journal, 2 August 1967.

93 Middle Journal, 27 July 1967.

CHAPTER 6

METHODISM IN THE 1960s.

The legacy of the Nonconformist conscience was quietly buried by the inner circles of Methodism in South Australia in the 1960s. In New South Wales it lingered on in vigorous individuals, not movements. For some local Methodists - perhaps even a large minority - 'some of the established common sense' regarding hotel trading hours 'was upset'.¹ The object here is to set the ambiguous nature of the Church in the midst of the urgent and divisive incidents and crises of the 1960s against the demographic and social contraction of Methodism. If Methodism remained committed to evangelical success how would it react to the secular confidence and turmoil of the period? Would the Church risk its identifiably religious elements in a search for 'relevance'?

Chapters Two and Three showed that much which contributed to the 'sense of threat' present in the first post-war decade depended on overseas sources and events. Donald Horne argued that the moods of the late 1960s were linked with international events and styles: "'Overseas" was a keyword of the times'.²

Australia participated in an international experience of cultural change which despite differences from one country to another, had at its core an expressive culture. The thesis of Bernice Martin's The Sociology of Cultural Change was that

The extravagant nature of the 1960s was largely a medium of cultural transmission and transformation. It drew attention to and familiarised the wider society with a range of expressive values, symbols and activities by showering them forth in their most extreme and dramatic form. [It was] a pitting of freedom and fluidity against form and structure. Sixties expressivism was a long and concerted attack on boundaries, limits, certainties, conventions, taboos, roles, system, style, category, predictability, form, structure and ritual. It was the pursuit of ambiguity and the incarnation of uncertainty.³

1 Donald Horne, Time of Hope 1966 1972 (Sydney, 1980), p.4.

2 Ibid., pp.14-15 and chapters 2-4; Bernice Martin, The Sociology of Cultural Change (Oxford, 1981), p.129.

3 Ibid., p.17.

Whereas instrumental culture rooted in commercial, industrial and technological spheres placed 'high value on rationality, calculation and efficiency' a cultural or 'expressive' enclave isolated 'an ideology of self-fulfilment, spontaneity and experiential richness'. The 1960s were well represented as a battleground between the expressive and instrumental cultures disputing the location of the boundaries between the one and the other. Martin argued that with the passage of each 'moral panic' during the 1960s the boundaries in mainstream culture accommodated 'increments of expanded "liminoid" expressiveness for adults as well as the young'.⁴ By 'liminoid shift' Martin meant that the boundaries of behaviour - the 'social and personal construction[s] of a system of meaning by which individuals and communities make sense of experience' - were taken further and further from what had been convention. The 'onslaught on boundaries and taboos of all kinds' is not itself the central issue of this chapter; rather, it is the way in which Methodists were caught up in the wash of the expressive vanguard's 'pursuit of liminality'.

Donald Horne's Time of Hope 1966-1972 was published shortly before Martin's book but shares much the same subject matter: whereas Martin presented a more rigorous analysis of the expressive phenomenon Horne was more accepting of expressive culture and disinclined to sympathise with the representatives of form and boundary. Importantly, Time of Hope was dismissive of the long-serving Prime Minister, Sir Robert Menzies who, as chapter two demonstrated, expressed many of the hopes and fears common to Methodists during his incumbency. Horne lauded Menzies as 'Australia's greatest prophet of sober middle class virtue' but observed, too, that 'he had presided over a change in the ideals of the middle class culture from those of the puritan work ethic to those of the hedonist ethic of a consumer society'.³ Later in the decade the values of the Menzies era were 'rambunctiously' and relentlessly derided by youthful, articulate, expressive hedonists and nihilists.

Many of the characters inhabiting Time of Hope were influenced by

3 Ibid., p.17.

4 Ibid., p.151.

the Andersonian nihilism of Sydney. The 'moral panics' of the 1960s were exemplified by the confrontation between the courts and Wendy Bacon, then a student at Sydney University and a member of the 'underground' which, typical of the sixties' underground, was highly visible and very noisy. It possessed an unusual quality of despair. According to Horne, libertarians believed in protest, but commonly 'only as an act of despair for its own sake'. In their publications Bacon and her associates repeated the line common to the extremes of the expressive revolution that the 'sexual structure of society upheld the establishment'. Pornography represented anti-structure. Each edition of the publications attracted court charges but continued to circulate through illegal printing and furtive distribution. Bacon's behaviour was deliberately outrageous and provocative, she was assisted by, among others, Germaine Greer and the lawyer, Jim Staples, whose court tactics were of such extreme legalism that, 'if made general, they might have wrecked the whole court system'. Horne commented:

The sheer boldness of the Thor group pushed the area of combat to the edge of the board so that, in effect, the authorities yielded most of the game [They] were reduced to despair.⁵

Although South Australian legislators were not driven to despair by the level of illicit drinking in the early 1960s, the amendments to the South Australian Licensing Act were described by some liberals in the parliament as extravagantly relaxed.

Now, the courts were unable to stem the onslaught of several student nihilists - legalism could not prevent the boundaries of expression being pushed further and further from the point where they stood in the mid-1950s. Nonetheless, boundaries remained as the system of film and magazine classification demonstrates.

The period was one of great theatricality. The metaphor of 'theatre' is common to both Horne and Martin. Being theatrical was a means by which groups or individuals could draw attention to themselves and the issue which they demanded be put on the agenda of public debate.

5 Horne, Time of Hope, p.20.

It was a time of 'theatricalised protest against "authority"':⁶ by means of street marches or demonstrations 'people gatecrashed the agenda by forcing the media to take notice of them'; they constructed the 'public drama'.⁷ Style, Martin wrote, was 'everything'.⁸

Continuing the theme of appearances and visibility a 'powerful symbol' of the times was the weekday television programme This Day Tonight. By presenting the theatrical performances of the day it made 'conservative people feel beleaguered in a more and more hostile world'.⁹ Walter Phillips reckoned that Nonconformist churchmen became 'humble' and made compromises with the popular culture of their day. Thus Methodist Conferences were perhaps less 'beleaguered' than ambiguous regarding their time.

Nevertheless, Methodism remained committed to success.¹⁰ That commitment lay at the heart of the Crusade for Christ in 1949, in the Mission to the Nation in 1954, in the Billy Graham Crusades in 1959. Local Methodist churches initially benefited from the well-being of many Australians in the aftermath of stewardship campaigns bolstered by the Graham Crusades. In January 1961 the editor of the Methodist put aside the disappointments in international affairs which filled the previous year and proclaimed that with 'courage, humility and leadership' the new year 'may well be the dawn of the Church's finest hour'.¹¹ His optimism was misplaced for while Missions and Crusades of the 1950s were theatrical and gained media space, they could not achieve success visible and comparable with unrestrained sixties theatricalism. The Church could not shift boundaries least of all in competition with growing affluence and hedonism.

Indeed, as growing numbers of ordinary men and women delighted in affluence and moral self-sufficiency, the Methodist constituency contracted. Apostasy caused some to leave the Church. There were also demographic reasons for Methodist decline which meant that by the early

6 Ibid., p.51.

7 Ibid., pp. 9-10.

8 Martin, The Sociology of Cultural Change, p.232.

9 Horne, Time of Hope, p.2.

10 Dempsey, Conflict and Decline, p.171.

11 Methodist, 7 January 1961.

1970s Methodists were, on average, older than most Australians and the distribution of occupations among Methodists differed markedly from local averages.

Methodism was committed to growth essentially from those people who when answering the Census question on religious denomination wrote 'Methodist'. What happened to their number over several decades? Did decline influence the way in which Methodists conceived the role of the Church?

Table 7 Intercensal increase in numbers of nominal Methodists in Australia, South Australia and New South Wales, measured as a percentage.

Years	Australia		South Australia		New South Wales	
	Incr	Decr	Incr	Decr	Incr	Decr
1933-47	27.4		33.2		21.6	
1947-54	12.2		13.3		11.5	
1954-61	10.0		12.2		6.9	
1961-66	4.5		4.9		3.9	
1966-71		2.3		5.3		0.9
1971-76		10.4		9.0		10.3

The declining growth of Methodism was repeated across Australia: South Australia and New South Wales did not depart greatly from the experience of relative and, by 1971, absolute decline. A major factor in the relative decline of nominal Methodism in the 1940s and 1950s was immigration. Thereafter, immigration was compounded by the failure of the Church to attract young people to the fellowship and communion of the Church. From early in the 1960s Methodist Churchmen feared the implications of the 'serious leakage' from Sunday Schools of young people.

In the five years from 1957 in New South Wales the Church statistics showed that for every 100 children commencing Sunday School 'only 15.2 became Church members'.¹² The South Australian connexional Department of Christian Education put the losses which occurred in that State as well, down to the historical weakness of Australian 'cultural

protestantism' which was then 'rapidly dying'. No longer could Sunday School be 'a street-cleaning agency for the whole community'.¹³ South Australian Methodists, especially, concluded that allogenuous growth of the membership was unlikely.

The sociologist Hans Mol concluded that among Methodists around one in two people whose parents regularly attended church were also regular attenders. Owing to inadequate data he could not decide whether that figure had changed over the course of the century; from interviews it appeared that the habit of regular churchgoing increased with the age of the respondent. More influential among Protestants than the habits of parents were the habits of spouses who adopted 'one another's non-churchgoing habits'. By the 1970s a young person would only become a regular churchgoer if both parents and his or her spouse also possessed regular churchgoing habits. The following comment by the Reverend John Bodycombe, Dean of Theological Hall, Melbourne, and formerly of the South Australian Conference, tends to confirm that Mol's conclusions regarding churchgoing by young people had much to do with non-religious causes:

friends and family - and NOT faith were reasons for involvement in the first place; removal from the former and NOT so much 'loss of faith' (for that was never a strong factor) led to drifting out.¹⁴

And yet faith was an element of Methodist fellowship, at least at some point and in some degree.¹⁵ As later pages will suggest from the perspective of lay-clergy division and liturgy,¹⁶ a religious element persisted in churchgoing. Apostasy, not merely alternative places for fellowship with 'friends and family', was an element in Methodist decline. The Church had great difficulty competing with numerous alternative associations for members' loyalty. After the 1961 local option polls in South Australian 1961 the Reverend M.C. Trenorden was apprehensive about the trend for more clubs: it had 'very great dangers and the Church will need to give much more attention to stop this drift before it is too late'.¹⁷ Christianity, and Nonconformist Methodist

13 Daily Record (SA), 18 October 1971.

14 Quoted in Dean Drayton, Five Generations, p.23.

15 See above, chapter one, p.9.

16 See below, pp. 168-170.

17 SAM, 21 July 1961.

^{Christianity}
 especially, was aptly described by Ronald Conway as 'a creed founded on principles which check unconditional freedom and the boundless satisfaction of the pleasure principle'.¹⁸ Sixties' hedonism ate into the Methodists' constituency.

If the young were following 'friends and family' away from the Church can the 'friends and family' be more precisely identified? In nominal Methodism generally the Census data suggest that the leaders were men.

Table 8 Male-female ratios among nominal Methodist adults in South

Australia and New South Wales according to the Census 1947-1976

Year	South Australia	New South Wales
1947	93:100	94:100
1961	94:100	92:100
1976	86:100	88:100

Between 1947 and 1961 in South Australia the number of nominal Methodist men increased by 16.6 per cent and women by 15.1 per cent. Between 1961 and 1976 the number of men decreased by 4.3 per cent while women continued to increase in number - by 4.2 per cent.

The same process occurred in New South Wales. Consequently, much of the lead away - or perhaps, more correctly, not into - the Church was given by adult males.

In the rural districts of both States nominal Methodism declined but losses lagged behind overall rural depopulation.

Thus the men who became indifferent to the Church were most often urban residents.

Whereas in 1947 the ages of Methodist were representative of South Australian and New South Wales averages and again in 1961 when the large numbers of children were a feature of Australian life, by the mid-1970s Methodism had aged considerably.

18 Conway, The Great Australian Stupor, p.179.

Table 9. Age x religion in South Australia and New South Wales
1947-1976.

		South Australia								
		0-14	15-19	20-35	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65+	Total
		1947								
State		24.4	7.2	8.0	15.8	13.8	11.7	10.3	8.7	646,173
Methodist		24.7	7.6	8.5	16.0	13.5	11.2	10.2	8.4	170,513
		1961								
State		31.1	7.7	6.2	12.8	14.1	11.6	7.8	8.8	969,340
Methodist		31.3	8.2	6.0	11.2	13.2	11.7	8.2	10.2	216,769
		1976								
State		29.0	9.1	8.3	15.0	11.0	11.5	9.2	9.1	1,244,754
Methodist		23.9	9.3	7.9	14.1	9.9	11.9	10.8	12.3	195,930
		New South Wales								
		1947								
State		24.9	7.9	8.3	15.9	13.7	11.4	9.6	7.7	2,984,838
Methodist		25.0	7.9	8.3	16.1	13.5	10.7	9.9	8.1	246,876
		1961								
State		29.1	7.7	6.7	13.5	14.1	11.9	8.3	8.8	3,917,013
Methodist		28.8	8.2	6.5	12.3	13.4	12.3	8.6	10.1	294,280
		1976								
State		26.3	8.8	8.0	15.3	11.6	11.6	9.2	9.3	4,777,095
Methodist		24.0	8.7	7.6	14.1	11.0	11.9	10.9	11.8	271,813

Ageing represented the serious failure by Methodists to transfer the faith to a younger generation and the loss of men more attracted to clubs and sport than churches. Less obvious was the impact of fertility.

Since the 1890s Australian fertility has slowly declined; occasional variations were determined by cyclic changes in marriage patterns.¹⁹ The process was initially accompanied by steep reductions in infant and child mortality. Later there came the post-1945 'baby-boom' which, due to changes in the timing of marriage and the increasing proportion of women marrying, might better be described as a 'marriage boom'. After 1971 the fertility rate fell dramatically, most

19 J.C. Caldwell, 'Fertility trends and prospects in Australia and other industrialised countries', Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology, 20 (1), March 1984, pp.3-22.

especially among 20-24 year old women; families became smaller and an increasing proportion of births were first births.²⁰ The significance of Methodist promotion of birth control as an element of quality of life in the outlook of the Church membership cannot be easily assessed. In South Australia, in particular, one of the major elements of the debate on abortion held in the late 1960s and described in chapter seven, was quality of life and the ways in which this was affected by the presence of unwanted children. Swayed by these sentiments Methodist women may have also have been less fertile than average.

Census figures suggest that, potentially, Methodism stood to greatly benefit from the post-war enthusiasm for marriage and yet within another decade or so after 1961 the chances of nominal Methodism even reproducing itself were reduced following changes in fertility patterns which started to affect age structures in the late 1960s and which accelerated in 1972-73. Thus from around 1967-68 demographic factors intersected with apostasy to depress the outlook of institutional Methodism.

The figures on membership in the Annual Conferences of Methodism in South Australia and New South Wales reflect these complex interwoven factors.

Table 10 Membership of the Methodist Church in South Australia and New South Wales after 1961.

Year	South Australia	New South Wales
1961	31,873	52,296
1963	34,070	53,846
1967	35,850	52,404
1971	33,488	50,692
1975	31,360	49,849

The outlook from around the mid-1960s was not promising for Methodism. Individual Churchmen such as the Reverend Alan Walker were unimpressed by any concessions to apostasy or secularisation which other members were sometimes inclined to recommend.

20 The proportion of first births was 29 per cent in 1960, 38 per cent in 1971 and 40 per cent in 1980. Ibid., p.9.

For example, a member of the DCC in New South Wales, Trevor Elligett, regretted the 'negative' image which he believed attached to the Church. He wanted no demands made of worshippers and members for 'our way may not be the right way'; a tolerant Church which emphasised its positive actions in social service, welfare and so on would strike a chord somewhere.²¹ Walker, particularly during his term as President of the New South Wales Conference in 1971, spearheaded evangelical endeavours to stem the tide of decline.²² Walker spoke to audiences totalling tens of thousands and the tide of decline was slowed and for one year reversed.²³

The Methodist membership was usually falling after the mid-1960s despite the evangelical efforts of a small number of clergy. Both nominal and committed Methodists were contracting not only in number but by age, geographical location and gender. Did Methodism also contract according to its occupational profile? This question follows Martin's analysis of cultural change and alludes to the susceptibility of Methodists to liberal secular thought which is described below.

The 1947 Census suggested that Methodists, like the adherents of most major denominations, were generally representative of the national distribution of occupations.

Was this facet of nominal Methodism maintained? Since a Census tabulation of religion and occupation is not available for the later 1960s and early 1970s circuit registers of baptism were used as a guide to the occupational structure of Methodism for that time.

Each Methodist circuit maintained a continuing register of baptisms. With each baptism the occupation of the father of the child - ideally - was recorded. Not all registers were equally reliable as

21 Methodist, 8 April 1967.

22 Henderson, Reach for the World. p.204; Daily Record (NSW), 13 October 1971; NSW Conf. Mins. 1970, p.56.

23 In 1971 there were echoes of previous experience by the Churches. After analysing the 'intense' evangelistic campaigns of New South Wales Protestants in the 1880s, Walter Phillips found that there was little, if any numerical gain to the Churches 'through their investment in evangelism, although it could be argued that there might have been greater losses if the denominations had put less effort in this direction'. Phillips, Defending 'A Christian Country', p.84.

sources; handwriting, for example could not always be deciphered; some ministers, too, were reluctant to ask for the occupation of the family bread-winner. The occupation of a deceased parent was also rarely given. Where appropriate these data have been used in conjunction with Census statistics in order to characterise the changing Methodist constituency.

Several other problems beside ministers' handwriting inhibit the confidence with which conclusions may be drawn about the occupational profile of Methodists. First, there is the arbitrary nature of the categories used to subsume wide ranges of occupations. According to Norman Blaikie occupations can be classified in three ways: in broad nominal categories; in terms of the prestige attributed to occupations by samples of respondents; or according to their socioeconomic status as determined by particular 'objective' characteristics.²⁴ The third would be the most useful for this chapter as it could permit more direct comparison with, for example, the Religion in Australia survey and other sociological studies and conclusions regarding occupations and religiosity. However, the Census was devised according to the first of Blaikie's categories and the eleven major groups 'emphasise industrial rather than social characteristics of jobs'.²⁵ Although several attempts have been made to re-allocate the 313 Census occupations, the published Census data for local government areas do not permit such re-arrangements. Thus, when categorising the occupations of family breadwinners according to Methodist registers of baptism, the categories of the 1971 Census were used. (Occupational details of local government areas were first provided in 1966. The categories were made slightly more flexible in 1971.)

Another limitation has been the quantity of data available from baptismal registers. Several registers provided too few annual or even decennial data to permit meaningful analysis.

Thus the following categories have been combined:

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- 24 Norman Blaikie, 'Occupational prestige and social reality', in Peter Hiller (ed.), Class and Inequality in Australia: Sociological Perspectives and Research (Sydney, 1981), p.113.
- 25 I.H. Burnley, 'Ethnic factors in social segregation and residential stratification in Australia's large cities', Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology. vol,11, no.1, February 1975, p.13.

- (i) Professional, technical and related workers; and administrative, executive, managerial workers;
- (ii) Clerical workers and sales workers;
- (iii) miners, quarrymen and related workers; workers in transport and communication; tradesmen, production process workers and labourers; service, sport and recreation workers.

The third group is generally subsumed under the heading 'Manual'; clearly not all who have been included under the heading 'manual' were purely manual workers or possessed similar levels of skill or occupational prestige, all of which would affect their place on a more sophisticated and subtle occupational structure. Not all 'sales' people worked behind a counter. Professionals possessed disparate world-views and lived in markedly differing suburban environments and so on; for example, Mol distinguished between upper (doctors and architects, for example) and lower (teachers and nurses) professions.²⁶ The Census did not.

The baptismal data, by definition, are restricted to particular age groups. The following occupational data therefore represent Methodists mainly in their twenties and thirties. Childless couples and unmarried Methodists were overlooked.

These caveats noted, even such blunt instruments as the three occupational categories used here can indicate the nature of a Methodist occupational profile over a period of time, the late 1940s to the early 1970s in particular. It would have been satisfying to conclude that the results were clear-cut and used to determine whether at the end of the period Methodism possessed, first, a different occupational profile from the one it possessed in 1947; secondly, whether the Methodists' occupational profile differed from the Methodists' local secular communities; and thirdly whether differences existed between South Australian and New South Wales Methodists in this context.

In fact the data were often inconsistent and probably incomplete. (This again has been a handicap of dealing with two States - or Conferences - rather than with one only in which case further data from more circuits might have been considered and thus provide more satisfying and coherent results.) Certain of the data were suggestive

26 Mol, Religion in Australia, pp. 88-89.

of the three 'conclusions' mentioned. Furthermore, the data reflect, first, Bernice Martin's contention that the main home of the anti- or non-instrumental values of the counter-culture were 'the upper middle class in the expressive professions'; the arts, education (particularly higher education), the mass media and the caring professions and semi-professions²⁷ and secondly, the Methodist data reflected the relationship between social class and organisational participation, both sacred and secular, recorded by Norman Blaikie.²⁸

Some of the most useful data came from Pirie Street Methodist Church in Adelaide which was for many years a relatively favoured place among South Australian Methodists for marriage and many couples returned there for the baptism of a first child. People came from all parts of the State and many may not ordinarily have felt very comfortable in a Methodist Church; they included several hotel-keepers and Aileen Gladys Sloper, a 'wine disgorging'. The register of baptisms was an unusually large volume - it was not the standard register - and any changes should have been indicated by the number of baptisms recorded. Infant baptisms peaked in the early 1950s. By the early 1970s they were increasingly rare. The Church was shortly closed owing to declining evening congregations - the seven o'clock service was the main service of worship - and demolished.

Table 11 Occupational profiles drawn from baptisms in Pirie Street Methodist Church.

	Prof/Admin		Clerical/Sales		Manual		Total
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	
1947-49	37	13.1	69	24.4	170	60.1	283
1950-52	48	13.7	65	18.5	211	60.1	351
1953-55	50	16.5	62	20.5	174	57.4	303
1956-58	56	19.2	54	18.5	167	57.2	292
1959-61	54	21.9	44	17.8	144	58.3	247
1962-64	59	26.8	49	22.3	100	45.5	220
1965-67	65	36.5	35	19.7	76	42.7	178
1968-70	24	38.7	16	25.8	19	30.6	62

27 Martin, The Sociology of Cultural Change, p.21.

28 Norman Blaikie, Religion, social status and community involvement: a study in Christchurch, Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology 1969, vol. 5, no. 1, pp.14-15.

From the beginning of the 1960s the proportion of manual occupations represented among those presenting children for baptism in Pirie Street Methodist Church began to fall - even more quickly than the total decline of baptisms. The clerical/sales group declined during the 1950s but, due to the quick decline of manual occupations, by the late sixties returned to its former proportion of baptisms.

The professional/administrative group steadily rose in significance from around one in eight baptisms in the late 1940s to better than one in three, twenty years later. This, broadly, was the very group which Martin identified as the 'main home' of those values which upset much common sense in the 1960s and which vigorously rejected conventional moral order.

Hans Mol argued that 'to speak of the religious alienation of any class of the Australian population at present [c.1970] is incorrect', but a contrary view is given by the Pirie Street data. Although other data from local circuits, mostly in New South Wales, did not prove so clear-cut, the results of one other sizeable set of data were consistent with Pirie Street.

Before presenting that evidence, another relevant category of Methodists must be identified. In addition to confirmed members there was also the class of adherents in local Methodist life. Adherents were people under the pastoral care of the local Church. Their names were taken from ministers' visiting lists, child and junior members' rolls, day school classes, Sunday School registers and 'any other relevant source'.²⁹ Their involvement in the life of the Church, at the local level at least, varied from slight to sometimes deep commitment. Many, though probably not a majority of circuit stewards, were unimpressed by the category, preferring that it be discarded and indeed between the mid-1950s and the mid-1960s few adherents' rolls were kept until General Conference, meeting in 1963, ordered that they be maintained. From that time, adherents were proportionately more numerous in New South Wales than in South Australia. While the proportion of adherents among regular attendants at worship is not known their involvement in Church life, partly by definition since only members could take responsible positions

29 Daily Record (NSW), 6 March 1951.

in the organisation of the Church was less substantial than that of the confirmed members.

The additional information relevant to differentiating members, adherents and people with no continuous contact with the Church came from the Canberra circuit in the Australian Capital Territory which while not strictly in New South Wales was a part of the New South Wales Conference. In preparing an occupational profile of Canberra Methodists between 1965 and 1970, the names of parents were checked against membership and adherent rolls.³⁰ Associate members (that is, members of other denominations) were very few and included in the confirmed members' figures. The figures in the table double the number of baptisms as both parents were included under the single given occupation. On many occasions both parents shared the one classification of membership or non-membership.

Table 12 Occupation profile drawn from
(a) baptisms in the Canberra circuit, and
(b) the Census for the A.C.T.

	Prof/Admin		Clerical/Sales		Manual		Total
	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	
(a) 1965-70							
Confirmed	31	75.6	5	12.2	4	9.8	41
Adherents	15	40.5	2	5.4	18	48.6	37
Non-members	42	41.2	18	17.6	36	35.3	102
Total	88	48.9	25	13.9	58	32.2	180
(b) 1966	7,412	24.5	6,663	22.0	12,470	41.2	30,238

Overall, the Methodists of this circuit were heavily weighted towards professional and administrative occupations and away from clerical and sales occupations. Manual workers were under-represented but the difference between Methodists and the total population in this regard was greater elsewhere and, again, does not suggest 'alienation' of working class people. When the 'total' Methodist profile was broken

30 I am grateful to the Reverend Ian Williams for making the relevant volumes available for this time-consuming and potentially unprofitable task.

down to the particular groups of Methodists the differences were accentuated. Non-members who were the majority of Methodists represented here, were also most broadly representative of both the 'total' and the wider community although they also included a higher proportion of professionals and administrators than given in the Census. Adherents were similarly disposed towards professional and administrative employment at the expense of clerical and sales occupations which were much under-represented. Adherents were also weighted towards 'manual' occupations. Three-quarters of the confirmed members represented by the baptismal register were either professionals or administrators.

Of the remaining 25 percent, just over half were in the clerical/sales group and just under half were in 'manual' occupations which were radically under-represented among Canberra's confirmed Methodists when compared with Canberra people generally. Was this a unique instance?

Most of the members of the 'Barool' Church described by Ken Dempsey were characteristically successful - if not wealthy - farmers and businessmen 'and such transients as senior local government officers and school principals'. From this group and from a small number of more wealthy grazing, business and professional families came 'all the important leaders' and the most active supporters of the Church. Adherents were located in working class occupations; they included semi-skilled workers, shop assistants, unskilled labourers, seasonal workers and domestics.³¹

In the late 1960s the number of adherents in South Australia in particular fell sharply and consistently.

31 Dempsey, Conflict and Decline, p.16.

Table 13 Methodist adherents and decline.

	South Australia		New South Wales	
	Number of Adherents	Index of decline	Number of Adherents	Index of decline
1967	32,923	100	63,257	100
1971	19,815	83	62,618	99
1974	13,728	57	47,436	75
1975	12,183	51	50,598	80

A complementary decline began in the early 1970s in New South Wales, but was neither as sharp nor as persistent; there the decline in adherents even showed signs of being reversible in the mid-1970s.

In the absence of a clearly defined adult category of adherents the significance of the smartly declining numbers of adherents should not be exaggerated. Much closer investigation of the figures would need to be undertaken before confident conclusions were made. The data from Pirie Street and Canberra Churches are sufficient, however, to underpin similar suggestions from other secular sources, such as Martin on the nature of Protestant Churches in the 1960s and the degree of susceptibility to the expressive culture which they possessed; that is, the extent to which they would jettison instrumental values epitomised by the protestant ethic and adjust their moral outlooks in accordance with more relaxed and much less rigorist contemporary sexual mores. Thus the Church could be perceived - and some in the Church were determined that it should be perceived - to be promoting attitudes of tolerance toward behaviour previously condemned as immoral. The keyword was 'responsible'.³² The tentative conclusion from this section on the occupational backgrounds of Methodists is that part of the explanation for the often accommodating and liberal character of the Annual Conferences (in both States but more so South Australia) and especially the Departments of Christian Citizenship lies in two complementary factors represented ^{by} the occupational profile of Methodists. The first is

32 Norman Webb, Work Done: a Study in the Finished Task of the Church (Sydney, 1967), pp.58-9.

the actual profile itself. The second is a complementary factor attempting to explain why the bulk of the Methodist membership would not be accommodating to the 1960s onslaught on 'sober middle class virtue'; for example, from within the Church the Church Life Movement was intended to translate a liberal theology into social action contrary to the received wisdom in many local communities. It is most likely that delegates to Conference were more tolerant of liberal social thought and action than either many Quarterly Meetings or the ordinary members.

The reasoning here comes from the conclusions emanating from one strand of the long-running debate on the Protestant ethic and questions about religion and social class.

Recently, interest has focused on 'the relationship between religious and community involvement, and ... dimensions of religiosity'.³³ The American sociologist Eric Goode suggested that people who were inclined to attend non-church meetings were also more likely to be regular churchgoers.³⁴ In the late 1960s Norman Blaikie investigated the hypothesis using data gathered in a Christchurch, N.Z., census district. He concluded that denominations were 'undifferentiated' in the socio-economic status of either their nominal adherents or their active members. He could point to differences of occupation but not 'overall status'. He found, too, that denominations differed in their respective rates of Church participation and community involvement. Methodists, for example, were 'the most active' in the community, but 'only moderately active' participants in worship and church organisations. Excepting people aged less than 35 years, active church attendance and involvement in church organisations was characteristic of high status individuals. If well-educated and probably middle-aged, those same high status individuals were also much involved in secular organisations. Blaikie concluded that a positive relationship existed between participation in church and non-church organisations on the one hand, and socio-economic status, occupation and education on the other.³⁵

33 Blaikie, 'Religion, social status and community involvement', p.14.

34 Mol, Religion in Australia, p.92.

35 Blaikie, Religion, social status and community involvement', pp.30-31.

Hans Mol did not find evidence from the Religion in Australia survey to support a relationship between class and organisational participation, both sacred and secular. Mol's data did suggest, however, that people in middle and upper middle occupational categories were more likely to attend non-worship gatherings in the Churches. The conclusion, then, is that people in professional or administrative employment, who were regular churchgoers, were those most likely to be involved in Church organisations. No distinction was made in either report - Mol or Blaikie - between local and, in Methodist parlance, connexional non-worship meetings.

By the 1960s, in a number of urban and semi-urban areas, many people in occupations most likely to have a professional ethos sympathetic to the non-instrumental culture, could be expected to be responsible for major positions in circuit life. Largely owing to their tertiary education many clergy, too, were similarly disposed to respond positively to the liberal challenges of the 'time of hope'. In most rural districts a much more traditional Methodist perspective held sway owing to the limited opportunities for people in middle and upper middle occupations in circuit organisations since most were transients and, as Dempsey noted for 'Barool', the most significant positions were reserved for individuals of much more permanent local standing. How did these characteristics show themselves in the 1960s and early 1970s? Without going into questions associated with the search for Church union, what conflict over the identity of Methodism occurred in these years?

The desire for success remained foremost in the psyche of Methodism. No other attitude could be entertained in an institution which, as the editor of the Methodist in 1967, the Reverend Arthur Bingley, wrote when extolling ecumenism, could 'embrace not only the broken body of Christ, but the whole family of mankind':

If the Church or any part of it is content to remain a minority Church withdrawn from the world, it will have failed and deservedly so.³⁶

While withdrawal was unthinkable, refashioning the Church was not. It could be forced on the people of the Church for the world was turning

36 Methodist, 22 July 1967.

to a 'Time of Hope' ill-suited to the Methodists' traditional social conscience and yet a vision of social and political life to which many influential Methodists were well-disposed. Whereas the New South Wales SSD was confident in 1961 that education of Methodists regarding liquor, gambling and Sunday Observance would mould a 'strong Christian public opinion' it only spoke of the possibility, not the likelihood, that campaigns could be undertaken 'to bring about reforms in society'.³⁷ That members did not have sufficient information and organisation³⁸ was not the cause of political inactivity. In the absence of a specific, sympathetic and electorally significant constituency political activity was impulsive. Hence the demise of the Nonconformist conscience in Methodism.

While some were distressed by the refashioned social conscience others were repelled by evangelical Methodist continuities; they preferred the new spirit of upheaval and 'revolution'. Methodism sought to identify the pulse of the modern world. Many sensed that they lived at a time when radical change took place in 'every area of our life'.³⁹ There was 'unprecedented turmoil': 'The winds of God are blowing; the challenges of theology, sociology and evangelism are increasing'. Hopes were expressed for ecumenism. Still many did not know where God was to be found. For example, the Pastoral Address of 1965 focused the (New South Wales) Church's attention on contemporary 'areas of witness and mission'.

Discovering these

means to search the Word of God for truth and light. It means to dig in the soil of human need, to probe the fabric of social structures, to delve into movements and revolutions of our bewildered world, and on the basis of God's Word to see what He is doing and to know how He would have us live and establish a Christian presence out in His world.⁴⁰

The task of the Church and its members was no longer one of domination; it had a vaguely pervasive character.

37 NSW Conf. Mins. 1961, pp.144-45.

38 Ibid., p.148.

39 Reverends E.T. Walker and S.M. Barrett, 'Pastoral Address', Ibid. 1964, p.67.

40 Reverends Walter Whitbread and W.D. O'Reilly, 'Pastoral Address', Ibid. 1968, pp.57-58.

The 1960s and early 1970s in particular saw a move from a concept of 'divine mission' in which

we must give ourselves to the study of God's Word, to the discipline of prayer and to regular attendance upon divine worship and the means of grace,

to a perception of the Christian life in which the Church and individual jointly took responsibility for the 'stewardship of the whole of life'.⁴¹ It was a time in which 'all values were becoming politicised' and Methodists were no exception.⁴² In the early part of the decade the Church's mission was perceived to include education, industry, commerce, social and political life 'in order to grapple with those forces which threaten to despoil God's image in the lives of men, and to bring men into a personal encounter with the living Christ'. Christians were called to be the 'light and salt of the world'.⁴³ God, it could seem, remained separate from the social relations of men and preceding reconciliation between the many competing groups in society God had to be reconciled with individuals. After an early burst of enthusiasm in the first months of 1960 hopes for revival soured. Many reflected that an affluent and secular society was not a congenial place for faith in the transcendental, let alone in revival.⁴⁴ Ecumenism and secular social action were attractive counters to the despair induced by the knowledge that individual encounters with God, the religion described in chapter one, were so few that no new age of peace would be ushered in that way. Methodism devoted to success could not countenance the thought of an isolated religious community.

As Churchmen deferred to the current language of 'revolution' and 'change' some were caught up in the whirl of excitement and mood of immanence and were not content to be 'pervasive'. R.H. Dougherty, who was Chairman of the New South Wales Methodist Lay Activities Council, called on the laity to turn the resolutions of Conference 'into knowledge and then into revolution'. The wherewithal for this transformation was found in ecumenism: all the denominations would merge 'into one vast worshipping and serving body'. He dismissed the distinction between sacred and secular as 'denial of the holiness of

41 DCC Report to Conference in NSW Conf. Agenda, 1972, p.584.

42 Norman, Christianity and the World Order, p.3.

43 NSW Conf. Mins. 1962, p.72.

44 Ibid. 1964, p.67.

God'. Christians must of necessity discover God working in the world of change. When God was found then no distinction between sacred and secular would remain and Christians 'shall no longer lament over the process of secularisation but rejoice in it ...'.⁴⁵

From that point it was a relatively short step to the conclusion that the Church was a redundant institution in a world of change, particularly if God was believed to be working through secular agencies. Secular theology possessed the same subject as evangelical Churchmen - the 'non-church-attending-world-at-large'.

In October 1967 the Reverend Norman Webb, Master of Wesley College at Sydney University, published Work Done: A study in the finished task of the Church.⁴⁶ For Webb secularisation was total; no 'religious part' to life continued to exist and already no religious authority remained. Ever since the Reformation bits of secular knowledge combined to form ever more complex, functioning institutions: the basic direction of this evolutionary process Webb called 'unification in complexification'. God was the motive power behind the process and from its zenith, in the complete union of all mankind, would become the 'emerging reign of Christ'. The technical capacity of the emerging twentieth century 'forced' mankind to 'see itself as one society'. The process was God working His final revelation. God was not in the traditional Church because religion was redundant. The Church's mission was complete for the Gospel message had been taken to all parts of the world. Webb observed that the Church now redirected its efforts to serving the daily needs of the secular community. It was a proper task and often very well done, but not one for which the Church or any sacred inspiration was indispensable. The Church's task was complete: it should dissolve and its people 'direct world attention to the full hope of Christ rather than themselves'. Webb was echoing the original inspiration of sociology in which, as Bryan Wilson summarised, 'ultimate questions would be abandoned as meaningless, and knowledge would take human welfare as its final concern. Humanity was to be deity, and altruism the rule of life'.⁴⁷ Webb was a secular evangelical as much as Alan

45 Methodist, 8 February 1964.

46 Norman Webb, Work Done: a Study in the Finished Task of the Church (Sydney, 1967).

47 Wilson, Religion in Sociological Perspective, p.3.

Walker, for example, was a biblical evangelical. Both were eager and confident of success.

The sense of immanence which inspired Webb's booklet and which had earlier been absent from Percy Black's pessimistic reflections on the inroads of desacralisation, was not confined to his particular perspective. Many in the Church continued to believe or hope that the Church was engaged in a revolutionary struggle to 'contribute in large measure to the great changes of our times', and yet this, too, was from a thoroughly secular perspective. (Its opposite, of protest at secularisation, occurred simultaneously in the emerging charismatic movement.)⁴⁸ For the Church to survive 'as a force relevant to the needs of our day and generation', it had to be 'immersed' in the life of the world. The New South Wales SSD said that to ignore declarations such as the 'Statement of Policy on Social Issues' emanating from the 1963 General Conference, would imply that Christian faith was irrelevant to the world's needs. The Statement was prefaced by a commitment to discern Christ's 'Will in national and international life'. Methodists were committed 'also to obedience to that Will as it is made known to us',⁴⁹ It was a statement which was part of, that questing, revolutionary movement of mind and spirit' which the Church believed characterised the age.⁵⁰

By using the language and concepts of its time the Methodist connexion was closely attuned to the political aspirations which flourished in Horne's 'Time of Hope' and which were represented by the establishment of the federal department of the Environment, Aborigines and the Arts; by the reduction of film censorship; diversified immigration sources; the appointment of a poverty inquiry; interest in urban controls and in numerous other forms.⁵¹

Conference resolutions sought the same or similar objectives. Appropriately, the English Church historian, Edward Norman commented later that 'the present relationship between Christianity and the ideals

48 Mol, Identity and the Sacred, p.265.

49 The General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australia, Statement of Policy on Social Questions, May 1963 (Melbourne, 1963).

50 Methodist, 14 March 1964.

51 Horne, Time of Hope, p.7.

of Western liberalism is an extremely close one'.⁵² Although Churchmen spiced their remarks with references to the prophetic tradition within Methodism and Christianity generally, they were not true to the Old Testament prophets who provided the model. Whereas 'the charisma of the prophets was always intimately bound up with religious revitalisation' - 'Thus saith the Lord', they began their messages - modern Churchmen turned to social questions precisely because they could not revitalise religion in the population.⁵³ The attempt to immerse the Church in secular liberal politics did not benefit the Church, not did it endear the Church to secular institutions. In 1967 the President of the New South Wales Conference, the Reverend Guy L. Walker, despondently reported:

There seems little point in continuing to tell people, who already know, of our desire for peace by issuing press statements and by making public pronouncements.⁵⁴

Walker there referred to the war in Vietnam. As Methodists learned in recent decades regarding liquor licensing there was nothing to be gained by constant repetition of a message which the public or authorities apparently intended not to hear - even when the Church spoke in a manner intended to be 'relevant'. Nor did it endear the Church to many of its own members. If the Church was well-attuned to the visions of liberal politics what posture did it present to the local church and its immediate community? Great contempt was sometimes heaped upon the local congregation. New buildings, for example, were 'white elephants' which satisfied no other need than the local congregation's 'status-seeking ego'. Buildings merely offered 'a lot of fairly disinterested people something tangible for their money'. The structure of the Church, it was said, was directed only to self-perpetuation. Ordinary churchgoers were fed on nineteenth century religious illusions which denied 'the scientific and cultural insights of our time'.⁵⁵

The experience of the CLM (Church and Life Movement) in 1966 illustrated the division between the inner circles of the Church and many local members. In that year several denominations participated to

52 Edward Norman, Christianity and the World Order (Oxford, 1979), p.29.

53 Mol, Christianity in Chains, p.48.

54 Methodist, 3 June 1967.

55 Ibid., 14 January, 18 February and 17 June 1967.

a greater or lesser degree in the CLM which called for participation by laymen in educational activities and community action and was espoused by the ^{ACC} (Australian Council of Churches). There was considerable resistance within the Church membership to many of the liberal ideas and concepts for social action and change which the intended to flow from proper study.⁵⁶

The CLM was a part of the Church's search for relevance in which spiritual salvation, the first concern of the great religions, was ambiguous. The CLM most likely appealed to liberal-minded Methodists who shared in Horne's 'Time of Hope'. Others, critical of the liberal theological and especially moral and political influences which inspired the CLM programme, preferred to remain rooted in a more traditional - even perhaps static - Methodism and Methodist identity. As Ken Dempsey noted, they 'repeatedly stressed that their first Christian responsibility was to be of assistance to their relatives, their friends, their neighbours and other members (meaning active members of their own church)'.⁵⁷ An anonymous writer in the Methodist would have been sympathetic: he (or she) denied that the creeds, theology and philosophy were essential for Christian living for they were 'not of the essence of religion which is the experience of God'. The author was content with a 'kit-bag religion'.⁵⁸ It was to these Methodists that the New South Wales Conference in 1961 had encouraged 'a complete plan of Devotion, Inspiration, Evangelism and Education within the life of the local Church and circuit'.⁵⁹ Occasionally, in small groups, in the immediately following years there appeared signs of 'quickened interest'.⁶⁰ Most Methodists were little interested in such meetings. Dempsey's ministers at 'Barool' chorused the complaint about the laity's indifference to the spiritual life of the Church - especially those ministers who were 'convinced of the need to educate and change the lifestyle of Barool laymen'.⁶¹

By preferring to maintain a pervasive, inclusive institution did Methodism risk damaging its religious identity? It has been argued that

56 Dempsey, Conflict and Decline, pp. 163-64.

57 Ibid., p.164.

58 Methodist, 3 February 1962.

59 Daily Record (NSW), 10 October 1961.

60 NSW Conf. Mins. 1964, p.67.

61 Dempsey, Conflict and Decline, p.26.

politicization of the sort represented by the Church's resolutions on contemporary social questions was arguably a symptom of 'Christianity's decay as an authentic religion'.⁶² Traditionalist critics - generally relatively inarticulate - thought so for they perceived a gradual dilution of the divinely transcendent element in human existence by liberal theologians who rejected for example, all references to the miraculous, including the virgin birth and resurrection. Methodism was a denomination at particular risk. Why? According to Bernice Martin in her Sociology of Cultural Change that strand of Protestantism which 'mistrust[ed] the collective and ritual aspect of religion as "in-authentic"' was susceptible to secular theology wherein mystery was extruded and religion reduced to the ethical.⁶³ Methodism had for decades condemned the ritual mass of 'Romanism' and since the late nineteenth century lost sight of the Book of Common Prayer on which its own rarely-used liturgical offices were based.⁶⁴ The typical service of twentieth century Australian Methodism was four hymns, two prayers, a lesson and a sermon. It was a far cry from Wesley's 'balanced' approach to worship. Wesley's hymns, by contrast with most Methodist attitudes, have been found to possess the following:

There is the solid structure of historic dogma; there is the passionate thrill of present experience; but there is, too, the glory of a mystic sunlight coming directly from another world.⁶⁵

The sacramental character of Wesley's hymns was not experienced by many Australian congregations.⁶⁶ The physical dominance of the pulpit in most Methodist churches reflected not only the importance given to preaching but also the downgrading of sacraments.⁶⁷ The Methodists' Communion Service, for example, presented the eucharist 'as unrelated to the "mighty acts of God" in history'; the Methodist rites were 'more concerned to explain than to do'.

From the late 1950s as churches began to show less concern for

62 Norman, Christianity and the World Order, p.13.

63 Martin, The Sociology of Cultural Change, p.190.

64 Hartley, 'Worship and liturgy', pp. vi, ix and 52.

65 B.L. Manning, The Hymns of Wesley and Watts (London, 1942), p.29 quoted in Ibid., p.7.

66 Interviews: Reverend E.G. Clancy, 13 October 1983 and Reverend T.R. Hayward, 1 June 1984.

67 Hartley, 'Worship and Liturgy', pp. 72-73.

preaching and a little more for the sacraments 'meaning' could be seen to be replacing 'experience'. In both cases the intention was subjective: in 1945 the Reverend Bruce Gentle denounced the 'dangerous subjectivism' of Methodist worship:

We have tended to put man at the centre of our worship instead of God. We aim to comfort, edify and surround him with exhortation instead of glorifying the Most High68

Comforting the congregation was much appreciated by 'Barool' laymen and as one of the few clergymen appointed to 'Barool' who did not leave in an atmosphere of acrimony, said,

I have not got beyond seeing the Church as the place where men find God, come to be renewed, and then return to do their work and to live with their families during the week.69

Throughout Dempsey's account of the relations between clergy and the laity of the 'Barool' congregation which were typical of the 'shift from harmony to conflict' in many other churches as well,⁷⁰ there is a sense that religion was 'concerned only with the maintenance of order'.⁷¹ And yet, for all its apparent poverty of transcendent spirit, Sunday churchgoing put the people in touch, in however restrained a fashion, with 'the memory of the (Divine and redemptive) event'; one correspondent told the Methodist that 'worship is the positive expression of the religious experience'.⁷² W.H. Auden wrote, in a manner parallel with Gentle and possibly, ironically, Norman Webb, that the role of the Church was not to convert - 'conversion is the work not of men but of the Holy Spirit' -

but to make conversion possible by continuing to preach its good news in words and liturgical acts. She must go on repeating herself, no matter whether her repetition be passionate or, when faith is low, lifeless and mechanical, to preserve that possibility.73

68 Ibid., pp.121, 223, 282 and 316-17.

69 Dempsey, Conflict and Decline, p.61.

70 Ibid., p.173.

71 Martin, The Sociology of Cultural Change, p 189.

72 Methodist, 4 July 1942, quoted in Hartley, 'Worship and Liturgy', p.276.

73 W.H. Auden, 'The Protestant mystics', quoted in Martin, The Sociology of Cultural Change, p.189.

Little wonder that many rejected the CLM. Nor that the 'Barool' congregation should have disapproved the action of one minister who replaced the Psalm with a reading from a daily newspaper; few in the congregation could see how to 'worship God through the newspaper'. The extracts chosen covered a wide range of social issues; the same ones referred to in Conference resolutions. It was not only that the minister's comments 'often conflicted with the values and beliefs of a large number of his politically conservative congregation' but that this intrusion of the 'sordid details' of much contemporary life deprived churchgoing of its refreshing and redemptive qualities.

It had become a time of great ambiguity within the institutional Church. In an editorial in the South Australian Methodist in 1969 the Reverend Dr. Arnold Hunt brought into view the severe limitations of Methodist discipline:

It is vagueness about belief and complacency about spiritual and moral mediocrity that more than anything else undermines the Church's disciplinary tradition and leaves it too often standing for absolutely nothing.⁷⁴

Thus a significant proportion of the core of Methodism became associated with the new agenda of the late 1960s and could answer with decreasing hesitation the question put to the New South Wales Conference in 1972: 'whose side are we on when it comes to community change?'⁷⁵ The Church earnestly sought to 'transcend' the barriers and the profane world but any merger between the sacred and the profane could only blur the distinguishing features of Methodism as a religious denomination, as a number of critics complained when the Church campaigned on certain moral and social issues such as liquor. There was an ambiguity within Methodism about its religious and spiritual roots. This was borne out in the sometimes conflicting relationships between numerous clergy and the greater proportion of the membership who generally rejected the liberal political and social stance offered by Conference. They were the people who generally paid the bills of the Church and who also - in all likelihood - were 'beleaguered' by the theatricality, boundary-shifting and occasional viciousness of the 1960s. As the following chapter demonstrates in relation to abortion, the 'humility' discerned by Phillips had more to do with surrender of moral positions and transcendental convictions than self-abasement and withdrawal.

74 SAM, 19 September 1969.

75 Daily Record (NSW), 11 October 1972.

CHAPTER SEVEN

METHODISTS AND ABORTION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

By the mid-sixties Methodism largely dismantled its Nonconformist social conscience. Many members were unsure of the role of the Church in social questions. Several generations earlier temperance had developed outside the Churches before it was yoked to evangelical branches of Anglicanism and Nonconformity. By the 1960s as that yoke was passing from view the Methodist Church, largely because of its felt need to be relevant and successful, recast its social conscience in a manner which the Church believed to be responsive to the social and political life of its time. Through an examination of the abortion issue this chapter illustrates the inability and unpreparedness of the Methodist Church in South Australia between 1967 and 1972 to pursue a complex social issue in spite of the Church's detailed understanding of many of the issues involved. In practice, it is argued here, being relevant did not mean playing a 'responsible part in ... shaping the thinking of the South Australian community';¹ rather, it meant accommodating the liberal secular community's articulated perceptions of the issue into its own attitudes.

The chronology of events on which this chapter is based opened in 1967 when the South Australian Methodist Annual Conference responded to liberalisation of the United Kingdom law on abortion by requesting the President of Conference to appoint a Commission to report on

the question of abortion in its relationship to the law with special regard to the ethical and theological issues involved.²

In September 1968 ALRASA (Abortion Law Reform Association of South Australia) was formed at a public meeting organised by the Humanist Society of South Australia.³

Several months later the Attorney-General, Robin Millhouse, sponsored a private member's bill to amend sections 81 and 82 of the

1 Reverend Keith Seaman in SAM, 10 May 1968.

2 Daily Record (SA), 19 October 1967.

3 Humanist Post, September 1968, p.2, October 1969, p.3.

Crimes Act which dealt with abortion. The amendments to codify and slightly liberalise current practice were referred to a Select Committee of the House of Assembly. The four-member Select Committee held public hearings during the summer of 1968-69 and reported in February 1969. The Methodist Commission reported to the Annual Conference in October. Millhouse's amendments passed all stages before Christmas 1969. The new Act was proclaimed on 8 January 1970. A statutory committee was appointed to examine and report on notifications of abortions. Throughout 1970 and 1971 opponents of abortion were alarmed by the accelerating rate of abortion. In October 1971 the Methodist Conference ordered the DCC to reassess all aspects of abortion and report to the following Conference. The DDC also re-assessed Methodist policies on sex, morals and family relationships. In February 1972 a bill to severely restrict access to legal abortion was introduced into the House of Assembly. The bill was defeated. The second Methodist committee of inquiry into abortion reaffirmed the Methodist position on abortion and offered numerous suggestions for lowering the incidence of unwanted pregnancy.

At the centre of events was the Millhouse bill to amend sections 81 and 82 of the Crimes Act. Millhouse believed that abortion was 'widespread'; impressionistic judgments of its incidence took the place of statistics. The statutory law appeared to outlaw abortion. It provided that anybody who unlawfully aborted a child was guilty of an offence and liable to punishment. The law was ambiguous about the conditions under which abortion was 'unlawful'. It seemed to allow the possibility of lawful abortion, and English case law provided some guide. In the absence of decided Australian cases the usually quoted instance was the 'Bourne' case of 1938 which followed the abortion of a 14 year old victim of rape. At the direction of the trial judge the jury determined that

a doctor was at liberty to perform the operation of abortion for the purpose of preserving the life of the mother or to prevent her from becoming a physical or mental wreck.⁴

4 Report of the Commission on Abortion presented to the South Australian Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia (Adelaide, 1969), p.2.

The core of Millhouse's proposals was the clause which permitted a pregnancy to be legally terminated by a medical practitioner when two doctors concluded

that the continuance of the pregnancy would involve greater risk to the life of the pregnant woman or greater risk of injury to the physical or mental health of the pregnant woman or any existing children of her family than if the pregnancy were terminated.⁵

Pregnancy could also be terminated for eugenic reasons thus avoiding 'serious' physical or mental handicaps. The controversial elements were the mental health of the mother and the 'social clause' which stated that no additional child should prejudice the emotional comfort of existing children. The 'social clause' was later deleted.

Millhouse expressed great pleasure at the 'intense interest' in the questions surrounding abortion triggered by his bill. It might therefore be asked: How would Methodism respond to this secular innovation in an area morality to reflect and encourage a high personal morality? In fact Methodists were ahead of Millhouse and ALRASA (the Abortion Law Reform Association of South Australia) in analysing abortion. Methodism had responded quickly to the English initiatives of 1967 on which Millhouse based his amendments to the Crimes Act. Early in July 1967 the Reverend Eric Nicholls, a South Australian clergyman was pleased to learn that the British House of Commons had passed the Sexual Offences Bill. The bill which later became law, was intended to liberalise the criteria by which pregnancies could be legally terminated. With the approval of the Director of the DDC (then the Reverend M.C. Trenorden) Nicholls drew the attention of readers of the South Australian Methodist to the possibility that similar legislation would be introduced to their own State Parliament. Christians should be prepared to think the issue through: 'it cannot be assumed that we should adopt a negative attitude'. His private view was that abortion had no place in the criminal law.⁶

5 Ibid., p.6.

6 Thinking that Nicholls had some inside information, the News sent a reporter to interview him. Nicholls was amused and flattered, but he was not privy to political knowledge. Interview: Reverend Eric Nicholls, 13 December 1983. His comments were published in the SAM, 21 July 1967.

Nicholls was supported by the Reverend Keith Seaman, Superintendent of the Adelaide Central Methodist Mission and later Governor of South Australia. Seaman reckoned that once the issue entered the local political demesne the Church's views would 'certainly' be sought. Methodists had a 'responsible part to play in shaping the thinking' of the community. To be 'neutral' would be 'cowardice'.⁷

In July 1967 all nine District Synods agreed with the DCC recommendation that a committee of enquiry into abortion be appointed by the President. Adelaide South, of which Nicholls was a member and possibly at his prodding, could see no reason why a report could not be prepared prior to Conference which was due to meet two months later. The pertinent fact is less that South Australian Methodists were responding to a secular initiative albeit in another country; others who might have been expected to lead were in fact lagging behind the Church. Rather, the pertinent question relates to the manner in which they should participate in and contribute to secular public debate. What relation would the particular perspectives employed by Methodists have to public opinion and the range of perspectives pertinent to the relevant questions in South Australia?

Abortion, as a public issue, had three elements. First, there were questions of sexual morality in which opinion ranged from antinomian to legalist, that is, from no imposed restrictions to an emphasis on what is and what is not permitted by law. Secondly, there were issues of social welfare and public services affecting unwanted pregnancy. Thirdly, there were attitudes to foetal status ranging from inviolable innocence to biological indications of individual personhood, quickening or viability. Each of these elements was confronted by the Methodist Commission and the Parliamentary Select Committee.

When in early 1968 Nicholls chose the personnel for the Methodist Commission, he sought the assistance of Professor Lloyd Cox, Professor of Gynaecology at the University of Adelaide, a Methodist and believed to have been of a generally liberal disposition.⁸ At the time Cox was overseas and Nicholls was referred to Dr. A.D. Byrne, a gynaecologist who

7 SAM, 10 May 1968.

8 Interview: Nicholls.

proved to have an 'extremely strong and dominant personality',⁹ and an excellent reputation in his field. Byrne insisted on certain strict qualifications to liberalisation of the statutory law and contrarily presented evidence of some 'hideous' consequences of induced abortion in support of his stance. It 'meant a great to-do'.¹⁰

Other members of the Commission included a general practitioner with considerable psychiatric training and an obstetrician whose own 'broad-minded' understanding of the issues confronting the Commission was over-shadowed by Byrne. Ministers on the Commission included the Reverend Charles Biggs, Lecturer in Biblical Studies and later Principal at Wesley Theological College who became chairman of the inquiry, and the Reverends Jeff Drake and Frank Hanson both of whom were noted for their counselling abilities and experience. The Commission also had the services of Gary Killington, a social worker who for several years had been a member of the DCC, the Service to Youth Council and, more recently, was made a member of the Advisory Panel of the Department of Social Welfare. Legal assistance was provided by H.K. Treloar, a solicitor. There were two women on the Commission, both housewives; one was formerly a teacher and the other a trained social worker.¹¹

No minutes of the Methodist Commission's meetings appear to have been kept. The DCC Minutes give some guide to the very slow progress of the Commission's work. Early in 1968 Nicholls sought to widen the terms of reference of the inquiry by including the question of contraception. This question was previously the preserve of a DCC sub-committee but, in view of the importance to the Abortion Commission of discussing means by which pregnancy could be avoided, contraception was pertinent.

By November 1968 the DCC made the first of several requests for the Commission to 'report as soon as possible'. Knowing that Millhouse shortly intended to introduce his amendments to the House of Assembly, the DCC hoped that the Commission would be able to make some contribution to the Select Committee. It did not. (In earlier years Methodists such as Woollacott and the Reverend Percy Chennel would have lost no opportunity to participate in public inquiries.) The Select

9 Interview: Reverend Dr. Charles Biggs, 9 December 1983.

10 Interview: Nicholls.

11 Interview: Biggs.

Committee reported to the House of Assembly in February 1969. In the same month Nicholls reported to the DCC that the Commission did not expect to report 'for months'. The DCC then sought to avoid commenting on the amending legislation.¹²

Again, in March, the new Director of the DCC, the Reverend Keith Smith, referred to the public silence of the Methodist Church on abortion. Hanson replied on behalf of the Commission that it needed sufficient time to prepare an adequate report. The dilatoriness of the Commission reflected the degree of division among members of the Commission over the medical dangers associated with abortion.¹³ In the early months of 1969 a small committee had reported to the Victorian DCC essentially denouncing the presence of abortion in the criminal law. The Victorians relied on conservative professional ethics of doctors to avoid abortion on demand. Smith was pleased that the Victorian report 'deliberately avoided stating conclusions'.¹⁴ By June, Smith was again harping at the Commission to finish its work: in view of the 'pressure that was being exerted' for the Methodist Church to declare its position on the abortion bill the luxury of time had expired.¹⁵ The report was hurriedly completed by mid-July.¹⁶ It was largely a copy of the Victorian report.

In the absence of a trained moral theologian it was difficult for the Methodist Commission to pursue a developed ethical approach to the questions set before it: specific criteria which could be used in deciding whether a pregnancy should be terminated or not were not stated nor was a means for employing those criteria provided. The Commission was further disadvantaged in that much more ethical and medical material was available after it had concluded its deliberations than before.

The Commission concluded that unwanted pregnancies were unavoidable. Any preventative action would not change that because irresponsible behaviour would continue in some degree. Conditions which encouraged unwanted pregnancy were 'compulsive' sex drives, poor family

12 DCC Mins. (SA), 15 November 1968 and 21 February 1969.

13 Ibid., 13 March 1969; interviews: Biggs and Nicholls.

14 Ibid., 16 April 1969.

15 Ibid., 20 June 1969.

16 Interview: Biggs.

relationships and economic hardship. The Commission was most concerned for unmarried women and girls who, as the present law stood, were believed to risk the dangers associated with a 'backyard' abortionist while their wealthier sisters were financially able to go interstate for their abortions. In order to reduce the incidence of 'backyard' abortion each woman's problems should be viewed sympathetically. The Commission implicitly rejected the anticipated 'highly irrational perception and reactions' of moralists who opposed any greater sense of moral liberty resulting from fewer legal restrictions. Because the Commission was concerned less with the criminal and moral law than to prevent unwanted pregnancy it recommended much increased provision of Family Planning clinics and radically extended courses on reproductive physiology and human relationships as features of the education system.

The Commission unanimously recommended several amendments to Millhouse's bill. Most important, the Commission recommended deletion of the controversial 'social clause' which referred to the likely emotional effects on existing children in the event of an unwanted pregnancy. Public opinion seemed to agree.¹⁷ As it stood the bill looked to two legally qualified medical practitioners to decide whether an abortion should be induced. The Commission recommended that one of these be a specialist surgeon and the other, also present at the operation, a gynaecologist. The Commission further recommended that each case be thoroughly documented by law and not at the whim of executive government. Finally, it recommended that Family Planning clinics be set up by the Department of Health, fully staffed by general practitioners, gynaecologists, and other relevant medical personnel.

By not employing moral rules based on firm principles of the sanctity of life, the Commission risked compromising traditional principles of chastity and foetal status in its search for a compassionate stance which did not victimise vulnerable women. To have relied on rules alone would have been legalistic and unconstructive at a time in which a major social problem associated with unwanted pregnancy was being uncovered. Nonetheless, should the Commission excessively emphasise the damage caused by backyard abortionists, measures intended to prevent unwanted pregnancy might not be pursued with the same vigour as liberalisation. In their

17 Gallup Poll no. 202, 15 February 1969, p.47.

pursuit of a new law Church liberals did not ensure or seek to ensure, by any political campaign which has been recorded or recalled, that family planning and other educational programmes would be established either to the extent that the Methodist Conference reluctantly recommended or as forcefully advocated by several expert witnesses to the Parliamentary Select Committee.

Individual material and psychological well-being provided for by government services (social welfare) and the medical aspects of abortion were the major topics of the evidence presented to the Select Committee. There was little talk of morals, some of ethics, mainly it was a matter of stumbling upon the best way through the thicket of conflicting conjecture regarding numbers of illegal abortions, reducing - if not eliminating - the fearsome results of 'backyard' abortionists and providing social services to help avoid unwanted pregnancies. Most contributors to the Select Committee hearings sought some middle way. This was Millhouse's own preference. Arguments for severe restriction or total liberty were, in the Attorney-General's words, 'logical and simple to defend' but unhelpful.¹⁸ The bundle of arguments on human relationships, social questions and medical factors grew constantly and contradicted simple solutions. Adjudication of what was initially perceived to have been a relatively straight forward problem became increasingly difficult and any answers to the question necessarily untidy and incomplete.

Medical practitioners, particularly gynaecologists and obstetricians who, in the course of their duties, terminated pregnancies and appeared before the Select Committee, spoke in unison that abortion was a 'most repulsive thing, repugnant to all concerned', and a 'referral to violence'.¹⁹ Other practitioners with less personal involvement sometimes rejected that line. Dr. Earle Hackett, ALRSA's representative, for example, was highly critical of such subjectivity which, he said, resulted from 'deep training and conditioning'. Doctors' attitudes would need to change in the face of community requests which arose from an environment wherein sexual life was 'private, spontaneous and, we hope, responsible'.²⁰

18 SAPD 1969, p.2531.

19 Select Committee, Report. pp. 34 and 78.

20 Earle Hackett, 'Medical implications', in Nicholas Haines (ed.), Abortion: Repeal or Reform? (Canberra, 1973), pp. 131 and 134.

Danger accompanied abortion. The Methodist Commission discussed but did not report any conclusions regarding morbidity associated with pregnancy. Some pathologists were highly critical of the impressions being created in the press that little difficulty was involved in an abortion. ALRASA believed termination of pregnancy to be very safe and much evidence was tendered in support of that view.²¹

If abortion were to be neither prohibited nor available on demand, then the grounds on which abortion would be legally justified needed to be stated precisely. The Methodist Commission was guided on several matters by the evidence to the Select Committee. Two conditions were dealt with quickly; neither was expected to result in many abortions. First, preservation of the mother's life rarely necessitated the loss of the child.²² A related cause for abortion was eugenic. Although the public seemed to accept that in the case of rubella the child might perhaps be aborted, the Select Committee was informed that abnormalities were remediable when treated. Few abortions could be justified for eugenic reasons. In such areas as eugenics arguments favouring continuation of life, remediation of handicaps and minimal termination of pregnancy were based on clinical and social evidence.²³

Regarding psychological conditions justifying abortion the Select Committee was less specific. It seemed more concerned to specify the incidence of illegal and therapeutic abortion. How could it be determined?

The suggestion and forms of estimation were bewildering. ALRASA argued that illegal abortion rose or fell according to the degree of legal restriction. Witnesses sometimes had subjective impressions of the numbers of illegal abortions, less often a numerical suggestion. Certain primary data, such as the products of curettage when subjected to varying methods of analysis could yield widely differing results.²⁴

21 Several years later Dr. John Miller discovered a high level of morbidity much greater than earlier optimistic predictions. John Miller, 'Medical abortion in South Australia: a critical assessment of early complications', Medical Journal of Australia, 1973, vol. 1, pp.825-830.

22 By the end of the decade it was less than three per cent. Twelfth Annual Report of the Committee Appointed to Examine and Report on Abortions for the Year ended 31 December 1981. SAPP 1982, no.90.

23 Select Committee, Report, p.59.

24 Professor Cox to the Select Committee, Report, pp. 22 and 38.

Estimates of the numbers of illegal abortions ranged between 250 and 10,000. The Minister of Education and member of the Select Committee, Mrs Joyce Steele, confessed midway through the Committee's hearings that the more evidence heard on the number of illegal abortions the less confident she was that the amendments would reduce them.²⁵

Whereas on several technical matters the Select Committee deferred to expert opinion, the vexed question of foetal status was resolved by reference to public opinion. The Select Committee agreed that life for a potential human being began at conception but observed that this was not accepted by many as 'the meaningful moment of the creation of a new human being'.²⁶ On the basis of opinion polls ALRASA claimed that the public generally saw it that way also.²⁷ The Methodist Commission approached foetal status pragmatically. It refused to adopt a position of outlawing abortion and therefore could not take the Catholic position that from blastocyst the embryo deserved respect as a human being. To have taken the Catholic position and then allowed that life could be taken by termination of pregnancy would be to destroy respect for life generally. In this context a balancing, conservative element was injected into the Commission's report when it presented a set of ideal conditions for the creation of new life. The Commission concluded a child's personality need not be 'adversely' affected by the absence of one or more of those conditions.²⁸

Whereas adoption was not praised as a social welfare alternative to abortion planned parenthood seemed much less complicated and witnesses to the Select Committee and the report of the Methodist Commission chorused their approval of it as a means to avoid unwanted pregnancies. Since, in many instances, abortion appeared to be no more than an alternative to contraception, prevention was doubtless better than cure. ALRASA's arguments rested on these points:

The need for an abortion usually involves an admission that error, contraceptive failure, lack of sex education, or sheer

25 Ibid., p.29.

26 Ibid., p.4.

27 Ibid., p.100.

28 These related to the degree of commitment of the intending parents, the loving and secure environment necessary for the child's 'complete development'. No additional child should 'seriously prejudice' already existing circumstances.

fecklessness has supervened. A woman should have some redress available to her for such misfortune.²⁹

ALRASA did not pursue education and contraceptives too hard. (Indeed, the ALRASA case could best be summed up by the phrase of the French jurist Maurice Hauriou, 'L'instinct du moindre effort'.)³⁰ The Methodist Commission emphasised social welfare and counselling facilities and agreed with many witnesses to the Select Committee that family planning clinics needed to be greatly upgraded and extended with haste, and that access to contraceptives be made easier. There was some hesitation among witnesses to the Select Committee regarding more generous welfare provisions, it was only slight, most favoured much greater government generosity. The Methodist Commission was in accord with most suggestions for increased welfare and counselling facilities. Dr. Hunt commented that the Methodist Report would cause little controversy.³¹

Methodist consent to liberalised abortion laws pivoted on education, the ready availability of contraceptives and active government involvement in providing these services. The DCC took comfort in the prediction, repeated in the Medical Journal of Australia in 1973,³² that with improved general knowledge abortion levels would fall. The contrary occurred. Abortions occurred more frequently each year.³³ The DCC would have liked to agree with Miss M.T. Gibson, a Catholic social worker who appeared before the Select Committee on behalf of Archbishop Beovich, when she said that the objectives of any education programme 'must be learned and incorporated into our society's norms'. The Methodists noted that unwanted pregnancy could result from failed contraception in which case the individual concerned 'may need help to adjust ... to the new situation'. Many predicaments did not lend themselves to such adjustment without enormous resources spent in the effort. Gibson agreed. And yet it was not

29 Select Committee, Report, p.99.

30 Quoted in John Finnis, 'Abortion and legal rationality', Adelaide Law Review, 3, August 1970, p.422.

31 SAM, 3 October 1969.

32 'Editorial: Legal abortion, the South Australia experience', Medical Journal of Australia. 1973, 1 (30), pp. 821-823.

33 Barbara Godfrey, Termination of Pregnancy in South Australia 1970-1977: A Report on computer analysis of information contained in the certificates of medical termination of pregnancy. (Adelaide, 1980), p.6.

because resources were scarce that the Methodist Commission concluded its report with the same words used by its Victorian counterparts:

We see our obligation to bring the Christian perspective to each situation, to see it in love and depth, to attempt to do justice to its complexity, and often its tragedy, and to provide a social and legal framework in which appropriate action can be taken.

Because abortion resulted from refractory personal circumstances, much tragedy might perhaps be avoided by a change in the law. Some would remain; tragedy could not be prohibited. Again, however, there could arise a jarring circumstance which refused to succumb to the blandishments of 'love': what was the outlook for those pregnant women, poor and of low intelligence? It was argued before the Select Committee that abortions could contribute to an improved standard of family life for these people, but 'you cannot get to them in time'; paradoxically, they were the 'people that most ... wanted to help in this matter'.³⁴

In South Australia abortion was largely a matter of the 'private interests of individuals'.³⁵ Because of the emphasis on individualism the Church found itself reassessing the nature of sexual relationships in which procreation was not intended. Once the Church reconstructed its policies regarding sexual morality, to whom would they be directed? It is necessary to review the background to these changes not only to recall the traditional morality of the Church but also to observe a note of unease which crept into Church thinking in the early 1960s.

Statements in earlier decades concentrated on marriage. During the late 1940s Conference was alarmed by an increasing rate of divorce and 'heartily recommended' the establishment and work of Marriage Guidance Councils throughout the Commonwealth. Although the dissolubility of marriage was a question on which conflicting opinions could be heard, Conference was referred to Mark 10:6-9³⁶ which defined the context in which divorce should be discussed. By rejecting 'forced marriages', whether based on 'cupidity or physical desire', the Church recognised

34 Dr. Dilys Craven, the Neo-natal Registrar and an Honorary Pediatrician at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Select Committee, Report, p.60.

35 ALRASA submission in Ibid., p.94.

36 'This is why a man must leave father and mother, and the two become one body. They are no longer two, therefore, but one body. So, then, what God has united, man must not divide.'

the need for conscious decision-making and made allowance for human frailty. In marriages which had soured, Christ was believed to defend the interests of, say, a discarded wife. Even so, no matter how 'outrageously ... unfaithful' one partner was, the innocent one should do all that was possible for reconciliation, 'never giving up till death do them part'. Still, the Church was not legalist and proclaimed that when restoration of a relationship proved utterly impossible divorce could be granted.³⁷

Following that reiteration, the official view held fast for around two decades although by 1963 a conscious effort was needed to defend marital fidelity and pre-marital chastity from the relaxed attitudes then gaining popularity. Unnamed forces were perceived by some in the SSD to be challenging the integrity and fidelity of the marriage relationship. Coincidentally with a reported increase of interest in social questions at the local church level, a sub-committee of the SSD and DCE was formed in order to respond to increasing numbers of school-girl pregnancies. Although the Committee was said to be meeting regularly, it found the questions very difficult and its discussion moved beyond the immediate problems of school-girls for whose predicaments no practical solutions were offered until the abortion Commission began its work.³⁸

While the Sex and Morals sub-committee remained committed to the 'recognised principles [of] chastity before and permanence within marriage' it recognised too the implacable boundary-shifting implicit in contemporary 'rapid social change'. District Synods gave few signs of similar recognition. Some did recommend further study 'with a view to strengthening the structure and deepening the faith of all family units', not only those which were Methodist.³⁹

Sex education was recommended by the committee in 1964, provided courses were consistent with the traditional principles of fidelity and chastity. Earlier condemnation of contraceptives mellowed: in wartime rubber was preferred for the war effort;⁴⁰ now, contraceptives would be

37 SA Conf. Mins. 1948, pp. 179-80.

38 SSD Mins., 26 July 1963.

39 See, for example, Eyre Peninsula Journal, 3 August 1963 and Daily Record (SA), 16 and 17 October 1963.

40 According to Woollacott 'some of these fellows don't know anything'. Interview: Hayward.

'neither advocated nor condemned'. Pedagogy received little attention except to say that not all questions would be guaranteed an answer and 'sex techniques' would not be mentioned.⁴¹ Synods and Conference remained cautious, generally preferring no action - the sub-committee should continue its studies.⁴²

A subsequent report presented to Synods early in August 1966 was cast in a traditional mould. It recommended that local churches run courses on Christian ideals of friendship, courtship and marriage. Perhaps as a reflection of certain inadequacies, ministers were requested to be prepared to offer advice and counselling to those intending marriage.⁴³ Synod reactions ranged from acceptance to outright rejection. The South Eastern District Synod could offer no reason for the sub-committee's continued existence.⁴⁴ Nor was it heard from again.

By virtue of the Sex and Morals sub-Committee's close association with the DCC, it is notable that its recommendations were directed toward the life of the Church as a community in itself. By contrast, Synod discussions of sex education in schools and subsequent enquiries into the policy of the Church on sexual relationships rarely separated the community of Christians from the broad secular community. By attempting to integrate its perspective in secular life the religious inspiration which might be expected to underpin the Church's attitudes to personal relationships, was lost from sight. The religious inspiration was subsumed in the universalism which for evangelical reasons had so inspired Methodists. Conservative religious attitudes were isolated and ironically the Church as a whole was ignored: as later responses of government attested, the general community was little interested in sophisticated measures of education and social counselling for improvements in personal behaviour and responsibility.

In the early months of 1969 the DCC was restructured and the Reverend Arthur Jackson took responsibility for a sub-committee on 'Chastity, Fidelity, etc.' It was responsible for contraception also but there is no record that the committee reported to the DCC; Jackson

41 Adelaide North Journal, 5 August 1964.

42 Daily Record (SA), 19 October 1964.

43 Adelaide North Journal, 4 August 1965 and 3 August 1966; Daily Record (SA), 18 October 1966; DCC Mins., 24 June 1966.

44 South Eastern Journal, 3 August 1966.

himself attended very few meetings of the DCC in those years. Because of the immediate need to develop a policy on abortion and unwanted pregnancy, contraception was given a status far beyond that of a few years earlier and quite opposite to that current during World War II. When the subject was taken from Jackson's committee and given to the Methodist Commission on abortion, contraception was taken out of the context of marriage to one of social welfare and quality of life.⁴⁵ Stripped of its religious garb, the issue of contraception was also completely secularised.

Possibly, the secular tone of the Commission's report explains the indifference shown by Methodist district synods in it and the accompanying DCC recommendations. Synods on Eyre and Yorke Peninsulas refused to compliment the Commission on its achievement and referred the recommendations to Quarterly Meetings which in turn were expected to report to Conference by October.⁴⁶

Conference ratified the moderately liberal view of the Commission and the DCC. It was largely in accord with the original intention of the Attorney-General who wanted the views of all the Churches in South Australia and thus had been badgering Smith for some time for an official Methodist response to the bill. On 8 October, in the guise of President-elect of the Conference, Dr Hunt announced the decision to the waiting media, claiming that the Church had departed radically from a Christian tradition more than 1,000 years old:

From the standpoint of the history of Christian ethics the Church's decision is thoroughly revolutionary.⁴⁷

Smith denied that it was revolutionary. The optimistic, humanitarian and responsible approach of Smith contradicted the traditional principle of

45 DCC Mins., 21 April 1967, 15 November and 13 December 1968.

46 Eyre Peninsula Journal, 26 July 1969; Yorke Peninsula Journal, 31 July 1969.

47 Interview: Reverend Keith Smith, 24 January 1984; Advertiser, 9 October 1969. The Daily Record of Conference gives no hint of the nature of the debate on abortion. Speakers were not named, for example, as was customary. Nor was any report on it given in the South Australian Methodist.

inviolable innocence. Neither Smith nor Hunt debated the points of conflict which existed between them. Smith continued in his view and Hunt decided to keep his (few) remarks to the matter of the Church being but one member of a pluralistic community: 'compromise was the only pragmatic policy' available to the Church; Hunt was constrained by the belief which he stated on several occasions, that the Church had a part to play in public life, but he observed that 'all sorts of private actions have an immeasurable effect on social institutions'.⁴⁸

Smith's position was not subjected to close scrutiny by fellow Methodists; certainly none is given in the evidence.⁴⁹ Nor did Hunt - again, according to the available evidence - deliver himself publicly of the reasons for his observation that the Church's decision was revolutionary.

Whereas Smith was confident that with ample social welfare and psychiatric services the choice for abortion would become a rare event, Hunt was concerned for the integrity of a theological perspective of great antiquity, that the 'fundamental question' of abortion was foetal status.⁵⁰ How would the Methodist Conference and the DCC get around the doctrine of inviolable innocence? There was only one historically acceptable exception - when the life of the mother was threatened by continuing the pregnancy. From the mid-1960s the issue of abortion has been discussed world-wide. An American moral theologian, James M. Gustafson, presented a basis for the Methodists' decision. Like Gustafson the South Australian Methodists took a personal, pastoral and situational approach. Although Gustafson held to principles of the 'inviolability of life, the sanctity of life' more strongly than the DCC appeared to do, he allowed major exceptions to the two rules which flowed from his principles. He countenanced abortion on medical grounds; that is in cases of rape and incest and for psychological and socio-economic grounds, as an 'act of last resort' when the 'possibilities for financial, social and spiritual help have been

48 SAM, 3 October 1969.

49 There was one minor exception but the context is different and it properly belongs in the continuing discussion of sex and morals and the community of the Church. See below, pp. 189-192.

50 John T. Noonan, 'Introduction' in John T. Noonan (ed.), The Morality of Abortion. Legal and Historical Perspectives (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), p.xvii.

explored'. Neither Gustafson nor the Methodists (nor Parliament) confronted the question which the Reverend Dr Geoffrey Scott of the South Australian Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia, posed recently: 'how does one know that one is dealing with an "exception" that is so genuinely justified' that the first two rules may be set aside?⁵¹ The problems of defining the exception continued to worry, perhaps annoy, the DCC. How did Gustafson resolve the dilemma? He said,

As the morally conscientious soldier fighting in a particular war is convinced that life can and ought to be taken, 'justly' but also 'mournfully',⁵² so the moralist can be convinced that the life of the defenceless foetus can be taken, less justly, but more mournfully.⁵³

The evil done was no less an evil because it was justified. Hence the importance of sound factual information when decisions for abortion were made.⁵⁴

If the Church was concerned for its contribution to public affairs did parliamentarians who were members of the Methodist Church represent their Church's official views in the political debate? In the event there was no single view by which they be identified on abortion although none gave foetal rights an absolute value.

Alone among the Methodists the State Treasurer, Glen Pearson, claimed that abortion should be a matter solely between the pregnant woman and her doctor.⁵⁵ Pearson strongly disapproved of the law 'blundering about in the area of medical practice'. Compared with the

- 51 Geoffrey Scott, 'Abortion in the Christian tradition', (Adelaide, n.d.).
- 52 Gustafson took the term from Roland Bainton's discussions of the mournful mood of the just war theorists in Christian Attitudes toward War and Peace (New York, 1960).
- 53 James Gustafson, 'A Protestant ethical approach' in Noonan, The Morality of Abortion, p.122.
- 54 James M. Gustafson, Ethics from a Theocentric Perspective vol.1, Theology and Ethics (Chicago, 1981), pp. 334 and 341.
- 55 On the advice of ALRASA, Hutchens sought to amend the central clause of the bill to that effect. He failed. The object of the exercise was more to ensure that Parliamentarians felt that the bill was a moderate one. SAPD 1969, p.2531; Jill Blewett, 'The Abortion Law Reform Association of South Australia: 1968-73', in Jan Mercer (ed.), The Other Half. Women in Australian Society (Melbourne, 1975), p.388.

earlier generation of Nonconformists of which he had been one, Pearson inverted the role of the state in a matter of personal morality from maximum intervention to none. Years before, because of its destructive power access to alcohol was counted by Nonconformists as a privilege and thus restricted as far as politically possible. In 1969 Pearson, as one of small group which included Don Dunstan, sought unrestricted access for women to abortion facilities. Pearson appeared to put little weight on education for responsibility, nor express any interest in preventing unwanted pregnancy; a minority would behave irresponsibly and the law ought to be tailored to that fact alone. He emphasised the 'remedial' quality of the bill.

While Pearson approved abortion on demand, others took a more restrictive line, both sides apparently oblivious to the report and statements of their Church. Among the conservatives Messrs Hughes and Wardle were concerned that the rights of the foetus should not be sacrificed merely for the sake of convenience. Additionally, they perceived that much public opinion was sceptical about the need for reform. Ivon Wardle argued that the public was confused over the nature of statutory and common law and the actual content of both on abortion. Codification of present practice was acceptable - extension was not, as about 100 petitions stated.⁵⁶ Generally, Wardle, who resigned the Methodist ministry to contest his seat for the LCL, was reluctant to speak; why, he did not say. Hughes had few inhibitions. Reporting, 'complete distaste for the legislation' he denied that liberalised abortion laws would lower the numbers of 'backyard' abortions. He ignored Methodist resolutions and took guidance from the Lutheran Church. He read to the House a letter from Pastor Minge, President of the South Australian District of the Lutheran Church of Australia. Any increased demand for abortion, Minge wrote, 'would create a further decline in community responsibility'.⁵⁷ The former Attorney-General, C.D. Rowe, echoed him, saying that Parliament legislates

to meet and maintain a standard, not to reduce our standards to meet a declining morality and an increasing sense of irresponsibility.⁵⁸

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- 56 This was what the rewritten Licensing Act did in 1967. There would have been more petitions but some did not comply with Standing Orders.
- 57 Wardle's voting pattern was the same as Hughes and his reasons probably coincided with those of the Lutherans as well.
- 58 SAPD 1969, p.3106.

The speech which came closest to the position of the Methodist Church was given by Molly Byrne. Her views and expectations were a little more restrictive than those of her Church. Her caution was best expressed when she voted with conservative colleagues in favour of a seven month residential clause.⁵⁹ She also favoured a more restrictive wording for the central clause of the bill.

Thirteen months elapsed from the time when Millhouse moved the amendments to the Crimes Act on abortion before the new Act was proclaimed on 8 January 1970. That the Methodist Church contributed nothing to the Select committee hearings nor to the Parliamentary debate on abortion illustrates the serious loss of credibility even among potentially influential members of the Church regarding social and moral questions.

Controversy within Methodism focussed obliquely on Seaman's wish that the Church take a 'responsible part in shaping the thinking of our community'. What responsibility did the Church have to its own people? The Reverend Malcolm Wilson who served on the DCC Committee some years earlier, questioned the propriety of the Methodist Church condoning liberal attitudes to abortion. Surely it did not mean, he asked, that 'abortion is our Lord's will and now to be regarded as part of the Christian ethic'? Wilson was unmoved by Smith's reply that it was a mistake to associate changes in the abortion law with an accommodation by the Church with 'the permissive attitude that is prevalent in the community as a whole'.⁶⁰

Unrepentant, Wilson wrote again, airing for the first time in the South Australian Methodist doubts about the rectitude of liberalised abortion laws. First, he asked, in what way was the life of the Church as a community affected by this new law? Second, how had the Church contributed to good government? He was greatly concerned by the apparent imprecision of the language used in the physical and mental health clause which was the centre-point of Millhouse's bill. If it was only a clarification of the law, then why was it being hailed interstate as a great liberalising measure? He asked again:

Does it not follow that Methodist women facing these

60 SAM, 31 October (Wilson) and 21 November (Smith) 1969.

59 SAPD 1969, pp.2423 and 2530.

conditions should feel they have the blessing of their Church if they seek abortion as a solution to their problem?⁶¹

At which point the editor, Dr. Hunt, decided that the correspondence columns were closed to discussion of abortion. No immediate reason was given for this decision. It may have been that the legislation could only be reasonably tested after the Act had been in operation for some time; it had yet to be proclaimed. Wilson gave no indication that he had read the report of the Select Committee. Perhaps, more importantly, he had not read the report of the Methodist Commission in the appropriate spirit.

Despite Wilson's questions, and in the absence of any response from the DCC, interpretation of the new law was a matter of balance between 'freeing' the profession - Professor Cox reckoned the Bourne decision was 'too rigid'⁶² - and allowing or encouraging professional ethics to maintain a conservative influence on medical decision-making. Two particular influences were at work here: one was the requirement that two practitioners be involved in each case (in New South Wales only one was required); the other was the appointment of the Mallen Committee responsible to the Medical Board of South Australia for ethical matters and to the Director-General of Medical Services for statistical matters.⁶³

Some time elapsed between passage of the abortion legislation and the growth of opposition to the apparent numbers of abortions made legal by it. The place of the DCC in that controversial context is considered later. It is now time to return to the questions of sex and morals facing Methodism in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Partly because of the complexities of abortion and partly because altered attitudes to sexuality in the late 1960s throughout the western

61 Ibid., 12 December 1969.

62 Select Committee, Report, p.23.

63 The Chairman was Sir Leonard Mallen, a distinguished gynaecologist and for several years Chairman of the Federal Assembly of the Australian Medical Association. The Committee took a close interest in several practitioners whose notifications far exceeded the mean. It also 'noted with unanimous disapproval, the actions of [ALRASA] in circularising medical practitioners requesting them to put their names on a "list of General Practitioners prepared to discuss the possibility of pregnancy termination"'. Although ALRASA was acting within the law, further liberalised practice was deemed undesirable by the Mallen Committee.

great significance in social world were of behaviour the DCC felt duty-bound to define a comprehensive and Christian attitude to freedom and responsibility in sexual relationships - including abortion - which took account of the changed environment.

The earlier Sex and Morals sub-committee had not deviated from the seventh Commandment when discussing human relations. Now, the DCC was impressed by the chasm between the decalogue and current sexuality. In 1970 a series of resolutions on planned parenthood passed by the United Methodist Church in the United States triggered the appointment of a South Australian DCC sub-committee to edit the document and include a paragraph on Christian responsibility for sexual relationships in which procreation was not intended.

The DCC statement, 'Family Relationships' expressed concern for the development of 'personhood' and 'wholeness as a child of God'. Responsibility in sexual relationships, preferably conducted in a marital environment, was emphasised; procreation should no longer be a matter of chance but of 'responsible choice'. In that context it discussed education for family life, pre-natal care, contraception, voluntary sterilisation, artificial insemination and adoption. The theme was quality of life and, in order to maintain consistency, the concept was extended to overseas programmes designed to 'realistically confront the population crisis'. Nearer to home, it recommended that minors who thought that they may have V.D. or be pregnant should be given free access to medical services. On abortion it sought

adequate safeguards for the community and individuals most directly involved until such time as abortion is removed from the criminal code and is dealt with as a matter of medical ethics.⁶⁴

At Conference in 1971 Smith suggested that Synods 'fairly widely approved' the statement.⁶⁵ Perhaps, but without enthusiasm as Synods representing just under half of all South Australian Methodists rejected it. One was Adelaide South. Taking its cue from a response by the

64 DCC Policy Statement, 'Family Relationships', 24 June 1971.

65 Daily Record (SA), 19 October 1971.

Reverend C.T. Symons, a former Director of the DCE and now associate editor of the Central Times, Adelaide South Synod referred the statement back to the DCC for complete redrafting. Symons denounced the 'inroads' into Church pronouncements which opinion outside the Church was making. No specifically Christian viewpoint was discernible in the document: 'a Church statement should be for Christians and should be a Christian document'.⁶⁶

The DCC was unmoved by Symon's vision of the Christian community. It preferred the situationist recommendations from a sub-committee that any redrafted statement should include three particular elements: it should note the circumstances which had arisen requiring Christians to rethink their attitudes; it should affirm those beliefs which were applicable to family relationships and sex; and it should take note of community debates and offer specific resolutions to those issues. It meant that the content of the statement would not change, just some aspects of style. The authors steadfastly refused to discriminate between Christian and non-Christian behaviour and ideals. In 1972 Conference agreed that the opinions expressed in the statement should be discussed and 'amplified' by Quarterly Meetings and other local church groups. With some further amendments it was printed in the Central Times and sent to churches with the view that after discussion it become an official pronouncement.⁶⁷

Concerted opposition to the new abortion laws only developed after the initial figures of terminations of pregnancy were released in July 1970. By the end of the year enough dissent from 'several prominent people' was discernible to the DCC for it to want to 'overcome' it. Anxiety about the numbers of abortions spread among some Methodists, too. In October 1971 Conference ordered the DCC to re-examine 'all matters relating to abortion' and report in the following year.⁶⁸ Early in 1972 Terry MacRae, a Catholic Member of the House of Assembly, introduced a bill designed to severely restrict the grounds on which an abortion might be obtained. MacRae claimed that the bill expressed the sentiments of a 'significant majority' if the community and that he acted on behalf of

66 Adelaide South Journal, 28 July 1971.

67 DCC Mins., 1 October and 19 November 1971, 17 March and 12 April 1972; Daily Record (SA), 19 October 1971; Central Times, 10 May 1972.

68 Adelaide North Journal, 28 July 1971; Daily Record (SA), 19 October 1971.

no interested group. Smith was not impressed; MacRae, he said, had 'finally buckled under violent pressure from the Southern Cross', Adelaide's Catholic weekly.⁶⁹

Tension within Methodism over abortion was heightened when members of the Right to Life Association (founded in 1971) and ALRASA both claimed, sometimes on television, that the Methodist Church approved abortion on request. Few Methodists can have been irked by these remarks because debate occurred in just two Synods.

On Yorke Peninsula a motion seeking to ally the Church with the Right to Life Association was amended in order to press the DCC to promote changes in the law thus eliminating the 'abortion on demand situation' which the Synod believed had developed in South Australia.⁷⁰

Members of the Adelaide South Synod were fearful lest the 'promiscuous' law encourage South Australian trends in abortion similar to those receiving publicity in England. Abortion must be curbed. In recognition of God as the giver of life, new legislation was required in order to 'safeguard the right to life of the unborn child and the right to life of the mother'. This was a Christian view and should be made known to the parliament which was due to debate the MacRae bill in the following week. A resolution calling for a radical restriction of legal abortion was sent to the DCC which, in turn, was expected to pass the opinion on to Members of parliament; the DCC Minutes simply state that Opposition and Government Whips were 'advised ... as requested'.⁷¹

For the DCC the repeal of the liberal law was 'neither desirable nor necessary'. Smith believed that the Church's view, dating from 1969, resulted from a 'scrupulous regard for conscience and a compassionate understanding of human problems'. Smith evinced little concern for those 'theologically conservative' Methodists - probably only a minority in their Church regarding abortion on its own - who felt beleaguered by the swift retreat of the boundaries of sexual morals in the local community and who had yet to move toward a situationist

69 Smith to Ray Watson (Sydney), 24 March 1972.

70 Yorke Peninsula Journal, 27 July 1972.

71 Adelaide South Journal, 24 July 1972; DCC Mins., 18 August 1972.

ethic.⁷² They were a minority who did not believe that the Church was upholding the Law in which they lived and believed that their God called them to live by. The question - to whom were the resolutions of the Church on social issues directed - had not been satisfactorily answered regarding a number of issues in recent years. The DCC retained the upper hand in determining the content of Church policies on sex, morals and family relationships. The DCC listened carefully to the 'world'. It did not support Methodists assailed by modernity and ambiguity.

In doing so the DCC placed itself in a deepening predicament. Within the DCC Smith clearly determined that public service was his first duty. He was unimpressed by the growing number of abortions; prevention of unwanted pregnancy took on greater urgency. A 'most disturbing aspect' of the campaign for repeal in July 1972 was the 'total failure' of those opposed to abortion to understand that prevention was better than cure. Thus Smith urged much greater provision of 'competent and compassionate counselling' for women contemplating abortion. A major cause of anxiety on Smith's part was the clear inference of ignorance or persistent refusal by many women to use contraceptives. Since 82 per cent of women who had abortions at the two public hospitals from which the data were taken had not been using contraceptives when they conceived, Dr. Aileen Connon, a Senior Lecturer in Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the University of Adelaide, concluded that

the concept of the individual's responsibility in planned parenthood was not evident in the majority of those seeking termination of pregnancy.⁷³

Although 50 per cent of requests for abortion were being refused, the statistic was only superficially comforting to those who favoured liberalisation but found abortion an obnoxious practice. As Connon pointed out, many of those refused then needed considerable assistance to see them through a pregnancy with which few could cope easily. Psychiatric and social assistance, as the Methodists recommended in concert with others, was not readily available.

72 Smith to Watson, 24 March 1972.

73 Aileen F. Connon, 'Medical abortion in South Australia: the first twelve months under the new legislation', Medical Journal of Australia, 1971, 2 (12), p.613.

The numbers of abortions continued to mount. And yet on many questions relating to the practice of abortion none but the most basic and blunt data were available.

In the middle of 1972 Smith was perplexed by his inability to answer his own questions regarding the 104.7 legal abortions for every 1,000 babies born. He questioned the standards of decision-making: were decisions 'made responsibly'; was there sufficient counselling; was wealth a determining factor in whether a pregnancy was aborted; what were the medical and psychological sequelae of abortion in South Australia? Smith sheeted the blame for this ignorance onto the State Parliament which had not given to the Mallen Committee 'the necessary research facilities to give adequate answers'. Smith greatly sympathised with the State branch of the AMA (Australian Medical Association) which denounced the apparent indifference of Parliament in the question of abortion once it was liberalised.⁷⁴ The doctors, he snapped, were 'left holding the foetus'.

The DCC believed that the Mallen Committee should be enlarged to include more than just the medical profession. Smith hoped to discuss some suggested improvements with the Chief Secretary. Since there is no further mention of such a meeting it may not have occurred.⁷⁵

In August 1972 following the defeat of the MacRae bill the legal issue was believed settled for many years to come. The second Methodist committee on abortion which was recently appointed by Smith was now free to concentrate on preparing materials for personal decision-making.⁷⁶

Minutes of only a few of the meetings of the abortion committee are available. They reflect a detailed understanding of the complex predicaments associated with the termination of pregnancy. (Dr. Connon figured among the guest speakers.) The Committee was not racked by the deeply emotional and divisive disputes which were common at meetings of the earlier Commission. The committee agreed with Smith that abortion

74 Keith Smith, 'Call for clear thinking on abortion', Central Times, 26 April 1972.

75 DCC Mins., 19 June 1969, 18 June 1971 and 16 July 1972; Central Times, 2 May 1971.

76 DCC Mins., 21 July, 18 August and 15 September 1972.

was not the best that society could do and spoke of 'an agonising struggle between conflicting rights'. The committee was essentially concerned about the consequences of sexual relations of unmarried women and girls. (Nothing was said about the married women whose abortions totalled one-third of all abortions.) The committee pinned its hopes for reducing the frequency of unwanted pregnancies on education. Many other institutional facilities were also recommended.

Conference accepted the Committee's report which was subsequently printed in the Central Times, the successor to the South Australian Methodist. An ideal of reconciliation between man and God, and man and his neighbour underlay both this report and, to a lesser extent, the statement on 'Freedom and Responsibility in Sexual Relationships'. The Church could not enforce ideal forms of conduct in 'our more relaxed society', nor perhaps at any time. Nor could it inspire government to take an interest in the minutiae of abortion.

Within the Church more was contemplated. In March 1972, Smith outlined a proposal to the DCC for a meeting of representatives from organisations in the three 'cooperating denominations' - Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational - to investigate the possibility of establishing an Abortion Counselling Service. It took in people from Life-life, the Babies Home, Youth Line and several circuit ministers. Youth Line was a recent addition to Methodist services and reported receiving 30 calls about abortion in its first week of operation. Smith was evidently seeking to demonstrate that all the words were not merely that: words. The editor of South Australian Clinics, Dr. E.M. Symonds, reported in August 1971, there was 'no doubt that the change in legislation [had] brought to light a large amount of social and psycho-pathology'.⁷⁷ Smith looked to a service, as described by the Methodists' second inquiry into abortion, for those contemplating an abortion, for those who had been refused an abortion and those women with psychiatric problems who needed support no matter what decision was made about their pregnancy. Limited resources defeated the scheme. Being aware of the general shortage of trained counsellors, linking with Family Planning Clinics was contemplated. Otherwise, the idea lapsed.⁷⁸

77 South Australian Clinics, 5(2), August 1971.

78 DCC Mins., 17 March and 21 April 1972.

Like much else in the 1960s and 1970s there was an ambiguity about the DCC's approach to abortion and public policy. The points stressed by the DCC - the need for counselling and educational services and sophisticated research - were generally incontestable in a liberal democratic society. What is contestable is whether the DCC possessed the political will to achieve its desired objectives. The evidence suggests that the DCC pursued minimal political activity even when it concluded that the problems associated with abortion practice in South Australia after January 1970 were probably capable of solution by government alone.

Two observations are pertinent here. As the Reverend E.H. Woollacott learned regarding alcohol and gambling laws, Methodists were difficult to stir to anger and even more difficult to stir to action. In the early 1970s the DCC did not attempt to involve its own people in the search for reform. Nor does the evidence imply that the DCC sought any ecumenical action for reform of the 'defects in the present system'. In the light of the Church's weakened demographic character and declining numbers co-operation with other bodies ^{may} have borne fruit. Thus political impotence is the first point.

The second is found in the DCC's justification for its existence. The DCC believed that it should demonstrate the relevance of the Gospel 'to every aspect of human life and every institution of society'. Three responsibilities attached to this task: first, information should be provided for members; second, on the basis of the Christian understanding of life, the DCC should seek changes in community attitudes on moral issues; thirdly, the DCC should present to government 'Christian insights on current issues for implementation through legislation and administrative measures'.⁷⁹ The DCC provided Church members with recommendations for reform. There is no evidence that the DCC went any further; administrative measures were among the recommendations but government was not confronted by them.

Conceivably, the DCC was imprisoned in a frustrating impasse, not that it may have wished to have taken the risks associated with escape. To have attempted escape by co-operating with other Churches in a major assault on the causes of abortion may have failed.

79 DCC Report to Conference in Daily Record (SA), 19 October 1971.

Would public opinion have been hostile to a campaign by the Church, alone or in concert with others, for the services prescribed by the DCC among others, to curb the rate of abortion? Public opinion seemed to reflect - probably unconsciously - the overall view of the Church. And yet how could public opinion be defined when the questions asked by pollsters were so ambiguous and even vacuous - no opinion regarding the numbers of abortions was sought in these years. The questions changed with each poll. When, in February 1969, 67.8 per cent of the sample poll agreed to permit abortion for a woman 'mentally ill' no definition of mental health or otherwise was given. Similarly, the result obtained in August-September 1973 when 69.8 per cent would allow abortion when a woman's 'health' was threatened, is unclear: what degree of threat was implied? In 1974 the issues were greatly reduced. The DCC would have approved for in a statement on family relationships distributed in June 1971 the DCC looked forward to the day when 'abortion is removed from the criminal code and is dealt with as a matter of medical ethics'. The Gallup question in November 1974 was simply: 'Should an abortion for a woman who has had medical and social counselling be legal or illegal'? Seven out of ten respondents agreed that it should be legal. The question did not seek to imply 'abortion on demand'. Legislation such as South Australia's did permit that result and the AMA perceived that the public believed that abortion was indeed 'on demand'; patients reckoned that doctors' questioning was an obstructive tactic.⁸⁰ As John Finnis, Fellow and Praelector in Jurisprudence, University College, Oxford, observed, short of obliging physicians to carry out an abortion on the demand of a woman, 'legislatures cannot themselves define the limits of their scheme ... with complete adequacy and security'. In the absence of clearly articulated justifications for abortion there existed, in fact, no restriction; legislation could not enforce moderation owing to the widely differing perspectives on abortion brought to each case by each doctor, perspectives which ranged from conscientious objection to acceptance of the right of the woman to choose.

In the absence of its own initiatives the DCC accepted simple public solutions to unwanted pregnancies. The DCC was left as part of the Church, a position which it refused to accept: although the second

80 Smith, 'Call for clear thinking'.

Methodist committee of inquiry into abortion reported to the DCC that it intended to prepare a statement 'to guide people who have to make a decision for or against abortion [using] Christian principles ... in the consideration of various aspects of the problem' no such statement appeared.

Was the DCC distinguishable from humanist bodies? When the Methodist Church was not affirmed as an identifiably religious body in the modern world humanists concluded that 'Christianity commands so little following that nobody need be converted from a Christian view'. Situation ethics was one means by which Churchmen believed they might enter the popular culture and secular daily life. The DCC took this risk. In this guise, the humanists responded, some Churchmen were indistinguishable from secular humanists.

To conclude: the DCC did not provide guidance for personal decision-making. Nor did it embark on an aggressive political campaign for reform. Did ambiguity serve to disguise confusion? The DCC recognised a major social problem. It determined to serve the potential and actual (adult) victims of unwanted pregnancy as best it could. The DCC saw no need to distinguish the Church - the religious communion - from the world. Few Methodists complained when the sanctity of life which Gustafson and other Protestant moral theologians emphasised was not a part of the DCC's first principles.

CONCLUSION

On 22 June 1977 the UCA (Uniting Church in Australia) was inaugurated. It comprised the whole of the Methodist Church of Australasia, about two-thirds of the Presbyterian Church of Australia and most of the Churches which belonged to the Congregational Union of Australia. The problems of social conscience which beset the Methodists in South Australia and New South Wales during the 1950s and the 1960s, the subject of this thesis, have continued to upstage the religious life of the Uniting Church. On several occasions in recent years the UCA's social conscience has been the subject of public scrutiny, most controversially following a Bulletin article by Tim Duncan. Duncan argued that while the 'old Left in the unions [had] become more conservative a new breed of middle-class, university-educated radicals [had] seized power in a number of fairly dormant, but widely respected institutions', in particular, the Uniting Church.¹ In high dudgeon officers of the national Assembly and the Moderator of the Victorian Synod of the UCA lodged a complaint against Duncan's article with the Australian Press Council.² While it agreed that Duncan's case was overstated, the Press Council concluded that his argument was sustained.³

The situation regarding the UCA obtained because of the events, coincidences and circumstances described and explained in the preceding chapters. The period generally was one of decline for the Methodist Church and loss of support for the Nonconformist conscience. With the development of social and political questions beyond the capacity of the Nonconformist conscience to resolve, the Methodist Church found itself in the 1960s improvising a social conscience on the basis of contemporary liberal, secular concerns 'rather than the Gospel'.⁴ The

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- 1 Tim Duncan, 'Uniting Church under threat from the Left', Bulletin, 25 January 1983, pp.20-23.
 - 2 Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of South Australia, Supplementary Reports, Business Papers, Decisions of the Synod and Directory (Adelaide, 1984), vol. 2, pp. 30-31.
 - 3 The Australian Press Council, Annual Report, no. 8, 30 June 1984, pp. 34-35.
 - 4 Hunt in an editorial review of Hans Mol, Christianity in Chains (Sydney, 1969) in SAM, 29 August 1969.

result was, as foreseen, 'the eclipse of the distinctively religious elements in the Church's life'.⁵

Whereas the 'left'⁶ liberal view on social questions has been enhanced within the inner circles of the UCA the theology of John Wesley has been downgraded.⁷ This diminution in Australia of a major source of modern Protestantism contrasts with the international 'reawakening of non-Methodist (as well as Methodist) interest in Wesley as a theologian',⁸ which is well-demonstrated by the ambitious Anglo-American project to publish a complete critical edition of the entire Wesley corpus in more than 30 volumes.⁹ Similarly, Charles Wesley is coming to be regarded as 'one of the finest lyric poets of his age'.¹⁰

These contrasting elements in the life of the Uniting Church have been recognised by many in the Church, including the inaugural President of the UCA, the Reverend Dr. J.D. McCaughey. In his retiring address at the second national Assembly of the UCA in 1979 McCaughey let it be known that in his estimation the Church did 'not know how to be a Protestant Church in a pluralist society' and questioned the ability of the Councils of the Church to make judgments on social or political questions. Turning his listeners' attention to the eschatological hope upon which the Church was founded, he reminded the Church that its central task was 'simply serving Christ's people gathered around Word and Sacrament'.¹¹

5 Ibid.

6 Australian Press Council, Annual Report, p.35.

7 Interview: Hunt.

8 Interview: Walker; John Deschner, 'Albert Outler: a biographical memoir' in John Deschner, Leroy T. Howe and Klaus Penzel (eds.), Our Common History as Christians. Essays in Honour of Albert C. Outler (New York, 1975), pp. xviii-xx; see Frederick Dreyer, 'Faith and experience in the thought of John wesley', American Historical Review, 88 (1), 1983, pp. 12-30.

9 Published by the Oxford University Press.

10 Rachel Trickett reviewing the Oxford project's collection of Wesley's hymns in the Times Literary Supplement, no. 4,264, 21 December 1984, p. 1467.

11 Minutes and Proceedings of the Second Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia (Sydney, 1979), pp. 46-47.

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