

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN  
“THE RELIGIOUS” AND “THE SECULAR”:  
THE CASE OF AUSTRALIAN CATHOLICS**

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# **STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP AND SOURCES**

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**No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.**

**All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics / Safety Committees (where required).**

**A portion of Chapter 6 of this thesis develops some of the analysis reported in Daw, J. (2004), Catholic church engagement in Australian society: A symbiotic relationship between “the religious” and “the secular”? *Australian Religion Studies Review*, 17 (2), 32-56.**

**Joan Daw**

# ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to examine the relationship between the religious and the secular as it pertains to Australian Catholics. The main line of enquiry takes the form of investigating the proposition that sociological approaches to religion that are based on the assumption of secular-religious dualism cannot adequately account for the way practising Australian Catholics live and hold their faith.

The central theoretical concern of the thesis relates to the sociological construction of the religious and the secular as derived from a “this world-other world” dichotomy. The classical sociological argument that rationalism underpins the binary distinction between “this world” and the “other world” is challenged in terms of its applicability to Catholicism. Any assumption that a religious sensibility precludes rationality is also challenged.

The thesis adopts the perspective of symbolic rationality which is regarded as inclusive of instrumental rationality. From this perspective, there is exploration of the extent to which the Catholic incarnational symbol system can accommodate both this-worldly and other-worldly tendencies. More specifically, there is examination of the proposition that a sacramental sensibility can be associated with the co-existence of apparent opposites – faith / reason, grace / nature, transcendence / immanence.

The thesis propositions are tested by analysis of data from the 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey and the 2001 National Church Life Survey. The findings indicate that, for Australian Catholics, orthodoxy of belief is compatible with a sense of paradox and contextuality. Australian Catholics are found to have a tendency to engage humanity in both its “grace” and its “sin”. There is no evidence to support any hypothesis of mutual exclusiveness between Catholic religious commitment and openness to the wider “secular” society. Indeed, it is found that Catholic openness to the “secular” appears to be associated with openness to the “Other” – a central element of the “Catholic ethic”. Catholicism is presented as an organic religion that has the capacity to engage the multiplicities of the socio-cultural environment. Moreover, it is argued

that the organic nature of Catholic engagement in secular society can be inclusive of engagement at the structural level of society.

Overall, it is argued that many practising Australian Catholics have the ability to hold apparent opposites together and that the classical sociological construction of the religious and the secular in terms of dichotomy does not fit the reality of their lived faith. The thesis concludes that, in the case of Australian Catholics, there is an overarching organic relationship between the religious and the secular that can be inclusive of instrumental relationships on the institutional level.

## **STATEMENT OF APPRECIATION**

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# **INTRODUCTION**

This thesis addresses the topic “The relationship between the religious and the secular: the case of Australian Catholics”. The topic is challenging in the sense that it links the wide-sweeping theoretical issue of the religious-secular relationship with the study of a specific group of people. At the outset, the challenge of the thesis topic needs to be seen in the context of some of the other challenges that have been encountered in the research and these are now discussed by way of introduction to the thesis.

## **CHALLENGES OF THE THESIS**

The research for the thesis has been funded through an Australian Post-graduate Award (with Industry) – the industry sponsor being the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. One of the sponsor’s main requirements of the research project has been the utilization of the 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey and the 2001 National Church Life Survey (Catholic component) – both surveys of Australian Catholic Church attenders. Initially it was thought that other survey data based on samples representative of the general Australian population would also be available for the research. However, in the event, less of this data was available than had been expected. This has had an impact on the research topic: the relative lack of data drawn from the wider population – including data from Australians who have ceased identification as Catholics or those who identify as Catholics but are no longer “practising” – meant that it was not possible to address fully the sponsor’s original preference for research relating to the issue of “secularisation”. Nevertheless, it has been considered that some understanding of “the relationship between the religious and the secular” can be gained from analysis of the church attender data available.

Another challenge is associated with the use of secondary data analysis. The church attender surveys are mainly omnibus-type surveys designed to gather information for pastoral planning purposes. They are not designed to address the specific questions posed in this thesis. However, both the 1996 and 2001 survey projects are comprised of a number of surveys which means that an extensive range of variables is available

across the surveys. From the many topics covered in the surveys it is possible to find ones that are relevant to the research for this thesis – although, the survey questions do not always fit neatly with the thesis questions. For example, sometimes an item of interest to the thesis enquiry can only be accessed indirectly as a response category to a survey question on an entirely different topic. In such cases, the data findings may be somewhat oblique to the line of enquiry. This affects the formulation of specific hypotheses. In general, the approach taken in relation to this type of difficulty is to pose the research questions on one level and then to break them down into subsets of questions that can be adjusted to match the level of the data. The particular ways in which the research questions are addressed are articulated in each of the chapters containing data analysis (i.e. Chapters 3 to 6).

The process of moulding the research questions through stages in order to match the level of the data is also made necessary by the great gulf between the data level and the very general nature of the theoretical dimension of the thesis topic. The notion of “the relationship between the religious and the secular” requires a considerable degree of theoretical interpretation and refinement. As a consequence, an extended theoretical discussion precedes the empirical component of the research. This applies both to the thesis as a whole and to the chapters containing data analysis. Specifically, the first two chapters of the thesis are devoted respectively to the theoretical perspective used and the theoretical issues being addressed; in the remaining chapters, the data analysis is couched deeply within the theoretical context of each chapter.

Yet another challenge is posed by the contentious nature of the sociological construction of the religious-secular relationship. Tracing the roots of this construction leads to consideration of the relationship between religion and social theory. This, in turn, leads to the questioning of some of the accepted paradigms of the sociology of religion. From here, the challenge is to establish a theoretical environment that can support what is regarded as the most appropriate approach to the religious-secular construction and at the same time provide an adequate explanatory framework for the empirical findings. The overall process draws upon the work of many social theorists but particular acknowledgement goes to John Milbank (1990; 1999; 2000).

Last, but not least, of the challenges of this thesis is the decision to approach the research from the perspective of “symbolic rationality”. As will be discussed in Chapter 1, this goes beyond instrumental rationality in the sense that it allows for the co-existence of apparent opposites and, for the purposes of this thesis, an organic<sup>1</sup> relationship between the religious and the secular. While the perspective of symbolic rationality may not fully accord with social science orthodoxy, it will be argued that this perspective is in the spirit of the “sociological imagination” and warrants expression. The adoption of this perspective is inspired by the work of Andrew Greeley (1969; 1973; 1981; 2000) and other theorists of the “religious imagination” such as William Lynch (1960; 1974) and David Tracy (1981; 1989).

## **ADDRESSING THE THESIS QUESTION**

Exploration of the thesis question will lead to the development of the overall hypothesis that, in the case of practising Australian Catholics, the relationship between the religious and the secular is organic rather than dichotomous.

In the exposition of the thesis perspective in Chapter 1 there is an attempt to examine the source of the construction of religion in terms of dichotomy. A more organic approach to religion is identified and this sets the scene for consideration of the possibility of an organic religious-secular relationship.

A main theme in the approach to the religious-secular construction is in terms of the relationship between religion and rationality. This theme will be explored not only in terms of the extent to which religion and rationality may / may not be compatible but more deeply in terms of the extent to which the received rationality of social theory may tend to construct religion in binary form giving rise to dualisms such as “this world-other world”, society-religion, secular-religious etc. In Chapter 2 the work of Max Weber is referred to as an example of a sociology of religion that lends itself to this type of examination. Towards the end of Chapter 2, various theoretical issues identified in Weber’s theory are articulated in terms of how they will be addressed in subsequent chapters in relation to the Catholic attender data.

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<sup>1</sup> The intended meaning of the term “organic” is discussed in Chapter 1.

Chapter 3 addresses the implication of the “this world-other world” dichotomy seen to be underlying approaches to the religious-secular construction in some of the seminal sociological studies that emerged in the 1960s. There will be an attempt to examine the extent to which the sociological legacy of locating religious belief in terms of a “this world-other world” dichotomy is helpful or not in explaining the way practising Australian Catholics approach religious belief. There is also consideration of the type of rationality associated with the Catholic approach to religious belief, the nature of Catholic orthodoxy, and the relationship between orthodoxy and social ethics.

In Chapter 4 there is exploration of the compatibility of a “symbolic” approach to rationality and the concept of “religious imagination”. The relevance of the religious imagination thesis to the case of Australian Catholics is examined in terms of its implications for a Catholic understanding of “this world-other world” relationship. The capacity of a Catholic analogical imagination to offer a more organic alternative to dualistic thinking is considered. This leads to an examination of the extent to which such “imagination” may be associated with Catholic openness towards and engagement in “the world”.

In Chapter 5 the focus moves from “this world-other world” dualism to religion-society dualism. While the nature of the overall thesis topic tends to obviate the necessity of addressing the religious change component of the “secularisation” thesis, to the extent that religion-society differentiation is incorporated into some theories of religious change, such theories, including a form of secularisation theory, are examined in this chapter. Specifically, there is examination of the relevance of privatisation theory and rational choice church-sect theory for explanation of ongoing religious engagement in society by Australian Catholics. This includes examination of assumptions about the nature and roles of the structural dimensions of religion and society. In line with this, the chapter questions the applicability of religion-society dualism to an understanding of the attitudes and practices of Australian Catholics and for an understanding of the position of the Catholic Church in Australian society. There is examination of the extent to which a religious imperative towards concern for the “Other” involves openness towards and engagement in society by Catholics on the individual, communal, and institutional levels. As the chapter develops, there is

exploration of the appropriateness of an organic communal model of religion to an understanding of Australian Catholicism. In this chapter the data analysis is complemented by a brief historical overview of Australian Catholicism as a means of providing some sense of macro-level context and long-term trends in the relationship between Australian Catholicism and society.

In Chapter 6 the focus moves directly to the relationship between the religious and the secular. The theme of the religious mission to secular society is explored and Catholic Church provision of social welfare services is proposed as a site of interface between the religious and the secular. There is examination of the extent to which the Catholic social mission can be seen to exemplify an organic relationship between the Catholic community and secular society. There is also examination of the extent to which Church-State relations concerning welfare funding can be encompassed within an overarching organic relationship between the religious and the secular. In this chapter the data analysis is complemented by consideration of studies of Catholic welfare service delivery.

## **THE EMPIRICAL COMPONENT OF THE RESEARCH**

As indicated previously, the empirical research for this thesis is mainly based on analysis of data from 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey (CCLS) and the 2001 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) (Catholic component).

### ***THE CCLS AND NCLS***

The 1996 CCLS was co-ordinated by the Pastoral Projects Office of the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. Catholics attending Mass on a particular weekend in 1996 completed CCLS questionnaires. The sample comprised 281 parishes (out of a total of about 1412 Australian Catholic parishes) and over 100,000 questionnaires were received.

In 2001 a similar project was undertaken as part of the NCLS which is a joint project of ANGLICARE (NSW), the Uniting Church Board of Mission (NSW) and the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. (The 2001 NCLS is also part of the 2001 International Congregational Life Survey). A random sample of 261 Catholic

parishes, stratified by diocese, was drawn. Of these parishes, 256 participated in the survey and nearly 80,000 questionnaires were received.

The data has been weighted to take account of diocesan stratification and thereby provide a better reflection of the distribution of Catholic Church attenders across Australia. While nearly all respondents to the 1996 CCLS and 2001 NCLS (Catholic component) identified as Catholic, approximately 2% of respondents did not. To ensure that the data used in this thesis is as representative of Catholics as possible, only respondents identifying as Catholic have been selected.

In both 1996 and 2001 a mixed set of questionnaires was used. More details about these surveys can be found in Appendix 1.

### ***OTHER DATA SOURCES USED***

In addition to the 1996 CCLS and the 2001 NCLS, limited amounts of data from other surveys have been used in this research. These surveys include the 1993-1994 National Social Science Survey project, the 1996 World Values Survey (Australian component), and the 1998 Australian Community Survey. Details of these surveys can be found in Appendix 2.

### ***METHOD***

In general, a basic form of data analysis is employed in this research. In each of Chapters 3 to 6 there is a separate section dedicated to data analysis where the particular data sources being used and the methodologies related to specific hypotheses are stated in detail.

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL COMPONENTS OF THE RESEARCH**

Because of the initial gap between the theoretical and empirical levels of the research, the existing theoretical studies that are selected for review may not, in the first instance, match neatly with the empirical studies reviewed. In chapters that begin with a lengthy theoretical discussion (e.g. Chapter 4), empirical studies are discussed

separately and are related to the theoretical issues as the chapter progresses. In some other chapters, it is possible to relate existing theoretical and empirical studies to each other in a more immediate way.

In each of Chapters 3 to 6 there is an effort to interpret the data findings in terms of the theoretical framework presented in the particular chapter. To some extent, each chapter is self-sufficient in this regard however, overall, it is hoped that the accumulation of evidence and refinement of interpretation as the thesis progresses through the chapters contributes towards support for the argument that, in the case of Australian Catholics, there can be an organic relationship between the religious and the secular.

# **Chapter 1**

## **THESIS PERSPECTIVE**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This thesis adopts an organic perspective in its examination of the relationship between the religious and the secular as it pertains to Australian Catholics. The perspective is organic in the sense that it attempts to go beyond binary distinctions between the religious and the secular and to explore ways in which the religious and the secular may also be connected to constitute a larger whole. The thesis perspective rests on the assumption that connectivity and distinctiveness are complementary. The thesis perspective is also organic in the sense that the organic whole is regarded as larger than and inclusive of binary distinction; as such, the organic level is deemed the appropriate entry level of the thesis.

This thesis claims its home in the discipline of sociology – specifically, the sociology of religion. However, the organic nature of its perspective maintains an openness to the insights and findings of other academic disciplines. According to C. Wright Mills (1959), the sociological perspective involves the use of the “sociological imagination” – the ability to move beyond one’s immediate perspective and to view phenomena from different vantage points. Wright Mills emphasizes the need for sociology to be open to other disciplines such as history and anthropology. Similarly, this thesis adopts the perspective that the sociological enterprise, as part of the larger academic enterprise, can be enriched by interdisciplinary connections. Moreover, in keeping with the organic approach, insights from disciplines such as science, philosophy and theology are not excluded from consideration. The indebtedness of sociology to the disciplines from which it emerged is acknowledged.

The perspective taken in this thesis aspires to the vision that Bellah proposed for the sociology of religion – that is, an approach that will be

based on the rejection of all univocal understandings of reality, of all identifications of one conception of reality with reality itself. It will recognize the multiplicity of the human spirit...It will recognize the human proclivity to fall comfortably into some single literal interpretation of the world and therefore the necessity to be continuously open to rebirth (Bellah 1970: 246).

The central theoretical concern of this thesis relates to the sociological construction of the secular and the religious. As will be seen, this construction tends to derive from a “this world – other world” dichotomy presented in many sociological analyses of religion. A pertinent question concerns how an intellectual construction of a religious tradition sits with the reality of how the tradition is believed and lived. This also touches on the question of the extent to which the intellectual constructions of Western religious thought may have influenced sociological analyses. While a comprehensive historical response to such questions is outside the scope of this research, some consideration of how the “this world – other world” dichotomy found its way into sociological thought would seem to be relevant.

According to some sociological analyses, the differentiating effects of rationalisation led to the development of a “this world – other world” dichotomy in Western religion. Yet we must ask whether this sociological construction simply describes what appears to have been an historical development in Western religion or whether it might also reflect the type of rationality employed by the sociologist formulating the description. This discussion of the perspective being used in this thesis begins with consideration of interdisciplinary accounts of the type of rationality employed in the construction of the Western religious tradition and leads to discussion of studies that focus on the nature of rationality per se.

While some sociological analyses trace the differentiating effects of rationalisation to the early Judaic tradition, there have been claims that this type of differentiation was, in fact, mainly due to the grafting of classical Greek modes of thinking onto the Judeo-Christian tradition which occurred in a later era. Given the frequently-mentioned claim that the Greek mode of thought postulated a “this world – other world” dichotomy, some examination of such claims would seem to be in order. This involves consideration of commentaries on perceived differences between Judaic and Greek thought, arguments that the two modes of thought were incompatible, and arguments suggesting that compatibility was possible.

## GREEK CONCEPTIONS AND JUDAIC CONCEPTIONS

There are many commentaries on the distinctions between classical Greek modes of thought and the type of thinking characteristic of the Judaic tradition. A central distinction is seen to relate to the dualistic nature of Greek thought as opposed to the more organic nature of Judaic thought. A useful example of such commentary is provided by Tresmontant (1953 / 1960) whose work is referred to below.

Tresmontant (1953 / 1960: 205) points to the significance in Greek thought of the use of Plato's dichotomy between form and matter – where the sensible (i.e. the world of the senses) is regarded as just a shadow of the intelligible world. According to Tresmontant, “In Platonism, the sensible participates in the Idea by a degradation...In the Biblical universe, the sensible participates in the intelligible by creation...” (1953 / 1960: 211). He argues that in Greek philosophy *the real* is regarded as some sort of degradation rather than as a positive creation: “To think of the genesis of the real as a creation, as an eminently positive operation, is an originality of the Biblical tradition” (Tresmontant 1953 / 1960: 206). He observes that on this fundamental point “Hebraic thought goes exactly in the inverse direction to Greek thought” (1953 / 1960: 206).

Moreover,

The Platonic symbol for representing and signifying a metaphysical or theological reality ...is disincarnated. The sensible, the concrete, is not suitable to carry the message... On the contrary, the Hebrew uses daily things, communal reality, history, to signify and teach the mysteries which are the proper nourishment of the spirit... The advantage of the Hebrew method of teaching metaphysics and theology by... the parable of concrete fact is its capacity for universality (Tresmontant 1953 / 1960: 211).

Tresmontant emphasizes the importance of the particular in the Judaic approach to the universal: “God...called a particular man who is named Abraham, at one particular time and in one limited place” (1953 / 1960: 212). In contrast, he believes that “From the Greek point of view, there is too much of the particular in the books of Israel” (1953 / 1960: 212). He refers to the Judaic choice of the particular to manifest the universal as “the method of the Incarnation” which he sees as contradicting the dualism inherent in Greek thought that postulates “irreducible separation between that

which is of the order of essences, the intelligible, and that which is of the order of fact ...” (1953 / 1960: 212).

Tresmontant also sees the Greek and Judaic traditions to diverge significantly in terms of the relationship between the one and the many. In Greek thought, “The many is degradation, the scattering of the One” – hence Greek philosophers related “the multiplicity of living beings” of creation to the negative (1953 / 1960: 206).

Accordingly, the “sensible and multiple world” is associated with evil (1953 / 1960: 206). However, in the Biblical tradition, “at each stage of the genesis the Creator sees that it is ‘very good’” (Tresmontant 1953 / 1960: 206).

Another distinction between the Greek and Judaic traditions relates to their respective approaches to time. Tresmontant argues that there is a “dialectic between time and eternity” in the Biblical account whereby “Time is a concept which signifies that all has not been given at once” (1953 / 1960: 207-8); he argues that Greek conceptions lacked this idea of movement in the universe and hence “The Greek universe is a finished, arrested cosmos” (1953 / 1960: 207-8; 210). The Hebrew universe is always a becoming.

Tresmontant’s references to the themes of ideal-real, particular-universal, good-evil, history-eternity etc. provide a helpful introduction to some of the topics that will emerge in this discussion. Many of the distinctions between the Greek and Judaic traditions as outlined in Tresmontant’s account, find resonance in the work of other commentators who explicate them in various ways.

For example, Cox (1966) argues that while the Greek perspective focused on ontology, the Hebrew interest was more focused on action. Similarly, Bellah (1970: 216) indicates that the finite universe of Greek thought was more conducive to an objectified “belief that” rather than to the Biblical “belief in”. Indeed, Bellah (1970: 220) contends that the ‘objectivist fallacy’ (i.e. the equation of religion with religious belief) is found only in religions influenced by Greek thought.

James Carroll (2002: 75) observes that biblical hope is based on wholeness rather than dichotomy. Lakeland makes the related point that “The covenantal promises to

Abraham are fulfilled in the earthly reality of the promised land. The Hebrew prophets excoriate pious words if they are not validated by a historical commitment to justice” (2002: 155).

Cullman’s commentary on “the Greek metaphysical distinction between this world and the timeless Beyond” explores the implications for the concepts of time and salvation; he argues that it is the Greek approach to time rather than the Biblical approach that leads to conceptions of revelation and redemption as taking place “only in the direction of timeless mysticism...”(1951 / 1960: 203-4).

Metz stresses the originality of the Jewish “conception of thought as remembering, as historical remembrance...” and the importance of “memory and retelling” in the lived tradition (1989: 85). This is associated with the Judaic tradition’s notion of “journey” and the sense of salvation as a continuing process. Such a tradition stresses the need for prophecy along the journey (cf Camilleri 2002). The notion of journey involves contextualisation and interpretation of the Biblical message with an appreciation of symbol and narrative (Metz 1989). Such symbolic interpretation requires the continuing role of imagination (Levi-Strauss in Greeley 1981: 11).

The foregoing gives a brief indication of some of the commentary on ways in which the classical Greek mode of thinking may be seen to differ from the Judaic mode in terms of distinction between “this world” and the “other world”. It also points to some of the ramifications of the two respective modes of thinking for various aspects of religion.

## **EARLY CHRISTIAN TRADITION**

We now turn to the early Christian tradition and consider some of the commentary on the extent to which the writings of the New Testament relate to this-worldly and / or other-worldly orientations and how this appears to have impacted on the lived tradition of the early Christians.

The symbol of the Incarnation is central. As Boccock observes,

“Incarnational theology leads to a positive evaluation of the material and social worlds...God became man; In Christ, God and Humanity are unified” (1973: 35). This co-existence of the human and divine would seem to override distinction between this-world and the other world.

For Tresmontant, the incarnation also represents the overcoming of the particular-universal distinction:

The incarnation is the choice of the particular, of the real with all its historical and geographic contingencies, a particular woman, a particular epoch...God Himself becomes someone particular for us, concrete, an individual with his name, country, his face, his history. The choice of the particular to manifest universal truth (Tresmontant 1953/1960: 212).

In a similar sense, Milbank argues that the incarnation communicates an idiom or “*logos*” whereby “...the Good and the True are those things of which we ‘have a persuasion’” rather than being “self-evident to objective reason”; this implies “commitment to a rhetorical, and not dialectical path to the Good” (1990: 398). He points out that particular experiences always enter into our general conceptions (Milbank 1990: 63). He sees the incarnation as giving the followers of Christ a standard by which to live the realities of their lives – with the *logos* being implicit in Christian practice (Milbank 1990: 383). As such, he stresses the importance of the social aspects of the early Christian Church (Milbank 1990: 399).

Related to the theme of the incarnation is the Christian symbol of “the Kingdom of God”.

Bocock argues that the “Kingdom” has been understood in different ways in different times. “Basically the doctrine has been understood to be either one referring to another world in a spiritual, superempirical realm...or to a new society here on earth...The early Christians most probably saw it in the latter way and expected the Second Coming of Jesus in their lifetime to establish the new Kingdom...” (1973: 36).

Lakeland points out that

Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom is faithful to the historical covenant faith. The kingdom is ‘at hand’, and repentance for sin is the order of the day. The first major

adjustment that the early Christian community has to make involves recognizing that it misunderstood Jesus' message as other-worldly. The world was not coming to an end, and community building, not apocalypse, was to be the order of the day (2002: 155).

Indeed, Milbank argues that "the early Christians seem to have thought in terms of a 'continuing' atonement" (1990: 397). He sees the kingdom as being interpreted in terms of "mutual forgiveness" and finding expression in "bearing the burdens of others" – in other words, "an atoning way of life" (Milbank 1990: 397).

From a more pragmatic perspective, Troeltsch makes the observation that "...whereas the Gospel had left all questions of possible realisation to the miraculous coming of the Kingdom of God, a Church which had to work in a world which was not going to pass away had to organise and arrange matters for itself, and in so doing it was forced into a position of compromise" (1911/1996: 66). He relates "this-worldly" and "other worldly" tendencies to what he refers to as "church" and "sect" types which he sees as often impinging upon each other: "... both types are a logical result of the Gospel, and only conjointly do they exhaust the whole range of its sociological influence..." (1911/1996: 66). Troeltsch sees the New Testament as helping to develop both tendencies (1911/1996: 68).

Other writers point to the cultural imbeddedness of the New Testament writings arguing that they allow for a type of multiplicity that tends to transcend either/or distinctions.

The following observation is made by Tracy:

Does not early Christianity show how many situationally embedded confessions...were necessary to maintain the common confession... in so many different cultural situations? The situations of the communities of Mark, Matthew, Luke, John, Paul, James, the pastoral epistles, the Book of Revelation are sufficiently distinct to demand often very different renderings of the common narrative...in different...cultural and historical situations of the first century of Christianity (Tracy 1989: 29).

Schineller views the same phenomena in terms of unity through complementarity:

The four gospels, each in its own way, portraying, pointing creatively to the same Jesus Christ. No one of them would be sufficient, and even together they only begin to glimpse the fullness of Christ. The canon of scripture, rather than fostering uniformity, functions to recognise the validity of and mark the limits of acceptable diversity. It points to unity through complementarity (Schineller 1989: 102).

## **INCORPORATION OF GREEK CONCEPTS INTO THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION**

The incorporation of Greek concepts into the Judeo-Christian tradition in the centuries after Christ (especially around the fourth century) raises the question of how the Greek structuring of thought fitted with the original Biblical elements of the Old Testament and, in particular, the incarnational dimension of Christianity.

Some commentators regard this as leading to a decisive change in early Christianity. For example, according to James Carroll:

The theological formulations that jelled between the Council of Nicaea (325) and the Council of Constantinople (381) had reflected an accommodation with Greek thought, and so had the work of the great Augustine (354-430). In this period, the metaphors that early Christians used to describe their experience of and faith in Jesus of Nazareth were reinvented in the categories of Hellenistic metaphysics. Obviously, the movement from religious expression, which began essentially as poetry and which prizes ambiguity and allusiveness, to religious philosophy, which values precision, above implication, represents a decisive shift (2002: 73).

From another perspective, Metz also sees profound change occurring at this time: “...very early in the history of Christianity something like an attack of schizophrenia occurred...Under the influence of the categories of classical Greek idealist metaphysics remembrance has been split off from theological reasoning” (1989:85).

Yet another example is found in Lakeland: “...the Jewish vision of God’s relationship to the world is much healthier than the dualistic obsessions that Christianity later grafted onto the worldview of Jesus and the early church” (2002: 173).

These are just a few selections from a large body of similar accounts. Yet, increasingly, some theologians are arguing that Augustinian Neo-Platonism was far more wholistic than such accounts suggest.

According to Milbank, Ward & Pickstock (1999: 2), the Augustinian Neoplatonic vision of knowledge actually transcended many of the dualisms that have been associated with it. They use the term “Radical Orthodoxy” to describe their presentation of this vision. One of main arguments in Milbank et al (1999) appears to

be that much of Christian theology from the time of Augustine up to and including the time of Aquinas was able to manage binary thinking without being incorporated by it.

From this perspective, the intellectual and the sensory are not regarded as mutually exclusive (Milbank et al 1999: 16). There is acceptance that “the visible affords some clue to the invisible” and that “all real knowledge involves some revelation of the infinite in the finite” (Milbank et al 1999: 4). Dualisms such as spiritualism and materialism are considered false alternatives (Milbank et al 1999: 4). Faith and reason are not seen to be essentially distinct (Milbank 2000: 35).

According to Milbank (1990: 389-390), Augustine did not regard peace as dialectically related to conflict but, instead, asserted the ontological priority of peace over conflict and isolated the codes of antagonism. Milbank (1990: 429) argues that Augustine separated difference from dialectics such that the “first principle” was not arrived at “by dialectics”. In Milbank’s reading of Augustine, there was “infinite emanation of difference within the Godhead” (1990: 428). Milbank sees in this a “creative positing of difference” allowing for differences to be “in continuous harmony” (1990: 416-7). He relates it to a view “...of the elements of creation as inherently interconnected ‘qualities’ which combine and re-combine in all sorts of ways...”– i.e. a view of creation as being “continuously generated in time” rather than as “a finished product in space” (1990: 424).

As Kerr (2000: 52) observes, Milbank et al present medieval Christian theology as offering a vision whereby notions of Being and notions of creation can co-exist. The singular / particular is not seen to need juxtaposition against the universal (cf Hemming 2000b: 79). The vision allows the concept of both emanating from the One and returning to the One (cf Reno 2000: 4). According to Reno’s description of this approach:

What matters is the way in which Neoplatonism treats the world as a differentiated realm of beings and events knit together, not in spite of or against the discrete identities of things, but in harmonious order and toward a common purpose. This view, which Radical Orthodoxy argues is advanced and intensified by classical Christianity (especially by Augustine), operates outside the contrastive logic of identity and difference. ...Radical Orthodoxy offers harmonious identity in difference (Reno 2000: 4).

Moreover, Milbank believes that in so far as the notion of harmonious difference entails “the offering to others of a space of freedom...”, it reflects virtue as charity – representing the “reconciliation of virtue with difference” (1990: 416). In Milbank’s reading “The task of human creative differentiation is to be charitable...” (1990: 424).

One of the most notable aspects of Milbank’s work is the assessment that “the time of error was the decadence of the late Middle Ages” (2000: 44). This is seen as the time when “theological distortions” set in and philosophy began to separate out from theology (Milbank et al 1999: 2). Milbank believes that this is related to the invention of “this world” (1990: 12; 90). He sees this in terms of a shift within theology concerning

the self-understanding of Christianity arrived at in late-medieval nominalism, the protestant reformation and seventeenth-century Augustinianism, which completely privatised, spiritualized and transcendentalized the sacred, and concurrently reimagined nature, human action and society as a sphere of autonomous, sheerly formal power (Milbank 1990: 9).

Moreover, both Protestant biblicism and post-tridentine Catholicism are regarded as the “aberrant results” of this (Milbank et al 1999: 2). It is viewed as the root cause of the emergence of “the modern bastard dualisms of faith and reason, grace and nature” (Milbank et al 1999: 2). The invention of “this world” is also regarded as the basis for the construction of the secular (Milbank 1990: 12; 90). According to Milbank, “Once there was no secular...” (1990: 432) – in other words, the secular had to be constructed.

Some Catholic theologians appear to agree with some aspects of Milbank’s thesis. For example, Rowland (2003) sees a fragmentation of knowledge as occurring around the fourteenth century. In her assessment, it was from this time that faith and reason began to be viewed in terms of opposition or competition. Similarly, James Cardinal Stafford (2003) argues that, up until about this time, knowledge had been seen as relationally rather than dichotomously constituted.

These reflections from the discipline of theology would seem to caution against assumptions of incompatibility between the organic elements of the Judeo-Christian tradition and the binary constructions of Greek thought introduced around the fourth

century. What is of particular interest is the implication that there is a type of wholistic thinking that can exist outside “contrastive logic”.

## **ORGANIC THINKING AND BINARY THINKING**

While much of the foregoing refers to traditions of thought, it is also helpful to consider the implications of research from a range of disciplines that touch on aspects of human thought processes. For example, there are various bases reinforcing the plausibility of the notion that organic thinking and binary thinking can coexist. In addition to the philosophical and theological reflections just considered, the notion also gains support from the widely different areas of neurological studies and studies of the imagination.

### ***NEUROLOGICAL STUDIES***

From their work in the field of brain imaging Newberg, D’Aquili and Rause emphasize that, for survival, humans need to “tirelessly process a torrent of constantly shifting sensory data. They must sort it, process it, weave it into some useful rendition of reality...” (2002: 14). Newberg et al liken this cognitive imperative to myth-making (2002: 60-8) and come to the conclusion that “All knowledge, then, is metaphorical; even our most basic sensory perceptions of the world around us can be thought of as an explanatory story created by the brain” (2002:171).

On the other hand, however, Newberg et al also point to the mind’s tendency “to make fundamental sense of things by reducing the most complicated relationships of space and time to simple pairs of opposites” (2000: 63); they observe that there may be some survival value in either/or thinking (e.g. in fight/flight situations) (2000: 50).

Overall, Newberg et al stress the importance of left brain / right brain interaction in survival. They observe that “the verbal, analytical left brain” needs “the intuitive, holistic right brain” which can analyze how the situation feels and influence the decision-making process of the left brain” (2000: 69). According to Newberg et al, it is only when logic and intuition are united that there can be the state of “left-brain / right-brain agreement” conducive to a sense of truth (2000: 73).

Such neurological studies seem to indicate that humans use both binary thinking and metaphorical thinking as survival mechanisms and the implication is that these two types of thinking are complementary. It would appear that human thinking involves both the organic element of making connections and the binary element of making distinctions.

Clearly, an expert assessment of these studies is beyond the scope of this discussion; such an assessment is neither presumed nor intended here. However, these studies are noted as a matter of interest from an interdisciplinary perspective.

### ***STUDIES OF THE HUMAN “IMAGINATION”***

Some studies of the human imagination resonate with the findings from neurological studies. According to Milner, “the truth was never presented whole to one’s senses at any particular moment, direct sensory evidence was always fragmentary and had to be combined into a whole by the creative imagination” (cited in Lynch 1974: 193).

Lynch (1974) regards the human imagination as all-encompassing. He defines it as “the sum total of all the forces and faculties in man [sic] that are brought to bear upon our concrete world to form proper images of it” (Lynch 1974: 243). He argues that an important task of the imagination “is to create perspectives for the facts it has found”. In this sense, Lynch sees the imagination “as an instrument for the exploration of reality” (1974: 191).

Lynch does not accept the notion that “the rationality of ideas and the power of images have their separate autonomies” (1960: 141). He regards the notion of a separated logic as being associated with the “univocal” mind (1960: 121). He argues that “The basic drive behind the univocal mind is the tendency to reduce everything, every difference and particularity in images, to the unity of a sameness which destroys or eliminates the variety and detail of existence” (Lynch 1960:118). Lynch contrasts this with the “analogical” imagination that “insists on keeping the same and the different, the idea and the detail, tightly interlocked in the one imaginative act” (1960: 136).

Lynch acknowledges the perennial human habit “of structuring the universe and man [sic] in terms of opposites” (1974: 233), however, he insists that we do not live in an either / or world “where we must absolutize either of two contraries” (1974: 229). He stresses the importance of the interweaving of opposites (1974: 237) and of assuming “an organic view” (1974: 229). In this way, reality can be seen as both structured and organic (1974: 230).

In describing the relation of the contraries, Lynch argues that

It is easy to see that in the case of univocal thinking it is a relationship of unqualified externality. But in analogy the relation is one of unqualified interpenetration. To put the matter tersely, the ‘same’ contains its differences and does not have to go outside of itself to find them (1960: 152).

In other words, the analogical imagination is big enough to allow for dialectical processes within it.

Like Lynch, Tracy (1981) also argues for the significance of the analogical imagination. Tracy (1981: 7) believes that it is necessary to use the analogical imagination in understanding cultural systems such as religion. He cites Aristotle’s phrase “to spot the similar in the dissimilar is the mark of poetic genius” as indicative of the power of the analogical imagination (Tracy 1981: 410). He defines analogy in terms of “a language of ordered relationships articulating similarity-in-difference. The order among the relationships is constituted by the distinct but similar relationships of each analogue to some primary focal meaning, some prime analogue” (1981: 408).

However, like Lynch, Tracy insists on the need for the dialectical as well. He emphasizes “the need for negations in the interpretation of each reality ... to assure that the similarities remain similarities-in-difference...” (Tracy 1981: 409). He argues that “without the ever-renewed power of the negative, all analogical concepts eventually collapse into ...false harmony...” (Tracy 1981: 421). By maintaining the dialectical sense within analogy “The unity achieved is never the deadening uniformity beloved by a univocal mind but a unity-in-difference disclosed by similarities-in-difference to an analogical mind” (Tracy 1981: 412).

The relevance of the analogical imagination as an aid to understanding religion and the ability of the analogical imagination to allow the co-existence of apparent opposites rather than absolutizing them into dualisms is evident in the following comment:

...the likenesses discovered in variety, the emerging harmony discovered in order are produced by the presence of those moments of intensity, the necessary negations: similarity-in-difference, the negation of any univocity... the concealment in every disclosure, the absence in every presence, the incomprehensibility in every moment of genuine comprehensibility, the radical mystery empowering all intelligibility (Tracy 1981: 413).

Hence, from the perspective of the analogical imagination it is possible to move beyond the old dualisms of this world-other world, immanence-transcendence, nature-grace, reason-faith, etc. As James Carroll observes, “Instead of a dualistic universe, with nature and grace impossibly alienated, or forced into the mould of one or the other, the analogical imagination posits a world in which every affirmation contains its own [antithesis]” (2002: 98). Similarly, Greeley reflects that Tracy’s presentation of the analogical imagination enables “the propensity to accentuate the immanence of God” and “the tendency to accentuate the transcendence of God” to be complementary rather than mutually exclusive (2001: 5).

Like Lynch, Greeley (1981: 2) allows for an intimate relationship between concrete images and abstract ideas. Greeley believes that images that impact on the senses can be part of the elementary experience of religion – experience that is then reflected upon intellectually in the form of ideas / propositions (1981: 2; 9-10). Here we see yet another way in which the classical sensory-intellectual dichotomy is transcended.

Moreover, Greeley stresses the role of “images, pictures, metaphors, stories, symbols” etc. in the process of making connections which is so much a part of creative thinking (1981: 11). He sees this as an essential aspect of exploring the world and making sense of it (1981: 16). In a later work, incorporating insights from the field of cognitive psychology, he points to the importance of metaphor:

Cognitive psychologists have recently begun to insist that metaphors – statements that one reality is like another reality – are the fundamental tools of human knowledge. We understand better and explain more adequately one reality to ourselves by comparing it to another reality which we already know...Marvin Turner suggests that the parable, a narrative form of the metaphor in which humans project a known story onto a hitherto unknown story so that they can better understand the latter, is a way of

knowing what may actually have preceded language in the evolutionary process of *Homo sapiens* (Greeley 2000: 6).

Greeley argues that creativity is “a matter of seeing new relations” – a type of “bricolage” exercise whereby component parts are connected into a whole and then re-ordered into parts and then reconstructed in an endless variety of arrangements (1981: 11-16). According to Greeley, “The same bricolage phenomenon is at work in both the Jewish and Christian Scriptures” (1981: 11).

In making connections and distinctions, in constructing and deconstructing, this type of bricolage would seem to involve both organic and binary thinking.

## **SYMBOLIC AND INSTRUMENTAL RATIONALITY**

In recent times, reference has been made to “symbolic rationality” as a type of rationality that transcends the binary mode and cause-effect reasoning characteristic of instrumental rationality.

Nozick (1993) argues that rationality comprises more than merely instrumental rationality. He believes that, without imagination, rational procedures are myopic (Nozick 1993:173). He observes that “for and against” reasoning alone does not necessarily lead to “novel and fruitful intellectual products”. Like some of the previously-mentioned authors, he notes that “Imagination plays an important role” in such achievements (1993: 172). For Nozick, it is the imaginative dimension that provides “the first step in human progress” (1993:174).

Focusing on the relationship between rationality and values / goals, Nozick points out that any attempt “to derive goals *de novo*, starting without *any* goals” is doomed to failure if approached only from the position of instrumental rationality (1993: 163). He sees the value element as transcending the instrumental structure of cause-effect rationality (1993: 136; 163). Nozick relates this to “symbolic rationality”, arguing that symbolic meanings rise above “the usual causal nexus” (1993: 139). According to Nozick, “One way we are not simply instrumentally rational is in caring about symbolic meanings, apart from what they cause or produce” (1993: 139). Nozick’s overall assessment is that the notion of rationality must include not only instrumental

rationality, but also other legitimate modes of rationality such as symbolic rationality (1993: 134; 139).

Hegy (2003) also refers to symbolic rationality – emphasising its transcendence of the binary mode of reasoning. Of special significance is Hegy’s perception of the aptness of symbolic rationality for the sociology of religion. For example, he regards Greeley’s emphasis on the role of the imagination in religion – and, indeed, Greeley’s use of the imagination in the sociology of religion – in terms of a paradigm shift away from instrumental rationality towards a more inclusive symbolic rationality (2003: 7).

Hegy argues that instrumental rationality and symbolic rationality can be identified as different levels of rationality. For Hegy, at the level of *instrumental rationality* “there is great emphasis on rationality... Symbols are often de-mythologized... the imagination is seen as fantasy and, as such, has little place in science” (2003: 1-2). Instrumental rationality is seen as having certain implications for religion: i.e. there is a sacred-profane dichotomy; religion and religious symbols are de-mythologized; there is a view that rationalization disenchant the world (Hegy 2003: 1-2).

Hegy (2003: 2) identifies *symbolic rationality* as another level of rationality. He refers to Fowler’s (1981) presentation of symbolic rationality as an attempt to integrate opposites and to Oser’s (1991) characterisation of symbolic rationality in terms of a “deepening appreciation for the unity or ‘partnership’ of opposites” (cited in Hegy 2003: 2). Building on their work, Hegy (2003: 2) points out that symbolic rationality does not view the world through dichotomies between sacred and profane, between enchantment and rationality; instead there is a deepening of the understanding of the partnership between apparent opposites. In this view “imagination is not to be equated with fantasy or make-believe. Rather, imagination is a powerful force underlying all knowledge” (Fowler 1981 cited in Hegy 2003: 2). In regarding instrumental and symbolic forms of rationality as being at different levels (rather than stages), Hegy argues that it is possible to espouse both.

### ***COMPLEMENTARITY THINKING***

Reich (2002) makes similar observations and advances a similar argument to that of Hegy. Reich (2002) points to the inadequacy of a one-dimensional “either / or”

approach to reasoning. According to Reich (2002), an advancement on “either / or” thinking is “complementarity thinking” whereby various relations and context dependencies can be understood from a multiple of perspectives / levels – i.e. we can look at something in one context and then look at it in another context and it can look different. In this way apparently contradictory things can be held in dynamic tension. This type of approach resembles an extension of the “sociological imagination”.

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It would appear, then, that there is a pattern in the various approaches to thought that have been discussed: organic thinking seems to be able to include binary thinking; the analogical imagination includes dialectical thinking; symbolic rationality can include instrumental rationality; Biblical thought may well be able to accommodate the Greek mode of thought, etc. However, there is the question of whether this pattern of inclusiveness is perceived as possible from both sides of the equation. In other words, does the perception of inclusiveness depend on the perspective from which the issue is initially approached? For example, from the perspective of organic thinking it seems relatively easy to include binary thinking; however, from an initial perspective of binary thinking, might not there be a tendency to pose the issue in “either / or” terms as a choice between binary thinking or organic thinking? If so, organic thinking would seem to be the larger / more inclusive of the two. As such, it would need to be regarded at the first order of the approach. The same would apply to the corresponding constructs of analogical imagination, symbolic rationality, and so on.

Hegy (2003: 9) points out that from the perspective of instrumental rationality there may be a tendency to view notions of imagination / symbolic rationality with suspicion. Moreover, to the extent that sociology (including the sociology of religion) tends to operate from the formal position of instrumental rationality (see Hegy 2003), embarking upon sociological research from the perspective of symbolic rationality could seem to be problematic. Yet it is precisely the very nature of the rational position from which sociology generally operates that provokes criticism from theorists such as Milbank (1990). He argues that sociology operates on the assumption of differentiation, “instead of enquiry into the deep level of the continued imagining of this differentiation” (Milbank 1990: 90). As such, he believes that

received sociology has missed the way the secular has been constructed (1990: 9). Milbank criticizes sociology for consequently presuming to encompass religion in what he refers to as a “policing of the sublime” (Milbank 1990: 106).

However, it appears that Milbank’s criticisms are not directed at sociologists such as Greeley who, as has been mentioned, embark on research from a perspective that could be described in terms of symbolic rationality. Indeed, Milbank’s work on the relationship between theology and social theory would seem to complement the body of empirical research produced by Greeley and others.

The combined work and insights of these authors has been a prime source of inspiration for the perspective adopted in this thesis – which attempts to employ empirical analysis in the examination of the relationship between the religious and the secular. The influence of some of the fore-mentioned authors is evident in the attempt of this thesis to explicate empirical findings in terms of the “religious imagination”. Notwithstanding reservations about the use of this approach in sociology, it is hoped that it will be shown to represent an intensive application of the “sociological imagination” rather than an abandonment of it.

In this chapter, imagination has been presented as the crucial element of symbolic rationality. For the purposes of this thesis, imagination can be identified in two distinct ways: (1) as a characteristic of a type of religiosity; and (2) as an approach in the sociology of religion. It would seem that there is a peculiar aptness of (2) for the study of (1). As Hegy has noted, “The function of both the religious and the sociological imagination is to advance our understanding of the ‘big questions’” (2003: 2). It is in this spirit that the imaginative and “organic” perspective of symbolic rationality is adopted in this thesis.

## **CONCLUSION**

The intention of this chapter has been to provide an entry point into the environment of this thesis and a fairly multidisciplinary approach has been used in the process. The next chapter attempts to go more deeply into the particularity of the discipline of sociology through the consideration of one influential sociological narrative – i.e. that

of Max Weber. Weber's narrative is regarded as providing the theoretical context for an examination, in subsequent chapters, of the way certain themes arising from his work are addressed by more contemporary theorists. It is from within the particularity of these thematic chapters that specific research questions are presented and formulated into hypotheses that are empirically testable by analysis of survey data.

## **Chapter 2**

# **THE DUALISTIC IMPLICATIONS OF WEBERIAN THEORY**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The major theoretical concern of this thesis relates to the construction of the religious and the secular as derived from a “this world-other world” dualism. The previous chapter attempted to examine issues surrounding this type of dualism from a multidisciplinary perspective. It was suggested that such dualism was associated with instrumental rationality and that symbolic rationality offered a more organic perspective.

This chapter seeks to identify indications of the “this world-other world” dualism in some of the early sociology of religion. This will involve consideration of how this dualism may have entered sociology. As has already been noted, associated issues concern how an intellectual construction of a religious tradition sits with the reality of the lived tradition and how the intellectual constructions of Western religious thought may have influenced sociological analyses. More specifically, there is consideration of the extent to which one of the most influential sociologies of religion – i.e. that of Max Weber – may have assumed a “this world-other world” dualism in relation to Western religion. The implications of Weber’s sociological legacy for both the characterisation of Catholicism and the construction of the religious and the secular in the modern era will be raised. This acts as a prelude to subsequent chapters where there will be examination of the theoretical analyses of some of the later sociologists who continue, in varying ways, in the Weberian tradition and the extent to which their analyses may assume that Catholicism, as found in the beliefs and practices of ordinary Catholics, can be located and comprehended within a dualistic framework.

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The “this world-other world” dichotomy postulated in some early sociological analyses may possibly be placed in the context of the relationship between theology

and social theory. According to Turner, the concept of God as separated from humanity in the evil world “entered sociology through the secular theology of Hegel and the young Hegelians...” (1981: 143). Turner argues that two centuries of debate in “natural theology” influenced some of the concepts that were developed in the early sociology of religion (1981: 148). He argues that some sociological concepts are “products of the interchange between theology, humanistic philosophy and sociology” and that “while these concepts now have in sociology a neutral and technical meaning, they still carry with them a theological and existential significance” (Turner 1981: 147-8; 143). This assessment is consistent with some of Milbank’s observations about the relationship between theology and social theory that were referred to in the previous chapter.

Turner (1981: 158) believes that Weber was strongly influenced by the theological and philosophical debates of his era – particularly those occurring in Germany; and that these constituted the background to Weber’s sociology of religion.<sup>1</sup> While many of the early sociologists of religion were exposed to the interdisciplinary influences described above, Weber has been singled out for consideration not only because his contribution to sociology is of immense importance but also because his theory can be seen to associate the process of rationalisation with a “this world-other world” dualism – and more specifically, a society-religion dualism – which is of particular relevance to this thesis. In this chapter there will be an exploration of the extent to which Weber’s sociology can be regarded as containing an assumption of such dualism as inherent in Western thought. According to Milbank (1990: 76; 89-90), it was this type of assumption by early sociologists such as Weber that provided the basis for the later construction of the secular-religious dualism.

## **THE DUALISTIC NATURE OF WEBERIAN ANALYSIS**

Weber’s analysis of Western religion places great importance on the process of rationalisation and its differentiating effects. Weber tends to associate this differentiation with dualistic categories such as “this world-other world”. While it could be argued that this type of dualism only represents a tool used in Weber’s

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<sup>1</sup> A detailed account of these particular philosophical and theological influences can be found in Turner (1981).

classification of types of religion, there is a concern that, at a deeper level, dualism informs the classification. This is a central issue to be explored in this discussion.

The characterisations of the Biblical mode of thought and the Greek mode of thought presented in the previous chapter are intended as the background to this discussion. Weber believed that the rationalisation of the Western tradition began in ancient Judaism and much of his theory of Western religious development derives from his socio-historical analysis of Judaism based on Biblical texts. It seems appropriate, therefore, to begin with a consideration of Weber's analysis of the Judaic tradition.

### ***WEBER'S ANALYSIS OF ANCIENT JUDAISM***

Weber believes that certain historical and social factors led to the rise of early Judaism. Specifically, he sees the liberation from Egyptian bondage and the crossing of the Red Sea as being regarded by the Israelites "both as a token of god's power and the absolute dependability of his promises and of Israel's lasting debt of gratitude" (Weber 1952: 118). Weber argues that the ensuing covenant between Israel and its God and its attendant rights and obligations informed the ethical conception of Judaism's teaching (1952: 118-120).

In outlining the process of the rationalisation of ethics, Weber (1952: 109) attaches great importance to the teachings of the charismatic prophets of doom, often isolated from society, who eschewed worldly ways and warned of suffering and misfortune if the commandments were transgressed. He argues that the Judaic theodicy implied "that each and every individual in Israel had to fear the vengeance of god if violation of his commandments were tolerated..." (Weber 1952: 263).

Weber (1952: 178) argues that the Levitical Torah was pushed towards rational method through the technique of answering the questions of life "by yea or nay" – i.e. in binary mode – in contrast to other oracular means more related to observations of the natural world.

According to Weber, the rationality of the tradition – including both ethical prophecy and Torah – was antithetical to "orgiasticism and irrational and emotional forms of magic" (1952: 193). With the rationalisation of ethics and the rationalisation of

method came the “rational development of the world image” (Weber 1952: 225). Associating the stimulation of “artistic or poetic imagination” with orgiasticism, Weber argues that in the absence of the latter, “Mythological imagery became increasingly abstract” (1952: 226). He explains this in terms of the domination of “theological rationalism” over “mythological elaboration” (1952: 226). The concept of God “took on the prophetic and universalistic traits of transcendently sacred omnipotence and inscrutability” (Weber 1922 / 1966: 24).

Moreover, in contrast to the nature deities of surrounding cultures, Judaic rationalization presented God as distanced from nature – “all nature mythologies were subordinated to a sober, rational orientation of divine action” (Weber 1952: 227). As the Torah became increasingly important, divine action (e.g. as interpreted in terms of reward or punishment) was increasingly seen to be related to the individual’s level of obedience towards God rather than being related to mythology (1952: 227).

However, the prophetic emphasis on the individual’s relationship with God was seen to be in tension with the more organizational orientation of the priests of the tradition. According to Weber, there was always opposition between priests and prophets and eventually the “spirit” of the old prophecy vanished “because the priestly police power in the Jewish congregation gained control over ecstatic prophecy” (1952: 380).

### ***COMMENTARY***

Weber’s analysis of ancient Judaism presents a somewhat different view to that found in the commentaries on the Biblical tradition referred to in the previous chapter.

Weber associates Judaic rationality with a type of binary mode of thinking that leads to the repression of more fluid thoughtways. This is in stark contrast to the conception of Jewish thought in terms of story-telling. Weber sees Judaic mythological symbols as progressively becoming disincarnated and being replaced by abstractions. This is very different to the argument that the Judaic tradition embraced “the method of the incarnation”. Rather than viewing imagination and rationality as intimately connected, Weber regards them as mutually exclusive. Weber’s belief that Judaism associated nature with orgiasticism leads to the assumption that Judaism strove to reject both – resulting in a conception of God as distanced from nature. This does not sit easily with a view of creation and the natural world as good. In several ways, then,

Weber's depiction of the Judaic thought tradition seems closer to what was referred to in the previous chapter as the Greek mode of thinking. Moreover, his interpretation of the rationalisation of Judaism as pointing towards the radical transcendence of God hints at an assumption of this world-other world dualism.

There are two aspects to this that need to be noted. Firstly, Weber sees instrumental rationality as replacing a more organic Judaic tradition. Secondly, Weber's own mode of analysis leans towards that of instrumental rationality because he sets up the type of analytical framework that leads him to look for dualistic tendencies in the first place.

It may be prudent to consider the social and intellectual climate within which Weber worked and the way this may have influenced the way he approached the study of religions such as Judaism. Mindful of the reference to Turner's comments at the beginning of the chapter, we might ask whether the attitudes towards rationality prevailing in Weber's own era influenced his characterization of Judaism. For example, according to Rodd (1996: 229), Weber's approach to Israelite religion was "over-intellectualised". Rodd argues that in the Israelite religion "the advance towards rationality was less prominent" than Weber asserted (1996: 229). Criticisms of Weber "for exaggerating the rationality of pure Yahwism" have also been noted by Turner (1981: 162).

Sociologists who are also involved in Biblical scholarship warn against the pitfalls involved in sociological interpretation of Biblical religion. As Gottwald points out, "...the Israelite traditions must not only be interpreted within their original matrices, but must be interpreted from *out of* the social matrix of the interpreter" (italics added) (1996: 222). Indeed, Rodd (1996: 233-4) identifies Weber's construction of sociological theory on the basis of religious scriptural tradition as problematic:

One of Weber's main aims was to trace the interaction between society and ideas. For this reason his analysis of Israelite society is highly important. Difficulties arise, however, when we ask upon what basis Weber erects his reconstructions and theories. The Old Testament consists solely of religious texts, even though a number of them are also historical narratives and many contain allusions to society. Not merely is it a selection from a much larger literature which once existed, but at no point does it specifically describe the social institutions of Israel...It is by no means clear that what Weber attempted is possible on the basis of the data available (Rodd 1996: 234).

Such reservations about Weber's analysis of Judaism are reinforced by Milbank's critique:

Weber sees ancient Judaism, along with Rome, as the true source of peculiarly western 'rationality' because of its monotheistic and ethical stress. However, the dualisms of Weber's religious categorizations ... really derive from a crudified version of the liberal protestant 'higher-critical' reading of the Old Testament, which is now seen to be a serious distortion. Following a common misreading of Wellhausen, Weber considers that 'the prophetic element' in Judaic religion was alone responsible for a rigorous monotheism, and for a stress on 'ethics' rather than on magic. In fact the Deuteronomic reforms which codified ritual observance, and insisted on its connection with ethical behaviour, were made by a priestly party. There was no total cleavage between priestly and prophetic functions, nor was Israelite religious experience ignorant of mystical 'unity with God', as Weber claims. Within the body of the Torah no qualitative distinction seems to have been made between 'ethical' norms, and ritual observances which have a certain 'magical' character to them. Hence Weber was simply wrong to discover in ancient Judaism the germs of a 'protestant' religion ... (1990: 94).

It would seem that an intellectualisation of a religious tradition that cannot take into account the realities of the lived tradition does not provide sound basis for sociological theory. However, these recent criticisms do not alter the fact that Weber's ideas about Judaism permeate his theory about Western religion in general. In so far as the latter has impacted greatly on the sociology of religion, some consideration of Weber's approach to the Judeo-Christian tradition is in order.

### ***WEBER'S ANALYSIS OF THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION***

Weber's analysis of Western religion is so complex and extensive that a comprehensive account of it is beyond the scope of this thesis. The intention here is only to identify certain aspects of Weber's analysis that appear to have some relevance to "this world-other world" dualism.

Weber's focus on rationality permeates his analysis of the Judeo-Christian tradition. His interest in the role of human consciousness and the meanings that individuals use in their lives is reflected in his theory of social action. Weber (1915/1967) believed that meanings direct human action.<sup>2</sup> While he acknowledged that emotion is primary and that thought is its secondary expression – indicating the primacy of the

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<sup>2</sup> This is qualified by Weber's belief that position in the hierarchies of class, status and power can influence what is meaningful.

psychological over the rational – he was particularly interested in the way the rational could influence experience (1915/1967: 286).

Weber (1915/1967: 286) believed that the type of conception of God that people held could influence their experiences. He argued that a conception of God as personal and active (e.g. wrathful, forgiving, demanding, punishing, loving, etc.) has dominated Middle-Eastern religions and the Western religions derived from them; he argued that this conception had influenced the way believers act (1915/1967: 285). For Weber, it was from their world view that people derived the meanings which influenced their actions (1915/1967: 286). Belief in a divinity who punishes and rewards had implications for the type of rationale that developed to explain the phenomena of suffering, evil, death etc.– i.e. the theodicy – and Weber argued that a theodicy of redemption had developed in the Judeo-Christian tradition (1915/1967: 280-1).

Weber regarded the quest for a meaningful cosmos as “the core of genuine religious rationalism” (1915/1967: 281). He considered that with increasingly rational views of the world there was an increased need for explanations of the meaning of suffering and misfortune (1915/1967: 275). He believed that this often included a rational theodicy where suffering could be related to divine punishment (1915/1967: 274). According to Weber, the cause of misfortune was usually attributed to sin. The exercise of mortification that, in primitive times, had served as a means of magical coercion of spirits, had been transformed into the more rational notion of repentance for sin (1915/1967: 274). This had led to an association of the divine will with human deprivation rather than with enjoyment of the world (1915/1967: 275). Moreover, when suffering could not be explained adequately in terms of individual sin (e.g. when sinners appeared not to suffer in this world), suffering could be explained in another way, e.g. in terms of the wickedness of the world per se (Weber 1915/1967: 275).

However, Weber believed that in the face of continuing rationalisation, the theodicy of redemption became increasingly untenable. He argued that, by the early twentieth century, many people who disbelieved in Christianity did so because it did not offer an adequate explanation of suffering and injustice (1915/1967: 275-6).

Weber (1915/1967: 282) argued that in the Western tradition the rationalisation process had split the original magical image of the world into rational cognition and the mastery of nature on the one hand, and mystical experience on the other – in other words, world mastery or world flight. Religion had been shifted into the realm of the irrational and, the more the world became “denuded of irrationality”, the more the religious quest for supernatural values was forced to retreat to the shrinking loci of the irrational – mystical experiences etc. (Weber 1915/1967: 281). “The inexpressible contents of such experiences remain the only possible ‘beyond’, added to the mechanism of a world robbed of gods...the individual can pursue his quest for salvation only as an individual” (Weber 1915/1967: 282).

Weber considered that rationalisation influenced the prophet and the priest in different ways:

Prophets systematized religion with a view to simplifying the relationship of man to the world, by reference to an ultimate and integrated value position. On the other hand, priests systematized the content of prophecy or of the sacred traditions by supplying them with a casuistical, rationalistic framework of analysis... (Weber 1922/1996: 45).

For Weber (1922/1996: 36-37), the development of a priesthood paralleled the transition of a sect gathered around a prophet to a “churchly congregation” where the permanence of the teaching is secured. In the emergence of the church form, charisma is separated from the person and linked to the institution (1922/1969:318). The church becomes “the bearer and trustee of an office charisma, not a community of personally charismatic individuals, like the sect”; whereas the sect is voluntary, the church becomes compulsory (Weber 1922/1969: 318). With increasing bureaucratization of church administration there was a decline in the position of charismatic prophets (Weber 1922/1969: 319). Eventually, the priestly doctrine became “a scripturally established tradition which the priesthood interprets by means of dogmas” (Weber 1922/1996: 44). Weber believed that institutional church-type tendencies could not co-exist with charismatic sect-type tendencies (1922/1969: 319).

Weber believed that “The full development of both a metaphysical rationalisation and a religious ethic requires an independent and professionally trained priesthood” (1922 /1966: 30). However, he argued that the priestly tradition had assumed the role of mediation between the human and the divine (1922/1966: 28-30). He believed that

this ultimately weakened the link between the human and the divine because “personal charisma” became routinized into the “office charisma” that he described as “the most uncompromising foe of all genuinely personal charisma” (Weber 1922/1969: 318-9).

For Weber, the rationalized view of God as transcendent and omnipotent meant that God was “not subject to magical influence” (1922/1966: 25). However, in Christianity a “magical qualification” remained in the concept of the priest – a crucial feature of the priesthood being specialization in the “cultic enterprise” (Weber 1922/1966: 28-30). Referring to the magical origins of divine worship through prayer and sacrifice, Weber observes that “... the Catholic priest continues to practice something of this magical power in executing the miracle of the mass...” (1922/1966: 25).

Weber believed that in rationalized religions the “orgy” had been sublimated into “sacrament” (1915/1967: 278). In hierocratic religions such as Catholicism priests were seen to play a role in the bestowal of “sacramental” grace otherwise viewed as inaccessible by individuals (1915/1967: 282). In this way, the Catholic quest for salvation was “regulated ritually” and “controlled hierocratically” (1915/1967: 282). According to Weber, the retention of sacrament forestalled the complete disenchantment of the world; but the view of sacrament as a means of grace also devalued action in the world (1915/1967: 290). Similarly, religious virtuosos such as Catholic monks, in their striving for other-worldly values, were seen to lack connection with the everyday world (1915/1967: 277, 289).

Weber contrasts this with ascetic Protestantism’s view of the world as being, despite its wickedness, the proving ground where everyday behaviour was testament to the individual’s state of grace (1915/1967: 290). Weber believed that ascetic Protestantism’s way of including such a this-worldly element in its worldview and ethos represented a unique stage in the development of the Judeo-Christian tradition (1915/1967: 290).

### ***COMMENTARY***

Weber’s analysis presents many dualistic elements: rationalism / enchantment, theodicy / mysticism, sin / grace, priest / prophet, church / sect, institution /

individual, world mastery / world flight, this world / other world. The ultimate positioning of the human condition is within the framework of these dualisms which Weber sees as being revealed by the inexorable process of rationalisation.

Weber associates this rationalisation and differentiation with the evolution of religion and society. To the extent that rationalisation disenchant the world of irrational magic and narrows the relationship between the individual and God to belief in redemption, “this world” is devalued and becomes associated with sin *vis a vis* the transcendent God. The growing gulf between “this world” and the “other world” (and also between society – governed by secular norms, values, and institutions – and religion) is seen as a sign of both religious and societal development.

However, the ultimate implication of this is a dichotomy between rationalism and religion, for, as the world becomes rationalised, there is little room left for the religious quest. According to Weber, if the theodicy becomes untenable under the influence of continuing rationalisation, the individual-God relationship becomes vulnerable and contingent – leaving mysticism and privatised religion as the only alternative for the individual. In rationalised religious organisations the individual-God relationship is disrupted by church bureaucracy which is in tension with individual charisma. Even in religions like Catholicism that retain a sacramental dimension, the individual-God relationship is vulnerable because it is mediated by and therefore totally dependent upon priestly control of the sacraments.

Weber’s view of the prospects for the human condition in the modern era is not optimistic. From his perspective, the human spirit does, indeed, appear to be trapped within an “iron cage”! However, we might ask whether, in some ways, Weber assumed an approach to the study of Western religion that may have predisposed him to focus on certain aspects of the Biblical message, while overlooking others.

Weber appears to be operating out of an understanding of the Judeo-Christian tradition that tends to focus more on the need to explain evil than on any need to explain goodness as well. The natural world seems to be associated more with magic and orgy than with divine creation. A view of humanity as “fallen” tends to dominate any view of humanity as created in God’s image. More attention is paid to sin than to

love.<sup>3</sup> A stress on the individual's relationship with God tends to overshadow any view of human communal relationships as a dimension of relationship with God. Individual salvation in the afterlife seems to preclude any sense of ongoing social salvation in the here and now.

Reservations about some aspects of Weber's account of Judaism give rise to reservations about his analysis of Christianity. For example, if we ask whether Judaic attitudes towards religious law (Torah) were as strongly related to purely transcendental belief as Weber suggests, we could pose a similar question about the Christian understanding of redemption solely in terms of the afterlife / radical transcendence.

According to Turner (1981: 143), the type of theological influences that Weber was exposed to were ultimately derived from Calvinist conceptions. He argues that the eighteenth-century theodicies that Weber studied "were predominantly the product of Protestant thinkers working with puritanical views of man, sin and God. There was little social dimension to their conception of theodicy..." (1981: 154). Turner even goes so far as to imply that Weber was a type of closet Puritan and that this affected the formulation of his concept of theodicy (1981: 165-6).

In Turner's assessment, "The problem of theodicy is central to Weber's sociology of religion since the contradiction between an ethical God and the presence of evil lies behind the development of distinctive salvational pathways of world-flight and world-mastery" (1981:148). Turner argues that Weber's approach to the concept of theodicy is problematic:

My argument is that Weber's admiration for the isolated prophet of doom preaching against the evil of the present is part of Weber's personal theodicy as distinct from his sociology of theodicy...The problem of theodicy is not, therefore, merely a technical problem in Weber's sociology of religion, but a major component of his metasociological and personal outlook on society, which is dominated by the demon of godless rationality (Turner 1981:165-6).

Such comments raise questions about the extent to which the theodicy of redemption actually does shape the faith of Christians and their attitudes towards the world. This also touches on the question of the extent to which religious belief per se can be seen

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<sup>3</sup> Although Weber did reflect on the "impossible" ideals of the Sermon on the Mount.

as the driving force of religious commitment. Given that the situation relating to the rationalisation of religious belief may differ between Catholicism and other forms of Christianity, these are pertinent questions that will be examined in the course of this thesis.

In arguing that Weber's approach "is infused by a puritan pessimism", Turner (1981: 142) points to the contrast with the more optimistic approach emanating from Catholic thinking. It is possible that Weber's concept of theodicy does not translate well into Catholicism. As Turner observes, "For Weber, theodicy may be a fundamental part of man's response to evil, but theodicy is also a dimension of the politics of exclusion and social closure" (1981: 170). We might take this to imply a particular type of relationship between religious belief and ethics; however, it may not necessarily be applicable to Catholicism. This is one of the central issues to be explored in this thesis.

To some extent the church-sect dynamic envisioned by Weber has particular implications for the relationship between religious belief and ethics. As we have seen, in Weber's typology, the sect, unlike the church, is a voluntary association. In order to retain its character and effectiveness, the sect seeks to avoid compromise and "is simply not concerned with outsiders" (Weber 1922/1969: 320-321). Yet, if this entails social exclusiveness, it signifies a certain type of ethic. Weber argued that ascetic Protestant sects embraced the ethic of activity in the workaday world; but this did not necessarily accompany an attitude of acceptance of all humanity – "saved" and "unsaved" alike. If we were to understand "the world" to include all humanity, we might expect a fully world-affirming ethic to be inclusive rather than exclusive.

When viewed in terms of a church-sect framework, we see a certain degree of complexity surrounding the relationship between the religious belief system and its accompanying ethic – particularly concerning the nature of the ethic. For example, Rose suggests the possibility that the church-sect dynamic could be associated with a "paradoxical inversion of grace and law" (1992: 173). According to Rose, "In the established 'Church', institutionalised law permits the spontaneity of grace; in the voluntary sect, eschatology of grace demands the legalism of life" (1992: 180). For

Rose, the ultimate predicament is one of a “diremption” of law and love (1992: 238).<sup>4</sup> This predicament will be examined in detail in this thesis – as the relationship between belief orthodoxy and social ethics is regarded as having important bearing on “this world” / “other world” orientations. The thesis will also consider the extent to which a church-sect typology offers an appropriate framework for the location of Australian Catholicism.

Another element of Weber’s theory that might be questioned in relation to Catholicism concerns the level of engagement in the material world by religious “virtuosos”. Weber’s argument that the “other-worldly” orientation of monks disengaged them from activity in the material world is suggestive of a spirit-matter dualism. It may underestimate the extent to which Catholicism can be both “this-worldly” and “other-worldly”. For example, Stark (2004) has taken issue with the way Weberian theory has tended to overlook some of the “this-worldly” elements of religions such as Catholicism. According to Stark, Weber was mistaken in his belief that the definition of “work and plain living” as virtuous was a Protestant “invention”. He points to its place in Catholic tradition and notes that

...medieval Christian monastics lived by their own labour, sustaining highly productive estates. This not only prevented ‘ascetic zeal from becoming petrified in world flight’ ...but sustained a healthy concern with economic affairs (Stark 2004: 467).

Perhaps the most important aspect of Weber’s analysis that needs to be examined in relation to Catholicism is the approach to sacramentality implied by the type of rationality that he employed. There are many similarities here between the instrumental rationality referred to in the previous chapter and the approach taken by Weber. For example, in Weber’s analysis, the rationalisation of religion was seen not only to devalue the natural world and humanity *vis a vis* the transcendent but also to devalue imagery and mythology *vis a vis* rationalized abstractions; the senses were likewise devalued *vis a vis* the intellect.

Similarly, according to Weber, religious ritual and symbolism were devalued by rationalisation as remnants of an original magic and orgiasticism. In this process,

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<sup>4</sup> Rose (1992: 236) uses the term “diremption” in the sense of calling forth paradox rather than resolution.

Catholicism, with its sacramental ritual and symbolism, was relegated to being viewed as a type of vestigial religion from an earlier historical era. In regarding the sacramentality associated with Catholicism as mainly attached to the priestly role, Weber seemed to express a rather narrow view of sacrament. He did not appear to make a sustained attempt to understand how a sacramental orientation may have affected / reflected the Catholic individual and the Catholic community.

For Weber, rationalisation and sacralisation were mutually exclusive. The strong incarnational element and sacramental system of Catholicism were viewed as means of maintaining “enchantment” and thus delaying the impetus of rationalisation – already progressing ineluctably through the Christian priestly bureaucracy – towards reality. Yet, there does not appear to have been much consideration of the effects that a sensibility towards the symbolic may have had for individual adherents. In excluding the possibility of the co-existence of rationality and sacramental sensibility, there was little reason to explore the question of whether a sacramental sensibility could be a way of actually engaging reality. There appears to have been little consideration of the extent to which a sacramental sensibility could integrate “other-worldly” and “this-worldly” views or provide a link between the ideal and the real. In other words, the overall concern is that insufficient attention has been given to the extent to which “this worldly” and “other worldly” tendencies may co-exist among practising Catholics on the basis of their actual belief and practice as opposed to their assumed belief.

Weber’s tendency to relegate imagination to an earlier era of religious history and to discount the role of imagination in human thought left little cause to explore the *connections* between the concrete and the abstract, between the image and the idea. It is possible that Weber underestimated the roles of narrative symbol / metaphor in meaning – e.g. in providing context for meaning, connecting the meaning system to worldly reality, allowing for different planes of meaning etc.

In seeming to pay scant attention to the Christian incarnational symbol system, Weber may have overlooked the central symbol of Christ as both human and divine – the symbol of both “this world” and the “other world”. We might speculate about the effects on Weber’s theory if he had been open to a more organic, incarnational

perspective: If humanity had been understood within a more incarnational perspective, would human society still have been viewed as predominantly sinful and antithetical to “the religious”? If human relationships had been more central in Weber’s analysis, would he have seen a more intimate connection between grace and attitudes of love towards the “Other”? If Weber had been able to locate love of the “Other” as a dimension of love of God, would he have viewed the individual-God relationship as being so precarious? If Weber had been more open to an incarnational understanding of redemption, might he have been more amenable to the notion of salvation as ongoing in both this life and the next? This is the type of speculation that could seem important for any attempt to locate Catholicism in a dualistic framework.

We might also speculate about Weber’s method. If Weber had ventured into ethnographic research in addition to work on official texts, would he have been less inclined to categorize religious and social phenomena as dichotomous?

## **THE SEPARATION OF RELIGION FROM SOCIETY**

As we have seen, the “this-worldly” orientation that Weber believed was characteristic of ascetic Protestantism did not necessarily include openness to humanity in general. Weber’s view of the separateness of religion from human society is significant.<sup>5</sup> It points to the relevance of the way humanity / human relationships are viewed – for example, whether humanity is seen as sinful, graced, or possibly associated in some way with both sin and grace. To the extent that a religion-society separation can be seen as a precursor to the construction of the religious and the secular, attitudes towards humanity will be treated as an important factor to be considered in this thesis investigation.

Milbank argues that just as Weber misread ancient Judaism as “desacralizing” nature and human society, he also misread Christianity “as by-passing the social to concentrate on the immediate relation between God and the individual” (1990: 129). In Milbank’s (1990: 76, 87) assessment, Weber’s theory was based on the assumption of the “religious” and the “social” as separate realms. This assumption of an *a priori*

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<sup>5</sup> It is noted that not all early sociologists who employed a dualist framework arrived at a religion-society dualism. For example, Durkheim (1915 / 1976) closely identified religion with society.

separation of religion from society presented “the differentiation of spheres as always imminent within the historical process” (1990: 90). Hence, differentiation was regarded by Weber as revealing the “evolution” of religion into its rightful specific sphere (1990: 89-90, 129).

Milbank is highly critical of Weber’s religion-society dualism on the grounds that it stems from Weber’s projection of contingent changes in Christian thought “back into the beginnings of Christianity and even the Old Testament” (1990: 93). Milbank argues that it resembles a “metanarrative” that presents the emergence of Protestantism as the reference point for emplotting the rest of Western history (1990: 76). In Milbank’s words, “The history of the west is turned into the always-coming-to-be of liberal Protestantism or its secular aftermath...” (1990: 93).

According to Milbank (1990: 87-89), the problem with Weber’s whole sociology is that he separates religion from society in the sense that religion is seen as essentially “extra-social” – religious organisation / community being viewed as a secondary phenomenon. Moreover, Milbank relates this problem to the type of rationality employed by Weber and other German sociologists who accepted “the confinement of the rational to a logically determinate process (subordinating, for example, the cognitive claims of aesthetic reason)” (1990: 77). This is germane to Milbank’s broader criticism of sociology as operating on “the surface level of our differentiated history, instead of conducting an enquiry into the deep level of the continued *imagining* of this differentiation” (1990: 90) (*italics added*).

The construction of religion as antithetical to society by Weber and others can be seen as a fore-runner to the construction of the religious-secular dichotomy. Hence, it is of crucial significance to this thesis investigation.

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The discussion of Weber’s work in this chapter has relied heavily on the critiques of social theorists such as Turner and Milbank. Increasingly, other sociologists are expressing similar views. For example, much of the foregoing could be encapsulated in Beckford’s assessment that Weber’s approach to the relationship between religion

and rationality was influenced by the “philosophically disputatious and ideologically charged settings” of his time and that the resulting “...notions of the religious and the secular were social constructions that did not represent a fixed reality lurking behind the concepts” (2003: 41-2).

While this section of the chapter has drawn attention to critiques of Weber’s theory, the intention has been more to note the concerns rather than to engage in the critique. It has been considered important to at least register, at the outset of this thesis, the possibility that Weber’s analysis of the relationship between religion and rationality could indicate a projection of his own approach to rationality upon the Western religious tradition rather than a valid construction of historical reality and of the beliefs, practices and orientations of Christian believers.

The discussion of Weber’s work has been presented as an introduction to theoretical issues that can ultimately be related to the sociological construction of the religious and the secular. It remains the case that some problematic aspects of the Weberian legacy continue to be influential in the contemporary sociology of religion and continue to affect the construction of the religious and the secular. In an attempt to enquire into the “continued imagining” of this construction, this thesis will examine the way some of the themes discussed in relation to Weber’s work have been addressed by later sociologists – with particular reference to some of the seminal works that emerged in the sociology of religion from the 1960s onwards. These include the work of Peter Berger, Rodney Stark, Robert Bellah, David Martin, Clifford Geertz and others. Aspects of their work relevant to this thesis are referred to in detail in later chapters of this thesis.

## **THEORETICAL ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED**

The following is a summary of the theoretical issues to be addressed in this thesis and is intended to provide an overview of the approach to be taken. This summary does not explicate the issues as they are presented comprehensively in the chapters that follow. Similarly, the specific research questions to be tested through analysis of survey data are stated in detail in each chapter.

The central theoretical concern of the thesis relates to the sociological construction of the religious and the secular in terms of dichotomy. The relationship between religion and rationality – between faith and reason – is presented as one of the main themes underpinning this dichotomy and it is implicit in many of the other themes mentioned below.

In Chapter 3 of this thesis the location of religious belief in the relationship between “this world” and the “other world” will be examined. Weberian-style theories about the differentiating effects of belief in redemption will be tested through survey data analysis. A key area of interest will be the extent to which Australian Catholics’ belief in redemption reflects an orientation that is “otherworldly”, “this-worldly”, or both. This will involve consideration of Catholics’ beliefs about human sin, the forgiveness of sin, and the possibility of salvation in both “this world” and the next. There will also be examination of the nature of the religious beliefs held by Australian Catholics, the extent to which they are held, and their compatibility with rationality.

Sociological theories that present religious belief as the central element of religious faith and suggest that religious commitment can be narrowed down to belief alone will be examined in terms of their relevance to the way Australian Catholics live their faith.

The relationship between religious belief and other aspects of religious commitment will be examined – focusing on the relationship between religious belief and ethics. Particular attention will be paid to the extent to which Catholic “orthodox” belief may / may not be compatible with an ethic that is open to the wider secular society.

In Chapter 4 theories that attempt to go beyond an intellectualist view of religion by defining religion more culturally in terms of a symbol system will be explored. This will involve consideration of the way religious symbolism may be integral to the relationship between a religious worldview and its ethos. The role of narrative symbol / metaphor in allowing for different planes of meaning, in providing context for meaning, and in connecting the meaning system to worldly reality will be explored in terms of the “religious imagination”. In relation to the Catholic symbol system, this will also involve consideration of the role of cultural tradition and contextualisation.

The focus will be on the Christian incarnational symbol system in terms of its implications for openness to paradox – e.g. the belief in Christ as both fully human and fully divine. There will be an attempt to locate the attitudes of Australian Catholics towards grace / nature and good / evil within this symbol system.

Particular attention will be paid to ways in which the sacramental nature of the Catholic symbol system may be associated with the dimension of human community. Theories that postulate a connection between a sacramental orientation that allows for a “graced” humanity and attitudes of openness towards human society will be considered. There will be an attempt to investigate ways in which a view of humanity as both “flawed and loved” may be associated with an openness towards secular society. The proposition that a sacramental orientation precludes engagement in “this world” will be challenged.

In Chapter 5 theories that postulate opposition between church-type tendencies and sect-type tendencies will be examined in terms of their applicability to Australian Catholicism. The proposition that the level of religious orthodoxy can be related to in-group / out-group orientations will be examined. The attempt to locate Catholicism within a church-sect dynamic based upon the degree of tension between religious organisations and their socio-cultural environments will also be questioned. Similarly, the “rational choice” theory that a single organisation cannot be both worldly and otherworldly will be challenged.

Theories that propose the “evolution” of religion through the process of differentiation between the religious and the secular and differentiation between the individual and society will be examined in terms of the extent to which they may assume a conflation of social structural change with individual human development. This will also include examination of the extent to which such theories may by-pass the relevance of communal worship by suggesting that the “externals” of the Catholic religious symbol system tend to preclude an “internal” relationship with God. This provides the context for examining the relationship between private devotion, participation in communal worship, and attitudes towards the broader society among Australian Catholics. The underlying issues touch on the extent to which human

relationships can be seen by Catholics as a dimension of relationship with God and the extent to which a religious orientation may be both private and public.

In the examination of the way various theories have located the individual-God relationship in terms of society, attention will be paid to the proposition that an individual's religious meaning system is threatened by the pluralism of human society resulting in the privatisation of religion. The levels of religious "orthodoxy" and the levels of openness to other religions among Australian Catholics will be viewed in relation to this proposition. This proposition also touches on the issue of religious socialisation and a distinction will be drawn here between the structural level perspective and the human experience perspective in an attempt to avoid conflation of the two. The extent to which *both* perspectives may be required for an understanding of certain phenomena will be explored.

While most of the themes presented in this thesis are viewed in terms of the findings of analysis of survey data, in the later stages of the thesis (Chapters 5 and 6) reference is made to structural level phenomena relating to Catholic institutions and the relationship between Church and State. Here, the complexities of the way in which individual level phenomena such as attitudes of openness towards the "Other" can be matched by Catholic organisations in the provision of services such as social welfare to the wider secular society will be explored. The situation of Catholicism in Australian society and the relationship between the Catholic Church and the State will be considered in terms of theories that propose that the relationship between Church and State is affected by factors such as the "organic" nature of a particular religion. This will provide the context for an assessment of the extent to which Australian Catholicism can be viewed as an organic religion in its capacity to engage the socio-cultural environment.

In the final part of the thesis, evidence from both structural level phenomena and individual level findings will be combined in an attempt to make an overall assessment of the relationship between the religious and the secular.

## **CONCLUSION**

This chapter began with accounts of Weber's analyses of Judaism and Christianity – with a focus on the underlying dualism of these analyses. Some of the criticisms of Weber's work were noted as a precaution to the examination of theoretical issues that ultimately appear to be related to the construction of the religious and the secular. There was identification of the theoretical themes to be considered in the following chapters and some indications of how they will be related to the data analysis.

# **Chapter 3**

## **THE LOCATION OF RELIGIOUS BELIEF IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN “THIS WORLD” AND THE “OTHER WORLD”**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter it was suggested that Weber’s theory tended to portray rationalisation as leading to the development of a “this world-other world” dichotomy in Western religion. In this chapter, there will be exploration of the proposition that this assumption of a “this world-other world” dichotomy underpins some of the influential sociological studies that emerged in the 1960s and, as such, continues to affect the way the relationship between the religious and the secular is viewed. This will involve consideration of the extent to which some sociological studies of religion influenced by Weber have a tendency both to employ binary-type rationality in the approach to religion and also to focus on the cognitive element of religion in the form of belief construed as credal propositions.

Two seminal studies have been selected for consideration: Berger’s (1969) theoretical work *The social reality of religion* and Stark and Glock’s (1968) empirical work *American piety: The nature of religious commitment*. It is argued that it is relevant to examine such early sociological works because of their continuing legacy. For example, a rationalist approach to religion and an emphasis on the rational element of religion continue in the work of Stark and Finke who consider that religion “is first and foremost an intellectual product, and ideas are its truly fundamental aspect” (2000: 92). Stark and Finke define religion as consisting “of very general explanations of existence, including the terms of exchange with a god or gods” (2000: 91) which they regard as “a purely cognitive definition of religion” (2000: 96). They are prominent proponents of the rational choice theory of religion.

Given that both Berger<sup>1</sup> and Stark consider that their arguments apply to Christianity in general (including Catholicism), there will be an attempt to examine the extent to which the legacy of these sociological approaches is useful or not in explaining the way Australian Catholic church attenders hold their religious beliefs.

The focus of the chapter is on the religious beliefs of Australian Catholics and the way such beliefs may be identified in terms of the relationship between “this world” and the “other world”. The empirical component of the chapter involves analysis of 2001 National Church Life Survey data (and a small amount of 1996 World Values Survey data). The main topics explored in the data analysis include: the religious beliefs of Australian Catholic church attenders; the type of rationality associated with the way beliefs are held; the mode of holding orthodox belief; specific beliefs about redemption and sin; and the relationship between beliefs about redemption and social ethics.

## **TWO SEMINAL STUDIES IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION**

### ***RATIONALISATION AND “THIS WORLD-OTHER WORLD” DIFFERENTIATION***

#### **Peter Berger (Theoretical study)**

The Weberian legacy continues in the work of Peter Berger who has had a major influence on the contemporary sociology of religion. Berger defines religion as an “attempt to conceive of the entire universe as being humanly significant” – an attempt to construct “a universe of meaning” (1969: 28). While religious meaning-systems clearly involve more than just the cognitive aspect, it is this aspect that tends to be emphasized by Berger.

In his examination of the development of Western religion, Berger, like Weber, stresses the significance of the rationalisation process that supposedly occurred in the ancient Israelite religion in the establishment of a covenant between God and Israel that implied “a god of radical ethical demands... immune to magical manipulation” (Berger 1969:115-7). He argues that a rational structure was imposed upon the religion through the repudiation of magic and the development of religious law

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis the focus is on the *early* work of Peter Berger because it has been so influential. It is acknowledged that there have been many changes in Berger’s work since 1969.

(Torah) embodying a rationalisation of ethics (1969:120). This rationalisation meant that the human world was no longer understood as being embedded in a universal, magical cosmos; instead, there was a radical transcendentalization of God and a concomitant “disenchantment of the world” (1969:113-8). The Genesis account in the Bible is seen to express the fundamental polarization between the transcendent God and humanity, “with a thoroughly ‘demythologized’ universe between them” (1969: 117). As such it represented the disruption of the divine-human continuum (1969: 99, 110) – i.e. separation between “this world” and the “other world”.

In Berger’s (1969: 121) analysis, this rationalisation was arrested by the development of Christianity – specifically through the incarnation of Jesus as mediator between God and humanity. The sacramental system and other forms of mediation which developed in Catholicism signified a type of re-enchantment or re-mythologisation (Berger 1969:121-2). However, Berger argues that the rationalising forces re-emerged during the Protestant Reformation, divesting Christianity of mystery, miracle, and magic and once again, threatening “the continuity between heaven and earth” (1969:111-2). Humanity’s relationship to the sacred was narrowed to the “redemptive action of God’s grace” (1969:111-2). Berger sees Catholicism as being resistant to the effects of rationalisation and its associated processes (1969: 122). However, he argues that the “demands of rationality” exercise “strong pressure” to which Catholicism is not immune (1969: 139) and that “no group” can escape completely (1969: 145). The expectation appears to be that Catholicism would also eventually succumb to the effects of rationalisation.

Berger emphasizes the importance of religious belief – especially the belief in redemption. As was noted in the previous chapter, Weber related such belief to the concept of “theodicy”. Following Weber, Berger (1969: 53) conceives of theodicy as explanation of the phenomena of suffering, evil, death etc. in terms of religious legitimations. He observes that in the Biblical tradition, the “historical” dimension of divine action is stressed and can lead to the notion that “when the proper time comes... sufferers will be consoled and the unjust will be punished” (Berger 1969: 68-9). He argues that such theodicies, if confined to this life, can be vulnerable to empirical disconfirmation – e.g. “Yahweh has not brought the rain” – and so the problem is typically solved by transposing the theodicy to another world: “It is no

longer enough to look for divine compensation in one's own lifetime or that of one's descendants. One now looks for it beyond the grave" (Berger 1969: 70). This is how the afterlife becomes the locale of meaning construction.

Berger (1969: 73-4) sees the problem of theodicy highlighted in Biblical religions where all power and all ethical values are ascribed to the one God, and where, therefore, the human question "How can God permit...?" implies an accusation against God. This problem, Berger argues, is solved by turning it around to become an explicit accusation against human beings so that "The question of human sin replaces the question of divine justice" (Berger 1969: 74).

In Berger's (1969:76) analysis, Christianity developed this theodicy into a type of "masochistic theodicy" in which "the incarnate God is also the God who suffers". He argues that in order to maintain simultaneously "*both* the full divinity *and* the full humanity of the incarnate Christ", it then became an essential condition of the theodicy that Christ suffered not for human innocence, but for human sin (1969: 77). Berger (1969: 112, 125) argued that belief in redemption was losing plausibility in the face of "systematic, rational penetration". His assessment was that the plausibility of Christianity depended on the plausibility of this theodicy (Berger 1969: 78).

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The concern about Berger's interpretation of Christian theodicy is the extent to which it is approached from a perspective of binary-type rationality that assumes a "this world-other world" dichotomy. The appropriateness of this type of perspective to an understanding of Catholic belief is the generic question addressed in this chapter.

The argument advanced by Berger (1969: 68-70) that belief in consolation in the afterlife represents a type of transposition of the historical dimension of divine justice suggests that he may be assuming that it is difficult / impossible for believers to envision a type of justice that spans both history and eternity. For example, Berger identifies the "social theodicy of Christianity" in terms of "legitimation of the inequities of society" (1969: 79). This seems to assume a "this world-other world" dichotomy that overlooks the possibility that some believers may embrace a vision of

otherworldly justice *as well as* a vision of divinely-inspired human action oriented towards the ongoing pursuit of justice for humanity in “this life” / “this world”. Berger’s approach implies that Christians hold passive attitudes towards worldly suffering which preclude efforts to ameliorate such suffering. His either/or approach seems to preclude Christians’ belief in the possible co-existence of the pursuit of earthly justice and heavenly justice – interpreted by some as the meaning of the phrase “Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (cf. The Lord’s Prayer).

Berger’s (1969:74) argument that in Christianity the question of divine justice is replaced by the question of human sin militates against a sense that believers may embrace both projects. From this either/or position only one side of the equation can be emphasized – i.e. sin. Berger’s interpretation seems to be that Christians recognize the human capacity for sin without recognizing any human capacity to repair the harm done by sin. There is little sense that believers may see individual salvation and collective justice as interdependent. Comments about the narrowness of the “redemptive action of God’s grace” (1969:111-2) suggest that, overall, believers view humanity as sinful (perhaps with the exception of “the saved”). This leaves little room for believers to embrace the concept of a graced humanity created in the image of God. Hence, the type of theodicy explicated by Berger appears to reflect an either / or approach to sin and grace. It may not reconcile easily with a more organic view of humanity as “flawed but loved” which allows for the co-existence of sin and grace.

Berger’s non-recognition of the possibility of belief in the co-existence of apparent opposites (such as grace and sin) places his concept of theodicy in an awkward position in relation to belief in Christ’s Incarnation. An emphasis on a view of humanity as sinful places constraints on how Christ’s humanity is to be understood – i.e. Christ’s humanity can only be seen in terms of suffering because of sin. (In this type of theodicy it is possible that other aspects of the humanity of Christ – such as his concern about earthly justice – may be de-emphasized). Ultimately, Berger argues that an emphasis on sin is essential for maintenance of belief in Christ’s Incarnation (1969: 76-8). However, this would seem to go against the very nature of the “incarnational thinking” that perceives Christ as both *fully* human and *fully* divine. In other words, “incarnational thinking” appears to be able to accommodate the co-

existence of apparent opposites without watering them down (i.e. any concept of Christ as *half* human and *half* divine) and without forcing a choice between the two (i.e. any concept of Christ as *either* human *or* divine).

It is possible that Berger is forced into a position of binary choice about belief in redemption and Incarnation – the latter by its very nature transcends binary thinking – because he approaches these beliefs from within the confines of instrumental rationality. Berger presents a view of rationality that tends to confine the divine to the “other world”. In addition, his notion that to locate any vision of divine justice in “this world” would subject that vision to empirical disconfirmation (1969: 70) appears to reflect an approach to theodicy that, rather than simply employing the rationality of cause and effect, seems to be itself contained and constrained by such rationality.

Similarly, Berger’s assessment that belief in redemption is besieged by “systematic, rational penetration” – suggests that his standpoint presumes that instrumental rationality encompasses symbolic rationality rather than vice versa. Yet, it would indeed seem to be the instrumental binary positioning of redemption in a “this life-afterlife” dichotomy that is problematic in the sense that it leaves little room for the less finite notion of salvation as an ongoing process. It may be the very interpretation of redemption as a binary construct that forces the choice of an otherworldly orientation and hence offers little hope for the possibility of divine justice in “this world”. If so, it would, ultimately, be a one-sided interpretation that could only offer a partial explanation of the whole. We might hypothesize whether a mode of thinking akin to “incarnational thinking” could offer a more holistic understanding of the relationship between the human condition and religious belief.

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While Berger considers that his theory is applicable to Christianity in general, one aim of this chapter is to examine how applicable it is to Catholicism in particular. Testing Berger’s theory will involve addressing questions about Australian Catholic attenders’ beliefs about redemption and the implications that these have for attitudes towards sin and humanity. There will also be an attempt to identify the type of rationality associated with the holding of these beliefs and attitudes. If Berger’s theory is

applicable to Catholicism, we might expect that, among regular church attenders, we would find: high levels of belief in otherworldly redemption; a high level of support for views of redemption in terms of Christ's suffering for human sin; high levels of belief in the sinfulness of humanity; some type of inverse relationship between attenders' beliefs in otherworldly redemption and attitudes of concern about this-worldly justice; evidence of a type of rationality among attenders that supports an either / or mode of holding beliefs. The specific research questions are presented in the data analysis section of this chapter.

### ***EMPHASIS ON THE BELIEF ELEMENT OF RELIGIOUS FAITH***

From a broader perspective, Berger's work focusing on theodicy / belief in redemption could be placed among sociological studies of religion that focus on the importance of religious belief per se in a faith tradition. As such, the questions raised by Berger's work can possibly be incorporated into a wider examination of the extent to which sociological approaches to religion that focus on belief may be helpful in understanding Australian Catholicism. For example, it may be that approaches to religion that emphasize rationality tend also to emphasize the element of religious belief construed as assent to credal propositions; if so, there could be a need to consider the extent to which other dimensions of faith (such as ethics) may be de-emphasized. Such consideration would seem appropriate in any attempt to locate Catholics' beliefs in terms of the relationship between "this world" and the "other world".

### **Rodney Stark (Empirical study)**

In the sociology of religion many studies focus on religious belief as the main aspect of religion. As we have seen, Weber (1915/1967) believed that meanings could direct human action and that religious belief could influence other aspects of behaviour. Building on this aspect of the Weberian tradition, Rodney Stark and his colleagues have focused on religious belief as the driving force of religious faith and have emphasized the role of religious belief in influencing other dimensions of religious commitment. For Stark and Finke, "the conception of the supernatural" expressed in religious belief is "the most fundamental aspect of any religion" (2000: 34). In

recognition of this they “grant causal status to doctrines” stressing that “religious doctrines per se often have consequences” (2000: 34).

The approach taken by Stark and his colleagues rests upon a large body of empirical research which they have developed over many years. A defining study in this body of research is Stark and Glock’s (1968) examination of the nature of American religious commitment. The proposition of the study that is of particular relevance to this thesis is that the level of orthodoxy of religious belief influences other aspects of religious commitment. In Stark and Glock’s interpretation, a “traditionally orthodox position” resembles one of “unquestioning faith” (1968: 26-7).

Stark and Glock’s (1968) study surveys respondents from a range of Christian denominations and so enables comparison of the way religious beliefs are held by members of different denominations. The study identifies Protestant denominations according to what was regarded as the degree of religious conservatism of the denomination. Stark and Glock’s findings show that, like Protestants in conservative denominations, high proportions of Catholics indicate strong belief in God (1968: 28), in the divinity of Jesus (1968: 33), in Biblical miracles (1968: 36), and in the existence of the devil (1968: 37). In contrast, lower proportions of Protestants in liberal denominations indicate such acceptance of these beliefs.

In order to obtain a measure of belief orthodoxy, Stark and Glock construct an orthodoxy index (based on the four beliefs mentioned above) that classifies respondents according to the number of belief questions on which a respondent expresses “certainty about the truth of the orthodox Christian position” (1968: 58-59). Using this index they find high levels of “orthodoxy” of belief among Protestants in conservative denominations and among Catholics (1968: 60).

Stark and Glock’s examination of the relationship between the orthodoxy index and indicators of other dimensions of religion leads them to conclude that “Belief in traditional Christian doctrines is vital to other kinds of religious commitment...” (1968: 213). For example, they find that church attendance and membership in church organizations are strongly related to orthodoxy of belief (1968: 214-5). However, Stark and Glock state that there is an exception to this trend in the dimension that they

refer to as “ethicalism” (i.e. “the importance placed on ‘Loving thy neighbour’ and ‘Doing good for others’”) (1968: 217). In their concluding chapter they state that ethicalism is “more prevalent in denominations where orthodoxy is least common” and that the least orthodox believers among church members are inclined to score more highly on ethicalism than are the most orthodox (Stark & Glock 1968: 217).

Yet this inverse relationship between orthodoxy and ethicalism that Stark and Glock dwell upon in their conclusion does not necessarily hold for all the denominations surveyed. As was previously noted, Catholics were found to have *high* levels of belief orthodoxy. Stark and Glock’s data also indicated that Catholics ranked among the denominations having high levels of ethicalism (1968: 72). Hence, their generalisation that ethicalism “is highest in bodies where traditional orthodoxy is weakest” (1968: 73) does not adequately address their own data on Catholics.

In their examination of the relationship between orthodoxy, ethicalism and church attendance Stark and Glock state that, for Catholics, the relationship is “unclear” (1968: 219). However, they do not comment on the remarkable aspect of their data that indicated that so few Catholics were “low” on ethicalism that stable percentages could not be calculated (1968: 219). While they do concede that “ethicalism is somewhat related to orthodoxy among Catholics” (1968: 76), very little attention is given to this compared to the great amount of attention paid to the negative relationship between orthodoxy and ethicalism (among other Christians) which is stressed throughout much of the book.

Interestingly, Stark and Glock do make a tentative attempt to explain the high Catholic level of ethicalism by relating it to attitudes towards salvation. It is to be noted that, in their analysis, they find differences between Protestants and Catholics in some beliefs and attitudes relating to salvation: i.e. a considerably lower proportion of Catholics than Protestants held the view that “Belief in Jesus Christ as Saviour” was absolutely necessary for salvation (1968: 42-3); a lower proportion of Catholics than Protestants expressed certainty about having “A sense of being saved in Christ” (1968:132-3); lower proportions of Catholics than Protestants were inclined to see barriers to salvation (1968: 52). Such findings suggest that there was more flexibility around Catholics’ attitudes towards salvation than was the case for other Christians.

In relating attitudes towards salvation to the level of ethicalism, Stark and Glock seem to suggest that the main difference centres on whether or not faith alone is regarded as sufficient for salvation. They argue that “Evangelical Protestantism tends to take a miraculous view of social justice, that if all men are brought to Christ social evils will disappear through divine intervention” (1968: 75). They propose that Catholicism, on the other hand, “assumes the sinfulness of man [sic] and is concerned to offer moral guidance for the conduct of man-to-man relationships” (1968: 76). Yet we might question whether this characterisation of Catholicism reflects an adequate understanding of Catholic attitudes towards sin and salvation and, hence, whether it provides an adequate explanation of the co-existence of orthodoxy and ethicalism among Catholics. We might question whether Stark and Glock’s explanation represents an in-depth interpretation of their own findings. Indeed, one of the main concerns about Stark and Glock’s work is that they do not appear to make sufficient effort to understand Catholicism. Overall, in the full context of their work, their finding that Catholics had high levels of both orthodoxy and ethicalism seems to have been treated more as an anomaly than articulated in terms of Catholic distinctiveness.

This seminal study by Stark and Glock remains important in the sense that Stark and his colleagues have built upon it in their subsequent research. Finke and Stark (1992) have developed an influential theory of church-sect dynamics largely based on Stark and Glock’s (1968) conclusions about the relationship between religious belief and other aspects of religious commitment. (The implications of this will be discussed in Chapter 5). Stark and Finke (2000: 275-6) also continue to endorse the relevance and usefulness of some aspects of the methodology of the early research (e.g. the use of an “orthodoxy index”). Hence, it seems reasonable to explore aspects of Stark and Glock’s (1968) approach in the analysis of more recent data. Also, given that Catholics were not the main focus of Stark and Glock’s study, an application of their approach that does focus on Catholics would seem to be in order. To this end, this chapter will include an examination of Australian Catholic attenders’ religious beliefs – paying particular attention to the nature of belief orthodoxy and its implications for other aspects of faith. There will also be an attempt to examine Australian Catholic attitudes towards sin and salvation.

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Although Berger's study and Stark and Glock's study are very different in nature, there are several areas of similarity / complementarity. Both studies emphasize the role of belief in religious commitment. In Berger's theory it is specifically the belief in redemption that is regarded as most important while Stark and Glock's research leads them to stress the importance of orthodoxy of belief. Stark and Glock present religious belief as being in a position to influence other dimensions of religiosity and this is also implicit in Berger's theory in the sense that he sees Christianity per se as depending on the plausibility of the belief in redemption.

Both studies incline towards an either / or interpretation of religious commitment. In Berger's theory this interpretation tends to preclude the possible co-existence of belief in otherworldly redemption and concern about this-worldly justice. In Stark and Glock's research there is a tendency to focus on their general finding of the mutual exclusiveness of belief orthodoxy and ethical attitudes and to downplay evidence of the co-existence of both in the case of American Catholics. Stark and Glock's brief attempt to explain the co-existence of orthodox belief and ethical attitudes among American Catholics refers to attitudes towards salvation – which ties in with Berger's emphasis on salvation belief. Stark and Glock associate the Catholic approach to salvation with an emphasis on the conduct of human relationships – but this is interpreted as stemming from views of the sinfulness of humanity. As with Berger's theory emphasizing the concept of sinful humanity, Stark and Glock's interpretation leaves little room for the notion of a "graced humanity". Like Berger, Stark and Glock do not explore the possibility that human relationships / "love of neighbour" could be viewed in terms of a dimension of relationship with God.

Stark and Glock's finding that American Catholics had a more flexible attitude towards salvation (than other Christians) has implications for issues raised by Berger's work. It offers further support for questioning how important the belief in "otherworldly redemption" alone is for Catholics and the extent to which an either / or approach to salvation is evident among Catholics. Stark and Glock's somewhat overlooked finding that American Catholics could adhere to orthodox belief and simultaneously be concerned about "this worldly" justice also suggests questions about Berger's implication that an orientation towards otherworldly justice precludes

an orientation towards this-worldly justice. Hence, an important element in the complementarity of the two studies examined appears to be an underlying assumption of this world - other world dualism.

## **ADDRESSING THE ISSUES**

The overarching issue addressed in this chapter is whether sociological approaches to religion that employ binary-type rationality and assume a this world-other world dualism are appropriate to an understanding of Australian Catholicism. Related to this is the issue of the appropriateness of approaches that focus on religious belief to the near exclusion of “love of neighbour”. More specifically, this translates into questions about the extent to which approaches that focus on orthodoxy of belief or belief in otherworldly redemption can adequately explain the faith of Australian Catholic church attenders. In addition to the issue of the sociological approach to religion, there is also the issue of the positioning of rationality in relation to religious belief. Here, an important underlying question concerns the type of rationality associated with Catholic belief. The empirical part of this chapter aims to explore such questions.

It is important to note that this dissertation utilizes survey data that was collected as part of a larger project and that no questionnaire was specifically designed to test the hypotheses of this dissertation. This means that the present research refers to questionnaire items and data that *are available*. It is acknowledged that these may not always be ideal indicators of the variables implied by the research hypotheses.

The empirical part of this chapter is mainly based on data from the 2001 National Church Life Survey (NCLS)(Catholic component), although a brief reference is made to 1996 World Values Survey (WVS) (Australian Component)(N=2048) data in terms of placing the NCLS data in broader context. The NCLS data used is mostly derived from Questionnaire W (N=9287) and Questionnaire X (N=1473) both of which were designed specifically for Catholic respondents. Some data from NCLS Questionnaire J (N=613) is also used.

A basic mode of data analysis is employed – focusing on frequencies and some cross-tabulation. In the data analysis sections of this chapter and following chapters missing

responses are excluded from analysis unless otherwise indicated. All percentages are rounded off to the nearest whole number. All results presented in the data analysis are statistically significant unless otherwise indicated.

### ***RESEARCH QUESTIONS***

The following indicates how the research questions are addressed in particular data sets.

1. What are the religious beliefs of Australian Catholics? For this question, WVS data is used by way of introduction. Application of the question to Australian Catholics church attenders uses data from NCLS Questionnaires W and J.
2. Is it possible to identify a type of rationality associated with the way Australian Catholic church attenders approach their faith? This question uses data from NCLS Questionnaire W.
3. What is the nature of belief orthodoxy among Australian Catholic church attenders? Are there implications of belief orthodoxy for other aspects of faith? These questions use data from NCLS Questionnaire W.
4. What is the nature of Australian Catholic attenders' beliefs about redemption and sin? Is there a relationship between redemption belief and social ethics attitudes? These questions use data from NCLS Questionnaire X.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

### ***SECTION 1: RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF AUSTRALIAN CATHOLICS***

*Data Sources: 1996 World Values Survey (N= 2048)*  
*2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)*  
*2001 National Church Life Survey J (N= 613)*

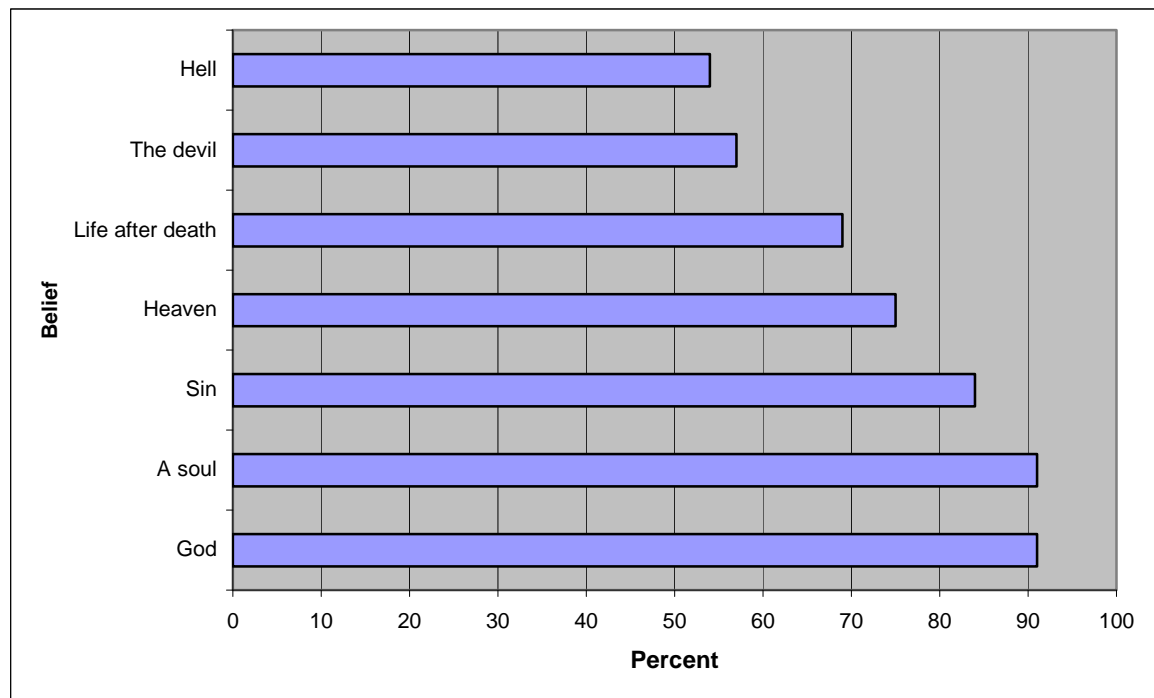
By way of introduction, this section presents summary data findings on the religious beliefs of Australian Catholics in general. This is followed by presentation of findings on the religious beliefs of Australian Catholic church attenders in particular. The main

aim here is to record the findings that will be discussed later in this chapter and will also be referred to in subsequent chapters.

### **Religious Belief among Australian Catholics (in general)**

Data from the 1996 World Values Survey (WVS) that taps into the wider Australian society provides a brief introductory snapshot of the religious beliefs of Australian Catholics. WVS data indicates that high proportions of the Catholic respondents hold religious beliefs such as belief in God (91%), belief in a soul (91%), belief in sin (84%), belief in heaven (75%), belief in life after death (69%), belief in the existence of the Devil (57%), and belief in Hell (54%) (See Figure1).

**Figure 3.1: RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF AUSTRALIAN CATHOLICS**



*Source: 1996 World Values Survey (Australian Component) (N=2048)*

Yet a much smaller proportion of these Catholics are church attenders. The 1996 WVS suggested that around 25% of Catholics were regular attenders. However, estimates from Catholic Mass counts are somewhat lower; in 1996 the Mass count estimated that around 18% of Catholics were regular attenders and the 2001 Mass count is lower than that – around 15% (Dixon 2003:2). The proportion of Catholics who attend Mass at least weekly is slightly lower still – around 13%.

Clearly, many Catholics hold religious beliefs of the type mentioned without participating in communal religious expression. This is the type of phenomenon that Grace Davie (1994) has referred to as “belief without belonging”. While this may characterize Australian Catholics generally, the main focus of this research is upon Australian Catholics who do participate in the communal dimension of religion.

### **Religious Belief among Australian Catholic Church Attenders**

As the main data source used in this chapter is the NCLS it is important to note that this survey was administered in churches and was completed by church attenders. Hence, the survey taps only a minority of those who describe themselves as Catholics.

The following frequency tables show the 2001 response patterns to questions about certain religious beliefs. These represent all the items on belief contained in Questionnaire W. For the purposes of this chapter they are noted mainly in terms of the extent to which the findings indicate adherence to the Catholic belief tradition.

Table 3.1 shows that in answer to the question “Which of the following comes closest to expressing your idea about God?”, 72% of respondents indicate the response that “There is one God, three divine persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit” – indicating that the vast majority of Catholic attenders believe in the traditional Trinitarian concept of God.

**Table 3.1: “WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING COMES CLOSEST TO EXPRESSING YOUR IDEA ABOUT GOD?”**

	Percent
There is one God, three divine persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit	72
God exists and is a divine person, but not Father, Son and Holy Spirit	3
God is not a person, but the name we give to a higher power in the universe, the mysterious and creative source of life	11
We and the universe are in God, part of God, identified with God	7
God is not ‘out there’, but is found only within each person	6
We cannot know for sure whether God exists	1
God does not exist	0
Total	100

*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)*

Table 3.2 shows that in answer to the question “Which of the following statements about the consecrated bread and wine at Mass expresses your belief?”, 71% of respondents indicate the belief that “the consecrated bread and wine” “truly become

the sacred Body and Blood of Christ – by receiving them we take part in his sacrifice”.

**Table 3.2: “WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS ABOUT THE CONSECRATED BREAD AND WINE AT MASS EXPRESSES YOUR BELIEF?”**

	Percent
They truly become the sacred Body and Blood of Christ – by receiving them we take part in his sacrifice	71
They remain bread and wine – sacred symbols through which we share in the death and resurrection of Jesus.	29
Total	100

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)

Table 3.3 shows that in answer to the question “Which of the following comes closest to your belief about the virgin birth?”, 78% of respondents indicate the belief that “Mary gave birth to Jesus without having had sexual intercourse”.

**Table 3.3: “WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING COMES CLOSEST TO YOUR BELIEF ABOUT THE VIRGIN BIRTH?”**

	Percent
Mary gave birth to Jesus without having had sexual intercourse	78
The virginity of Mary is not meant to be taken literally; it is a way of saying that Jesus is the Son of God	22
Total	100

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)

Table 3.4 shows that in answer to the question “Which of the following comes closest to your belief about the resurrection of Christ?”, 87% of respondents believe that “Christ was raised by God’s power from death to life – really, bodily, physically”.

**Table 3.4: “WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING COMES CLOSEST TO YOUR BELIEF ABOUT THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST?”**

	Percent
Christ was raised by God’s power from death to life – really, bodily, physically	87
Christ did not literally ‘rise from the dead’; the story is a way of expressing God’s power to give life	10
Christ did not rise from dead	0
Don’t know	3
Total	100

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)

Table 3.5 shows that in response to the question “Which of the following comes closest to your belief about the Holy spirit?”, 75% of respondents believe that the Holy Spirit is “A divine person, God dwelling in the hearts of believers, who gives us gifts beyond our human capacities”.

**Table 3.5: “WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING COMES CLOSEST TO YOUR BELIEF ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT?”**

	Percent
A divine person, God dwelling in the hearts of believers, who gives us gifts beyond our human capacities	75
The ‘Holy Spirit’ is just a human way of giving a personal name to the presence of God in our lives	18
The Holy spirit is not God, but only a symbol of our human capacities for growth	2
A name that has little meaning in world today	1
Don’t know	4
Total	100

*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)*

Table 3.6 shows that in response to the question “Do you agree or disagree with each of these statements?”, 91% of respondents either agree or strongly agree that “Jesus Christ was both fully God and fully human”.

**Table 3.6: “DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH EACH OF THESE STATEMENTS?” (Jesus Christ was both fully God and fully human)**

	Percent
Strongly agree	65
Agree	26
Neutral or unsure	9
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	0
Total	100

*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey J (N= 613)*

Hence, the vast majority of respondents indicated what might be described as conservative responses to these questions. This shows a high level of support for “orthodox” Catholic beliefs among Australian Catholic church attenders.

One observation to be made at this point is that these belief items were included in the questionnaires as representing fundamental Catholic beliefs. It needs to be noted that most of these strongly supported religious beliefs also, in some way, contain an incarnational element. The belief in God as Trinity (Table 3.1) includes an incarnational dimension in the sense that the “Son” implies Christ incarnate. The belief in the Eucharist as the sacred body and blood of Christ (Table 3.2) signifies incarnation in terms of the divinity and physicality of Christ. The belief in the Virgin birth of Christ (Table 3.3) is central to the belief in the incarnation of Christ as both human and divine. The belief in the resurrection of Christ (Table 3.4) pertains to both divine power and the physicality of Christ. The belief in the Holy Spirit (Table 3.5)

refers to the presence of God in humanity. Finally, the belief that Jesus was both fully God and fully human (Table 3.6) represents explicit belief in the Incarnation. This points to the strongly incarnational nature of orthodox Catholic belief.

## **SECTION 2: RATIONALITY ASSOCIATED WITH RELIGIOUS BELIEF**

*Data Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)*

In this section there is an attempt to explore Australian Catholic church attenders' approach to religious belief in terms of other questionnaire items contained in Questionnaire W. These include items relating to the way religious "truths" are accepted, attitudes towards a "questioning" approach to religious belief, attitudes towards faith development, and attitudes towards the beliefs of other religions. While these items do not explicitly refer to "rationality", indirectly they appear to cast some light on the type of rationality associated with religious belief.

Table 3.7 shows that in response to the statement "Faith in God calls us to accept truths we can't fully understand and can't prove", 51% of respondents strongly agree and another 43% tend to agree. This high level of overall agreement suggests that the vast majority of Australian Catholic attenders accept the notion that faith goes beyond rational understanding.

**Table 3.7: "DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?"**  
(Faith in God calls us to accept truths we can't fully understand and can't prove)

	Percent
Strongly disagree	3
Tend to disagree	3
Tend to agree	43
Strongly agree	51
Total	100

*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)*

Table 3.8 shows that in response to the statement "By questioning some things you believed when younger, you grow to a deeper and surer faith", 30% of respondents strongly agree and another 58% tend to agree. This high level of overall agreement suggests that, for most Australian Catholic attenders, faith does not preclude a questioning approach and the exercise of reason. It also indicates openness to the possibility of growth in faith.

**Table 3.8: “DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?”**  
(By questioning some things you believed when younger, you grow to a deeper and surer faith)

	Percent
Strongly disagree	3
Tend to disagree	9
Tend to agree	58
Strongly agree	30
Total	100

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)

Further evidence of most respondents’ acceptance of the notion of faith development comes from the findings presented in Table 3.9 which shows that in response to the statement “As I grow and change through experience, I expect my religious beliefs also to grow and change”, 34% of respondents strongly agree and another 54% tend to agree. This high level of agreement indicates that most Australian Catholic attenders have the expectation of ongoing development of their religious belief and an openness to transformation – in other words, the conceptualisation of faith as a journey.

**Table 3.9: “DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?”**  
(As I grow and change through experience, I expect my religious beliefs also to grow and change)

	Percent
Strongly disagree	5
Tend to disagree	7
Tend to agree	54
Strongly agree	34
Total	100

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)

Table 3.10 shows that in response to the statement “Even religious views we strongly disagree with contain some truth we can learn from”, 17% of respondents strongly agree and another 70% tend to agree. This high level of agreement suggests that most Australian Catholic attenders regard their faith as being compatible with some degree of openness to the beliefs of the “Other”.

**Table 3.10: “DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?”**  
(Even religious views we strongly disagree with contain some truth we can learn from)

	Percent
Strongly disagree	3
Tend to disagree	10
Tend to agree	70
Strongly agree	17
Total	100

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)

Overall, then, the above findings indicate that most Australian Catholic church attenders agree with the statements relating to faith as transcending rational understanding, as developing through a questioning approach, as being open to change, and, as being open to otherness.

This could be interpreted as suggesting that, for the majority of attenders, faith goes beyond rational understanding and is therefore not confined by reason / “the rational”; yet, at the same time, faith can include rationality in the sense that it is open to questioning of belief, development / change of belief, and, in a sense, even diversity of belief. In other words, the transcendence of reason does not preclude the inclusion of reason. This interpretation of the findings suggests a positioning of religious faith to encompass what is generally referred to as “rationality”. Moreover, this appears to be associated with a sense of “journey” or openness to transformation rather than any sense of univocal fixedness.

### ***SECTION 3: ORTHODOX BELIEF AMONG CATHOLIC ATTENDERS***

*Data Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)*

This section aims to build upon the findings of Section 1 (which pointed to the incarnational nature of Catholic orthodox belief and indicated high levels of belief orthodoxy among Australian Catholic attenders) and Section 2 (which suggested the existence of an approach to faith as inclusive of rationality).

Stark and Glock’s study stressed the importance of belief orthodoxy and in this section there is an attempt to explore some aspects of their approach in the analysis of NCLS data. The intention is not to replicate Stark and Glock’s study; indeed, replication would not be possible given that the type of data available for analysis in this thesis is generally not comparable with that analysed by Stark. However, there is an attempt to construct an orthodox<sup>2</sup> belief index (based on some of the previously-mentioned religious belief items) and to examine the relationship between this index and the variables pertaining to religious faith that were referred to in Section 2. Stark

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<sup>2</sup> The term “orthodox” is used here to describe beliefs that accord with official church teaching and represent the most conservative versions of belief. This would seem to be akin to the way “orthodox” is interpreted by Stark and Glock (1968: 26-7).

and Glock’s assumption that a “traditionally orthodox position” is one of “unquestioning faith” and Section 2’s suggested positioning of faith as inclusive of a rational, questioning approach, set up a critical juxtaposition. The examination in this section attempts to shed light upon this juxtaposition.

### **Orthodox Belief Index**

While it is not possible to use exactly the same belief items that Stark and Glock used in their study, the NCLS (W) questionnaire items relating to beliefs about God, the Eucharist, and the Virgin Birth of Jesus appear to lend themselves to an examination that focuses on Catholic “orthodox” belief.<sup>3</sup> For each of the three items there is one response regarded as the most conservative or “orthodox” response and at least one other response. The exact wording of the three belief questionnaire items and the most conservative response is set out below:

Question: “Which of the following comes closest to expressing your idea about God?”
Response: “There is one God, three divine persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit”
Question: “Which of the following statements about the consecrated bread and wine at Mass expresses your belief?”
Response: “They truly become the sacred Body and Blood of Christ – by receiving them we take part in his sacrifice”
Question: “Which of the following comes closest to your belief about the Virgin Birth?”
Response: “Mary gave birth to Jesus without having had sexual intercourse”

In the present research these questionnaire items are used to construct an orthodoxy index as follows:

Respondents who give the orthodox response to all three questions = High Orthodox

Respondents who give the orthodox response to two questions = Medium Orthodox

Those who give the orthodox response to one question = Low Orthodox

Those who give the orthodox response to no questions = No Orthodox

*Orthodox Belief Index W:* Table 3.11 shows that 43 % of Australian Catholic church attenders gave orthodox responses to all three questions and so are regarded as “High Orthodox”. Twenty-eight percent of respondents gave two orthodox responses, 17% gave one orthodox response and 12% gave no such response.

<sup>3</sup> These three belief items are used because they are regarded as central to Catholic belief. It is these three belief items that also appear on Survey V which will be referred to in Chapter 5.

**Table 3.11: ORTHODOX BELIEF INDEX W**

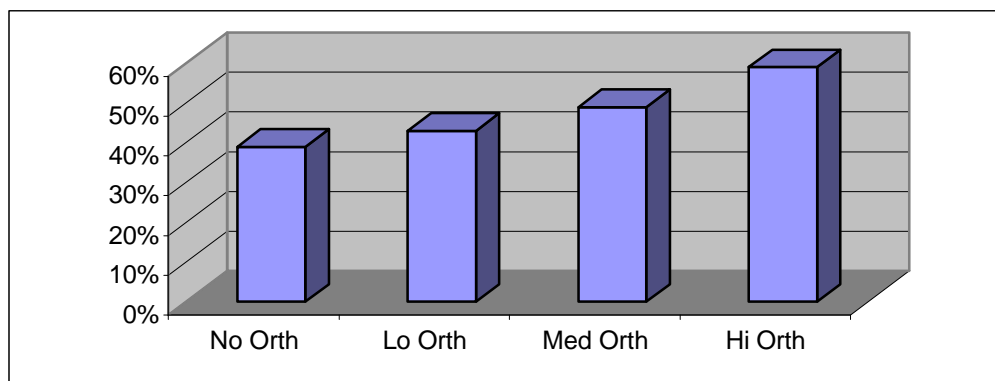
	Percent
No Orthodox (0)	12
Low Orthodox (1)	17
Medium Orthodox (2)	28
High Orthodox (3)	43
Total	100

*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)*

The following figures display the findings of cross tabulations between the Orthodox Belief Index and the “Strongly agree” responses to the items referred to in Section 2.

Figure 3.2 shows that 39% of the No Orthodox, 43% of the Low Orthodox, 49% of the Medium Orthodox, and 59% of the High Orthodox strongly agree that “Faith in God calls us to accept truths we can’t fully understand and can’t prove.” This indicates a positive relationship between the holding of orthodox belief and strong acceptance of faith as transcending rationality among Australian Catholic attenders.

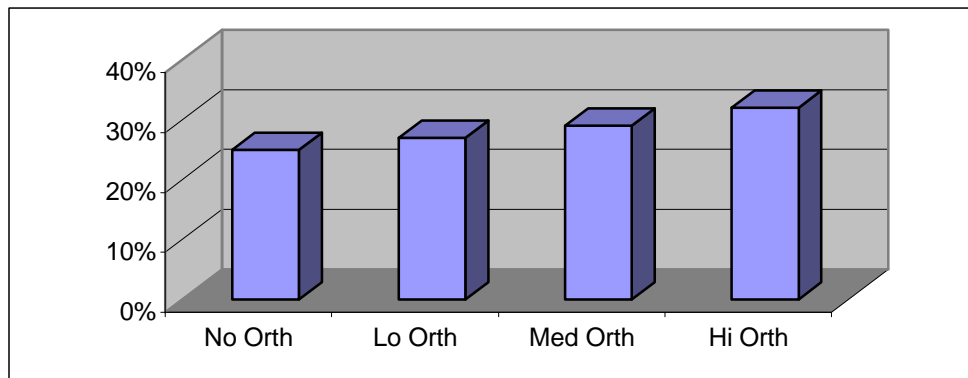
**Figure 3.2: STRONGLY AGREE “FAITH IN GOD CALLS US TO ACCEPT TRUTHS WE CAN’T FULLY UNDERSTAND AND CAN’T PROVE”**



*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)*

However, it would seem that this does not preclude an association between orthodoxy of belief and regard for the place of questioning / reasoning in faith. As Figure 3.3 shows, 25% of the No Orthodox, 27% of the Low Orthodox, 29% of the Medium Orthodox, and 32% of the High Orthodox strongly agree that “By questioning some things you believed when younger, you grow to a deeper and surer faith”.

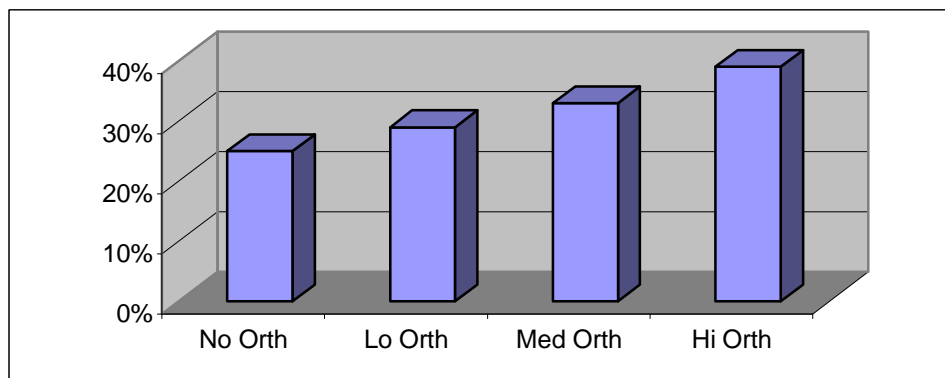
**Figure 3.3: STRONGLY AGREE “BY QUESTIONING SOME THINGS YOU BELIEVED WHEN YOUNGER, YOU GROW TO A DEEPER AND SURER FAITH”**



Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)

Indeed, Figure 3.4 indicates that orthodoxy of belief is associated with the strong expectation of development / change in belief with experience. Figure 3.4 shows that 25% of the No Orthodox, 29% of the Low Orthodox, 33% of the Medium Orthodox, and 39% of the High Orthodox strongly agree with the statement “As I grow and change through experience, I expect my religious beliefs also to grow and change”.

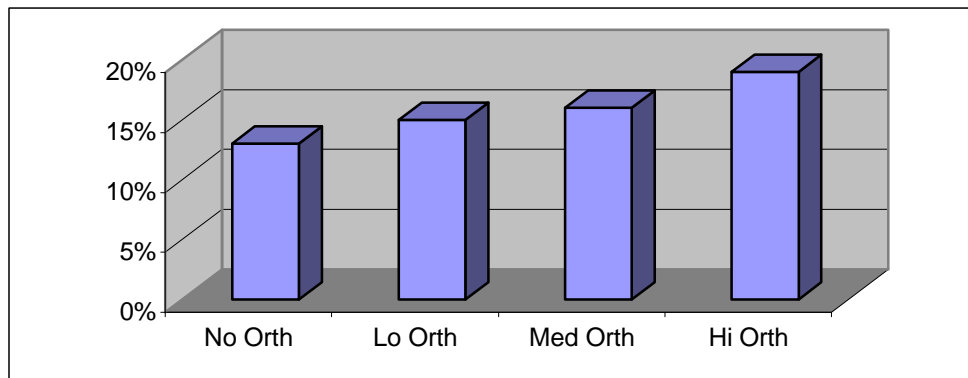
**Figure 3.4: STRONGLY AGREE “AS I GROW AND CHANGE THROUGH EXPERIENCE, I EXPECT MY RELIGIOUS BELIEFS ALSO TO GROW AND CHANGE”**



Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)

Moreover, it also appears that orthodoxy of belief is associated with strong attitudes of openness to the beliefs of the “Other”. Figure 3.5 shows that 13% of the No Orthodox, 15% of the Low Orthodox, 16% of the Medium Orthodox, and 19% of the High Orthodox strongly agree with the statement “Even religious views we strongly disagree with contain some truth we can learn from”. While all the percentages here are lower than in the previous figures, there is still a positive relationship between the Orthodox Belief Index and strong agreement with the statement.

**Figure 3.5: STRONGLY AGREE “EVEN RELIGIOUS VIEWS WE STRONGLY DISAGREE WITH CONTAIN SOME TRUTH WE CAN LEARN FROM”**



*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)*

Overall, therefore, it would appear that, in the case of Australian Catholic church attenders, orthodoxy of belief is positively related to strong agreement with the four statements referred to. The positive relationship between belief orthodoxy and strong agreement with the statement relating to faith as transcending understanding may not be unexpected. However, the positive associations between belief orthodoxy and strong agreement with the statements relating to questioning of belief, change of belief, and openness to other beliefs require explanation.

Stark and Glock's association of belief orthodoxy with "unquestioning faith" does not promise to be helpful in interpreting these findings. Earlier in this chapter, concern was expressed about the inadequacy of Stark and Glock's interpretation of the lack of an inverse relationship between belief orthodoxy and ethical attitudes among American Catholics. It would seem that just as Stark and Glock's approach offers inadequate explanation of the co-existence of American Catholic belief orthodoxy and openness to the "Other" in terms of ethical attitudes, it also cannot adequately explain the relationship between Australian Catholic belief orthodoxy and strong agreement with openness to questioning of belief, change of belief, and the beliefs of the "Other".

One might speculate whether there is something about the nature of Catholic orthodoxy that is problematic for the type of explanation offered by Stark and Glock's approach.

#### **SECTION 4: SALVATION BELIEF AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH SOCIAL ETHICS**

*Data Sources:* 2001 National Church Life Survey X (N=1473)  
2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)

Earlier in this chapter, Stark and Glock's attempt to explain the high level of ethical attitudes among American Catholics in terms of their supposed attitudes towards sin and salvation was linked to Berger's theory stressing the concept of sinful humanity and the importance of belief in otherworldly redemption. It was also argued that both Berger's study and Stark and Glock's study tended to emphasize religious belief and to downplay social ethics. This prompts an examination of the beliefs about sin and salvation held by Australian Catholic attenders and leads us to consider whether there is evidence of any relationship between the beliefs about salvation held by Australian Catholic attenders and social ethics.

This section aims to test some aspects of Berger's theory by exploring NCLS data on the beliefs of Australian Catholic church attenders about salvation, sin, and revelation. (Belief about revelation is included because of its possible relevance to some of the other issues considered). This is followed at the end of the section by exploration of any possible relationship between salvation belief and social ethics.

Table 3.12 shows that just over half of Australian Catholic attenders (52%) view salvation as "The gradual process of being transformed by God's love and forgiveness, leading us to eternal life". While this type of salvation belief contains the element of sin (implied by "forgiveness"), it also contains the element of grace ("God's love"). This belief contains the element of "this life" (implied by "gradual process") and also contains the element of the afterlife ("eternal life"). Moreover, the implication of the belief is that sin is not regarded as finite and fixed but can be overcome ("transformed"). In other words, the belief is open to the possibility of good overcoming evil. Hence, this belief about salvation is simultaneously "this worldly" and "other worldly" with a sense of fluidity between the two in its elements of hopefulness and openness to change.

Seventeen percent of Australian Catholic attenders think of salvation as "Getting to Heaven". If, as Berger suggests, salvation is mainly understood in terms of the afterlife, a much higher response rate would have been expected here.

Sixteen percent of respondents see salvation in terms of Jesus' atonement for sin. Given the emphasis placed upon Christ's suffering for human sin in Berger's theory, a much higher response to this belief item would have been expected if Berger's theory was applicable to Australian Catholic attenders.

Only 11% of respondents indicate a belief in salvation in terms of mostly "this worldly" development and success.

Overall, the data findings shown in Table 3.12 provide a very different picture of Christian believers to that proposed by Berger. Only a minority of respondents indicate a belief in salvation in a solely otherworldly sense. Similarly, only a minority see salvation in terms of Jesus' atonement. An even smaller proportion regard salvation in solely "this-worldly" terms. The majority of respondents indicate a belief in salvation that has *both* otherworldly and this-worldly elements.

**Table 3.12: Do you think of Salvation mainly as:**

	Percent
Getting to Heaven	17
Making the decision to accept Jesus as my Saviour who atoned for my sins	16
The gradual process of being transformed by God's love and forgiveness, leading us to eternal life	52
Achieving full human development and the capacity for success in life and relationships	11
There is no such thing	0
Don't know	5
Total	100

*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey X (N=1473)*

Table 3.13 shows that, in total, the overwhelming majority (94%) of Australian Catholic attenders indicate "Yes" to the question "Do you believe that God forgives sins, through the ministry of a priest, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation?" This finding suggests strong support for belief in a forgiving God. However, 45% of respondents also believe that "God forgives us whenever we ask". This suggests that forgiveness through the mediation of a priest and forgiveness through direct relationship with God are not necessarily regarded as mutually exclusive. This casts doubt on Weberian-type assumptions that sacramentality and individual-God relationships do not co-exist. Overall, the findings shown in Table 3.13 complement those of Table 3.12 in the sense that they suggest belief in a God whose love and forgiveness is present in an ongoing way throughout life and where sin / evil can be

overcome.<sup>4</sup> There appears to be a sense of hopefulness and openness to transformation here that does not sit easily with the stress on the sinfulness of humanity that Berger, Stark and Glock regard as significant.

**TABLE 3.13: “DO YOU BELIEVE THAT GOD FORGIVES SINS, THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF A PRIEST, IN THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION?”**

	Percent
Yes	49
Yes, but God forgives us whenever we ask; Reconciliation is just a more open and definite way of expressing our repentance and God’s forgiveness	45
There’s no value in confessing to a priest	4
I don’t believe we need God’s forgiveness; we only need to forgive ourselves and each other	2
Total	100

*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey X (N=1473)*

Table 3.14 shows that 89% of attenders either agree or strongly agree with the statement “I believe God’s plan for the world will work out; but I don’t really understand how”. The first part of this statement suggests a hopefulness about the divine plan – there is also, possibly, the sense of unfolding revelation. The second part of the statement indicates an openness towards the understanding of revelation – a type of acceptance that it can be beyond human understanding. This ties in with the notion that faith transcends rationality that was referred to in Section 2. The high level of agreement with the statement indicates strong support for this particular type of faith and hope.

**Table 3.14: “I BELIEVE GOD’S PLAN FOR WORLD WILL WORK OUT; BUT I DON’T REALLY UNDERSTAND HOW”**

	Percent
Strongly disagree	4
Tend to disagree	6
Tend to agree	50
Strongly agree	39
Total	100

*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)*

Table 3.15 shows that 86% of attenders agree / strongly agree that Christians should work to change the structures of society in order to create a more just society. This represents a very high level of support for an understanding of Christianity in terms of the pursuit of earthly justice. It implies strong support for the Christian tenet of “Love thy neighbour”. Moreover, the questionnaire item itself, in so far as it refers to social

<sup>4</sup> The sacramental aspect related to this is discussed in the next chapter

structural change, implies unambiguous engagement in society / “this world”. One possible interpretation of this could be in terms of endorsement of participation in building “the Kingdom” – the “working out” of “God’s plan for the world” (referred to in the previous table). Yet it would be wrong to rest an argument on responses to this question. Statements about what Christians *should* do cannot be read as statements about what is essential for salvation or even as indicating priorities among a number of things Christians should do.

**Table 3.15: “CHRISTIANS SHOULD WORK TO CHANGE THE STRUCTURES OF SOCIETY IN ORDER TO CREATE A MORE JUST SOCIETY”.**

	Percent
Strongly agree	40
Agree	46
Neutral / Unsure	12
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	1
Total	100

*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey X (N=1473)*

However, consideration of the following crosstabulation allows us to explore connections between salvation beliefs and social ethics among Australian Catholic attenders. Table 3.16 is a crosstabulation of the questionnaire items on salvation belief and attitudes towards Christian social engagement in the pursuit of earthly justice<sup>5</sup>. It indicates that, regardless of their belief about salvation, the overwhelming majority of Catholic attenders agree / strongly agree that “Christians should work to change the structures of society in order to create a more just society”. Eighty-eight percent of those who view salvation in terms of “Getting to heaven” agree with the statement, 88% of those who view salvation in terms of transformation by God’s love agree, 86% of those who view salvation in terms of achieving full capacity for success in life agree, and 83% who view salvation in terms Jesus’ atonement agree. The only group with a lower response rate are the respondents who indicate “Don’t know” in relation to salvation belief (60%). If Berger’s theory had been applicable, we would expect to see some relationship between respondents’ beliefs about salvation and their attitudes towards the pursuit of earthly justice; for example, we might have expected a lower proportion of the respondents who viewed salvation in terms of “Getting to heaven” to express agreement with the pursuit of earthly justice. However, this is not the case.

<sup>5</sup> It is possible to cross-tabulate these variables because they are present in the same survey.

Similarly, the findings do not support Stark and Glock's proposition that the high level of "ethicalism" among Catholics is related to attitudes towards salvation.

**Table 3.16: Crosstabulation: "CHRISTIANS...JUST SOCIETY" \* SALVATION BELIEF**

		BELIEF	ABOUT	SALVATION			
		Getting to heaven	Accept Jesus who atoned	Transformation by God's love, eternal life	Achieving full capacity for success in life	Don't know	Total
CHRISTIANS SHOULD CREATE JUST SOCIETY	St. agree / Agree*	88%	83%	88%	86%	60%	86%
	Neutral	10%	16%	11%	13%	33%	13%
	St. disagree/ Disagree*	2%	2%	1%	2%	7%	2%
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey X (N=1473)

Note: As there was 0% response to the Salvation belief option "There is no such thing", this option has been excluded from the crosstabulation.

\* Strongly agree combined with Agree and Strongly disagree combined with Disagree to produce viable cell sizes.

Overall, the findings presented in this section suggest that the majority of Australian Catholic attenders are oriented towards belief in salvation as a gradual process spanning this life *and* the next and that they have a hopeful attitude about the unfolding of God's plan. While there is belief in the existence of sin, there is also belief in the presence of a forgiving God and the possibility of overcoming sin. Moreover, there is strong support for engagement in this world in the pursuit of earthly justice as part of Christianity. However, there does not appear to be a relationship between salvation belief and social ethics attitudes of the kind the theories of Berger and Stark and Glock would lead us to expect.

These findings do not seem to fit the type of theory presented by Berger that emphasizes the sinfulness of humankind and views the Christian belief in salvation in terms of an otherworldly orientation. Nor do they fit Stark and Glock's proposition that strong support for social ethics among Catholics is related to attitudes towards salvation. Rather, the data appears to suggest a worldview where faith, hope and love are intertwined – a worldview that is simultaneously this-worldly and otherworldly.

## ***SUMMARY OF FINDINGS***

1. Among Australian Catholic church attenders there is a high level of support for conservative or “orthodox” beliefs (most of which contain an incarnational element).
2. Most Australian Catholic church attenders appear to regard religious belief as transcending rational understanding, but as developing through reasoned enquiry, as being open to change, and, as being open to otherness. This could be interpreted in terms of a view of faith as encompassing rationality *and* as reaching toward realities that cannot be contained in dogmatic formulae.
3. Among Australian Catholic church attenders there is a positive relationship between orthodoxy of belief and strong agreement with the characteristics of faith mentioned in 2 above. This challenges Stark and Glock’s association of orthodoxy with “unquestioning faith”.
4. A very high proportion of Australian Catholic church attenders believe in a God who forgives sin and that God’s plan for the world will work out. The majority of respondents see salvation as a gradual process spanning this life and the next. There is strong support for social ethics, but this is not driven by salvation belief. These findings challenge propositions advanced by both Berger’s study and Stark and Glock’s study relating to the concept of sinful humanity, salvation belief, and social ethics.

## **CONCLUDING DISCUSSION**

In this chapter, Berger’s study and Stark and Glock’s study have been selected as early examples of a model of the sociology of religion that is fashioned by binary-type rationality. The overall premise of the chapter is that such studies, in adopting an either / or approach tend to present faith and reason as dichotomous. In this type of approach religious beliefs need to remain unquestioned. They hang by the tenuous thread of their plausibility and must be bolstered by in-group out-group dynamics.

(This is discussed further in Chapter 5). The implication of this type of approach is that orthodoxy not only precludes openness to reason, but that it also precludes openness to transformation and openness to the “Other”. Such isolation of religious belief from the rhythms of the world appears to reflect an assumption of this world-other world dualism that is also presumed to underscore the content of religious belief *per se*.

The data analysis presented in this chapter has produced findings that cast doubt on the appropriateness of such a model for an understanding of Australian Catholicism. We have found that while most Australian Catholic attenders hold orthodox religious beliefs, they do so in a way that is open to reason, transformation and otherness. Moreover, we have found that, among Australian Catholic attenders, belief orthodoxy is associated with this type of openness.

While analysis of Survey W data shows a high level of belief orthodoxy, analysis of Survey X data shows a high level of ethical attitudes (or, in Stark and Glock’s terminology, “ethicalism”). Taken together then, these two surveys indicate high levels of both orthodoxy and ethicalism. Here there may be some similarity to the American Catholics of Stark and Glock’s study. Unfortunately, as the variables for orthodoxy and ethical attitudes are not both present in the one NCLS survey, it has not been possible to test the relationship between them. However, NCLS Survey V contains the three belief items used in Orthodox Belief Index W and an item relating to parish activity reaching out to the wider community (e.g. community service, welfare, social justice). Although this latter item cannot be regarded as an indicator of ethical *attitudes*,<sup>6</sup> it is perhaps noteworthy that a crosstabulation of this item with an Orthodox Belief Index based on the Survey V belief items shows no sign of an inverse relationship in the case of Australian Catholic attenders.<sup>7</sup> It is doubtful whether the faith of Australian Catholic attenders could be understood in terms of any tendency towards an either / or relationship between orthodoxy and ethicalism.

The openness to transformation that has been referred to as one characteristic of the way most Australian Catholic attenders believe, is also evident in beliefs about sin

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<sup>6</sup> The difference between ethical attitudes and social welfare activity is discussed in Chapter 5.

<sup>7</sup> Survey V data and other data relating to social welfare activity is examined in Chapter 5.

and salvation. Most attenders believe that God forgives sin and the majority see salvation in terms of gradual transformation through God's love and forgiveness. These findings suggest a sense of hopefulness. They suggest the notion of journey and "method of the incarnation" associated with the "organic" mode referred to in Chapter 1. They also suggest the sense of the co-existence of sin and grace and an orientation that spans this-world and the next. The binary mode of Berger's theory does not offer an adequate explanation of these findings.

Earlier in this chapter there was speculation as to whether there is something about the nature of Catholic orthodoxy that is problematic for binary-type explanations. Perhaps there is a hint in the incarnational nature of the fundamental beliefs that are held by most Australian Catholic attenders and the way they are held in terms of openness to reason, transformation and otherness. Perhaps there is an element here of the "incarnational thinking" that was referred to earlier. Together with the high level of support for social ethics, this approach to belief might be seen to be part of a worldview that, as was previously suggested, could be described in terms of the intertwining of faith, hope and love – a worldview that is simultaneously this-worldly and otherworldly.

Indeed, the findings presented in this chapter might be interpreted as supporting what has been termed "the Catholic worldview" described by Dixon as follows:

Catholic teaching is profoundly hopeful. It is not blind to hardship and evil, but is based on the belief that, in the long run, good will triumph over evil. Suffering in this life, however, is not to be disregarded in the hope of eternal reward in the next. On the contrary, Catholic teaching about the human person and its understanding of the mission entrusted to the Church by Jesus means that every effort is to be made to overcome oppression, poverty, disease and other forms of suffering (2005: 12).

It might be expected that this type of worldview would be associated with attitudes that attach importance to the Christian pursuit of justice in this world. If so, there are significant implications for religious engagement in secular society and thus, for the relationship between the religious and the secular. It is doubtful that such relationship could be adequately understood in terms of sociological theories of religion that assume a religious-secular dichotomy and that focus on belief while marginalizing social ethics.

One of the concerns emerging in this chapter is that the two studies referred to do not seem to capture a sense of the Catholic view of humanity. Their stress on the sinfulness of humanity does not fit with the view of humanity as “flawed but loved” implied by the findings presented in this chapter. A more organic approach that allows for human relationships to be seen as a dimension of relationship with God seems to be called for.

The following chapter represents the next stage of our journey into the relationship between the religious and the secular. It will explore the possibilities of cultural analysis to be more attuned to the issue of human relationships. In this type of analysis Catholicism may be viewed in terms of an incarnational symbol system within which the worldview and ethos of Australian Catholic church attenders can be inextricably linked. This parallels a movement away from examination of sociological approaches grounded in instrumental rationality towards examination of approaches more sympathetic to symbolic rationality.

## **Chapter 4**

# **THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE “RELIGIOUS IMAGINATION” FOR THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN “THIS WORLD” AND THE “OTHER WORLD”**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter examines the relevance of the “religious imagination” thesis to the case of Australian Catholics and its implications for the way the relationship between “this world” and the “other world” is understood among Catholics. The main research issue centres on the extent to which various characteristics that have been associated with the “religious imagination” in Catholicism apply to practising Australian Catholics and how these may imply a particular orientation towards “this world” / secular society.

The chapter begins with a review of cultural analysis approaches to religion that view religion as a symbol system. This leads into a consideration of literature relating to the “religious imagination” and an exploration of the compatibility of the “imagination” perspective of religion with a “symbolic” approach to rationality. More specifically, the Christian incarnational symbol system is explored in terms of its possibilities for the understanding of grace and nature, good and evil. Against the assumption that relentless processes of rationalisation have effected a “this world-other world” dualism in all Christian faith traditions, the possibility that a more monistic, incarnational and sacramental Christianity is found among Australian Catholics is investigated. Further, the capacity of an incarnational symbol system to accommodate both this-worldly and other-worldly orientations and to offer a more organic alternative to dualistic thinking is explored. This touches upon the argument that an incarnational approach to humanity may engage humanity in both its “sin” and its “grace” in a sense of hopefulness relating to both this world and the next.

The theoretical discussion then focuses more directly upon the “analogical imagination” and its association with Catholicism in terms of both approach and

content. The Catholic expression of the analogical imagination is discussed in terms of a symbolic / contextual mode of religious understanding (including a symbolic / contextual mode of understanding religious scripture) and other characteristics with which it has been associated, either implicitly or explicitly, in the literature:

Orientation towards immanence; Sacramentality; Concept of a graced humanity; Cultural imbeddedness and diversity; Organic approach to morality and ethics. This is followed by consideration of studies which offer an empirical dimension to the theoretical issues discussed.

The data analysis in this chapter is organized under section headings roughly corresponding to the characteristics of the Catholic expression of the analogical imagination mentioned above. Various survey items are selected as indicators of these characteristics. The initial question to be addressed in each section concerns the extent to which certain characteristics associated with the Catholic expression of the analogical imagination are evident among Australian Catholics. There is then an attempt to assess the extent to which such characteristics are related to an analogical mode of religious understanding that can withstand tendencies towards dualistic thinking. This takes the form of analysis of the relationship between one variable identified as the key indicator of a Catholic analogical mode of understanding and variables representing the other characteristics selected.

In the final discussion, the degree of Australian Catholic openness to “this world” (in both its physical and social manifestations) and the paradoxical way in which Catholics may locate this in an otherworldly context is viewed in terms of the implications of a Catholic analogical imagination for an understanding of the relationship between “this world” and the “other world”.

## **THEORETICAL DISCUSSION**

In Chapter 1 (Perspective) the role of the imagination in human thought processes was raised. We discussed the intimate relationship between images and ideas, the concrete and the abstract, the particular and the universal. Imagination was viewed as providing perspectives for reality. Symbol and narrative were seen to play a vital role in connecting diverse aspects of reality into a meaningful whole and in placing

otherwise isolated elements in context. The metaphorical nature of knowledge was recognised and symbolic rationality was presented as being inclusive of binary rationality. This was followed in the second chapter by expression of concerns about the emphasis on (and influence of) binary rationality in the Weberian sociological tradition. Then, in the third chapter, we examined some later versions of the theory that rationalisation undermines religion. These were challenged by evidence that suggested that, for Australian Catholic attenders, religious faith can be inclusive of reason – that faith goes beyond the purely rational. Such theories also could not adequately explain the finding of co-existence of orthodox belief and openness to the wider society among Catholic attenders.

In the first part of this chapter there will now be an examination of theoretical approaches that, to varying extents, address some of the above-mentioned concerns and that appear to contribute towards a more suitable framework for explanation of the type of findings documented in this research. Reference will be made to the early theories of Bellah and Geertz whose work has been built upon by Greeley, Tracy and others.

### ***RELIGION AS A SYMBOL SYSTEM***

Aware of some of the problems of an overly rationalist approach to the analysis of religion, Bellah (1970: 54) attempts to improve on the work of writers such as Weber by focusing on religion as a symbol system. Bellah argues that faith goes “beyond belief”. He defines religion as “a set of symbolic forms and acts that relate man [sic] to the ultimate conditions of his existence” (Bellah 1970: 21). He sees religion as “that symbolic form through which man [sic] comes to terms with the antinomies of his being...” (1970: 227).

However, like Weber, Bellah appears to view salvation and the individual-God relationship as central to Western religion. Bellah argues that “... on the whole the historic religions as institutionalised had offered a mediated salvation. Either conformity to religious law, or participation in a sacramental system or performance of mystical exercises was necessary for salvation” (Bellah 1964: 368). Yet, he sees these symbols of mediation as somehow disconnected from “the midst of worldly activities” (1964: 368); the mediation seems to apply only to the relationship between

the individual and God. This is possibly due to Bellah's Weberian-type perception of world rejection as the prime characteristic of "historic" religions (cf. Bellah 1964: 360, 374). In this, Bellah may underestimate the potential of the symbols of mediation to connect the meaning system to human relationships and the realities of daily living in "this world". In other words, while focusing on symbols of mediation in religions such as Catholicism, Bellah does not seem to look at them in terms of the extent to which they may allow for the interpenetration of both "this world" and the "other world".

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Working from an anthropological perspective, Geertz (1973: 87-8), like Bellah, is also critical of theoretical constructions of religion in terms of what he describes as "narrowly defined intellectual traditions". He argues that there is a need to develop the cultural dimension of the analysis of religion (Geertz 1973: 89). By "culture" Geertz means the "historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols" (1973: 89). Geertz believes that religion differs from other cultural systems in its formulation of ideas of transcendence (1973: 98). However, he argues that religion can still be analysed as a cultural system in the sense that, like other cultural systems, religion gives meaning to social reality and is also shaped by social reality (1973: 92-3). In his words, "Religion tunes human actions to an envisaged cosmic order and projects images of cosmic order onto the plane of human experience" (Geertz 1973: 90).

Geertz defines a "symbol" as "any object, act, event, quality, or relation which serves as a vehicle for a conception" (1973: 91). He argues that religious symbols enable congruence between "the world as lived and the world as imagined" (1973: 112). Religious symbols express a certain type of order while simultaneously inducing "dispositions"; this provides humans with not only the "ability to comprehend the world, but also, comprehending it, to give a precision to their feeling..." (1973: 104). Geertz believes that most humans find it difficult to leave problems unclarified without attempting to find a way of reconciling them with ordinary experience; this involves accounting for ambiguity (1973:101). As an example, Geertz refers to the religious symbolization of suffering/ injustice that, he argues, involves recognition of

suffering on the human plane along with simultaneous denial of suffering on the cosmic plane (1973:103-8). This variation on the Weberian theme of suffering seems to keep the two planes less distant from each other. According to Geertz, humans move back and forth between the religious perspective and the commonsense perspective of the everyday world that is their paramount reality; in this process, religious dispositions impact on everyday life (1973: 119).

Hence, for Geertz, religious symbols enable humans to manage contrasting ways of looking at the world – to envisage different planes of meaning. In doing this, symbols also function to synthesize a people's metaphysical worldview with their ethos / way of life (Geertz 1973: 90). These two elements of Geertz's model would seem to provide a way of overcoming some of the previously-mentioned limitations of Weberian theory and also offer improvement on Bellah's early approach.

However, there are some aspects of Geertz's model that may need to be tuned more specifically to the purposes of the present research. For example, according to Geertz's model, it is possible that a people's religious worldview could shape their social reality in terms of providing justification for suffering and injustice on the human plane in a way that leads to acceptance of worldly injustice rather than efforts to overcome it. While this may be applicable in some cases, it may not necessarily capture the sense of journey characteristic of some religions. This may be related to the way Geertz sees religious symbolism as *accounting for* ambiguity. There is the possibility that accounting for ambiguity may be interpreted as explaining it away and hence devitalizing it. Geertz says of the religious response to ambiguity: "The effort is not to deny the undeniable... but to deny that there are inexplicable events..." (1973: 108). It is possible that a denial of the inexplicable can be related to a type of closing off – a loss of mystery – an objectified artificial explicability. This way of treating ambiguity may not be entirely appropriate to a religion such as Catholicism.

It may be the case that Geertz's idea of moving back and forth between the different planes of meaning tends to place them in an either / or relationship. Had Geertz envisaged another way in which the planes of meaning could be held together, there may have been more room for ambiguity.

## ***THE RELIGIOUS IMAGINATION***

Building on the early work of Geertz, Greeley defines a symbol as “a picture, an image, a story (called a ‘myth’), an act of the creative imagination that tries to communicate not merely to our intellects but to our emotions and to our whole persons” (1973: 59). This definition would seem to be even more holistic than Geertz’s definition. Moreover, for Greeley, religion is “a symbol system that illumines the ambiguity of life and expresses its ultimate meaning...” (1973: 13). The notion of illumining ambiguity rather than accounting for it might seem to allow a greater sense of openness around ambiguity than is offered by Geertz’s model.

Greeley relates the concept of symbol to Kubie’s idea of “the preconscious” – the type of figurative and allegorical mentation that expresses nuances of thought and feeling – “Here every coded signal has many overlapping meanings, and every item of data from the world of experience has many coded representatives” (Kubie cited in Greeley 1981: 13). Greeley argues that “The symbol is filled with paradox...one has not done full justice to a symbol by merely reducing it to a prose statement” (1973: 62). In other words, the ambiguity associated with symbols allows for paradox.

For Greeley, symbols are grounded in the human experience of *reality*. He believes that certain realities (e.g. fire, the sun, water, the moon, oil, love, sex, marriage, death, community) “seem especially likely to trigger grace experiences for many human beings” which “impact on the senses” and are then filtered through the imagination (1981: 9-10). He argues that “the religious imagination produces the symbols which resonate with the reality that has been experienced” – likening the process to “locking on” to the outside world through the images uncovered (Greeley 1981: 16).

According to Greeley, religious symbols are implicitly narrative images prior to becoming propositions (1981: 4-5). Yet symbols and propositions are intimately related in the sense that “Intellect examines experience...” (1981: 2). Greeley argues that “Because we are reflective beings, we must reflect on our religious experiences and narrative symbols and critique them with the powers of human reason” (2000:79). On the level of the religious tradition, both the cognitive superstructure (e.g. doctrine) and the experiential and narrative infrastructure are regarded as essential (Greeley

2000: 4). However, he believes that a religious heritage is passed on primarily through human storytelling at the imaginative level (Greeley 2000: 174-5).

This is related to Greeley's (1981: 18) belief that the most important human experience of reality is that of human relationships. He sees interpersonal factors as a dominant influence on people's religious lives (1981: 239) and proposes the thesis that "religious imagination is shaped by relationships" (1981: 72). For Greeley,

...a religious sensibility is passed on by storytellers, most of whom are not aware that they are telling stories because their narratives reside more in who they are and what they do rather than in what they say...The stories are told by the way in which they react to the ordinary and especially the extraordinary events of life – failure, disappointment, suffering, injustice, death, success, joy, love, intense pleasure, marriage, birth (Greeley 2000: 175).

Moreover, this is seen to have social implications: "a person's intimately personal religious story and images of God" are connected to his / her social attitudes (Greeley 1981: 117). Indeed, Greeley argues that religious symbols can "provide the motivation, the goals and the ideals for social reconstruction" (1973: 129).

Furthermore, by emphasizing that all human experiences – including human relationships – are open to ambiguity, Greeley's work points to the relevance of symbol in approaching the ambiguity of human diversity and issues such as living "with those who are different from us" (Greeley 1973: 117; 121). In other words, religious symbolism can have implications for social attitudes.

Greeley's approach to religion as a symbol system, then, allows for ambiguity and paradox. Symbols are seen to be grounded in reality and human relationships and, while they are regarded as anterior to rational propositions, they are also seen as complementary to them. This appears to bring an added dimension to Geertz's (1973) argument that symbols synthesize worldview and ethos for, if religious symbol is associated with "the experience of gratuity and the encounter with The Other" (Greeley 1981: 8), it follows that there may be certain implications for attitudes towards "The Other" expressed as social ethics.

If Greeley's approach to religion is compared to Weber's approach (see Chapter 2), several significant differences become apparent. Greeley attaches more importance to the relationship between sensory experience and intellectual conceptualisation than

does Weber. Similarly, Greeley places more emphasis on the relationship between narrative images / symbols and rational propositions. Whereas Weber downplayed the human imagination, Greeley presents it as the key to religious understanding. Moreover, for Greeley, the religious imagination is both a reflection of and an expression of human relationships – enabling human relationships to be perceived as a dimension of personal relationship with God. This is a long way from any view of the individual-God relationship that isolates it from human society and the dynamics of everyday life.

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Many of the themes articulated by Greeley find support in the work of other authors such as Tracy and Lynch who, like Greeley, write as both social commentators making claims about the beliefs and practices of Catholics in particular societies and also as theologians advancing claims about a Catholicism that is true to its sources in scripture, Catholic theology, and the magisterium.

Like Greeley, Tracy (1981: 7) also draws upon Geertz's cultural analysis approach to religion and argues for recognition of the importance of symbolic expressions in human culture. Tracy shares Greeley's view that the symbol used in the imagination resonates with the human experience of reality giving rise to thought which then returns reflectively to the symbol. Tracy points to the particularity of concrete reality and the way that symbols can unite that particularity with universality (Tracy 1981). In describing the "classic" symbols of religious culture, Tracy argues that they offer "experiences of both participation in reality and distancing from reality" (1981: 173). In this, Tracy stresses the paradoxical nature of the mediation of universality through particularity (1989: 29, 31).

Like both Greeley and Tracy, Lynch grounds the symbols of the imagination in reality. He believes that imagination feeds on reality and must keep returning to it (Lynch 1974: 200). The real and the ideal need to be kept in relationship. In similar fashion to Tracy, Lynch sees the imagination as providing for the "interpenetration of unity and multiplicity, sameness and difference" – allowing apparent contraries to co-

exist (Lynch 1960:143). The perspective and context given by the imagination are seen to allow for such paradox.

Carroll (2002) also links symbol and paradox. He observes that the metaphorical aspect of symbol facilitates the imagination of more than one perspective / level of understanding and thereby allows for paradox (Carroll 2002: 95). To the extent that metaphor hints at another reality rather than attempts to grasp it objectively, it resists precision – leaving room for ambiguity. Similarly, the argument that symbols can be inclusive of ambiguity is advanced by Hanegraaf (1999: 147) who points out that the contextuality of symbols ensures that their meaning is not restricted to the literal level.

The importance of narrative symbols in this process of contextualisation is stressed by many authors. For example, Lynch (1974: 243) argues that narrative symbols / stories do not leave facts scattered but join them through contextuality. Making a similar point, Hanegraaf (1999: 154) draws out the implication that, in this sense, it is symbols such as images and stories rather than reasoned beliefs that give coherence to religious tradition. Building on this, Hanegraaf argues that “the doctrines and theologies of a given religion are ultimately far less important to preserving religious community in space and over time, than the fundamental images and stories shared by its members” (1999: 148). This type of argument is also advanced by Metz (1989: 85) and supports Greeley’s position that symbols can be more important than doctrine in preserving religious community over time.

Hence, there is a fair amount of support for Greeley’s position on the grounding of symbols in the human experience of reality, the linking of the particular and the universal in symbol, the role of symbol in allowing ambiguity and paradox, and the greater importance of symbols, relative to propositions, in the communal tradition.

### ***SYMBOLIC RATIONALITY***

As was indicated in Chapter 1, Greeley’s approach has been described as exemplifying “symbolic rationality”. The relevance of this approach to the present research lies in the way an understanding of symbol as enabling the co-existence of different planes of meaning – and hence emphasising paradox without obviating the exercise of reason – allows for the holding together of apparent opposites.

It would appear that the role of paradox in rationality is increasingly under discussion. For example, Sorenson argues that “Paradoxes have recently stimulated revisions in established theories of rationality” (2004: 263). He associates the power of paradox with its “pain” of contradiction and he presents the possibility of the holding of a “set of propositions that are individually plausible but jointly inconsistent” (Sorenson 2004: 259).

This is compatible with Rose’s (1992) emphasis on the importance of paradox and multi-dimensional awareness in the approach to the “incorporation of contraries”. She sees apparent dichotomies as not necessarily oppositions, “but positions that can be experienced simultaneously” (1992: 15). For Rose, the challenge is to go beyond “one-dimensional presentations of adversaries...” in the human quest for understanding (1992: 8).

This also fits with Reich’s (2002) notion of “complementarity thinking”<sup>1</sup> whereby phenomena can be viewed in terms of multiple levels – allowing apparent opposites to be held together.

In varying ways, Sorenson, Rose, Reich and others hint at the approach that has been referred to in this thesis as “symbolic rationality”. Their combined work leaves us with an important insight: If, instead of viewing apparent opposites as being located at either end of the one dimension / continuum (and hence mutually exclusive), we view them as belonging to different dimensions of a singular reality, it is possible to hold them simultaneously.

The relevance of this insight to the present research is that the approach of symbolic rationality may allow for the holding together of opposites such as “this world” and “other world”, nature and grace, secular and religious. When considered in the context of an exploration of religion as a symbol system, it lends added emphasis to the importance of symbol in religious sensibility. Indeed, in such a context, the perspective of symbolic rationality leads easily to a focus on the “imagination” of

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<sup>1</sup> Referred to in Chapter 1

religion. This becomes apparent in the following exploration of the Christian symbol system.

### ***THE CHRISTIAN SYMBOL SYSTEM***

The observations about religious symbolism made by Greeley and others appear to be especially applicable to the Christian incarnational symbol system.

The central symbol of Christianity is that of Christ as both fully human and fully divine, such that Christianity is foundationally rooted in a human-divine paradox. It seems particularly apt, then, to consider the Christian symbol system in terms of a “religious imagination” that is constituted in metaphor and paradox. In keeping with this, the topic will be approached through reference to commentaries that appear to exemplify symbolic rationality. Certain theological considerations that appear to be relevant will not be excluded from the discussion. The ultimate aim of the discussion, however, is to move towards consideration of issues relating to the Christian symbol system, and specifically Catholicism, which lend themselves to empirical analysis of certain aspects of the relationship between worldview and ethos.

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The importance of narrative symbols and imagination in Christianity is emphasized by Balasuriya (2002: 6) who points out that Jesus taught mainly in parables and stories. He argues that what can be known of God “is necessarily expressed only in analogies and metaphorical language” (Balasuriya 2005a). He argues against a “black and white” approach in theology and, instead, advocates an approach of “‘both/and’ rather than ‘either/or’” that accepts that “opposites may be part of the whole, that there can be various shades of colour, different routes to the mountain top...” (Balasuriya 2005b).

As has been discussed in this chapter, the use of imagination has been associated with appreciation of the paradoxical element of religion. Its applicability to Christianity, in particular, is illustrated by Lynch who describes the Christian paradox in terms of analogy as follows:

...it is in Christ we come to the fullest possible understanding of what analogy means in the fullest concrete, the facing relentlessly into the two poles of the same and the different and the interpenetrating reconciliation of the two contraries (Lynch 1960: 158).

In other words, the Christian incarnational symbol system may have the potential to transcend the limits of binary rationality in terms of the imagination of the holding together of humanity and divinity.

Yet this perspective is not new. Some of the themes referred to in this chapter have long been reflected upon specifically in relation to the Christian symbol system. For instance, as the following paragraphs indicate, Chesterton (1908) at once stresses the priority of Christian narrative symbol over rational objectification, regards the Christian paradox as resonating with the human experience of reality, and explicates its ethical implications.

Chesterton argues that, in Christianity, “existence is a *story* which may end up in any way” (1908: 233). In arguing for the priority of narrative symbol over logic in Christianity, he contrasts poetry which “floats easily in an infinite sea” with reason which “seeks to cross the infinite sea, and so make it finite” (1908: 16). In a further comparison, Chesterton observes that “The poet only asks to get his head into the heavens. It is the logician who seeks to get the heavens into his head” (1908: 16). Chesterton emphasizes the organic aspect of human thought: “Thinking means connecting things, and stops if they cannot be connected” (1908: 47). In his assessment, “There is a thought that stops thought. That is the only thought that ought to be stopped” (1908: 44). According to Chesterton’s line of argument, “All descriptions of the creating or sustaining principle in things must be metaphorical” (1908: 125).

The Christian paradox of divinity and humanity is regarded by Chesterton as tapping into the human mode of perception:

The ordinary man [sic]...has permitted the twilight...If he saw two truths that seemed to contradict each other, he would take the two truths and the contradiction along with them. His spiritual sight is stereoscopic, like his physical sight: he sees two different pictures at once and yet sees all the better for that...It is exactly this balance of apparent contradictions that has been the whole buoyancy of the healthy man (Chesterton 1908: 35).

Chesterton sees this type of balance as resonating with Christianity's "apparently mystical talent for combining that which seemed inconsistent" (1908: 138). He stresses that this combination is central in orthodox theology and points to the orthodox insistence "that Christ was not a being apart from God and man... but both things at once and both things thoroughly, very man and very God" (1908: 151-152). Chesterton describes Christianity as a "...paradox whereby two opposite passions may blaze beside each other" (1908: 252).<sup>2</sup>

According to Chesterton (1908: 154), this type of "duplex passion" is the Christian key to ethics. It relates to the paradox of charity which involves "loving unloveable people" (1908: 157). Chesterton argues that this paradox is allowed because Christianity "...divided the crime from the criminal. The criminal we must forgive... The crime we must not forgive at all" (1908:158). Chesterton sees the implication as being that "... Christian morals have always said to the man [sic], not that he would lose his soul, but that he must take care that he didn't" (1908: 233). Chesterton's perspective on Christian salvation is that Christianity "concentrates on the man [sic] at the cross-roads" (1908: 233).

Chesterton's approach to Christianity, then, emphasizes metaphor as opposed to objectification. He views orthodoxy in terms of paradox and locates salvation within a paradox of charity. This tends both to present charity as integral to orthodoxy and also to militate against a finite approach to salvation. This Christian orthodoxy is rather different to that assumed by the theories referred to in Chapter 3 which could not adequately account for the profile of orthodoxy and attitudes towards salvation among a core majority of Australian Catholic attenders.

Indeed, it is possible that the type of perspective advanced by Chesterton, Balasuriya and other Christian thinkers that focuses on Christianity as a symbol system may offer a more appropriate framework for an understanding of the worldview and ethos of a majority of Australian Catholic church attenders. The Catholic tradition is rich in symbol and culture and some argue that this intensifies the characteristics that have

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<sup>2</sup> He points out that the apparent opposites are not really inconsistent, but "hard to hold simultaneously" (1908: 252).

been associated by the likes of the authors reviewed here with the incarnational foundation of Christianity. Hence, we continue to explore this perspective in terms of its relevance to examining the beliefs and practices of Catholics.

### ***THE ANALOGICAL IMAGINATION IN CATHOLICISM***

The type of perspective on the Christian symbol system that has just been examined might be described as reflecting what was referred to in Chapter 1 as the “analogical imagination”. Some argue that this type of imagination is especially relevant to Catholicism and that approaches compatible with this imagination are most suited to uncover the complexities of Catholicism – both theological and as it is lived.<sup>3</sup>

Lynch (1960) distinguishes the analogical imagination from both univocal and equivocal ways of thinking. According to Lynch (1960: 118), the univocal tendency is towards the reduction of particularity and variety into a unity of sameness whereas the equivocal tendency is towards the perception of experience in isolation, disconnected from any sense of unity. In Lynch’s words, “With the univocal idea we saw how sameness crushed the reality and diversity out of being; with the equivocal, difference, and only difference, reigns everywhere. Everything is a private world...” (1960: 134). He argues that “somewhere in between the two forms... (the univocal as a pure unity or sameness and the equivocal as a pure, ununified diversity) lies analogy and the analogical imagination” (1960: 136). As such, he believes that the analogical imagination can withstand both the univocal tendency towards absolutism as well as the equivocal tendency towards privatism and relativism. In Lynch’s view, the “ability to keep many relative views together in one picture” goes beyond solipsism in that the human being “puts on the minds of others” in a “public act of thinking and imagining” that involves “many acts of trust and faith” (1974: 249). Ultimately, Lynch relates this to the type of imagination and hope that can leave the “final judgement to God” (1974: 256). This would appear to be an important aspect of the analogical imagination. Lynch (1960: 164) believes that such aspects of the analogical imagination tend to be stronger in Catholicism than in other forms of Christianity such as evangelical Protestantism.

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<sup>3</sup> This does not necessarily imply, however, that the analogical imagination is exclusive to Catholics or, indeed, that all Catholics share it.

Tracy (1981) articulates a similar view to Lynch. He regards the analogical imagination as functioning in a way that allows pluralism “without forfeiting the need for common criteria of meaning and truth” (Tracy 1981: x). Tracy argues that it is not necessary to

absolutize the claims of any religion in order to realize that any major tradition does disclose in its symbols and in its reflections upon those symbols (i.e. its theologies) some fundamental vision of the meaning of individual and communal existence providing disclosive and transformative possibilities for the whole society (Tracy 1981: 10).

Tracy regards the analogical imagination as a way in which the complexities of social reality can be addressed without falling into either of the extremes of authoritarianism or a “lazy pluralism contenting itself with sharing private stories” (1981: 6).

According to Tracy, it is because the analogical imagination contains within it a sense of the dialectical that it can withstand tendencies to either control or to slacken (1981: 409, 413). In his view, the interpretation of religious texts in the light of this type of imagination allows for the social and public dimension of religious faith to be present (1981: 173ff).

While Lynch and Tracy address their arguments principally at a theological level, the possibility that they may have implications for an understanding of the way ordinary Catholics approach their faith deserves consideration. Indeed, various authors have examined the role of the analogical type of imagination in Catholicism. The characteristics that have been associated with the Catholic expression of this imagination include: a symbolic / contextual mode of understanding scripture; an orientation towards immanence; sacramentality; the concept of a graced humanity; cultural imbeddedness and diversity; and an organic approach to morality and ethics.

### **Symbolic / contextual mode of understanding scripture**

A key element of the analogical imagination identified in the literature is that of an orientation towards a symbolic / contextual mode of religious understanding. One form that this can take is that of a mode of understanding religious scripture that is sensitive to symbol / metaphor, context and tradition.

The value placed upon symbol / metaphor in addition to logic that was articulated by Chesterton as characteristic of Christianity, is regarded by some authors as being

intensified in Catholicism. Some make their points through comparison with the Protestant tradition. For example, Wuthnow observes that the thinkers of the Protestant Reformation regarded the imagination with suspicion and instead attempted to focus on “rational interpretations of the Bible” (2003: 184). The extent to which such interpretations of the Bible may become separated from considerations of context and tradition is regarded as a matter of crucial importance by some authors. Bocock (1973: 34), for instance, argues that the acceptance of Church tradition as a source of teaching in addition to the Bible can be critical in distinguishing between different types of Christianity. James Carroll makes the related point that Luther

...appealed to the ultimate authority of the Bible, as if the texts preceded the community that reads them. But the Catholic position was, and remains, that the community, albeit an inspired one, produced those texts as inspired texts, and they are nothing without the readers who take them in (2002: 44).

Similarly, Coleridge (2002) observes that the Catholic view is that scripture alone is not enough – interpretation, communally negotiated, is needed.

For Tracy, Schineller and others, interpretation of the Bible in the light of religious culture and tradition can be accompanied by an appreciation of ambiguity, context, and diversity. This was discussed in Chapter 1 in reference to the comments by Tracy (1989: 29) and Schineller (1989:102) on the complementarity of diversity within Christian scripture. Interpretation of scripture within culture and tradition also fits with Greeley’s (2000: 175) emphasis on the importance of human storytelling in religious sensibility.

This raises certain questions for the present research. Are Australian Catholics inclined to adopt a cultural / traditional approach to scripture that obviates literalism? If so, is such an approach compatible with the operation of more than one level of understanding in the sense that it can be associated with a type of openness to the ambiguities of reality? Is there a relationship between the mode of understanding scripture and other characteristics that, as will be seen, have been attributed to the Catholic expression of the analogical imagination – such as certain attitudes towards creation, sacramentality, humanity, diversity, and morality / ethics? Such questions are refined and addressed in the empirical part of this chapter. The findings are viewed in terms of their relevance to the argument that a Catholic analogical

imagination may be consistent with an orientation that is both this-worldly and otherworldly.

### **Orientation towards immanence**

Another characteristic of the type of imagination found among Catholics that is referred to in the literature is an orientation towards immanence (and therefore to transcendence as well). This can be seen to go to the heart of the relationship between “this world” and the “other world”. An orientation towards immanence among Catholics could bear upon the issue of the way the world is viewed and hence have implications for the way the relationship between “this world” and the “other world” is understood.

For example, Lakeland observes that

Catholic theology is both creationist and incarnational. These two principles, stressing the world as God’s work and the enfleshment of God in earthly reality, cannot but lead to a positive evaluation of the world...Nature is graced...and the world is always already sacred (2002: 150-1).

Lakeland goes on to argue that “The relationship between secular and sacred...is much like that between nature and grace... Just as we can speak of a graced nature, so we can also talk of a secular that is always already sacred” (2002: 151).

Lakeland’s argument spells out the relevance of a Catholic view of the sacredness of nature for the classical construction of a “nature-grace” dichotomy as reflecting a “this world - other world” dichotomy (referred to in Chapter 1). A propensity to see the sacred in nature could be seen to challenge such dualistic construction. This will be explored further in the empirical section of the chapter through examination of Australian Catholic attenders’ attitudes / sensibilities towards nature and creation.

### **Sacramentality**

A propensity to see the sacred in nature also implies a sense of sacramentality. Initially, it may be helpful to view this in terms of the overall Catholic sense of sacrament. According to Dixon,

In its broadest sense, a sacrament can be thought of as any way at all in which a person experiences the loving presence of God: personal relationships, the beauty of

creation, music or religious services are just some examples of the countless things which could at times be sacramental (2005: 3).

In other words, sacrament can be seen in terms of an incarnational mode of relationship with God.

The Catholic understanding of sacrament in the formal sense is explained by Dixon as follows:

... the principal use of the word sacrament is in relation to seven major rituals which proclaim and celebrate the presence of God. These are formal community events, many associated with important stages in life. These seven sacraments can be considered to be of three types: sacraments of initiation, sacraments of healing, and sacraments of service. The sacrament of Eucharist belongs to all three groups (2005: 14).<sup>4</sup>

Some theological and historical studies have associated sacramentality with the overcoming of duality. While theological reflection per se may be outside the scope of this thesis, in the interests of deepening understanding of the type of imagination found in Catholicism and of refining the research questions, it is considered appropriate to make some reference to such theological approaches.

According to Teilhard de Chardin, the concept of human-divine contact can be approached in terms of what he refers to as “the divine *milieu*” (1960: 117). He describes this *milieu* as having “immense enchantment” (1960: 117) and it is in terms of this *milieu* that he approaches that which he regards as mystical in Catholicism: “Incarnation”, “Eucharist” and the belief that “The kingdom of God is within us” (1960: 124; 128). De Chardin presents the Eucharist as the realization of the Incarnation in the individual (1960: 124) and he relates this to the mystical aspiration “*to be united* (that is, to become the other) *while remaining oneself*” (emphasis in original) (1960: 116). For de Chardin, it is in this sense that “the substantial *one* and the created *many*” (emphasis in original) can be viewed as a whole (1960: 122). In de Chardin’s view, it is in this way that the *milieu* “assembles and harmonises within itself qualities which appear to us to be contradictory” (1960: 113). He relates this to a type of multidimensional awareness; he considers that it is an error “to confuse the

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<sup>4</sup> The centrality of the sacrament of Eucharist to Catholicism is also reflected in the way that the Eucharistic celebration is the focus of the Catholic Mass. The Eucharistic liturgy explicates the Catholic belief that in memory of the Last Supper, when bread and wine are consecrated, they become the body and blood of Christ.

different planes of the world, and consequently to mix up their activities” (de Chardin 1960: 117). This resonates with the Catholic imagination of the holding together of apparent opposites that has been referred to previously in this chapter. It fits with the understanding of the “opposites” as belonging to different dimensions which can be experienced simultaneously rather than as being located at either end of the one dimension / continuum. Moreover, de Chardin’s presentation of the Eucharist in terms of this wholeness of apparent opposites is integrally related to the notion of “communal convergence” (1960:144) intensified through “love for one’s neighbour” (1960: 143).

Writing from within the Anglo-catholic tradition, Pickstock (2001) has also associated sacramentality with the overcoming of duality. Pickstock (2001: 92) presents an understanding of the Eucharist in terms of the overcoming of the dichotomy of presence and absence in which there are implications for the human being in community. In Reno’s analysis of Pickstock’s early work, this type of understanding refers to the way “in which the human subject remains identifiable even when incorporated” (2000: 4). It is described as follows:

The glue that holds us together, our identity as discrete individuals with personal projects, is the same glue that holds us together as a community in common worship. The one intensifies rather than diminishes the other (Reno 2000: 5).

This indicates the holding together of the apparent opposites of individual and community through the Eucharistic celebration. As Reno observes, this is seen to have social implications: “...the Christian vision necessarily gathers up all of human life into its analysis, looking toward a transformed way of living” (2000: 5). In other words, from this perspective, sacramentality, the overcoming of opposites, and love of the “other” are all intimately connected. In this sense, there are strong similarities with the work of de Chardin.

Writing from a more historical perspective, Bock (1973) points to a possible link between the overcoming of duality, sacramental ritual, and social ethics. Bock’s (1973: 39) study of a particular confluence of movements in nineteenth century Anglo-catholicism suggests that sacramental ritual linked to incarnational social theology was conducive to support for socialism. Bock argues that this was also associated with the overcoming of dualism:

[The] process of moving away from a simple dualistic view of there being two worlds, an empirical one and a supernatural one...was present among the catholic socialists...However, it should be pointed out that most of the catholics of the period considered they were reviving a lost understanding of the Faith. Dualism may well be more recent than some think, and a temporary phase at that (1973: 45).<sup>5</sup>

Hence, the disparate works of de Chardin, Pickstock, and Bocock all suggest some type of connection between the transcendence of dualism, sacramentality, and openness to the social dimension.

Taken together, these works provide a different view of sacrament to the view advanced by Weber (referred to in Chapter 2). While Weber (1922/1969: 318-9) believed that sacrament routinized personal charisma thus weakening the human-divine relationship, theologians such as de Chardin and Pickstock see sacrament as intensifying this relationship. While Weber (1922/1966: 25-30) tended to associate sacrament with external priestly control, de Chardin and Pickstock point to its innerness / mysticism. While, for Weber, the “enchantment” of sacrament precluded rationality, de Chardin associates this enchantment with a type of multidimensional awareness that resonates with the core rationality addressed by Sorenson, Rose, and Reich and which has been referred to in this thesis as symbolic rationality. De Chardin’s work implies that enchantment and rationality are not mutually exclusive – that these apparent opposites can co-exist. While Weber (1915/1967: 290) argued that the notion of sacramental grace devalued action in the world, de Chardin, Pickstock, and Bocock have all, in some way, associated sacrament with community – having implications for social engagement.

The claims by de Chardin, Pickstock and Bocock are relevant to examination of the type of imagination expressed by Catholics. In the present research there will be an attempt to establish whether they are validated in surveys of ordinary Australian Catholics. If sacramentality can be associated with the holding of opposites and the deepening of an incarnational sensibility, we might ask whether sacramentality is part of the nexus of characteristics that have been described as being associated with the type of imagination said to be typical of Catholics. Is there a tendency among Australian Catholics to experience the world / society / daily life in a sacramental

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<sup>5</sup> The “lost understanding” that transcended dualism presumably relates to Roman Catholicism.

way? Is there a relationship between mode of religious understanding and sacramental sensibility? Questions such as these will be addressed in the empirical part of the chapter.

### **Concept of a graced humanity**

The sections on immanence and sacramentality each point towards another characteristic of the type of imagination said to be found among Catholics: the concept of a graced humanity.

In the type of commentary that focuses on the immanence aspect of the Catholic expression of the analogical imagination, the positive value placed upon nature is perceived as extending to humanity and human society. This comes together with the openness towards humanity that has just been portrayed as being associated with a sacramental type of human-divine relationship.

In Greeley's account, the type of imagination found among Catholics refers to both a graced nature and a graced humanity. Greeley believes that there is a "sacralizing tendency in the human condition" (1969: 11). For Greeley, the concrete experience of loving goodness within humanity can be interpreted in terms of pointing towards that which is sacred. He argues that,

While nonhuman objects, such as fire, water, sunset, and mountain, may stir up experiences of grace, loving goodness is mostly perceived through relationships with other humans. We are the principal sacrament, the principal sign, the principal symbols through which other persons encounter grace and hope validated, just as they are the principal sacrament, the meaning base, and validating hope for us. Ultimate loving goodness, if it does indeed reveal itself, seems to reveal itself mostly through proximate loving goodness (Greeley 1981: 18).<sup>6</sup>

In this interpretation, the particularity of human relationships appears as a context for universal love. It is another reflection of the type of holding together of apparent opposites that has been associated with the analogical imagination.

The significance for the perception of human society of this type of approach to the human-divine relationship is articulated by Lynch as follows:

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<sup>6</sup> It is noted that Greeley speaks with two voices: as a Catholic theologian and as a sociologist of religion. One reading of Greeley's (1981) work sees it as an attempt to bring the two voices together.

...the Catholic imagination does not force me to imagine that at the end I must free myself from all human society to unite myself with God. Rather, it helps me to imagine that once I have embarked on a good thing with all its concreteness (here it is society), I can and must carry it with me all the way into the heart of the unimaginable (1960:164).

In the above commentaries, Greeley and Lynch each describe the Catholic imagining of human social relationship as an aspect of the holding together of the human and the divine. It is an example of the characterisation of a Catholic type of imagination as being grounded in human culture and community. Such grounding, as Greeley implies, is seen to be intimately associated with love of the “Other”. In this sense, it would seem possible that a Catholic expression of the analogical imagination may embrace a religious worldview that is inextricably linked to an ethos oriented towards humanity / the “Other”.

These claims about the way in which Catholic incarnational theology predisposes Catholics towards openness to the world as part of their salvation journey will be explored in analysis of survey data about the actual beliefs and orientations of ordinary Australian Catholics. We will address the question of whether practising Australian Catholics display attitudes / sensibilities towards humanity consistent with the foregoing arguments about a Catholic orientation towards the “Other”. For example, do such Catholics display an inclination to view humanity as God’s creation / as being created in God’s image? How open are they to experiencing a sense of peace / a sense of God in situations of human interaction? How open are Australian Catholics towards the “other” in society? Questions such as these will be explored in the empirical section of the chapter. The extent to which Australian Catholics’ worldview and ethos may be oriented towards humanity and the human condition in “this world” is an issue that has relevance for the perception of the relationship between “this world” and the “other world”.

### **Cultural imbeddedness and diversity**

The characterisation of a Catholic type of imagination as being open to immanence, sacramentality, and humanity and as being grounded in human culture is consistent with another characteristic that has been attributed to this imagination – i.e. an appreciation of cultural particularity and diversity.

In a similar way to Lakeland (2002), Tracy (1981 and 1989) sees the most important implication of the Christian symbol system for Catholicism as the recognition of grace. According to Tracy, “A recognition of the all pervasive reality of grace, of the need to focus upon every particular manifestation in the light of” the incarnation is the “vision that forms something like a ‘second sense’ in Catholics for appreciating the local, the concrete, the particular” (1989: 30). This suggests that the notion of a graced world is seen to influence not only *what* Catholics believe but also *how* they believe.

Carroll observes that the Catholic propensity to see the sacred as immanent in “this world” predisposes Catholics to “‘think about’ God using metaphors drawn from everyday life” (Carroll 2003: 7).<sup>7</sup> In this sense, the imagination and cultural imbeddedness of Catholicism can be seen to have implications for ways of viewing “the world” – especially in terms of ambiguity, contextuality, diversity and otherness.

In explicating the relevance of the “concrete universal” paradox for Catholicism, Tracy points out that while the great symbols of Catholicism are culturally transcending, universality is enculturated “in each particular culture in accordance with its particularity. Catholicism, at its best, has always acknowledged this” (1989: 31). Tracy observes that

Catholics know, almost as a second instinct, that one reaches the concrete whole – ‘the universal’ – only in and through the journey into one’s particularity – this family, this people, this locality, this local church, community, folk, heritage (1989: 30).

Further, he argues that “Catholic Christianity is most faithful to its very catholicity by affirming the common universality mediated through particularity” (Tracy 1989: 31).

For Arrupe, such a positive approach to particularity is associated with

the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question, but becomes a principle that animates, directs, and unifies the culture, transforming and remaking it so as to bring about a new creation (Arrupe cited in Schineller 1989: 98).

This implies an integral relationship between cultural diversity and catholicity. Indeed, according to Schineller, groundedness in human culture “...is the only

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<sup>7</sup> Carroll is consciously building on Greeley’s argument here as part of his analysis of localised Catholic narrative traditions.

possible way to full catholicity” (1989: 100). In his assessment, the paradoxical relationship between particularity and universality is best described in terms of “complementarity” (Schineller 1989: 101). He supports the view that when apparent opposites (such as particularity and universality) are held together as complementary, there is a richer unity (Schineller 1989: 105). He argues that it is “Unity through complementarity” (1989: 100) that underlies the interpretation of catholicity as “the holding together of opposites” (Dulles cited in Schineller 1989: 105).

In a similar way, Michael Carroll (2003) addresses the paradox of unity and diversity. He believes that the view that the sacred can be immanent in all the various aspects of this world influences the Catholic approach to diversity:

It is the fact that Catholics are predisposed (given their belief in immanence) to see a common sacredness lying beneath all aspects of creation, no matter how diverse, which gives rise ... to the general cognitive predisposition ... to emphasize diversity and commonality simultaneously. Among Catholics, in other words, the experience of living in a world characterized by a diversity that they can see and by an underlying ‘sameness’ that they cannot see predisposes them to similarly emphasize diversity and an underlying sameness... (Carroll 2003: 8).

Carroll (2003: 4-7) points not only to the diversity of thought among Catholic “elites” but also to the diversity among “non-elite” popular Catholic traditions – e.g. the plurality of localized versions of the Madonna in various regions of the Catholic world, the plurality of cults dedicated to saints, etc. Carroll argues that

...notwithstanding the tremendous diversity that exists ... in the Catholic tradition at the level of conscious thought (among both elites and non-elites), this diversity has always coexisted with a sense that at some deep level there is an underlying sameness and similarity that binds together all Catholics (2003: 4).

Carroll challenges the perception of Catholic uniformity (as distinct from unity) emanating from the following type of account (by Durkheim):

The Catholic accepts his faith ready made, without scrutiny...A whole hierarchical system of authority is devised, with marvellous ingenuity to render tradition invariable. All *variation* [emphasis in original] is abhorrent to Catholic thought.... (Durkheim cited in Carroll 2003: 2).

Carroll responds to such statements by pointing out that Durkheim’s judgment was made during a period when the Catholic Church was reacting to modernism and, as such, “can be seen as a product of the times” (2003: 2). Carroll’s position is that this

should not overshadow “the rich diversity that has always existed within the Catholic tradition” (2003: 2).<sup>8</sup>

Carroll argues that the Catholic imagination of immanence and diversity represents a fundamental distinction between Catholicism and Protestantism. He endorses Massa’s observation that, for Catholics,

the created world embodies and sacramentally discloses the Holy...[The Protestant tradition by contrast] emphasizes...[the] infinite qualitative difference between this world and God’s kingdom, between the human and the divine... (Massa 2001 cited in Carroll 2003: 8).

Ultimately, then, Carroll’s argument links the issue of diversity within the Catholic tradition with the Catholic perception of diversity per se through the elements of immanence and sacramentality associated with a type of imagination found in Catholicism. The suggestion is that not only are Catholics inclined to view different levels of meaning simultaneously, but also that Catholics are open to view the diversity of “this world” in a positive – even sacramental – way.

For the purposes of this research, this type of argument raises the question of how Australian Catholics view diversity. How open are they to the “otherness” of human diversity, religious diversity, and so on? Are there any indications that diversity is viewed positively by Australian Catholics? Is there any relationship between Australian Catholics’ mode of religious understanding and the way they view diversity? These questions will be explored in the empirical section of the chapter. A propensity of Catholics to see unity in diversity could have implications for the “other world - this world” construction<sup>9</sup>, and, by extension, for the sacred-secular construction.

### **Organic approach to morality and ethics**

So far, the sections on immanence, sacramentality, humanity, and diversity have all been associated with a type of worldview that implies an ethos of openness to the “other” in some way. Some authors explicate this type of Catholic worldview and ethos in terms of its implications for morality and social ethics.

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<sup>8</sup> Characteristics of the institutional dimension of the Catholic Church in Australia are referred to in Chapter 5.

<sup>9</sup> As discussed in Chapter 1, in the classical construction, the “unity-diversity” relationship could be seen to reflect the “other world-this world” relationship.

Bocock contrasts the Catholic-type view of the world as graced against the view in which “the utopian aspects of the Christian faith are projected into the afterlife” and in which “this world” is seen as “a world of human sinfulness” (1973: 45). He observes that from the latter perspective it may be possible to live “without any great strain towards the actual society and the condition of people in it” because there is “no point in working for a structural change in the society” (Bocock 1973: 45).

Similarly, Wood (1999: 320) believes that the way the transcendent realm is understood and the way it is connected to this-worldly reality has implications for attitudes towards good / evil and openness to the world. Wood argues that “denying the possibility of worldly goodness or seeing the world as irredeemably ‘fallen’ .... gives believers little incentive to engage in worldly reform efforts” (1999: 317). He argues that, on the other hand, a religious culture (such as Catholicism) that is able to deal with ambiguity and that can allow for “the existence of both good and evil in the world” is more open to the wider society and efforts to improve it (Wood 1999: 317).

According to Wood, a religious culture that has “rigid dividing lines between those who are saved / good and those who are unsaved / evil” can have a constraining effect on active participation in the world (1999: 317). He contrasts this with the type of religious culture (such as certain expressions of Catholicism) in which

the interplay between good and evil was seen as occurring not just within individuals and regarding issues of individual morality, but also in society and regarding social issues such as inequality... (1999: 317).

Wood regards this Catholic type of religious culture as calling for discernment in relation to good and evil thus enabling a less black and white approach to the complexities of the wider socio-political environment (1999: 317). He argues that

a culture that understands good and evil complexly, as potentials in every person, lends itself to sophisticated interpretation of the political world, whereas conceptualizing good and evil in absolute terms as ‘us’ and ‘them’ tends strongly toward simplistic political interpretation (Wood 1999: 328-9).

Wood’s argument here resonates with Chesterton’s commentary on the discernment of good and evil and its connection with the paradox of charity. Chesterton’s comments about “loving unlovable people” through distinguishing between the person and the action fit with Wood’s comments about the potential for good and evil

within every person. In short, both Chesterton and Wood refer to a view of humanity that recognizes the binary distinction between good and evil rather than itself being predicated upon the distinction. In other words, a view that the dialectic between good and evil can be encompassed by the individual human, rather than that the dialectic between good and evil encompasses all humanity. This view would seem to resist the definition of any person as “evil” – implying a type of openness to the good in the “other” (which resonates with Greeley’s view). This openness to the “other” is seen to have implications not only for attitudes towards the wider society, but also, according to Wood, for socio-political engagement.

This raises the question of how Australian Catholics view morality. How do they view guidelines relating to good and evil? To what extent do Australian Catholics adhere to traditional sources of moral authority? Is there any indication of distinction between the person and the action in matters of morality? For example, is there any indication of suspension of judgment of the *person* (as opposed to the *action*)? Insofar as Catholics’ attitudes towards morality may be an expression of worldview and ethos, they have implications for openness to the wider society – an issue that could be seen to bear upon the relationship between the religious and the secular.

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Each section of this discussion of the analogical imagination in Catholicism has pointed towards certain themes to be examined in the empirical part of this chapter. In short, these themes refer to Australian Catholics’ attitudes and sensibilities relating to scripture, nature, sacramentality, humanity, diversity, morality and ethics. Some of these themes have been addressed, in varying ways, in the empirical studies referred to in the following section.

## **EMPIRICAL STUDIES**

The themes of interest that have been outlined in this chapter are not necessarily addressed directly in the empirical studies to be referred to. Indeed, many of the themes may be addressed only by observing patterns and trends across the studies. For this reason, there is some overlap of themes in the following discussion. The

empirical studies are discussed under the following headings: The “religious story” and approaches to scripture; Nature, humanity and creation; Attitudes towards diversity; Morality and ethics. (Sacramentality is referred to indirectly under the “religious story” heading). Following the reference to each study there is an indication of the relevance of the study for the present research.

### ***THE “RELIGIOUS STORY” AND APPROACHES TO SCRIPTURE***

Much of Greeley’s theory about the religious imagination can be related to empirical research. Greeley (1981: 23) has attempted to produce an empirical description of this imagination through examination of survey data collected from 2500 young adult Catholics in the U.S. and Canada. Based on the pattern of these respondents’ stories / images of God, the afterlife, Jesus and Mary, Greeley (1981: 24-29) constructs a scale (referred to as “the grace scale”) that is regarded as providing a measure of the religious imagination. He finds that there is a positive relationship between a “gracious” religious story (i.e. a warm, positive story about human-divine relationship as measured by the grace scale) and sensitivity to nature (1981: 29, 34). Positive relationships between the grace scale and religious experience, and between the grace scale and the reception of weekly communion (Eucharist) are also found; moreover, variables such as sensitivity to nature and religious experience are found to be related to each other (Greeley 1981: 36, 38). Variables representing family, friends, and sermons are also found to belong in this cluster of interrelationships (1981: 60, 73, 81).

While it is not possible to replicate Greeley’s (1981) research due to the type of data available here, in the present research there will be an attempt to identify an indicator of the type of “religious story” implied by Catholics’ responses. The “religious story” indicator selected relates to respondents’ approach to scripture. It is acknowledged that this indicator does not have the capacity to tap imagery as sensitively as Greeley’s measure does; it certainly does not have the richness of Greeley’s “grace scale”.<sup>10</sup> However, the indicator does have the capacity to distinguish an approach to

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<sup>10</sup> Another way in which Greeley’s concept of “religious story” is used differently in this research is that here it is treated as an *independent* variable – consistent with the hypothesis of this research that imagination as a mode of understanding influences attitudes towards the world. Greeley’s research is mainly concerned with the *development* of the religious imagination – hence the “religious story” is mostly presented as a dependent variable in his research.

religious narrative that is grounded in culture and tradition and is sensitive to context. (A practical consideration for the selection of this indicator is that it is the closest indicator of what can be regarded as “religious story” available across many of the surveys to be used in this research.)

Moreover, the selection of a variable relating to the approach to scripture as an indicator of a “religious story” is supported, to some extent, by research that shows differentiation between Catholics and other Christians according to this variable.

Many studies have suggested that Catholics are less inclined to a literalist interpretation of scripture than are other Christians. These studies include the work of the Australian NCLS team whose findings are most relevant to the present research. In their analysis of 1996 NCLS and 1996 CCLS data, Kaldor, Dixon, Powell & the NCLS team) find that while most Australian church attenders (of all denominations) believe that the Bible is the word of God in some way, about one quarter take the position that “the Bible is the word of God to be taken literally word for word” (1999: 84). Kaldor, Dixon et al find that the Catholic church has the lowest proportion of attenders holding this literalist position (1999: 82).<sup>11</sup> Kaldor, Dixon et al point to the inclination of Catholics to regard the Bible in both a contextualist sense (in which the Bible is interpreted in the light of its historical and cultural context) and a traditional sense (in which the Bible is interpreted in the light of the church’s teaching and traditions as well) (1999: 84).

The present research aims to build upon this finding. However, the aim is not to make comparisons between Catholics and other Christians<sup>12</sup> but to explore Catholic attenders’ views of the Bible in terms of the extent to which a particular type of “religious story” / mode of understanding scripture is evident among Australian Catholics. In response to some of Greeley’s (1981) findings, there will also be

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<sup>11</sup> In contrast, Kaldor, Dixon et al (1999: 82) find that Assemblies of God and Pentecostal churches are the denominations which have the highest proportion of attenders holding this literalist position.

<sup>12</sup> It needs to be noted that the main data source being used is the Catholic component of the 2001 NCLS which precludes comparison between Catholics and others. However, it is possible to give occasional “glimpses” of such comparison because a small amount of NCLS non-Catholic response data has kindly been made available. Also, small amounts of data from surveys that tap the wider society such as the NSSS and the ACS have been made available. Overall, however, the availability of the type of data that allows comparison between Catholics and others is minimal and “patchy”.

exploration of the data for evidence of any relationship between the “religious story” variable and other variables relating to nature, religious experience, Eucharist, family, friends, and sermons.<sup>13</sup> This will form part of a larger attempt to explore the extent to which the “religious story” is related to other beliefs / attitudes / practices regarded as characteristic of the Catholic type of religious imagination. In the broader picture, it contributes towards an examination of the extent to which an “imaginative” mode of religious understanding may have implications for attitudes towards the world.

### ***NATURE, HUMANITY AND CREATION***

Using data from the National Social Science Survey (1993 and 1994), Hughes, Thompson, Pryor & Bouma (1995) examine the response patterns of Australian church attenders (comprised of Catholics and other Christians) to questionnaire items relating to a range of issues / phenomena. These include items that touch upon attitudes towards the creation of the world, nature and human beings and (indirectly) sensibilities relating to nature and human community. The analysis of NSSS data by Hughes et al (1995: 23) finds that the vast majority of Australian church attenders believe that God created the world and human beings according to the Biblical account, whereas a much lower proportion believe that human beings evolved through natural selection. Hughes et al also find that a high proportion of church attenders always / often experience a sense of peace and well-being in “nature” settings such as the sea and the bush (as well as in situations such as prayer and family) (1995: 42).<sup>14</sup>

While Hughes et al (1995) present denominational response patterns of the church attenders in relation to some issues, these do not include the particular issues mentioned above. However, some NSSS data has been made available for the purposes of the present research, making it possible to identify Catholic attenders’

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<sup>13</sup> In the present research these variables are located across several different surveys and so, in general, it is not possible to explore the interrelationships between them. It is possible to explore the relationship between the variable chosen to represent the “religious story” and most of the other variables because the “religious story” variable is included in most of the survey questionnaires.

<sup>14</sup> Hughes et al (1995) locate these findings in the broader Australian context by comparing Australian church attenders with other Australians (i.e. those who do not attend church and / or do not claim to be religious). Their findings show that, compared to attenders, a much lower proportion of other Australians believe in creation and higher proportions believe in evolution (Hughes et al 1995: 29; 35). The findings show that while a high proportion of other Australians also experience a sense of peace in nature settings, a lower proportion experience it in a family setting and a much lower proportion experience it in a prayer situation (1995: 42).

responses to these issues. Unfortunately, the NSSS data that has been made available does not include an item relating to the view of the Bible and so it is not possible to explore any relationship between “religious story” and the NSSS variables touching on attitudes / sensibilities relating to nature, humanity, creation etc. On the other hand, the NSSS taps the wider Australian society and so it is possible to compare Catholics (both attenders and non-attenders) with others in the society. (While it has been noted that comparison between Catholics and others is not the prime purpose of this research, such comparison in relation to the mentioned items will be made as a matter of interest and, of course, because of the availability of the data.)

In this research the analysis of attitudes / sensibilities relating to creation, nature and humanity will contribute towards the exploration of the question of whether Catholics are oriented towards immanence – in particular, the notions of a graced nature and a graced humanity. Analysis of attitudes towards evolutionary theory will contribute to an examination of the extent to which Catholics may indicate a religious orientation that can accommodate scientific rationality – i.e. an orientation that can be both otherworldly and this-worldly.

### ***ATTITUDES TOWARDS DIVERSITY***

In the literature pertaining to Catholicism’s cultural imbeddedness and the relationship between the particular and the universal, it is suggested that there may be an inclination among Catholics to be open to diversity. In empirical research conducted by Hoge (2005) and Hegy (2003) there is some evidence of this tendency.

Hoge’s (2005) research is based on analysis of data from a survey of 875 American Catholics. His findings indicate that the vast majority of American Catholics believe that “How a person lives is more important than whether he or she is a Catholic” (2005: 5). Hoge’s research shows that only 56% of the respondents agree that “Catholicism contains a greater share of truth than other religions do” (2005: 5). He sees this as indicating “that about half of American Catholics are uncertain about the greater truth of Catholicism as a defining boundary” (2005: 5). These findings are interpreted by Hoge as indicating that the boundaries of Catholic identity are “fairly vague and porous” (2005: 5).

Hegy's (2003) research also finds evidence of a type of Catholic openness to other religions – although Hegy offers a different interpretation to that of Hoge. Hegy conducted over one hundred interviews with American Catholic parish leaders and from analysis of their responses finds “near unanimity that faith can be found in all religions...”(2003: 5). Hegy interprets this finding as supporting a conception of religious faith as *trust* in God (rather than solely as credal belief) (2003: 5). He sees this conception of faith as trust in God as being linked to conceptions of faith in terms of relationships of attachment and closeness. As such, Hegy's interpretation appears to be compatible with the perspective of the religious imagination as presented by Greeley.

The studies by Hoge and Hegy each indicate a considerable degree of openness to other religions on the part of American Catholics but there is debate as to how this openness is to be interpreted. Is Catholic openness to religious diversity an indication of looseness in Catholic identity or can it be regarded, paradoxically, as a distinctive marker of Catholic identity? To what extent can explication in terms of the analogical imagination account for openness to religious diversity in a way that goes beyond both absolutism and relativism? These are some of the issues that surround an examination of attitudes towards religious diversity.

In the NCLS surveys used in the present research there are questionnaire items that elicit views about other religions and non-Christian beliefs and practices. In addition, there are items that elicit views about diverse Christian practice. This type of data will be used to explore Australian Catholic attitudes towards religious diversity and the type of surrounding issues mentioned above.

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Australian research on attitudes towards human diversity related to sexual orientation has also shown that Australian Catholics are generally more open than are other Australian Christians to persons of a homosexual orientation. Flood and Hamilton (2005:1) analysed the responses of 24,718 Australians to a survey designed to map homophobia in Australia and found that, among those who indicate a religious affiliation, Catholics are the most tolerant of homosexuals. For example, one-third of

Catholics think that homosexuals are immoral, compared with two thirds of Baptists (Flood and Hamilton 2005: 2). In view of the strong stance against homosexuality made by the Australian Catholic Church hierarchy, Flood and Hamilton interpret their findings as suggesting that “the Catholic Church has less doctrinal authority over its congregation than some other Christian and non-Christian churches” (2005: 2).

However, this interpretation has been challenged by some Catholic commentators who interpret the findings more in terms of an openness to the reality of human diversity on the part of Catholics. Building on the observations of AIDS charity workers, Mannix (2005b) points out that, in practice, the Catholic Church demonstrates a caring attitude to homosexuals through the involvement of ordinary Catholics and the institutional Church in the care of HIV/AIDS homosexual clients. Mannix (2005b) sees this in terms of the Catholic position of “hate the sin but love the sinner” and the attitude of being open to all people in need. Similarly, Gonzales considers the Church’s official statements on issues such as homosexuality in the light of the Catholic belief that “All life is sacred” and observes that there are instances where “The black and white stance of the Church doesn’t live up to a life lived in all its colours” (2005).

The foregoing indicates that attitudes towards homosexuality can be regarded not only as attitudes on a dimension of human diversity, but also in terms of attitudes towards morality / immorality. It also touches on issues of moral authority. The NCLS surveys used in the present research contain items on attitudes towards homosexuals and sources of moral authority. The data relating to these items will be examined for any evidence of the “religious imagination” approach to diversity and morality. Such evidence, along with the data on attitudes towards religious diversity, will be viewed in terms of their implications for Catholic attitudes towards the wider society.

### ***MORALITY AND ETHICS***

While the issue of morality can, to some extent, be viewed obliquely through attitudes towards diversity, in this research there is also an attempt to address it in a more direct manner.

Flood and Hamilton's (2005) comment on the difference between the attitudes of Australian Catholics towards homosexuals and the Catholic hierarchy's stance against homosexuality points towards the issue of how moral authority is viewed. Hoge's (2005) research also has implications for this issue. Hoge found that the majority of American Catholics consider the Church hierarchy's teachings on issues of sexuality such as same-sex marriage optional rather than essential to their Catholicity. "Helping the poor" is found to be a far more central element of Catholic identity than the hierarchy's teachings relating to sexual morality (Hoge 2005: 2). This finding suggests that, *in the lived tradition* of American Catholics, a charitable orientation towards the "other" may inform morality. The positioning of Australian Catholics' moral views vis a vis the moral teaching of the Catholic hierarchy is an issue that will be explored in the present research. The extent to which this issue, along with the issue of a morality oriented towards the "other" can be understood in terms of an appreciation of ambiguity (as characteristic of the analogical imagination), will also be considered.

The implications of an appreciation of ambiguity for attitudes towards the wider society are indicated by Wood's (1999) research. Wood's (1999) argument that the view of morality characteristic of a religious culture can affect its capacity to deal with the ambiguities of the socio-political environment is based on analysis of four case studies (three religious groups and one non-religious group). Wood finds that cooperation with religious others and negotiation with public officials is related to a capacity to appreciate ambiguity. For example, Wood finds that in the Catholic groups "Potential political allies were never assessed according to whether they were personally Christian / Catholic or not", but according to their priorities regarding human dignity and social justice – i.e. by distinguishing between person and action (1999: 317). In contrast, Wood described the Pentecostal group in terms of "... its sharp division of the world into the 'saved' and 'unsaved', its relatively rigid church / world boundary...and its identification of the concept of evil with a rather narrowly conceived set of practices of personal immorality" which, he found, presented difficulties for successful political organising – i.e. an inclination to judge others "did not lend itself well to the kind of compromise and give-and-take needed in political negotiation" Wood (1999: 319-320).

As with interpretations by Mannix of the findings relating to attitudes towards homosexuals, Wood's interpretation of his findings focuses on the importance of the distinction between the person and the action and the Catholic disinclination to judge the person. Wood has also shown the social implications of this attitude – reinforcing the notion of a link between morality and social ethics. In the present research, there will be an attempt to examine the way Australian Catholics view good and evil and the extent to which they may distinguish between person and action or indicate a disinclination to judge the person. There will also be an attempt to assess whether this can be viewed in terms of a charitable orientation towards the “other”. In the overall picture, this forms part of the examination of the extent to which a Catholic expression of the analogical imagination may be associated with an ethic that implies openness to the wider society. (The practical implications of such openness in terms of engagement in the wider secular society are addressed in the following chapter).

## **ADDRESSING THE ISSUES**

The main aim of the empirical component of this chapter is to explore the relevance of the “religious imagination” thesis to the case of Australian Catholic Church attenders. In general, the literature reviewed earlier in this chapter has presented the analogical imagination in terms of an orientation towards a symbolic mode of understanding and a heightened sense of ambiguity and paradox. In the context of Catholicism, the literature has presented this as being expressed in a contextual / traditional approach to scripture, an incarnational approach to nature and humanity, sacramentality, an openness to diversity and otherness, and an organic approach to morality and ethics. The fundamental rationale underlying the present research is that if this type of imagination and its expressions exist among Australian Catholic Church attenders there are implications for the way that the relationship between “this world” and the “other world” is perceived.

### ***RESEARCH QUESTIONS***

In this empirical investigation, the primary question to be addressed concerns the extent to which expressions of the analogical imagination are evident among Australian Catholic Church attenders. Certain variables in the available surveys are

identified as indicators of the expressions of the analogical imagination mentioned above. It is not possible to capture the essence of the analogical imagination in survey questions, as has already been noted. However, Greeley's notion of the "religious story" is used as an approximation, and a variable relating to the view of the Bible is regarded as a key indicator of the religious imagination in the sense that it distinguishes certain modes of understanding the religious story. The data is explored in terms of the extent to which the "religious story" indicator and other indicators of the analogical imagination are evident among Australian Catholic Church attenders.

A secondary issue to be addressed concerns the nature of the dynamics of the religious imagination among Australian Catholic Church attenders. It relates to the question of whether a particular mode of understanding or "religious story" has implications for other expressions of the religious imagination. This is addressed through examination of the relationship between the "religious story" indicator and some of the other indicators of the analogical imagination.

More specific questions relating to particular variables in the data are outlined in each section of the data analysis.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

As was noted in the previous chapter, this dissertation utilizes existing survey data that was collected as part of other projects and it is acknowledged that this may not always provide ideal indicators of the variables implied by the research questions.

The empirical part of this chapter is mainly based on data from the 2001 National Church Life Survey (NCLS)(Catholic component), although some data from the 1994 National Social Science Survey (NSSS)(N=1275) is also utilized in terms of allowing comparison between Catholics and others in relation to certain issues and hence providing a broader context for the NCLS findings. The NCLS data used is derived from Survey A-C (N= 54026), Survey J (N=613), Survey M (N=611), Survey N (N=615), Survey P (N=630), Survey S (N=562), Survey V (N= 2256), and Survey W (N=9287). Some use is also made of data from the 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey (CCLS) Survey S (N=983). At the beginning of each section of the data analysis the

particular data sets being used in that section are indicated. In general, a basic mode of data analysis is employed – focusing on frequencies and some cross-tabulation.

The data analysis is presented in five sections: a) Approach to scripture (This section relates to what is being referred to as the “religious story”); b) Nature, humanity and creation; c) Sacramentality; d) Diversity; e) Morality and ethics. These section headings indicate the general thrust of each section; however, as has been noted previously, the survey items being used were not designed specifically for this particular research and there is some unavoidable overlap. Also, in some cases, the item of interest can only be accessed indirectly – e.g. as a response category to a question about another topic.

In each section there is examination of frequency distributions of survey items that are regarded as indicators of the analogical imagination. These are considered in terms of the issues relating to the analogical imagination that have been discussed in this chapter. In most sections<sup>15</sup> this is followed by an examination of the relationship between the “religious story” indicator and other indicators of the religious imagination.

### ***SECTION 1: APPROACH TO SCRIPTURE***

*Data sources:* 2001 NCLS Survey A-C (N= 54026)  
2001 NCLS Survey J (N=613)  
2001 NCLS Survey M (N=611)  
2001 NCLS Survey N (N=615)  
2001 NCLS Survey P (N=630)  
2001 NCLS Survey S (N=562)

The main aim of Section 1 is to examine the way Australian Catholic attenders approach an understanding of the Bible. The various modes of understanding the Bible are explored for the most suitable available indicator of the analogical imagination.

For the purposes of this research, the most salient aspect of the analogical imagination in Catholicism would appear to be a propensity among Catholics to go beyond a unidimensional approach to meaning through sensitivity to metaphor, context and

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<sup>15</sup> It is not possible to examine this relationship in all sections because the variable used as the “religious story” indicator is not present in all surveys.

cultural tradition – i.e. a particular type of “religious story”. The way Catholics approach scripture could be regarded as an indicator of religious story type. The 2001 NCLS contains an item relating to the way the Bible is viewed which can be used as such an indicator. This item appears on many (but not all) NCLS questionnaires hence allowing for analysis of relationship between the approach to scripture and some of the other expressions of the analogical imagination that have been associated with Catholicism.

Table 4.1 shows response to this item in NCLS Survey version A-C, which has the largest number of respondents (N=54,026) of all 2001 NCLS survey versions. Table 4.1 shows that a majority of Catholic attenders (53%) hold the view that “The Bible is the word of God, to be interpreted in the light of its historical context and the Church’s teaching”. Another 19% indicate that “The Bible is the word of God, to be interpreted in the light of its historical and cultural context”. Together, these results indicate that 72% of Catholic attenders include a contextual element in their interpretation of the Bible. The view that “The Bible is the word of God, to be taken literally word for word” is held by 15% of attenders. These findings are compatible with the previously-mentioned comments made by Kaldor et al (1999) in relation to 1996 CCLS data.

**Table 4.1: “WHICH STATEMENT COMES CLOSEST TO YOUR VIEW OF THE BIBLE?” (2001 NCLS Version A-C)**

	Percent
The Bible is the word of God, to be taken literally word for word	15
The Bible is the word of God, to be interpreted in the light of its historical and cultural context	19
The Bible is the word of God, to be interpreted in the light of its historical context and the Church’s teaching	53
The Bible is not the word of God, but contains God’s word to us	7
The Bible is not the word of God, but is a valuable book	1
The Bible is an ancient book with little value today	1
Don’t know	4
Total	100

*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey A-C (N=54,026)*

Our finding that 72% of respondents have a contextual dimension to their approach to scripture lends support to the notion of a Catholic inclination to go beyond a literal understanding of scripture – which has been described as one characteristic of the analogical imagination. However, the approach to scripture associated with the specifically Catholic expression of the analogical imagination has been described not

only in terms of interpretation in the light of historical and cultural context but also in the light of religious tradition. In other words, the analogical imagination in Catholicism could be seen to call not only for consideration of the historical and cultural context of that which is being interpreted, but also for consideration of the historical and cultural context – i.e. the living religious tradition – of those who are doing the interpretation. This is one sense in which the approach to scripture of a Catholic analogical imagination might be seen as “organic”. It also suggests that interpretation of the Bible “in the light of its historical context and the Church’s teaching” is the response category that most closely resembles the approach to scripture characterized by a Catholic analogical imagination. Hence, it is this response category that will be viewed as an indicator of the “religious story” associated with the analogical imagination in Catholicism.

In view of the fact that analysis of the relationship between the approach to scripture and other indicators of the Catholic expression of the analogical imagination will be spread across several 2001 NCLS surveys, the findings relating to the view of the Bible item from these surveys are presented below to allow for comparison with the corresponding findings in NCLS Survey A-C shown in Table 4.1.

Table 4.2 shows the response pattern to the view of the Bible in 2001 NCLS Surveys J, M, N, P, and S which are being used in this research.<sup>16</sup> A comparison of the response pattern shown in Table 4.1 (Survey A-C) with that of the other surveys shown in Table 4.2, shows that there are only slight variations in frequencies between the data sets. The response category being regarded as the closest available approximation to a key indicator of the analogical imagination in Catholicism – i.e. “The Bible is the word of God, to be interpreted in the light of its historical context and the Church’s teaching” – elicits response rates varying between 52% (Survey P) and 59% (Survey S). This compares with 53% response to this category in Survey A-C. This is fairly conclusive evidence that a core majority of Australian Catholic attenders appear to exhibit a Catholic analogical imagination (as defined above). Respondents who exhibit a literal mode of understanding the Bible comprise between 12% (Survey M) and 16% (Survey P) of those surveyed. This compares with a 15%

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<sup>16</sup> NCLS surveys that do not contain the same item relating to the view of the Bible (e.g. 2001 Survey W, 1996 CCLS Survey S ) are omitted from analysis in Part II.

response rate to the “Literal” category in Survey A-C. Hence, only a minority of Catholic attenders exhibit a literal mode of understanding scripture.<sup>17</sup>

**Table 4.2: “WHICH STATEMENT COMES CLOSEST TO YOUR VIEW OF THE BIBLE?” (2001 NCLS Surveys J, M, N, P, & S)**

	J	M	N	P	S
	%	%	%	%	%
The Bible is the word of God...(literally)	16	12	15	16	13
The Bible is the word of God...(historical / cultural context)	23	20	22	24	20
The Bible is the word of God...(hist'l context / Church teaching)	53	57	53	52	59
The Bible is not the word of God, but contains God's word to us	4	7	7	6	5
The Bible is not the word of God, but is a valuable book	1	1	1	1	2
The Bible is an ancient book with little value today	0	0	0	1	1
Don't know	3	3	3	2	2
Total	100	100	100	100 <sup>^</sup>	100 <sup>^</sup>

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey Surveys J (N=613), M (N=611), N (N=615), P (N=630), & S (N=562)

<sup>^</sup>Total appears to >100 because six figures have been rounded up

As indicated earlier, in most of the following sections there is some attempt to examine the relationship between the mode of understanding scripture / “religious story” and other indicators of the religious imagination. From the sample of Catholic attenders, two groups are selected – respondents who appear to exhibit the mode of understanding scripture characteristic of the analogical imagination and respondents who appear to adopt a more literal mode of understanding. In keeping with Kaldor et al’s (1999) terminology, respondents who believe that the Bible is to be understood literally are classified as “Literalists”. Respondents who believe the Bible is to be interpreted in the light of historical context and Church teaching are classified as “Traditionalists”.<sup>18</sup> The response patterns of the two groups to various indicators of the religious imagination are compared as a way of exploring the dynamics of a type of religious imagination found in Catholicism.

<sup>17</sup> It is possible to compare Catholic attenders with other Christian attenders on the View of the Bible because the Anglican / Protestant data for this item has kindly been provided by the NCLS. This data shows that 35% of Anglicans / Protestants view the Bible literally, 35% view it in the light of its historical and cultural context, 23% view it in the light of historical context and church teaching, 4% say that “The Bible is not the word of God, but contains God’s word to us”, 1% say that it is not God’s word but a valuable book, 0% say it is an ancient book of little value, and 2% say “Don’t know” (Source: 2001 NCLS (Survey J) (N=3308). The main points of comparison are that Anglicans / Protestants are more likely to adopt a literal interpretation of the Bible (35%) than are Catholics (15%) (Survey A-C) and less likely to see the Bible in the light of historical context and church teaching (23%) than are Catholics (53%) (Survey A-C).

<sup>18</sup> It is to be noted that a “Traditionalist” approach is also contextualist but with the added dimension of church teaching.

## **SECTION 2: NATURE, HUMANITY AND CREATION**

There are two parts to the presentation of data in this section. Part a) utilizes data from the 1994 NSSS and Part b) utilizes data from the 1996 CCLS and the 2001 NCLS.

*a) Data source: 1994 National Social Science Survey (NSSS) (N=1275).*

*(The NSSS taps the wider society including respondents who identify with a religion and those who do not).*

The principal aim of the examination of 1994 NSSS data is to identify the response patterns of Australian Catholic church attenders to questionnaire items relating to: the creation of the world and human beings; attitudes towards evolution; and sensibilities towards natural and social environments. The literature referred to in this chapter has suggested that the type of imagination found among Catholics allows for an emphasis on creation and incarnation which involves views of nature and humanity as graced. If there is such an orientation towards immanence among Australian Catholic attenders, we might expect the data to show strong belief in creation and positive sensibilities towards natural and social environments. If we find strong support for belief in creation among Catholic attenders, we might then ask whether this precludes acceptance of evolution theory, or, whether creation belief and evolution theory can be held together – in line with the analogical imagination thesis of the holding together of apparent opposites.

The NSSS data also allows for comparison between Catholic attenders (i.e. who attend church at least monthly) and all Catholics. In addition, it allows for comparison with respondents of other religious orientations and the “non-religious”. Hence, in this early stage of the data analysis, the opportunity for comparison is utilized by way of introduction in locating the Catholic attender responses in wider context. In view of the previously-mentioned research by Hughes et al (1995), we would expect stronger support among church attenders for belief in creation than among non-attenders. Suggestions in the literature that the analogical imagination is stronger in Catholicism than in Protestantism lead us to ask whether the data indicates stronger support for creation belief among Catholic attenders than among Protestant attenders and, whether Catholic attenders are more likely than Protestant attenders to subscribe to both creation belief and evolution theory – as a type of holding together of apparent

opposites. We also ask whether there is a difference between Catholic attenders and Protestant attenders in terms of the pattern of sensibilities towards natural and social environments.

Table 4.3 refers to survey items relating to creation of: the world; animals and birds; human beings; human beings in the image of God. Table 4.3 indicates that Catholic attenders are more likely to indicate agreement with the four creation beliefs than are Catholic respondents as a whole. For example, 87% of Catholic attenders agree that God created the world – compared with 66% of Catholics in general. Similarly, Anglican / Protestant attenders are more likely to indicate agreement with the creation beliefs than are Anglicans / Protestants as a whole. For example, 76% of Anglican / Protestant attenders agree that God created the world – compared with 42% of Anglicans / Protestants in general. Catholics and Anglicans / Protestants – regardless of attender status – are generally more likely to indicate agreement with the creation beliefs than is the sample as a whole (which comprises respondents from a range of religious orientations including “No Religion”). These findings are in line with those of Hughes et al (1995).

Table 4.3 also shows some differences between Catholic attenders and other Christian attenders in the proportions who agree with the four creation beliefs. A higher proportion of Catholic attenders (87%) than Anglican / Protestant attenders (76%) believe that God created the world. Similarly, a higher proportion of Catholic attenders (83%) than Anglican / Protestant attenders (72%) believe that God made different kinds of animals / birds. The difference in response rates is even greater in relation to beliefs about the creation of human beings: 88% of Catholic attenders and 75% of Anglican / Protestant attenders believe that God created mankind (sic); 83% of Catholic attenders and 68% of Anglican / Protestant attenders believe that God made people in his own image. These findings suggest that Catholic attenders are more strongly oriented towards belief in creation – particularly the creation of human beings – than are Anglican / Protestant attenders.

**Table 4.3 : AGREEMENT WITH BELIEFS ABOUT CREATION\***

Creation Belief	Sample	All Catholics	Catholic Attenders	All Anglicans / Protestants	Anglican / Protestant Attenders
	%	%	%	%	%
God created the world	41	66	87	42	76
God made different kinds of animals / birds	39	62	83	42	72
God created mankind	41	66	88	43	75
God made people in his own image	33	57	83	33	68

Source: 1994 NSSS (N= 1275)

\* “Strongly agree” combined with “Agree”

The sensibilities of respondents to nature and other settings are tapped by several 1994 NSSS questionnaire items relating to situations in which respondents experience a sense of peace or well-being. Table 4.4 shows that the highest proportion of Catholic attenders experiences a sense of peace or well-being always / often when spending time with family (78%) and praying (78%).<sup>19</sup> This is followed by the situations of Church services (72%), the sea (71%), and spending time with friends (66%).

Some differences between Catholic attenders and Anglican / Protestant attenders are indicated in Table 4.4. While a high proportion of Catholic attenders experience a sense of peace or well-being always / often in nature settings such as the sea (71%), this is slightly less than the corresponding proportion of Anglican / Protestant attenders (74%). Catholic attenders are also less likely to have this experience in nature settings such as the bush (61%), or a garden (57%) than are Anglican / Protestant attenders (75% of whom experience this in the bush, and 67% in a garden).

On the other hand, Catholic attenders are more likely to have this experience of peace or well-being while spending time with family (78%) or friends (66%), praying (78%) or at a church service (72%) than are Anglican / Protestant attenders – for whom the corresponding response rates are 68% (family), 60% (friends), 68% (praying), and 68% (church service). It is interesting that Catholic attenders appear to have a higher response rate to experiencing a sense of peace or well-being in situations involving human interaction than do Anglican / Protestant attenders.

<sup>19</sup> The selection of “always / often” responses facilitates comparison with Hughes et al’s (1995) observations.

**Table 4.4: SITUATIONS IN WHICH A SENSE OF PEACE / WELL-BEING IS EXPERIENCED ALWAYS / OFTEN. (Catholic Attenders & Anglican / Protestant Attenders)**

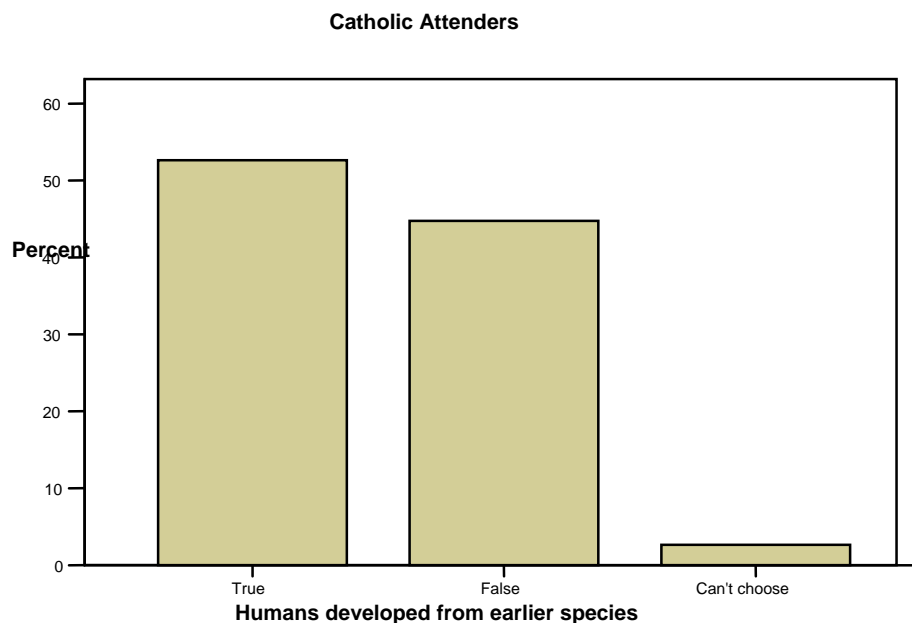
Sense of peace / well-being always /often in this setting	Catholic Attenders	Anglican / Protestant Attenders
	%	%
In the bush	61	75
By the sea	71	74
In a garden	57	67
Listening to music	59	74
Playing or singing	32	49
Spending time with family	78	68
Spending time with friends	66	60
Homemaking	53	51
Praying	78	68
At a church service	72	68

Source: 1994 NSSS (N=1275)

Note: "Always" combined with "Often".

The 1994 NSSS also contains a questionnaire item on the development of humans as a species. Figure 4.1 shows that, in response to the statement "Humans developed from earlier species", 53% of Catholic attenders regard the statement as true and 45% regard it as false. Two percent of respondents "Can't choose".

**Figure 4.1 "HUMANS DEVELOPED FROM EARLIER SPECIES" (Catholic Attenders)**



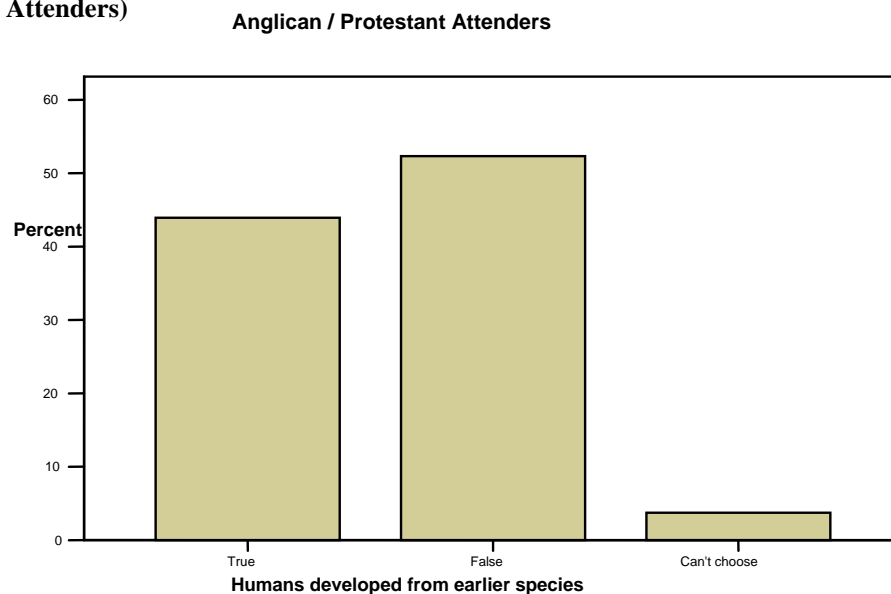
Source: 1994 NSSS (N=1275)

Note: Both levels of agreement as "True" combined; both levels of agreement as "False" combined.

On the other hand, Figure 4.2 shows that, in response to the statement "Humans developed from earlier species", 44% of Anglican / Protestant attenders regard the

statement as true and 52% regard it as false. Four percent of respondents “Can’t choose”. Given that Catholic attenders are more likely than Anglican / Protestant attenders to affirm creation beliefs – especially beliefs about the creation of human beings – it is paradoxical that Catholic attenders are also more likely than Anglican / Protestant attenders to affirm this type of evolutionary theory about the development of the human species.

**Figure 4.2 “HUMANS DEVELOPED FROM EARLIER SPECIES” (Anglican/Protestant Attenders)**



*Source: 1994 NSSS (N=1275)*

*Note: Both levels of agreement as “True” combined; both levels of agreement as “False” combined.*

Attempts at cross-tabulation between creation beliefs and evolutionary theory for Catholic and Anglican / Protestant attenders resulted in too many small cell sizes. In order to maintain acceptable cell sizes, *all* Catholics and *all* Anglicans / Protestants are referred to in the following cross-tabulations and the response categories of “Can’t choose” / Neutral are excluded from analysis.

This type of crosstabulation for Catholics is presented in Table 4.5 which shows that 53% of Catholics who agree with the belief that God created human beings also accept the truth of the theory that humans developed from earlier species. This indicates that, for these Catholics, the holding of religious belief can be inclusive of the rationality of scientific theory.

**Table 4.5: Crosstabulation: “HUMANS DEVELOPED FROM EARLIER SPECIES” \* “GOD CREATED MANKIND” (All Catholics)**

		GOD	CREATED	MANKIND*	
HUMANS DEVELOPED FROM EARLIER SPECIES^	True		Agree 53%	Disagree 88%	Total 57%
	False		47%	12%	43%
	Total		100%	100%	100%

Source: 1994 NSSS (N=1275)

\* “Strongly agree” combined with “Agree”; “Strongly disagree” combined with “Disagree”; “Neutral” excluded.

^ Both levels of “True” combined; both levels of “False” combined; “Can’t choose” excluded.

In contrast, as Table 4.6 shows, 43% of Anglicans / Protestants who believe that God created humankind accept the truth of human evolutionary theory. This finding suggests that Catholics are more likely than Anglicans / Protestants to affirm simultaneous belief in the creation of humans and evolutionary theory. This suggestion gains further support from crosstabulations of other creation beliefs and evolutionary theory which indicate that Catholics are more likely than Anglicans / Protestants to affirm each creation belief simultaneously with acceptance of the evolution of human beings.<sup>20</sup> Overall, these findings indicate that Catholics are more likely than Anglicans / Protestants to hold together the apparent opposites of creation belief and evolutionary theory – suggesting that the analogical mode of understanding may be stronger among Catholics than Anglicans / Protestants.

**Table 4. 6: Crosstabulation: “HUMANS DEVELOPED FROM EARLIER SPECIES” \* “GOD CREATED MANKIND” (All Anglicans / Protestants)**

		GOD	CREATED	MANKIND*	
HUMANS DEVELOPED FROM EARLIER SPECIES^	True		Agree 43%	Disagree 95%	Total 62%
	False		58%	5%	38%
	Total		100%	100%	100%

Source: 1994 NSSS (N=1275)

\* “Strongly agree” combined with “Agree”; “Strongly disagree” combined with “Disagree”; “Neutral” excluded.

^ Both levels of “True” combined; both levels of “False” combined; “Can’t choose” excluded.

<sup>20</sup> These crosstabulations indicate that 52% of Catholics who believe that God created the world also accept evolutionary theory; the comparable figure for Anglicans / Protestants is 43%. Fifty percent of Catholics who believe that God made different kinds of animals / birds simultaneously affirm evolutionary theory, compared to 43% of Anglicans / Protestants. Forty-nine percent of Catholics who believe that God made people in his own image simultaneously affirm evolutionary theory, compared to 37% of Anglicans / Protestants.

This brief analysis of NSSS data has provided an introductory view of Catholic attenders as being very likely to see the world as God's creation. While many Catholic attenders experience a sense of peace/ well-being in "nature" settings, most experience this in situations such as family, praying, and church services. This is suggestive of a generally positive orientation / sensibility towards natural and social environments. While a very large proportion of Catholic attenders believe that human beings were created by God, a majority also affirm that human beings evolved – possibly suggesting a complex understanding of creation. This level of support for both creation belief and evolutionary theory may also be indicative of the type of holding together of apparent opposites that has been associated with the analogical imagination. Comparison between Catholic attenders and Anglican / Protestant attenders shows that Catholic attenders are more likely to affirm creation beliefs and evolutionary theory. Moreover, a higher proportion of Catholics than Anglicans / Protestants affirm creation beliefs and evolutionary theory *simultaneously* – suggesting that the analogical imagination may be stronger among Catholics than among Anglicans / Protestants. It has also been found that Catholic attenders are more strongly oriented towards a view of humanity as God's creation and appear more likely to experience a sense of peace in human company than is the case for other Christian attenders. This lends support to the argument that the analogical imagination in Catholicism tends to be expressed in attitudes and practices relating to human relationships.

*b) Data Sources: 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey (CCLS) (Survey S)(N=983)  
 2001 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) (Survey J) (N=613)  
 2001 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) (Survey W)(N=9287)*

There are some questionnaire items in the 1996 CCLS and the 2001 NCLS that allow for further exploration of the themes of nature and creation. As was noted in the previous chapter, these surveys address a different population in the sense that they were administered in churches and the respondents were almost exclusively Catholic church attenders.

Table 4.7 shows that most Catholic attenders (69%) regard nature as sacred because it is created by God. A further 16% of respondents regard nature as sacred or spiritual

in itself and 10% regard nature as important but not spiritual. The strong regard for nature as sacred because it is created by God tends to support the finding of strong belief in divine creation by Catholic attenders evident in our analysis of NSSS data. Taken together, the first two response categories in Table 4.7 indicate that 85% of respondents regard nature as sacred / spiritual in some way. This would seem to challenge any suggestion that Catholic attenders see the natural world as somehow antithetical to God.

**Table 4. 7 “WHICH STATEMENT COMES CLOSEST TO YOUR VIEWS?” (Nature) <sup>21</sup>**

	Percent
Nature is sacred or spiritual in itself	16
Nature is sacred because it is created by God	69
Nature is important but it is not spiritual	10
Unsure	6
Total	100

*Source: 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey S (N= 983)*

The 2001 NCLS Survey W has a sequence of questionnaire items that taps sensibilities to various situations (including nature) interpreted in terms of an awareness or sense of God. The first item (Table 4.8) elicits response to the awareness / experience itself and the follow-up item (Table 4.9) elicits response to its context / situation.<sup>22</sup>

The exact wording for the Table 4.8 question is: “Has this ever happened to you: suddenly and strongly you are aware of God – You sense that God is real, or you sense God’s presence or God’s power?” Table 4.8 shows that in response to this question 51% of Catholic attenders say “A few times”, 35% say “Often”, 10% say “Never”, and 4% say “Once”. This indicates that 90% of respondents have experienced this type of awareness / sense of God at least once.

<sup>21</sup> There is no comparable item in the 2001 NCLS.

<sup>22</sup> There are differences between this NCLS question sequence and the NSSS item examined earlier. The preliminary NCLS question refers explicitly to an awareness or sense of God and so cannot really be compared to the NSSS item that refers more generally to a sense of peace or well-being. It also needs to be noted that the structure of the NSSS question elicits the frequency of experience in each situation – hence it is possible to tabulate results for respondents who experience a sense of peace *always / often* in each situation. In contrast, the NCLS sequence elicits frequency of experience per se in the preliminary question but not in the follow-up question relating to the situation of experience. Another difference to note is that the range of situations in the NSSS question is not the same as in the NCLS question.

**Table 4.8: “HAS THIS EVER HAPPENED TO YOU: SUDDENLY AND STRONGLY YOU ARE AWARE OF GOD – YOU SENSE THAT GOD IS REAL, OR YOU SENSE GOD’S PRESENCE OR GOD’S POWER?”**

	Percent
Never	10
Once	4
A few times	51
Often	35
Total	100

*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)*

Table 4.9 presents the response to the follow-up question. It shows that 66% of Catholic attenders indicate that they have experienced awareness of God in the situation of enjoying the beauty of nature. This situation category elicits the highest response rate. The next highest response is elicited by the situation of the death of a family member or friend (57%). This is followed by the situation of being at Mass / prayer group (50%).

The high ranking of the response of experiencing God’s presence in the nature situation (Table 4.9) possibly reinforces our earlier finding of a high proportion of respondents who regard nature as sacred because it is created by God (Table 4.7). This suggests a holistic rather than a dualistic perception of the relationship between God and the physical world. Indeed, the findings appear to suggest that many respondents may be predisposed to experience the natural world in a sacramental way – at least episodically.

While it has been noted that direct comparison is not possible between the NSSS item on experience of a sense of peace and the NCLS item on experience of God’s presence, it is interesting to observe that a cluster of phenomena related to similar situations – i.e. nature, family, prayer, and church service – tends to rank highly in the findings from both surveys.

**Table 4.9: “HAS THIS HAPPENED IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SITUATIONS? (MARK ALL THAT APPLY)”**

	Percent
Enjoying the beauty of nature	66
Listening to music	46
While feeling very lonely	37
Death of a family member or friend	57
At Mass or another service, or in a prayer group	50
Reflecting or praying alone	45
While feeling that you had done something bad	24
At the birth of a child	37
Hearing a sermon or homily	35
While feeling afraid	31
While suffering physical pain	27
A special moment with a child	33
While in some place that is special to you	30
Reading the Bible	22
In some other situation, not mentioned above	28

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey W (N=9287)

The 2001 NCLS Survey J has a questionnaire item related to creation and evolution.<sup>23</sup> As Table 4.10 shows, the largest single proportion of Catholic attenders (35%) considers that evolution and the biblical account of the creation of the world can be reconciled. A further 27% accept evolutionary theory and regard the biblical account as largely symbolic. Together, these findings indicate that 62% of respondents find a way of being open to both the Bible and evolutionary theory. Twenty-four percent of respondents accept the biblical account and do not believe in evolution; and 14% are unsure.

**Table 4.10: “WHICH STATEMENT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR VIEWS ABOUT THEORIES OF EVOLUTION?”**

	Percent
I do not believe in evolution. The world was created in six days as described in the Bible.	24
I think evolution and the biblical account of creation can be reconciled.	35
I accept evolutionary theory and see the biblical account of creation as largely symbolic.	27
I am unsure.	14
Total	100

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey J (N= 613)

Given the strong affirmation of nature as sacred because it is created by God (Table 4.7) and the strong response to experiencing God’s presence in the beauty of nature (Table 4.9), it is interesting that a majority of Catholic attenders are open to evolutionary theory (Table 4.10). The way in which acceptance of the world as God’s creation can be held alongside the theory of the evolution of the world seems to

<sup>23</sup> This item refers to evolution of the world and is not the same as the NSSS item which refers to the evolutionary development of human beings.

parallel our NSSS data findings that most Catholic attenders hold the belief that God created humankind (Table 4.3) at the same time as a majority affirm an evolutionary view of humankind (Figure 4.1), and our finding that a majority of Catholics who believe that God created humankind simultaneously affirm evolutionary theory (Table 4.5). This lends further support to interpretation in terms of the holding together of apparent opposites that has been associated with the analogical imagination.

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The final stage of analysis in this section comprises an attempt to examine the extent to which the findings relating to Catholic attenders' attitudes towards creation and evolution can be related to religious imagination type as indicated by a particular "religious story" or mode of understanding scripture. As discussed earlier, the "analogical imagination" approach to scripture has been associated with sensitivity to context and culture and openness to interpretation in the light of tradition. In the previous section, the view of the Bible as "the word of God, to be interpreted in the light of its historical context and the Church's teaching" was selected as the best available variable to represent the analogical mode of understanding. Respondents indicating this view were identified as "Traditionalists" who were presented for comparison with "Literalists" (who indicated a more literal, unidimensional mode of understanding). In view of previous discussion of the analogical imagination it is hypothesized that an analogical mode of understanding the Bible would be more open to symbol, paradox, and multidimensionality in interpretation of the Biblical story of creation than is the case for literalist approaches. Further, it is expected that Traditionalists will be more likely than Literalists to affirm both creation belief and evolutionary theory simultaneously.

Table 4.11 shows that in relation to views about evolution and creation, Traditionalists (42%) are much more likely than Literalists (24%) to think that evolution and the biblical account of creation can be reconciled. Traditionalists (28%) are also more likely than Literalists (9%) to accept evolutionary theory and to see the biblical account of creation as largely symbolic. This indicates that 70% of Traditionalists (compared to 33% of Literalists) are able, in some way, to accommodate both creation belief and evolutionary theory. It is perhaps not

unexpected that Literalists (39%) are more likely than Traditionalists (21%) to understand the biblical account of creation in literal terms. Overall, Traditionalists are more likely than Literalists to hold evolutionary theory and biblical account together or to see the biblical account as symbolic.

**Table 4.11: “WHICH STATEMENT BEST DESCRIBES YOUR VIEWS ABOUT THEORIES OF EVOLUTION?” (Literalists & Traditionalists)\***

	Literalists	Traditionalists
	%	%
I do not believe in evolution. The world was created in six days as described in the Bible.	39	21
I think evolution and the biblical account of creation can be reconciled.	24	42
I accept evolutionary theory and see the biblical account of creation as largely symbolic.	9	28
I am unsure.	28	10
Total	100	100

*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey J (N= 613)*

*\*Literalists represent 16% of the Survey J sample; Traditionalists represent 53%.*

We have found, then, that a very large proportion of Traditionalists, who comprise the majority of all Catholics surveyed, reconcile acceptance of the Bible, interpreted symbolically, with acceptance of evolutionary theory. This finding lends added support to the suggestion that the apparently paradoxical position relating to creation and evolution that is held by a core group of Australian Catholic Church attenders can be related, to some extent, to an analogical imagination.

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The NSSS data and the NCLS data that have been examined in this section tend to be complementary. Taken together, they present a picture of most Catholic attenders as affirming the world as God’s creation. More important, the findings also indicate that many Catholic attenders may be inclined to experience the natural world in a sacramental way – i.e. a way that implies the view that God is present in the symbolic forms of the created world. This would appear to challenge any view of Catholic orientation and sensibility as being framed by a nature-grace dichotomy. On the other hand, it would tend to support arguments relating to a Catholic analogical imagination that have been discussed earlier in the chapter.

Moreover, the findings indicate that most Catholic attenders believe that human beings are created by God in God's image and that most have experienced a sense of peace in situations involving other human beings such as family life or church services. A majority of Catholic attenders have experienced a sense of God's presence at the death of a family member or friend and half have experienced this in a church service. These findings suggest a holistic rather than a dualistic orientation towards the relationship between God and humanity. The findings do not support any characterisation of Catholic orientation and sensibility in terms of a God-humanity dichotomy. They tend to be more supportive of the thesis that holds a graced humanity to be central to a Catholic analogical imagination.

The findings that most Catholic attenders believe that the natural world and humankind are God's creation while, simultaneously, a majority affirms evolutionary theory, suggests that these respondents may have an orientation that is somehow able to encompass any creation-evolution dialectic rather than be encompassed by it. Indeed, the finding that respondents who indicate an analogical type of religious "story"/ approach to scripture (i.e. Traditionalists – the largest single grouping of Catholic attenders) are more likely than Literalists to hold creation belief and evolutionary theory together, suggests that this apparently paradoxical creation-evolution position is related to an approach to symbol and paradox reflective of a Catholic analogical imagination.

### ***SECTION 3: SACRAMENTALITY***

*Data sources: 2001 NCLS Survey A-C (N= 54026)*  
*2001 NCLS Survey J (N=613)*

The findings of the previous section have suggested that there is a tendency among Catholic attenders to experience the natural world and human communal situations in a sacramental way. The findings have pointed to a cluster of situations that tend to rank highly in terms of Catholic attenders' experience of a sense of peace or a sense of God; this cluster includes church services (which, in the Catholic case, would usually be the Mass). In this section there is an attempt to build upon and go beyond these findings by exploring data relating to sacrament in the formal sense – i.e. the Eucharist as celebrated in the Mass.

The 2001 NCLS questionnaire J contains another item relating to the experience of God's presence which includes the Eucharist as one category of response. The question "Do you believe that you have personally experienced God's presence through the following?" is accompanied by a range of situations for which the respondent is requested to indicate "Often", "Occasionally", "Once", or "Never". Table 4.12 is a summary table of the "Often" response to the situations.<sup>24</sup>

Table 4.12 shows that 54% of Catholic attenders believe that they have often experienced God's presence in the Eucharist. This represents the category with the highest response rate. The next highest response rate is represented by 48% of respondents who believe that they have often experienced God's presence in the flow of daily life. The response rates to these two categories suggest the importance of both formal sacramentality and everyday sacramentality in the lives of Catholic attenders. This is followed by 35% who believe that they have often experienced God's presence through a powerful experience of nature. The three highest response rates, then, are elicited by situations relating to sacrament (Eucharist) and "this worldly" phenomena (i.e. the flow of life and the experience of nature). These findings appear to be compatible with those of the previous section and lend some further support to the thesis of a sacramental sensibility associated with a type of imagination found among Catholics.

**Table 4.12: "DO YOU BELIEVE THAT YOU HAVE PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED GOD'S PRESENCE THROUGH THE FOLLOWING?" ("Often")**

	Percent
The flow of daily life	48
A powerful experience of nature	35
An answer to prayer in unusual circumstances	31
Through feeling guilty about doing something wrong	32
Through miraculous healing	12
The Eucharist / Holy communion	54
Hearing or reading the Bible	26
Hearing a sermon or homily	32

*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey J (N=613)*

The 2001 NCLS questionnaire A-C contains an item relating to aspects of the parish that are valued which includes celebration of the Eucharist as one category of

<sup>24</sup> The "Often" response has been selected in order to be as close as possible to the "Always / Often" response shown in Table 4.2 (NSSS data).

response. Table 4.13 shows that in answer to the question “Which of the following aspects of this parish do you personally most value?” the highest response rate by far is elicited by “Celebrating the Eucharist / receiving Holy Communion” (64%). The second highest response is given to “Praying for one another” (28%), and the third highest response is given to “Traditional style of worship or music” (27%). This is followed closely by “Sermons or homilies” (26%). Overall, then, the celebration of the Eucharist is clearly the most valued aspect of the parish for the majority of Catholic attenders.

**Table 4.13: “WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS OF THIS PARISH DO YOU PERSONALLY MOST VALUE? (Mark up to three options)”**

	Percent
Wider community care or social justice emphasis	13
Reaching those who do not attend church	7
Traditional style of worship or music	27
Contemporary style of worship or music	14
Celebrating the Eucharist / receiving Holy Communion	64
Social activities or meeting new people	10
Sermons or homilies	26
Small prayer, discussion or Bible study groups	6
Ministry to children or youth	8
Praying for one another	28
Practical care for one another in times of need	17
Openness to social diversity	8
The parish school	16

*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey A-C (N=54,026)*

The 2001 NCLS questionnaire J also contains an item relating to attitudes towards the Eucharist. Table 4.14 shows that in response to the question “Which of these is *most* important to you about receiving the sacrament of Holy Communion, Eucharist or Lord’s Supper?” 58% of Catholic attenders indicate “Receiving the sacramental presence of Christ”. Thirty-one percent of respondents indicate “Recalling that Christ died for us” and 9% indicate “Sharing Christian unity in a common meal”. Overall, then, a majority of respondents indicate the explicitly sacramental aspect of Eucharist as most important.

**Table 4.14: “WHICH OF THESE IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU ABOUT RECEIVING THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION, EUCHARIST OR LORD’S SUPPER? (Mark ONE only)”**

	Percent
Recalling that Christ died for us	31
Receiving the sacramental presence of Christ	58
Sharing Christian unity in a common meal	9
We do not have this sacrament	1
Don’t know	2
Total	100

*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey J (N=613)*

So far, the findings of this section have added to our understanding of the Catholic religious orientation by showing that when the sacrament of Eucharist is offered as a response category, it is ranked most highly in terms of situations in which respondents often experience a sense of God's presence. Celebration of the Eucharist is also ranked most highly as the aspect of the parish that is most valued. When the sacrament of Eucharist is focused on more closely, the findings show that it is explicitly the sacramental element of the Eucharist – i.e. receiving the sacramental presence of Christ – that the majority of Catholic attenders nominate as the most important aspect of the Eucharist. This would seem to present the sacrament of Eucharist as central to the religious sensibility of many Catholic attenders.

These findings have also added an extra dimension to our understanding of the more generalized sacramental nature of the way a majority of Catholic attenders appear to experience the world. The findings have shown that the type of situation occasioning the experience of God's presence can be extended beyond the "nature" dimension of this world to include the flow of daily life in this world.

Overall, the findings of this section suggest that many Catholic attenders may be inclined towards sacramentality in both the formal sense and the informal sense – enabling a religious sensibility that can be both this-worldly and otherworldly. The findings lend support to the thesis that a sacramental sensibility is a characteristic of a type of religious imagination found among Catholics. We now take a further step towards testing this thesis.

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The final stage of analysis in this section comprises an attempt to examine the extent to which Catholic attenders' attitudes and sensibilities regarding sacramentality can be related to religious imagination type as indicated by a particular "religious story". As in the previous section, comparison is made between "Traditionalists" and "Literalists" in terms of their response patterns to several variables shown to be relevant to sacramentality. The "religious story" variable is present in both NCLS

Survey A-C and NCLS Survey J enabling such comparison to be made in relation to all the variables referred to in this “Sacramentality” section.

Table 4.15 shows that a similarly high proportion of Traditionalists (66%) and Literalists (65%) believe that they have often experienced God’s presence in the Eucharist. This represents the category with the highest response rate for both groups. Table 4.15 also shows that Traditionalists are more likely than Literalists to indicate this experience of God’s presence through the flow of daily life, hearing a sermon, an experience of nature, and hearing / reading the Bible. On the other hand, Literalists are more likely than Traditionalists to indicate the experience of God’s presence through an answer to prayer, through feeling guilty, and through miraculous healing. A point of comparison relevant to sacramentality, then, appears to be that Traditionalists are more likely than Literalists to experience God’s presence through life in the world, human “story telling” situations (i.e. sermons), and nature.

**Table 4.15: “DO YOU BELIEVE THAT YOU HAVE PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED GOD’S PRESENCE THROUGH THE FOLLOWING?” (“Often”) (Literalists & Traditionalists)\***

	Literalists	Traditionalists
	%	%
The flow of daily life	46	53
A powerful experience of nature	25	37
An answer to prayer in unusual circumstances	40	31
Through feeling guilty about doing something wrong	36	29
Through miraculous healing	30	11
The Eucharist / Holy communion	65	66
Hearing or reading the Bible	25	34
Hearing a sermon or homily	25	39

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey J (N=613)

\*Literalists represent 16% of the Survey J sample; Traditionalists represent 53%.

Table 4.16 shows that, in terms of the most valued aspects of the parish, Traditionalists have a higher response rate than Literalists to: the celebration of the Eucharist, sermons, practical care, the parish school, contemporary style of worship, children’s ministry, and openness to social diversity. On the other hand, Literalists have a higher response rate than Traditionalists to praying for one another and reaching the unchurched. There is little difference between Traditionalists and Literalists in relation to the other aspects of the parish that are mentioned. Overall, the finding that is most relevant here to our interest in sacramentality is that Traditionalists are a little more likely than Literalists to indicate the Eucharist as the most valued aspect of the parish.

**Table 4.16: “WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING ASPECTS OF THIS PARISH DO YOU PERSONALLY MOST VALUE? (Mark up to three options)” (Literalists & Traditionalists)\***

	Literalists	Traditionalists
	%	%
Wider community care or social justice emphasis	12	12
Reaching those who do not attend church	13	6
Traditional style of worship or music	29	28
Contemporary style of worship or music	7	14
Celebrating the Eucharist / receiving Holy Communion	63	68
Social activities or meeting new people	9	10
Sermons or homilies	23	29
Small prayer, discussion or Bible study groups	7	6
Ministry to children or youth	6	9
Praying for one another	37	26
Practical care for one another in times of need	14	18
Openness to social diversity	4	8
The parish school	11	16

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey A-C (N=54,026)

\*Literalists represent 15% of the Survey A-C sample; Traditionalists represent 53%.

That interpretation of a small difference is bolstered by a further and more marked difference between Literalists and Traditionalists found in Table 4.17. This table shows that, when questioned about the most important aspect of the Eucharist, a much higher proportion of Traditionalists (62%) than Literalists (44%) indicate “Receiving the sacramental presence of Christ”. On the other hand, a much higher proportion of Literalists (53%) than Traditionalists (27%) indicate “Recalling that Christ died for us”. For the present purpose, the most relevant finding here is that Traditionalists are more likely than Literalists to place importance on the explicitly sacramental element of the Eucharist.

**Table 4.17: “WHICH OF THESE IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU ABOUT RECEIVING THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION, EUCHARIST OR LORD’S SUPPER? (Mark ONE only)” (Literalists & Traditionalists)\***

	Literalists	Traditionalists
	%	%
Recalling that Christ died for us	53	27
Receiving the sacramental presence of Christ	44	62
Sharing Christian unity in a common meal	3	10
We do not have this sacrament	0	1
Don’t know	0	1
Total	100	100

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey J (N=613)

\*Literalists represent 16% of the Survey J sample; Traditionalists represent 53%.

The foregoing comparisons have indicated that, while, there is no real difference between Traditionalists and Literalists in experiencing a sense of God’s presence in the Eucharist, Traditionalists tend to be more likely than Literalists to place importance on the explicitly sacramental aspect of the Eucharist and to view the Eucharist as the most valued aspect of the parish. In relation to sacramentality in the

less formal sense, it has been found that Traditionalists are more likely than Literalists to experience nature and daily life in a sacramental way. These findings, then, would seem to associate the type of imagination found among Traditionalists with a tendency to emphasize sacramentality per se and to extend the experience of sacramentality beyond a formal sense of sacrament to life in the world.

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Overall, then, we have found a strong level of sacramental sensibility in the formal sense among Australian Catholic Church attenders – regardless of “imagination” type. However, it is the analogical imagination that seems to be associated with the generalisation of sacramental sensibility to “the world” – enabling an orientation that can be both otherworldly and this-worldly.

#### ***SECTION 4: DIVERSITY***

This section is in two parts. Part a) relates to human diversity and includes consideration of i) ethnic / cultural diversity and ii) sexual orientation. Part b) relates to religious diversity.

##### **a) Human diversity**

*Data Source:* 2001 NCLS questionnaire P (N= 630)  
2001 NCLS questionnaire M (N= 611)

In the earlier discussion in this chapter a postulated Catholic inclination to view nature and humanity as graced and to experience the world in a sacramental way was also presented in terms of openness to the diversity of the world. In this section, the analyses of attitudes towards human diversity begin by addressing the overall question of the extent to which the openness to human diversity that some have associated with Catholicism is evident among Australian Catholic church attenders. There is then an examination of the extent to which it can be associated with an analogical mode of religious understanding.

The 2001 NCLS questionnaires P and M have items relating to attitudes towards human diversity based on ethnicity / culture and sexual orientation. While there are many forms of human diversity, ethnicity and sexual orientation would seem to

represent two facets of human diversity which have the potential, in some situations, to polarize attitudes. An examination of how Catholic attenders respond to items relating to ethnicity and sexual orientation may provide an indication of how Catholics approach human diversity – how they view the “other”. The item relating to sexual orientation may also elicit an indication of how Catholics approach the type of human diversity that may / may not be constructed in terms of moral diversity. Examination of response to these items bears upon the argument that the view of humanity associated with the type of imagination dominant among Catholics tends towards openness to humanity in all its diversity.

#### *i) Ethnic / Cultural Diversity*

Figure 4.3 shows the response to a seven point attitudinal scale between two opposing statements about the diversity resulting from immigration: “We must be careful not to let too many migrants into this country or they’ll take over the place” at one end of the scale and “We are better off for the diversity that comes with our migrant intake” at the other end of the scale. Figure 4.3 indicates that the three categories towards the “Diversity positive” end of the scale account for 63% of the total response (i.e. 32%+20%+11%). The three categories on the “Diversity Negative” end of the scale account for 19% of the total response (i.e. 8%+8%+3%). Nineteen percent of respondents assume a neutral position. These findings indicate that the majority of Catholic attenders are inclined to be accepting of the ethnic / cultural diversity that accompanies immigration.

**Figure 4.3: “THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS SHOW PAIRS OF OPPOSING STATEMENTS. PLEASE MARK THE NUMBER ON THE SCALE FROM 1 TO 7 WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOUR OWN VIEW” (ATTITUDES TOWARDS DIVERSITY FROM IMMIGRATION)**

FOUR OWN VIEW (ATTITUDES TOWARDS DIVERSITY FROM IMMIGRATION)								
	(Diversity negative)				(Diversity positive)			
	We must be careful not to let too many migrants in...				We are better off for the diversity			
Scale Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
Response	8%	3%	8%	19%	20%	11%	32%	100%

Source: NCLS 2001 Survey P (N=630)

Figure 4.4 shows the response to a seven point attitudinal scale between two opposing statements about ethnic diversity within the church: “I would rather be in a church with people from similar ethnic backgrounds” at one end of the scale and “I would rather be in a church with people from a great range of different ethnic backgrounds”

at the other end of the scale. Figure 4.4 indicates that the three categories towards the “Diversity Positive” end of the scale account for 60% of the total response (i.e. 30% +18%+12%). The three categories on the “Diversity Negative” end of the scale account for 17% of the total response (i.e. 8%+6%+3%). Twenty-three percent of respondents assume a neutral position. These findings indicate that the majority of Catholic attenders are inclined to express preference for an ethnically diverse church community.

**Figure 4.4: “THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS SHOW PAIRS OF OPPOSING STATEMENTS. PLEASE MARK THE NUMBER ON THE SCALE FROM 1 TO 7 WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOUR OWN VIEW” (ATTITUDES TOWARDS ETHNIC DIVERSITY WITHIN CHURCH)**

	(Diversity negative) Prefer church with people of similar ethnic background				(Diversity positive) Prefer church with people of varied ethnic backgrounds			
Scale Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
Response	6%	3%	8%	23%	18%	12%	30%	100%

Source: NCLS 2001 Survey P (N=630)

Another questionnaire item relating to ethnic diversity within the Church elicits findings that reinforce those above. Table 4.18 shows that in response to the question “How would you feel about a congregation from a different ethnic background also using the building you worship in for their own services?” 41% of Catholic attenders indicate that they would be “Very comfortable” and a further 35% indicate that they would be “Comfortable”. Taken together this accounts for 76% of the total response. Seventeen percent of respondents say that they are unsure and 7% express some level of discomfort (i.e. 5%+2%). Overall, these findings indicate that the majority of Catholic attenders are open to sharing parish community facilities with Catholics of “other” ethnicities.

**Table 4.18: “HOW WOULD YOU FEEL ABOUT A CONGREGATION FROM A DIFFERENT ETHNIC BACKGROUND ALSO USING THE BUILDING YOU WORSHIP IN FOR THEIR OWN SERVICES?”**

	Percent
Very comfortable	41
Comfortable	35
Neutral or unsure	17
Uncomfortable	5
Very uncomfortable	2
Total	100

Source: NCLS 2001 Survey P (N=630)

Table 4.19 shows response to the question “How important do you think it is for your congregation / parish to be ministering across cultures?”. Table 4.11 shows that 61%

of Catholic attenders regard cross-cultural ministry as very important and a further 30% regard it as being of some importance. Together, this accounts for 91% of the total response. Six percent of respondents indicate “Don’t know” and 3% say that it is “Not important”. This, then, indicates that the vast majority of Catholic attenders consider that it is important for their parish to be ministering across cultures.

**Table 4.19: “HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU THINK IT IS FOR YOUR CONGREGATION / PARISH TO BE MINISTERING ACROSS CULTURES?”**

	Percent
Very important	61
Of some importance	30
Not important	3
Don’t know	6
Total	100

*Source: NCLS 2001 Survey P (N=630)*

The foregoing findings indicate that the majority of Catholic attenders are accepting of the ethnic/ cultural diversity associated with immigration both nationally and within the church. The majority of respondents are open to sharing parish facilities with Catholics of “other” ethnicities – a very high proportion of respondents regarding cross-cultural ministry important for their parish.

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The next main question to be addressed concerns the extent to which this openness to cultural diversity is associated with the analogical imagination as represented by a particular “religious story”. As in previous sections, this will be done through comparison between “Traditionalists” (whose “story” tends to be open to multidimensionality, paradox and context) and “Literalists” (whose “story” tends to be more literal / unidimensional) in terms of their response patterns to the relevant variables.

Figure 4.5 shows that 65% of Traditionalists (i.e. 24% + 12% + 29%) are on the positive side of the scale of attitudes towards diversity resulting from immigration. In comparison, 53% of Literalists (i.e. 10% + 9% + 34%) are on the positive side of the scale. Eighteen percent of Traditionalists and 33% of Literalists are on the negative side of the scale. These findings indicate that Traditionalists are more open than Literalists to the type of cultural and ethnic diversity that results from immigration.

**Figure 4.5: “THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS SHOW PAIRS OF OPPOSING STATEMENTS. PLEASE MARK THE NUMBER ON THE SCALE FROM 1 TO 7 WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOUR OWN VIEW” (ATTITUDES TOWARDS DIVERSITY FROM IMMIGRATION) (Literalists & Traditionalists)\***

	<b>(Diversity negative)</b> We must be careful not to let too many migrants in...				<b>(Diversity positive)</b> We are better off for the diversity			
Scale Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
Literalists	13%	0%	20%	15%	10%	9%	34%	100%
Traditionalists	6%	3%	9%	17%	24%	12%	29%	100%

Source: NCLS 2001 Survey P (N=630)

\*Literalists represent 16% of the Survey P sample; Traditionalists represent 52%.

In the questionnaire item relating to how respondents would feel about a congregation of another ethnicity using the church building, a fairly high proportion of both Traditionalists (75%) and Literalists (71%) say that they would be comfortable / very comfortable with the arrangement. (As this difference is so small, a table has not been included). A lower proportion of Traditionalists (7%) than Literalists (13%) say that they would be uncomfortable / very uncomfortable. This suggests that Traditionalists may be a little more open to diversity within the church than is the case for Literalists.

A more marked comparison regarding openness to ethnic diversity within the church can be found in Figure 4.6 which shows that 64% of Traditionalists (i.e. 29% + 14% + 21%) are on the positive side of the scale of attitudes towards ethnic diversity within the church compared to 54% of Literalists (i.e. 32%+ 11%+11 %). Fourteen percent of Traditionalists and 24% of Literalists are on the negative side of the scale. This provides a stronger indication that Traditionalists are more open than Literalists to ethnic diversity within the church.

**Figure 4.6: “THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS SHOW PAIRS OF OPPOSING STATEMENTS. PLEASE MARK THE NUMBER ON THE SCALE FROM 1 TO 7 WHICH BEST DESCRIBES YOUR OWN VIEW” (ATTITUDES TOWARDS ETHNIC DIVERSITY WITHIN CHURCH) (Literalists & Traditionalists)\***

	<b>(Diversity negative)</b> Prefer church with people of similar ethnic background				<b>(Diversity positive)</b> Prefer church with people of varied ethnic backgrounds			
Scale Category	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Total
Literalists	6%	7%	11%	22%	11%	11%	32%	100%
Traditionalists	4%	3%	7%	22%	21%	14%	29%	100%

Source: NCLS 2001 Survey P (N=630)

\*Literalists represent 16% of the Survey P sample; Traditionalists represent 52%.

Table 4.20 shows that 63% of Traditionalists think it is very important for their parish to be ministering across cultures and a further 31% think it is of some importance. Together, this indicates that 94% of Traditionalists consider cross-cultural ministry to be of at least some importance. The comparable proportion of Literalists who consider cross-cultural ministry to be of at least some importance is 80% (i.e. 55% “Very important” + 25% “Of some importance”). Overall, this indicates that, while high proportions of both groups consider cross-cultural ministry in the parish to be important, Traditionalists are even more likely to do this than are Literalists.

**Table 4.20: “HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU THINK IT IS FOR YOUR CONGREGATION / PARISH TO BE MINISTERING ACROSS CULTURES?” (Literalists & Traditionalists)\***

	Literalists	Traditionalists
	%	%
Very important	55	63
Of some importance	25	31
Not important	6	1
Don't know	14	4
Total	100	100

Source: NCLS 2001 Survey P (N=630)

\*Literalists represent 16% of the Survey P sample; Traditionalists represent 52%.

The foregoing findings, then, indicate that Traditionalists are more open than Literalists to ethnic/cultural diversity within the church and in the wider society. This lends some support to the thesis that an analogical mode of understanding (as expressed by Traditionalists) can be associated with openness to humanity in its ethnic and cultural diversity.

## ii) Sexual Orientation

Another type of human diversity to be considered is that based upon sexual orientation. Empirical studies referred to earlier showed that Australian Catholics are fairly accepting of homosexual persons within the society. The question to be addressed here concerns the extent to which Australian Catholic attenders are accepting of homosexual persons within the Church.

The 2001 NCLS questionnaire M has an item relating to human diversity (based on sexual orientation) within the church. Table 4.21 shows that in response to the question “Should homosexuals be accepted as *members* in the church on the same basis as heterosexuals?” 42% of Catholic attenders say “Yes, whether they engage in homosexual practices or not”. A further 29% of respondents say “Yes, but only if they

do not engage in homosexual practices”. Together, this accounts for 71% of all respondents. Sixteen percent say “No” and 13% “Don’t know”. Overall, these findings indicate that the majority of Catholic attenders are, in some way, accepting of homosexuals as members of the church. However, the conditions relating to homosexual practice point to the need for further examination.

To some extent, this question about homosexual membership of the church also touches upon attitudes towards the type of human diversity that may / may not be constructed in terms of moral diversity. Given that official Catholic Church teaching regards homosexual acts as sinful, it is possible that such construction provides a context for Catholic attenders’ attitudes. Moreover, the question is not clear about what is meant by membership of the church. If respondents were to interpret membership of the church in terms of a person’s Baptism, there would not appear to be any other factor affecting membership. On the other hand, if respondents were to interpret membership of the church in terms of reception of the Eucharist, for example, they may link this to a need to be in a “state of grace” (following repentance for sin). This type of thinking could focus on the issue of whether there has been reconciliation / repentance for “sinful” behaviour or whether the behaviour continues. However, this can only remain at the level of conjecture. From the available data it is not possible to know how respondents interpret the meaning of church membership. Nevertheless, it has been considered prudent to mention the ambiguity of interpretation.

**Table 4.21: “SHOULD HOMOSEXUALS BE ACCEPTED AS MEMBERS IN THE CHURCH ON THE SAME BASIS AS HETEROSEXUALS?”**

	Percent
Yes, whether they engage in homosexual practices or not	42
Yes, but only if they do not engage in homosexual practices	29
No	16
Don’t know	13
Total	100

Source: NCLS 2001 Survey M (N=611)

As we have seen, the single highest proportion of respondents (42%), though not a majority, indicate *unconditional* acceptance of homosexuals as church members. This suggests suspension of judgment of both the person and the act and points to an

inclusive view of church.<sup>25</sup> The 29% of respondents who appear to regard equal membership of the church as conditional upon homosexual non-practice would seem to be assuming a distinction between the person and the act. This appears to offer more space for acceptance of homosexual membership in the church than the attitude of clear rejection that is indicated by 16% of respondents. These findings, then, could be seen to suggest that many Catholic attenders are disinclined to judge homosexuals (as persons) in relation to church membership, although some respondents appear to make judgments about homosexual practice. The overall level of inclusivity suggested is compatible with the openness to humanity that has been described as characteristic of the type of imagination dominant in Catholicism.

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The next question to be addressed concerns the extent to which attitudes towards homosexual membership of the Church can be associated with religious imagination type (as indicated by the respective “stories” of Traditionalists and Literalists).

Table 4.22 shows that 41% of Traditionalists support unconditional acceptance of homosexual persons as members of the church and another 32% support their acceptance conditional upon behaviour. This indicates that 73% of Traditionalists are, in some way, accepting of homosexual persons as members of the church. The comparable figure for Literalists is 54% (i.e. 23% unconditional acceptance + 31% conditional upon behaviour). Overall, then, Traditionalists are more likely than Literalists to be open to homosexual membership of the church.

**Table 4.22: “SHOULD HOMOSEXUALS BE ACCEPTED AS MEMBERS IN THE CHURCH ON THE SAME BASIS AS HETEROSEXUALS?” (Literalists & Traditionalists)\***

	Literalists	Traditionalists
	%	%
Yes, whether they engage in homosexual practices or not	23	41
Yes, but only if they do not engage in homosexual practices	31	32
No	28	15
Don't know	17	12
Total	100	100

Source: NCLS 2001 Survey M (N=611)

\*Literalists represent 12% of the Survey M sample; Traditionalists represent 57%.

<sup>25</sup> It is also possible that it reflects a disinclination to judge sexual orientation per se. Another possible interpretation is that it reflects an acceptance that *all* members of the church are sinners in some way.

In this sub-section relating to attitudes towards homosexual membership of the Church we have found that over 70% of Catholic attenders have some level of acceptance of homosexual persons as Church members. The higher likelihood of Traditionalists (compared to Literalists) to be accepting of homosexual persons lends some support to the thesis that this type of acceptance may be associated with the analogical imagination (as represented by Traditionalists).

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The analysis of data in this section relating to human diversity has generally pointed towards a dominant tendency among Catholic attenders to be open towards the “other”. While this openness is quite strong in relation to the ethnic “other”, in relation to the homosexual “other”, it is somewhat conditional upon behaviour (and, presumably, the definition of certain behaviour in terms of morality / immorality). The findings pertaining to attitudes towards ethnic diversity lend support to the proposition that the type of imagination dominant in Catholicism includes the notion that the Christian tradition is always incarnated in a particular cultural context. This then predisposes towards openness to diversity. To the extent that Traditionalists are more likely than Literalists to be open to this type of diversity, some support is given to the argument that the analogical imagination is associated with such openness. The findings pertaining to attitudes towards homosexuals have relevance for the proposition of a type of imagination in Catholicism that tends towards openness to distinction between person and action and to leaving “the final judgment to God” (see Lynch 1974). The finding that Traditionalists are more likely than Literalists to suspend judgment of the homosexual person and to distinguish between person and action lends further support to the argument that this type of openness to the “other” is a correlate of the analogical imagination found among Traditionalist Catholics.

#### **b) Religious diversity**

*Data source: 2001 NCLS Survey J (N=613)*

Catholic attitudes towards diversity can be further investigated by focussing on issues of religious diversity. Empirical studies referred to earlier indicated that, among Catholics, there is a fairly high level of openness to religious diversity. The main

question to be addressed in this section concerns the extent to which openness to religious diversity is found among Australian Catholic church attenders and whether openness (as expected) is more marked among Traditionalists exhibiting the analogical imagination than among Literalist Catholics.

The 2001 NCLS questionnaire J contains several items relating to diverse religious beliefs / practices. These include the practice of “speaking in tongues”, the belief in reincarnation, the practices of Eastern meditation, astrological / tarot consultation, New Age enquiry, and psychic / crystal healing. The response patterns to these items will be examined in terms of what they indicate about Catholic attenders’ attitudes towards diversity of religious belief and practice. The thesis that the analogical imagination implies an openness to diversity and the level of openness to religious diversity that has been found by American empirical studies would lead us to expect similar findings in relation to Australian Catholic attenders.

The first item to be examined relates to the practice of speaking in tongues. This practice can occur in Christian charismatic groups / situations which may /may not include Catholics. However, it is generally not a practice that occurs in Catholic-defined situations. The item on speaking in tongues, therefore, might be regarded as tapping attitudes towards the diversity of practice within Christianity.

Table 4.23 shows that 36% of attenders neither approve nor disapprove of the practice of speaking in tongues, while 30% indicate that they “Don’t know”. These two categories combined account for 66% of the total response. Nineteen percent of respondents indicate some level of approval of the practice (i.e. 10%+5%+4%) and 17% (i.e. 7%+10%) indicate some level of disapproval.

If we accept that the practice of speaking in tongues is likely to be fairly unfamiliar in Catholic parishes, it is interesting that the single category with the highest response rate (36%) relates to the suspension of judgment. This, together with the relatively high “Don’t know” response rate (30%) suggests that many (66%) Catholic attenders may be disinclined to pass judgment on that which is unfamiliar / other within Christianity. This could, perhaps, be interpreted as a type of openness towards “otherness”.

**Table 4.23: “WHAT IS YOUR OPINION OF ‘SPEAKING IN TONGUES’ AS IT IS PRACTISED TODAY?”**

	Percent
I strongly disapprove	7
I disapprove	10
I neither approve nor disapprove	36
I approve, but do not speak in tongues	10
I approve, & have spoken in tongues	5
I think it is necessary for all Christians	4
Don't know	30
Total	100

*Source: NCLS 2001 Survey J (N= 613)*

*Note: Total appears more than 100% due to rounding up in five categories.*

The next item to be examined relates to the (Non-Christian) belief in reincarnation. Table 4.24 shows that, in response to the question “Do you believe there is such a thing as reincarnation where people today have lived previous lives?” 38% of Catholic attenders indicate a definite “No” and a further 23% indicate a probable “No”. Together this indicates that 61% of respondents do not ascribe to the belief. Another 23% of respondents are “Unsure”. Only 17% ascribe to some degree of belief in reincarnation (i.e. 7%+10%).

**Table 4.24: “DO YOU BELIEVE THERE IS SUCH A THING AS REINCARNATION WHERE PEOPLE TODAY HAVE LIVED PREVIOUS LIVES?”**

	Percent
Yes, definitely	7
Yes, probably	10
Unsure	23
No, probably not	23
No, definitely not	38
Total	100

*Source: NCLS 2001 Survey J (N= 613)*

In response to the practices of Eastern meditation, astrological / Tarot consultation, New Age enquiry, and psychic / crystal healing, a very high proportion of Catholic attenders indicate that they have “Never” engaged in these practices. Table 4.25 is a summary table of the “Never” response to these practices.

**Table 4.25: “IN THE PAST TWELVE MONTHS, HOW OFTEN HAVE YOU DONE THE FOLLOWING?”**

	Percent indicating “Never”
Practised Eastern meditation	78
Sought direction from a horoscope, tarot, fortune teller or similar method	89
Read books or attended seminars connected with the New Age movement	92
Explored or used psychic healing or crystals	91

*Source: NCLS 2001 Survey J (N= 613)*

The 2001 NCLS questionnaire J also has an item about attitudes towards different religions. Table 4.26 shows that in response to the statement “All the different religions are equally good ways of helping a person find ultimate truth”, 41% of Catholic attenders agree, and a further 23% strongly agree. Together this indicates that 64% of respondents express some level of agreement with the statement. Twenty percent of respondents are neutral / unsure. Only 16% (i.e. 12%+4%) indicate some level of disagreement.

**Table 4.26: “DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THIS STATEMENT: ‘ALL THE DIFFERENT RELIGIONS ARE EQUALLY GOOD WAYS OF HELPING A PERSON FIND ULTIMATE TRUTH?’”**

	Percent
Strongly agree	23
Agree	41
Neutral / Unsure	20
Disagree	12
Strongly disagree	4
Total	100

*Source: NCLS 2001 Survey J (N= 613)*

As was seen in Chapter 3, the 2001 NCLS questionnaire W has a similar item statement: “Even religious views we strongly disagree with contain some truth we can learn from”. Table 3.10 showed that 70% of Catholic attenders tend to agree with the statement and a further 17% strongly agree. Together this indicated that 87% of respondents express some level of agreement with the statement – only 13% expressing some level of disagreement. It is interesting that this survey item – that allows for the apparent opposites of disagreement with other religious views and simultaneous openness to some truth in those views – elicits a much higher positive response from Catholic attenders than does the survey item that refers to all religions as “equally good ways” of finding truth. It is as if the item that allows for the coexistence of apparent opposites taps more deeply into the type of imagination dominant in Catholicism.

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The foregoing findings indicate that many Catholic attenders may be disinclined to pass judgment (in terms of approval / disapproval) on an unfamiliar religious practice such as speaking in tongues. In addition, the majority of respondents agree that all religions are equally good ways of helping people find truth; indeed, a very high proportion of respondents are inclined to accept that even religious views with which they disagree contain some truth. However, the majority of respondents do not ascribe to the belief in reincarnation nor do they participate in practices such as Eastern meditation, astrological / Tarot consultation, New Age enquiry, or psychic / crystal healing. We have found, then, a fairly high level of openness to religious diversity among Catholic attenders which appears to be compatible with the suspension of judgment of religious otherness rather than implying acceptance / adoption of other religious beliefs / practices.

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The final stage of analysis in this section addresses the question of the extent to which the above findings can be related to the type of imagination found among Catholic attenders. As in previous sections, this involves comparison between Traditionalists and Literalists.

Table 4.27 shows that 38% of Traditionalists and 20% of Literalists neither approve nor disapprove of the practice of speaking in tongues. A similar proportion of Traditionalists (27%) as Literalists (28%) indicate that they “Don’t know”. This indicates that 65% of Traditionalists and 48% of Literalists tend to suspend judgment about the practice. Eighteen percent of Traditionalists express some level of disapproval (i.e. 5%+13%) compared to 28% of Literalists who express some level of disapproval (i.e. 19%+9%). Some level of approval of the practice is indicated by 17% of Traditionalists (i.e. 10%+5%+2%) and by 24% of Literalists (i.e. 16%+4%+4%). Overall, then, Traditionalists are more likely than Literalists to suspend judgment on the practice of speaking in tongues and Literalists are more likely than Traditionalists to express an opinion of either agreement or disagreement.

**Table 4.27: “WHAT IS YOUR OPINION OF ‘SPEAKING IN TONGUES’ AS IT IS PRACTISED TODAY?” (Literalists & Traditionalists)\***

	Literalists	Traditionalists
	%	%
I strongly disapprove	19	5
I disapprove	9	13
I neither approve nor disapprove	20	38
I approve, but do not speak in tongues	16	10
I approve, & have spoken in tongues	4	5
I think it is necessary for all Christians	4	2
Don't know	28	27
Total	100	100

Source: NCLS 2001 Survey J (N= 613)

\*Literalists represent 16% of the Survey J sample; Traditionalists represent 53%.

Table 4.28 shows that 69% of Traditionalists (i.e. 44%+25%) and 48% of Literalists (i.e. 29%+19%) do not ascribe to belief in reincarnation. Sixteen percent of Traditionalists and 34% of Literalists are unsure. Sixteen percent of Traditionalists (i.e. 7%+9%) and 18% of Literalists (i.e. 6%+12%) indicate some level of belief in reincarnation. The findings indicate, then, that Traditionalists are much less likely than Literalists to ascribe to reincarnation belief and much less likely to be unsure. If viewed alongside the findings from the previous question relating to speaking in tongues these findings appear to suggest that while there may be a tendency among Traditionalists to suspend judgment about “other” religious practices, this does not necessarily translate into equivocation about their own personal religious beliefs.

**Table 4.28: “DO YOU BELIEVE THERE IS SUCH A THING AS REINCARNATION WHERE PEOPLE TODAY HAVE LIVED PREVIOUS LIVES?” (Literalists & Traditionalists)\***

	Literalists	Traditionalists
	%	%
Yes, definitely	6	7
Yes, probably	12	9
Unsure	34	16
No, probably not	19	25
No, definitely not	29	44
Total	100	100

Source: NCLS 2001 Survey J (N= 613)

\*Literalists represent 16% of the Survey J sample; Traditionalists represent 53%.

In response to the question about the practices of Eastern meditation, astrological / Tarot consultation, New Age enquiry, and psychic / crystal healing, very high proportions of both Traditionalists and Literalists indicate that they have never engaged in these practices. Over 80% of both groupings have never engaged in astrological / Tarot consultation and over 90% of both groupings have never engaged in Eastern meditation, New Age enquiry, or psychic / crystal healing. As there is little

difference between Traditionalists and Literalists in relation to all the practices mentioned, a table is not shown.

The survey item relating to the statement that “All the different religions are equally good ways of helping a person find ultimate truth” does not elicit much of a difference between the responses of Traditionalists and Literalists. Table 4.29 shows that over 60% of both Traditionalists and Literalists express some level of agreement with the statement – Traditionalists being slightly less likely than Literalists to agree and slightly more likely to disagree. In view of the postulated association of the analogical imagination with openness to diversity, we might have expected Traditionalists to have higher levels of agreement (or Literalists to have lower levels of agreement) with the statement than is the case.

**Table 4.29: “DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THIS STATEMENT: ‘ALL THE DIFFERENT RELIGIONS ARE EQUALLY GOOD WAYS OF HELPING A PERSON FIND ULTIMATE TRUTH’?” (Literalists & Traditionalists)\***

	Literalists	Traditionalists
	%	%
Strongly agree	29	18
Agree	36	43
Neutral / Unsure	19	19
Disagree	11	15
Strongly disagree	6	5
Total	100	100

Source: NCLS 2001 Survey J (N= 613)

\*Literalists represent 16% of the Survey J sample; Traditionalists represent 53%.

Another reason for expecting this type of differential response pattern is the background finding that Catholic attenders are more likely than Anglican / Protestant attenders to express agreement with this statement relating to religious diversity<sup>26</sup> and the implications of this in the light of Lynch’s (1960) assessment that the analogical imagination tends to be stronger in Catholicism than in other forms of Christianity.

Perhaps it may be helpful to look more closely at the wording of the statement in question. If we consider the statement “All the different religions are equally good

<sup>26</sup> On request, the Anglican / Protestant response data for this question in NCLS Survey J has kindly been made available for this research. A comparison of the findings shows that a higher proportion of Catholics (64%) express agreement with the statement than is the case for Anglicans / Protestants (50%). Similarly, a smaller proportion of Catholics (16%) express disagreement with the statement than is the case for Anglicans / Protestants (32%). This suggests that Catholics are more open than Anglicans / Protestants to religious diversity.

ways of helping a person find ultimate truth” alongside the previously-mentioned statement “Even religious views we strongly disagree with contain some truth we can learn from”, we note again that the latter statement elicits a much higher level of agreement among Catholic attenders than does the former statement. Earlier, it was suggested that the statement allowing for strong disagreement with certain religious views and simultaneous openness to some truth in those views may tap the sense of paradox associated with the analogical imagination in Catholicism. It may be that the statement referring to all religions as “*equally* good ways” towards truth hints at equivocation (as opposed to paradox) and does not resonate as strongly with the analogical imagination. Unfortunately, it is not possible to confirm this speculation because the “paradoxical” question variable does not appear in the same survey as the variable on which the Traditionalist-Literalist distinction is based.

However, another hint of an inclination towards paradox in Traditionalists’ approach to religious diversity may be found in the difference in response between Traditionalists and Literalists in relation to belief in reincarnation and opinion on speaking in tongues. As has been seen, Traditionalists are less likely than Literalists to adopt “other” religious beliefs (i.e. reincarnation) and less likely to be judgmental about “other” religious practices (i.e. speaking in tongues). It is possible that this indicates that there is a greater tendency among Traditionalists (as compared to Literalists) to be deeply rooted in their own faith and simultaneously non-judgmental of other faiths. If so, this would suggest the type of holding together of apparent opposites that has been associated with the analogical imagination.

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In this section on religious diversity we have found a high level of openness to religious diversity among Catholic attenders. Over 60% of respondents – Traditionalists and Literalists alike – agree that all religions are equally good ways towards ultimate truth. One possible interpretation of this type of openness to religious diversity could be that it is indicative of a high level of relativism. However, we have found overall tendencies to suspend judgment on religious otherness rather than to accept / embrace other religious beliefs – tendencies which are more pronounced among those regarded as most closely expressing the analogical

imagination in Catholicism (i.e. Traditionalists). It has also been noted that a very high proportion (87%) of Catholic attenders adopt the type of paradoxical position that religious views with which they strongly disagree can contain some truth. Further, it needs to be emphasized that in Chapter 3, a positive relationship was found between strong agreement with this position and the orthodoxy index (See Figure 3.5). In other words, this level of openness to the beliefs of the “Other” is associated with orthodoxy of belief. Moreover, most Catholic attenders ascribe to orthodox Catholic beliefs (see Chapter 3). This does not sit easily with interpretation in terms of relativism. While it might be argued that the “orthodoxy” demonstrated in answer to proposition-form questions relating to beliefs may only be a shallow orthodoxy, there is also the possibility that this is not the case. We cannot exclude the possibility that the finding of a relationship between orthodoxy and strong agreement with a position of openness to religious diversity reflects a transcendence of the binary mode of mutual exclusiveness between apparently opposite sets of beliefs – a transcendence that is possibly enabled by the incarnational nature of the orthodoxy in question.

As we have seen, most Catholic attenders, while holding firmly to their own religious beliefs, and without ascribing to other religious beliefs or practices, are nonetheless disinclined to pass judgment on the latter. This seems to resonate with Tracy’s (1981: 10) observation about the ability to recognize the disclosive possibilities of the symbols of the major faith traditions without necessarily accepting their absolutist claims. It does not necessarily resemble the “lazy pluralism” (see Tracy 1981: 6) of equivocal thinking and relativism. It may just as easily be interpreted in terms of the type of imagination and hope that attempts to “put on the minds of others” and leaves the “final judgement to God” (see Lynch 1974). If viewed in this light, the strong acceptance that truth can be found even in religious views that are not ascribed to, would not present as a wavering of commitment to Catholic belief and practice. It may suggest, instead, a certain type of openness to “otherness” that has been described as being characteristic of a Catholic analogical imagination – an imagination that in its incarnational orthodoxy can transcend dualistic thinking rather than be shaped by it.

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If our findings about attitudes towards religious diversity are viewed alongside our findings about attitudes towards other types of diversity, and in the context of the American studies mentioned, some consolidation of this argument may be possible. In relation to attitudes towards ethnic diversity, our findings lend support to the proposition that the very catholicity of Catholicism tends to undercut identification in terms of particularist boundaries. If this is placed together with our finding in Chapter 3 of a positive relationship between Catholic incarnational orthodoxy and strong agreement with a position of openness to religious diversity, it leaves open the possibility that Catholic identity may, to an extent, be constructed in terms of a wholeness that can encompass differentiation. Perhaps such identity could be seen to imply faith and confidence in a God whose grace flows through *all* humanity and creation and does not stop at church boundaries? This could cast a different light upon Hoge's (2005) concerns about the undermining of Catholic identity through openness to religious diversity. Indeed, one of Hoge's findings about Catholic identity is that behaviour is regarded as a more important identity marker than religious affiliation. This has relevance for our finding about attitudes towards homosexual persons that suggested tendencies to distinguish between person and action and to leave final judgment to God. A tendency to leave final judgment to God implies trust in God's judgment.

Such findings, then, appear to fit into the conception of faith as trust in a God whose grace and judgment apply to *all*. It is this type of conception of faith as trust that Hegy (2003) proposes in explanation of his finding of Catholic openness to religious diversity. The conception of faith in terms of a trust relationship also fits with Greeley's argument that the imagery of relationships is a fundamental aspect of the Catholic religious narrative. As our findings have indicated, Catholic openness to religious diversity can co-exist with orthodoxy of belief. This suggests that a conception of faith in terms of trust can still include adherence to particular creeds. Such a view of Catholic faith could also be compatible with Greeley's argument that the imagery of relationships, while being anterior to credal propositions, is also complementary to them. In short, this can be seen as exemplifying the way a Catholic expression of the analogical imagination accommodates ambiguity and paradox.

## **SECTION 5: MORALITY**

*Data sources: 2001 NCLS Survey A-C (N= 54,026)*  
*2001 NCLS Survey S (N= 562)*  
*2001 NCLS Survey V (N= 2256)*

The previous section relating to attitudes towards diversity has touched upon issues of morality. Our finding of Catholic attitudes towards homosexual persons suggested a tendency to either distinguish between person and behaviour or to suspend judgment altogether. It might be tempting to view this approach to moral judgment in terms of a charitable orientation towards the “other” – in line with the location of morality within a paradox of charity as suggested by Chesterton and others. Other “hints” of this might be gleaned from empirical studies referred to in the previous section: For example, Hoge’s (2005) research shows that a high proportion of American Catholics emphasize the importance of behaviour rather than religious affiliation and emphasize the importance of helping the underprivileged. (The extent to which Australian Catholics indicate a charitable orientation towards the “other” in terms of attitudes towards the poor etc. will be examined in Chapter 5).

In this chapter section the focus is on issues relating to morality and moral authority. More specifically, the data allows for examination of the Catholic approach to morality in terms of attitudes towards guidelines about good and evil and for examination of attitudes towards sexual morality and sources of moral authority such as the Bible and the Church. Initially, we ask the question: What are Australian Catholic attenders’ attitudes towards good / evil, moral authority, and sexual morality? We then address the question of whether acceptance of the Church’s authority to teach on moral matters translates into acceptance of what the Church teaches and consider any implications for the relationship between institutional authority and individual conscience. This is followed by an examination of the extent to which the findings can be interpreted in terms of the analogical imagination.

The 2001 NCLS questionnaire S has an item statement relating to the perception of good and evil: “There can never be absolutely clear guidelines about what is good and evil. It depends upon the circumstances at the time.” Table 4.30 shows that, in response to this statement, 9% of Catholic attenders strongly agree and a further 41% agree. Together, this indicates that 50% of respondents express some level of

agreement with the approach to morality implied by the statement. Nine percent of respondents strongly disagree and a further 26% disagree – accounting for 35% of the sample expressing some level of disagreement. Fifteen percent of respondents are neutral / unsure. Overall, then, the response to this statement relating to guidelines about good / evil is mixed – although a higher proportion of respondents express agreement rather than disagreement. Perhaps if the question had distinguished between person and action, the results might have been more definitive. However, we can only speculate about this.

**Table 4.30: “THERE CAN NEVER BE ABSOLUTELY CLEAR GUIDELINES ABOUT WHAT IS GOOD AND EVIL. IT DEPENDS UPON THE CIRCUMSTANCES AT THE TIME”**

	Percent
Strongly agree	9
Agree	41
Neutral / unsure	15
Disagree	26
Strongly disagree	9
Total	100

*Source: NCLS 2001 Survey S (N=562)*

In so far as the Bible and the Church may be seen to offer guidelines about morality, respondents’ attitudes towards the authority of the Bible and the Church could provide relevant background for these findings about attitudes towards good and evil.

There is an item in 2001 NCLS Survey S that could be seen to relate to the authority of the Bible. Table 4.31 shows response to the statement “To question what it says in the Bible is wrong”. Table 4.31 shows that 41% of Catholic attenders disagree with this statement and another 11% strongly disagree. Together this indicates that a small majority (52%) of respondents express some level of disagreement that it is wrong to question the Bible. Twenty-eight percent of respondents express some level of agreement (i.e. 20%+8%) and 20% are neutral / unsure. There is some difficulty in interpreting these findings because the question is fairly general and does not specifically mention the moral teaching of the Bible. (Respondents could just as easily interpret the question as referring to the veracity of biblical stories). However, even though the question is therefore not very helpful, it does provide some context for consideration of the following question relating to church authority.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> The question relating to the Bible is also included for consideration because it appears to reflect a differential effect of the “religious story” variable – as will be seen later in the data analysis.

**Table 4.31: “TO QUESTION WHAT IT SAYS IN THE BIBLE IS WRONG”**

	Percent
Strongly agree	8
Agree	20
Neutral / unsure	20
Disagree	41
Strongly disagree	11
Total	100

Source: NCLS 2001 Survey S (N=562)

Another item in 2001 NCLS Survey S refers to the authority of the Church. Table 4.32 shows that in response to the statement “To question the authority of the Church is wrong”, 32% of Catholic attenders disagree and a further 11% strongly disagree. Together, this indicates that 43% of respondents express some level of disagreement with the statement. Thirty-four percent of respondents express some level of agreement with the statement (i.e. 23%+11%) and 22% are neutral / unsure. Overall, then, the response to this statement relating to Church authority is mixed – although a higher proportion of respondents express disagreement rather than agreement. This question, however, like the previous question, is fairly general. Again, if the question had been more specific about the type / area of authority, the results might have been more definitive.

**Table 4.32: “TO QUESTION THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH IS WRONG”**

	Percent
Strongly agree	11
Agree	23
Neutral / unsure	22
Disagree	32
Strongly disagree	11
Total	100

Source: NCLS 2001 Survey S (N=562)

Nevertheless, it may be helpful to compare the data relating to these two fairly general questions. A comparison of Table 4.32 and Table 4.31 shows that a higher proportion of Catholic attenders appear to be open to questioning the Bible (52%) than are open to questioning Church authority (43%). It could be relevant to view this finding in the context of the Catholic tendency to accept the Church’s role in religious interpretation / teaching (discussed in *Approach to Scripture* section) and the earlier commentary on the metaphorical / contextual mode of the Catholic expression of the analogical imagination. (This will be examined in more depth later in this section).

There is, however, another question in 2001 NCLS Survey A-C which relates to Church authority and which is more specific than the previous question. Table 4.33 shows that in response to the question “Do you accept the authority of the Church to teach that certain doctrines of faith and morals are true, are essential to the Catholic faith, and are to be believed by all Catholics?” 49% of Catholic attenders indicate “Yes, with no difficulty”. Thirty-eight percent of respondents indicate “Yes, with some difficulty” and 7% indicate “Yes, with great difficulty”. All together, this accounts for 94% of the sample who accept Church teaching authority – with varying levels of difficulty. Only 6% of respondents do not accept Church teaching authority.

**Table 4.33: “DO YOU ACCEPT THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH TO TEACH THAT CERTAIN DOCTRINES OF FAITH AND MORALS ARE TRUE, ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE CATHOLIC FAITH, AND ARE TO BE BELIEVED BY ALL CATHOLICS?”**

	Percent
Yes, with no difficulty	49
Yes, with some difficulty	38
Yes, with great difficulty	7
No	6
Total	100

*Source: NCLS 2001 Survey A-C (N=54,026)*

The finding that the overwhelming majority of Catholic attenders accept (with varying levels of difficulty) the Church’s authority to teach on matters of faith and morals (Table 4.33) might seem to be at odds with the previous finding that only 34% of Catholic attenders consider it wrong to question the authority of the Church (Table 4.32).<sup>28</sup> The variation in levels of difficulty in accepting the Church’s teaching authority leaves open the possibility that there could be some attenders who, while accepting in principle the authority of the Church to teach, also reserve the right to question and to exercise individual conscience. It may be relevant to view this alongside the findings in the last chapter that suggested that, for many Catholic attenders, faith does not preclude a questioning approach (see Table 3.8). Moreover, it is to be noted that strong agreement with this questioning approach was found to be positively related to the orthodoxy index (see Figure 3.3).

The implications of this for the relationship between individual conscience and institutional authority warrants some consideration. As we have already seen in relation to Flood and Hamilton’s (2005) research, the majority of Australian Catholics

<sup>28</sup> It is not possible to test the relationship between the variables referred to in Table 4.20 and Table 4.21 because they appear in different surveys.

do not consider homosexuality to be immoral – despite the strong stance against homosexuality held by the Catholic hierarchy. Similarly, Hoge’s (2005) research has indicated that the majority of American Catholics are more likely to place importance on helping the poor than on the hierarchy’s teachings on matters of sexual morality. Moreover, as we have seen, the present research has indicated that the majority of Australian Catholic attenders are open towards homosexual persons as members of the Church.

This prompts the question of how Australian Catholic attenders may view other issues of sexual morality.

The 2001 NCLS Survey V contains the question “Do you think it is wrong for a man and a woman to have sexual relations before marriage?”, Table 4.34 shows that in response to the question 44% of Catholic attenders indicate that it is always wrong. This means that less than half of the respondents appear to agree with the Catholic hierarchy’s teaching that sexual relations before marriage are wrong. Forty percent indicate that it is not wrong if the couple is engaged or committed to a long-term relationship. Seven percent of respondents indicate that it is not wrong in any circumstances, and 9% “Don’t know”.

**Table 4.34: “DO YOU THINK IT IS WRONG FOR A MAN AND A WOMAN TO HAVE SEXUAL RELATIONS BEFORE MARRIAGE?”**

	Percent
Always wrong	44
Not wrong, if they are engaged / committed to a long-term relationship <sup>^</sup>	40
Not wrong in any circumstances	7
Don’t know	9
Total	100

*Source: NCLS 2001 Survey V (N=2256)*

<sup>^</sup> “Not wrong, if they are engaged” combined with “Not wrong, if they are committed to a long-term relationship”.

The 2001 NCLS Survey V also contains the same question about acceptance of Church teaching authority that appears on Survey A-C (although it has an additional response category of “Don’t know”).<sup>29</sup> This enables examination of the relationship

<sup>29</sup> The frequencies for the Survey V item on Acceptance of Church teaching authority are: 47% “Yes, no difficulty”, 40% “Yes, some difficulty”, 6% “Yes, great difficulty”, 5% “No”, and 3% “Don’t know”.

between attitudes towards Church teaching authority and attitudes towards premarital sexual relations.<sup>30</sup>

Table 4.35 shows a crosstabulation between the Acceptance of Church teaching authority variable and the variable for attitudes towards premarital sexual relations. The table shows that among Catholic attenders who accept Church teaching authority (with varying levels of difficulty), 46% believe that premarital sexual relations are always wrong and 40% believe that they are not wrong if the couple is committed to a long-term relationship. Among respondents who do not accept Church teaching authority, only 7% believe that premarital sexual relations are always wrong, 56% believe that they are not wrong if the couple is committed, and 26% consider that premarital sexual relations are never wrong.

The finding that less than half of the attenders (46%) who accept the Church's authority to teach on matters of morality affirm the Church's teaching that premarital sexual relations are always wrong suggests that acceptance of the Church's authority to teach does not necessarily translate into acceptance of Church teaching per se for all respondents.

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<sup>30</sup> To be more comparable with the Survey A-C variable for Acceptance of Church teaching authority, the "Don't know" response category is excluded from the corresponding Survey V variable in the following analysis.

**Table 4.35: Crosstabulation: ATTITUDE TOWARDS PREMARITAL SEXUAL RELATIONS \* ACCEPTANCE OF CHURCH TEACHING AUTHORITY (Categories of levels of difficulty combined)\***

		ACCEPTANCE OF CHURCH TEACHING AUTHORITY		
		Yes (varying levels of difficulty)*	No	Total
ATTITUDE TOWARDS PREMARITAL SEXUAL RELATIONS	Always wrong	46%	7%	44%
	Not wrong, if engaged/committed long-term^	40%	56%	41%
	Not wrong in any circumstances	6%	26%	6%
	Don't know	8%	11%	9%
	Total	100%	100%	100%

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey V (N=2256)

\* In the Acceptance of Church teaching authority variable the response categories "Yes, without difficulty", "Yes, with some difficulty", and "Yes, with great difficulty" are combined and the "Don't know" category is excluded. After exclusion of the "Don't know" category, the combined "Yes" categories account for 95% of the respondents and the "No" category accounts for 5%.

^ "Not wrong, if they are engaged" combined with "Not wrong, if they are committed to a long-term relationship".

In order to examine this more closely, we now consider a cross-tabulation of the same two variables as in Table 4.35 but expanded to show the levels of difficulty relating to Acceptance of Church teaching authority. Table 4.36 shows that among respondents who accept Church teaching authority without difficulty, 63% believe that premarital sexual relations are always wrong and 27% believe that such relations are not wrong if the couple is engaged or committed to a long-term relationship. On the other hand, among respondents who accept Church teaching authority with some difficulty, 28% believe that premarital sexual relations are always wrong and 54% believe that they are not wrong if the couple is committed. Among respondents who accept Church teaching authority with great difficulty, the response pattern is similar: 24% believe that premarital sexual relations are always wrong and 58% believe that they are not wrong if the couple is committed. Hence, among respondents who accept Church teaching authority, the pattern of attitudes towards premarital sexual relations differs between those who accept Church teaching authority with difficulty and those who accept it without difficulty. Respondents who experience difficulty in accepting Church teaching authority are considerably less likely than those who accept it without difficulty to share the Church's moral view that premarital sexual relations

are always wrong. Nevertheless, the finding that not all respondents who accept Church teaching authority without difficulty appear to accept the Church's teaching on sexual morality (i.e. 63%) still suggests that acceptance of the Church's authority to teach does not necessarily translate into acceptance of Church teaching on all specific issues for all respondents. It appears that some Catholic attenders do not regard their acceptance of Church teaching authority as precluding individual questioning / interpretation.

**Table 4.36: Crosstabulation: ATTITUDE TOWARDS PREMARITAL SEXUAL RELATIONS \* ACCEPTANCE OF CHURCH TEACHING AUTHORITY\***

		ACCEPTANCE	OF CHURCH	TEACHING	AUTHORITY
		Yes, with no difficulty	Yes, with some difficulty	Yes, with great difficulty	No
ATTITUDE TOWARDS PREMARITAL SEXUAL RELATIONS	Always wrong	63%	28%	24%	7%
	Not wrong, if engaged / committed long-term <sup>^</sup>	27%	54%	58%	56%
	Not wrong in any circumstances	3%	7%	10%	26%
	Don't know	7%	11%	9%	11%
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey V (N=2256)

\* "Don't know" response category has been excluded from Acceptance of Church teaching authority variable. After exclusion of the "Don't know" category, "Yes, no difficulty" accounts for 48% of the respondents, "Yes, some difficulty" accounts for 41%, "Yes, great difficulty" accounts for 6% and "No" accounts for 5%.

<sup>^</sup> "Not wrong, if they are engaged" combined with "Not wrong, if they are committed to a long-term relationship".

So far, this section has examined attitudes towards moral guidelines, sources of moral authority, and sexual morality. The first three survey items considered (relating to guidelines about good and evil, questioning the Bible, and questioning Church authority) are fairly general; hence interpretation of the results is somewhat limited. The findings show that half the sample of Catholic attenders considers that it is not possible to have absolute guidelines about good / evil. While the overall response to this item is mixed, more respondents agree with this position than disagree. The findings have also shown that just over half of Catholic attenders do not consider it wrong to question the Bible and a little under half of the respondents do not consider it wrong to question Church authority. Analysis of data from a more detailed question

about Church teaching authority has indicated that the overwhelming majority of Catholic attenders accept the authority of the Church to teach on moral matters; however, just under half do so without difficulty. This, together with the finding that less than half of the respondents appear to agree with the Church's teaching that sexual relations before marriage are wrong, has prompted examination of the relationship between acceptance of Church teaching authority and acceptance of Church teaching on sexual morality. This examination has suggested that acceptance of the Church's authority to teach does not necessarily translate into acceptance of the Church's teaching *per se*: just under half of the attenders who accept the Church's authority to teach on matters of morality affirm the Church's teaching on sexual morality. Even among respondents who accept Church teaching authority *without difficulty*, not all appear to accept the Church's teaching on sexual morality. In short, within an overall general acceptance by Catholic attenders of the Church's authority to teach, there appears to be a level of questioning / individual decision-making that calls for interpretation.

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One possible interpretation is in terms of the analogical imagination. If some Catholics have an openness to metaphorical and contextual interpretation of scripture, does this, to any extent, carry over into the interpretation of Church teaching? Can a general acceptance of the tradition of Church teaching and a simultaneous questioning of specific aspects of that teaching be seen as a type of holding together of apparent opposites? Can it be interpreted in terms of a way of holding universals and particulars together – a way of holding institutional authority and individual autonomy together? Can analysis in terms of the type of religious “story”/ imagination indicated by respondents shed any light upon such questions? This line of analysis will now be pursued.<sup>31</sup>

Table 4.37 shows that 46% of Traditionalists (i.e. 9%+37%) and 56% of Literalists (i.e. 13%+43%) express some level of agreement with the statement that there can

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<sup>31</sup> In the following analysis it will not be possible to compare Traditionalists' and Literalists' attitudes towards sexual morality because 2001 NCLS Survey V does not include the variable relating to View of the Bible.

never be absolutely clear guidelines about good and evil. Forty percent of Traditionalists (i.e. 29%+11%) and 27% of Literalists (i.e. 23%+4%) express some level of disagreement with the statement. Overall, then, Traditionalists are less likely than Literalists to agree with the statement about good and evil and more likely to disagree. This indicates that there tends to be a firmer perception of moral guidelines among Traditionalists than among Literalists. It also suggests that the analogical imagination as expressed by Traditionalists cannot necessarily be linked to moral relativism.

**Table 4.37.: “THERE CAN NEVER BE ABSOLUTELY CLEAR GUIDELINES ABOUT WHAT IS GOOD AND EVIL. IT DEPENDS UPON THE CIRCUMSTANCES AT THE TIME” (Literalists & Traditionalists)\***

	Literalists	Traditionalists
	%	%
Strongly agree	13	9
Agree	43	37
Neutral / unsure	17	14
Disagree	23	29
Strongly disagree	4	11
Total	100	100

Source: NCLS 2001 Survey S (N=562)

\*Literalists represent 13% of the Survey S sample; Traditionalists represent 59%.

It might be expected that Literalists (who ascribe to a literal “story” / mode of understanding of the Bible) would be more likely than Traditionalists to affirm the guidelines and authority of the Bible. This expectation is confirmed by the findings which show a pronounced difference between the two groupings in relation to attitudes towards the authority of the Bible. Table 4.38 shows that only 25% of Traditionalists (i.e. 8%+17%) compared to 65% of Literalists (i.e. 16%+49%) express some level of agreement that it is wrong to question what it says in the Bible. A large difference is also evident in relation to disagreement with the statement: 54% of Traditionalists (i.e. 44%+10%) and 28% of Literalists (i.e. 10%+18%) express some level of disagreement. Twenty-one percent of Traditionalists and 6% of Literalists take a neutral position. Overall, then, Traditionalists are far less likely than Literalists to agree that it is wrong to question the Bible and far more likely to disagree. This suggests that Traditionalists’ “story” / openness to interpretation of the Bible in terms of metaphor, context, and tradition (see Section 1) – which has been presented in this chapter as a key expression of the analogical imagination – tends to include an openness to questioning “what it says in the Bible”.

**Table 4.38: “TO QUESTION WHAT IT SAYS IN THE BIBLE IS WRONG” (Literalists & Traditionalists)\***

	Literalists	Traditionalists
	%	%
Strongly agree	16	8
Agree	49	17
Neutral / unsure	6	21
Disagree	10	44
Strongly disagree	18	10
Total	100	100

Source: NCLS 2001 Survey S (N=562)

\*Literalists represent 13% of the Survey S sample; Traditionalists represent 59%.

We may ask whether the same pattern applies in relation to questioning the authority of the Church. Table 4.39 shows that 34% of Traditionalists (i.e. 13%+21%) and 47% of Literalists (i.e. 21%+36%) express some level of agreement that it is wrong to question the authority of the Church. Forty-two percent of Traditionalists (i.e. 35%+7%) and 31% of Literalists (i.e. 16%+15%) express some level of disagreement. Traditionalists (24%) are more likely than Literalists (12%) to take a neutral position. Overall, then, Traditionalists are less likely than Literalists to agree that it is wrong to question church authority and more likely to disagree. While the difference between Traditionalists and Literalists in response to this item is not as great as it was in relation to questioning the Bible, it is interesting that the difference is in the same direction as in the case of questioning the Bible. In view of the fact that the Traditionalist “story” includes not only consideration of context but also *Church teaching* in its approach to scripture, the finding that more Traditionalists than Literalists are open to questioning the Church again suggests that the analogical imagination (as expressed by Traditionalists) may be associated with a questioning approach. It also suggests that while the analogical story in Catholicism may embrace Church tradition, that tradition remains open to scrutiny.

**Table 4.39: “TO QUESTION THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH IS WRONG” (Literalists & Traditionalists)\***

	Literalists	Traditionalists
	%	%
Strongly agree	21	13
Agree	36	21
Neutral / unsure	12	24
Disagree	16	35
Strongly disagree	15	7
Total	100	100

Source: NCLS 2001 Survey S (N=562)

\*Literalists represent 13% of the Survey S sample; Traditionalists represent 59%.

Indeed, it appears that Traditionalists are more likely than Literalists to have difficulty in accepting Church teaching authority. Table 4.40 shows that Traditionalists (49%) are much less likely than Literalists (75%) to accept the teaching authority of the Church without difficulty. Traditionalists (42%) are more likely than Literalists (20%) to accept the teaching authority of the Church with some difficulty. Only very small proportions of both Traditionalists and Literalists experience great difficulty in accepting church authority. These findings suggest that Traditionalists are more likely than Literalists to maintain an acceptance of Church teaching authority in a way that includes difficulty / tension.

**Table 4.40: “DO YOU ACCEPT THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHURCH TO TEACH THAT CERTAIN DOCTRINES OF FAITH AND MORALS ARE TRUE, ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE CATHOLIC FAITH, AND ARE TO BE BELIEVED BY ALL CATHOLICS?” (Literalists & Traditionalists)\***

	Literalists	Traditionalists
	%	%
Yes, with no difficulty	75	49
Yes, with some difficulty	20	42
Yes, with great difficulty	3	5
No	2	3
Total	100	100

*Source: NCLS 2001 Survey A-C (N=54,026)*

*\*Literalists represent 15% of the Survey A-C sample; Traditionalists represent 53%.*

One of the main findings of the earlier part of this Morality section has been that an overall general acceptance by Catholic attenders of the Church’s teaching authority co-exists with a considerable level of questioning / individual decision-making in relation to moral matters. The finding that Traditionalists are more likely than Literalists to have a questioning approach to both the Bible and Church teaching suggests that such an approach may be associated with the analogical imagination as expressed by Traditionalists. This interpretation tends to be reinforced by the finding that Traditionalists’ way of accepting Church teaching authority is more likely to include an element of tension / difficulty than is the case for Literalists. This element of tension is highlighted in the sense that Traditionalists, by definition (see Section 1), embrace Church teaching (re. scripture) in a way that Literalists do not. It appears, then, that an analogical embrace of Church tradition can include the tension and dialectics of individual enquiry / conscience.

In the previous section on Diversity it was suggested that the openness to diversity associated with the analogical imagination was not a “lazy” openness; similarly, the

findings of this section suggest that the type of acceptance of Church tradition associated with the analogical imagination is not a “lazy” acceptance. Moreover, the finding that Traditionalists tend to perceive moral guidelines more firmly than is the case for Literalists challenges any notion of association between the analogical imagination and moral relativism. This lends further support to the argument implied in the Diversity section that the analogical imagination cannot be equated with relativism.

### ***SUMMARY OF FINDINGS***

1. A core majority of Australian Catholic attenders exhibit a mode of understanding scripture that is grounded in context and tradition. This mode resembles the type of “religious story” indicative of a Catholic analogical imagination.
2. Most Catholic attenders affirm the natural world and humanity as God’s creation and many are inclined to experience the natural world and social situations in a sacramental way. A majority of Catholic attenders are also open to evolutionary theory. Interdenominational comparison shows that Catholic attenders are more likely than other Christian attenders to affirm creation belief and evolutionary theory and that Catholics are more likely than other Christians to do so *simultaneously*. Among Catholic attenders, those who indicate an analogical “religious story” are much more likely than those who indicate a literal mode of religious understanding to accommodate both creation belief and evolutionary theory in some way.
3. The sacrament of Eucharist is the main situation in which Catholic attenders often experience a sense of God’s presence. For the majority of attenders, it is reception of “the sacramental presence of Christ” that is the most important aspect of the Eucharist and celebration of the Eucharist is the most valued aspect of the parish. Respondents also rank daily life and nature fairly highly as situations that can be experienced sacramentally. Respondents who indicate an analogical mode of religious understanding (Traditionalists) are more likely than Literalists to emphasize sacramentality per se and to extend the experience of sacramentality to nature and life in the world.

4a. Most Catholic attenders are accepting of cultural diversity both nationally and within the Church – an openness that is stronger among those exhibiting an analogical mode of understanding than among literalists. The majority of Catholic attenders are also accepting of homosexual members of the Church – although for some, this acceptance is conditional upon behaviour; attenders who exhibit an analogical mode of understanding are more likely than Literalists to either suspend judgment of the homosexual person or to distinguish between person and action.

4b. Most Catholic attenders are open to religious diversity. There is a tendency to suspend judgment about religious otherness rather than to embrace other religious beliefs – a tendency that is stronger among those indicating an analogical mode of understanding than among Literalists.

5. The overwhelming majority of Catholic attenders accept the authority of the Church to teach on moral matters – although just under half do so without difficulty. Even among attenders who accept Church teaching authority without difficulty, not all accept all specific teachings. Only about one third of respondents consider it wrong to question the authority of the Church and even fewer consider it wrong to question the Bible. Respondents who indicate an analogical mode of understanding are more open than Literalists to questioning Church authority and the Bible. However, while half the respondents believe that there can never be clear guidelines about good and evil, those who indicate an analogical mode of understanding are less likely than Literalists to agree with this position.

Sometimes the above findings are based on small differences, but across the various measures used there is an overwhelming trend in a direction that indicates that an analogical mode of understanding has a differential effect upon the attitudes and orientations surveyed.

## CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

In this chapter there has been an attempt to understand the above findings in terms of the dominant type of “religious imagination” found among Australian Catholic church attenders and its implications for the Catholic orientation towards “the world”.

The “analogical imagination” in its sensitivity to symbol, ambiguity and paradox, has been focused upon as being consistent with “symbolic rationality” and as a particularly apt way of viewing the Christian symbol system. The way in which the analogical imagination can allow for the holding together of apparent opposites has been used to approach the incarnational nature of Christian orthodoxy and, in particular, the sacramental emphasis of Catholicism. We have explored the perspective that the type of imagination dominant in Catholicism is grounded in the reality of human relationships and communal tradition – a mode of religious understanding that, in its cultural imbeddedness, allows for an organic relationship between particulars and universals. This has been viewed as implying an organic mode of understanding religious narrative that recognizes both the context of the narrative and the context of the interpreter.

In the empirical part of this chapter a variable representing interpretation of religious narrative / scripture (regarded as “the word of God”) in terms of its historical context and also in terms of Church teaching tradition has been regarded as the closest indicator of a Catholic analogical mode of understanding that is available across the data sets. The finding that a majority of Australian Catholic attenders indicate this way of understanding religious narrative – i.e. a way that holds together otherworldly and this-worldly elements – presents it as the dominant type of “religious story” among them.

The finding that Catholic attenders who indicate an analogical mode of religious understanding are more likely than Literalists to hold together the apparent opposites of the story of divine creation and the scientific theory of evolution has suggested that there may be a tendency among the former to approach ambiguity in a way that allows for the simultaneous maintenance of different planes of meaning – i.e. the

maintenance of otherworldly and this-worldly orientations. The finding has also been interpreted as an example of the way an analogical embrace of religious tradition can include the dialectics of scientific rationality. As respondents who indicate an analogical mode of understanding represent a majority of Catholic attenders, this has implications for a Catholic openness to “worldly” enquiry.

The findings relating to the centrality of the sacrament of Eucharist in the spiritual lives of most Catholic attenders have indicated the sacramental nature of Catholic spirituality. The findings that the natural world, daily life and social situations can also be experienced sacramentally have been reinforced by the findings of high levels of belief in nature and humanity as God’s creation and attitudes towards nature and humanity as graced. This has been interpreted as indicating a way in which otherworldly and this-worldly orientations are held together by Australian Catholics. The finding that respondents who indicate an analogical mode of understanding are more likely than Literalists to extend the experience of sacramentality to “the world” has been interpreted as suggesting that the analogical imagination may play some part in the holding together of otherworldly and this-worldly orientations. The overall implications have been interpreted in terms of a Catholic openness towards “the world” and human society.

Catholic openness to humanity has also been explored in terms of openness to human diversity. The finding that many Catholic attenders are open to ethnic / cultural diversity and that this openness is stronger among those indicating an analogical imagination (compared to Literalists), has suggested an approach to the ambiguity of human diversity that implies a recognition of the universal and the particular as different dimensions that can be experienced simultaneously – i.e. in terms of universal humanity present in the particularity of cultural context. The implications of this have been interpreted in terms of a Catholic openness to social diversity. Of course, the *experience* of ethnic / cultural diversity within Australian Catholicism may explain a large part of the openness reported here. However, the data support the claim that the analogical imagination also plays a part, and probably influences the interpretation given to experience.

In addition, we have found that many Catholic attenders are open to religious diversity – an openness that tends to take the form of accepting the possibility that other religions may contain some universal truth but not adopting the particularities of those religions; instead, as Chapter 3 indicated, maintaining the particularity of Catholicism. The finding that respondents indicating an analogical imagination appear more likely than Literalists to suspend judgment about the particularity of religious otherness but less likely to adopt the particular belief of another religion has been interpreted as an indication that an analogical mode of understanding may be more open to holding apparent opposites in tension. This has suggested the possibility that an analogical imagination tends to allow one's own religious belief and the religious belief of the "other" to be implicitly understood as different dimensions. As we have seen, Chesterton (1908: 252) has articulated a vision whereby apparent opposites "may blaze beside each other". If this vision can be applied to Catholic openness to religious otherness, such openness cannot be interpreted in terms of equivocation or relativism.

As well as finding openness to cultural and religious "otherness", we have found a considerable level of openness to the homosexual "other" that takes the form of either distinguishing between the human person and the action or suspending judgment altogether. This has suggested a tendency to regard person and action as belonging to different dimensions in a way that resonates with Chesterton's (1908: 157-8) location of morality within a paradox of charity. As this type of openness to the "other" through multidimensional awareness is stronger among respondents indicating an analogical rather than a literal mode of understanding, it has been interpreted as being associated with the analogical imagination. Once again, the implications of this have been viewed in terms of a Catholic openness to the diversity of human society.

Attitudes towards the homosexual "other" were also discussed in terms of Church teaching relating to homosexuality and led into examination of attitudes towards Church teachings and Church authority. The finding that many Catholic attenders can accept the authority of the Church teaching tradition at the same time as being open to the questioning of Church authority and / or particular teachings, suggested that there may be a tendency among Catholic attenders to understand the overall Catholic tradition and particular teachings as different dimensions. The finding that attenders

who indicate an analogical imagination and are “Traditionalists” (so defined by their approach to scripture in the light of Church teaching tradition) are more likely than Literalists to question Church authority lent some support to this interpretation. It is as if an embrace of Catholic tradition can include rational enquiry / individual questioning – possibly in keeping with the organic mode of an ongoing cultural tradition.

In brief, we have found evidence of a Catholic openness to “the world” that appears to be related to the incarnational and sacramental nature of Catholicism. Among Australian Catholic attenders there appears to be a dominant type of religious imagination that heightens this by allowing for the holding together of apparent opposites and an orientation that is both otherworldly and this-worldly. A Catholic orientation towards humanity and openness to the “other” implies a social ethic that would seem to involve openness towards and engagement in the wider society. This aspect of the Catholic worldview and ethos will be explored further in the next chapter.

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In the context of this thesis as a whole, the findings of this chapter are relevant to some of the theoretical problems referred to earlier in the thesis. In Chapter 2 concerns were expressed that the emphasis on and influence of rationality in the Weberian tradition was conducive to dualistic constructions. In an attempt at a more wholistic approach, we have adopted the perspective of symbolic rationality – employing an understanding of symbol as enabling the co-existence of different planes of meaning. Whereas Weber tended to view the imagination and rationality as mutually exclusive, from the perspective of symbolic rationality we have argued that the religious imagination can be inclusive of rationality. Reinforcing the finding in Chapter 3 that religious faith can be inclusive of reason, we have found that a “religious imagination” approach to scripture tends to allow room for both otherworldly belief (e.g. creation belief) and this-worldly rationality (e.g. evolutionary theory). On the other hand, a narrowly “rationalist” / literal approach to scripture tends to force a binary choice between otherworldly belief and this-worldly

rationality. The irony here is that the religious imagination allows for scientific rationality in a way that a “rationalist” approach to scripture does not.

Similarly, a “religious imagination” embrace of the Catholic faith tradition does not appear to preclude rational enquiry / questioning of Church authority and / or particular doctrines. Following the line of argument that symbols are anterior to propositions (see Greeley 1981), it could appear that acceptance of the role of the Church institution within the Catholic tradition is, to some extent, symbolic and anterior to specific institutional-level propositions that may be subject to individual scrutiny / conscience. If so, this type of relationship between symbol and proposition may offer some insight into the way individual religiosity accommodates the institutional aspects of Catholicism. It cannot necessarily be assumed that individual religiosity and institutional form are mutually exclusive.

In the Weberian tradition, rationalisation is mutually exclusive to sacralisation. Yet, the incarnational, sacramental sensibility of practising Australian Catholics seems to correspond to a multi-dimensional perspective that allows for the co-existence of the apparent opposites of otherworldly belief and this-worldly rationality. Most practising Catholics have a sacramental orientation towards the world – believing in a graced nature and a graced humanity – that keeps a connection between this world and the other world. While for Weber, the priestly role in sacrament weakened the human-divine relationship, our findings show that most practising Catholics experience the Eucharist in terms of the reception of divine presence and that it is central to their spirituality / “charisma”. The “externals” of the communal Eucharistic celebration do not appear to preclude the individual’s inner relationship with God. Instead, sacramentality presents as a linkage between the human and the divine, this world and the other world. This does not support Weberian notions of an antithesis between sacramentality and the world.

Further, the overwhelming majority of practising Catholics regard human beings as being made in God’s image and many are inclined to experience human communal situations in a spiritual way. This is consistent with evidence of a Catholic tendency towards openness to society that is inclusive of the “other”. In this sense, human relationships may be seen as a dimension of individual relationship with God. This

interpretation does not support notions of the individual's relationship with God as being separate from society. It does not support the Weberian notion of a religion-society dichotomy.

Hence, theories based on the assumption of a "this world-other world" dualism and attendant dualisms do not appear appropriate in explaining our findings relating to the beliefs, orientations and practices of Australian Catholics. Notions that religious faith precludes rationality, that individual religiosity cannot accommodate institutional-level propositions, and that religion is antithetical to society, are not supported by our findings. The type of perspective advanced by Christian social theorists that focuses on Christianity as an incarnational symbol system appears to offer a more appropriate framework for an understanding of the worldview and ethos of Australian Catholics than do analyses based on Weberian theory. In the next chapter this interpretative perspective will be applied to empirical data in competition with the religion-society dichotomy outlined in Chapter 2.

## **Chapter 5**

# **CHALLENGING THE RELIGION-SOCIETY DUALISM**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter addresses the question of the extent to which the postulated religion-society dualism referred to in Chapter 2 presents a relevant theoretical framework for an understanding of the attitudes and practices of Australian Catholics and for an understanding of the position of the Catholic Church in Australian society. There will be consideration of two theoretical strands that, in different ways, imply a separation between religion and society. More specifically, versions of the theory of the privatisation of religion and the “church-sect” theory will be explored in terms of the extent to which they may / may not offer explanations for the evidence presented. The evaluation of the usefulness of a religion-society dualism for an understanding of Australian Catholicism that is presented in this chapter leads directly into the examination of the relationship between the religious and the secular that is presented in Chapter 6.

In Chapter 2 we discussed Weber’s theory that, in Western culture, processes of rationalisation were not only associated with a “this world - other world” differentiation but had also effected differentiation between society and religion – the latter being marginalised in a sphere of its own. In Chapter 3 we tested the Weberian hypothesis that Christian belief in redemption was related to a predominantly otherworldly orientation but found that this did not apply to most practising Australian Catholics. Instead, we found a dominant attitude towards salvation in terms of transformation – the suggestion was that a view of individual salvation did not preclude social transformation but rather included it. We did find a high level of orthodoxy of belief but we also found that Catholic belief orthodoxy tended to be associated with openness to rational enquiry and the wider society. There was not the disjunction between orthodoxy and social ethics predicted by some theories. Moreover, in Chapter 4 we found that openness to rational enquiry and social diversity on the part of Catholics could be interpreted, to some extent, in terms of the dominant type of religious imagination found among them. The Weberian notion of a

divide between individual religiosity and society was not supported by the Chapter 4 findings.

Some of these findings warrant further consideration. The openness to otherness found among many Catholics calls for reappraisal of the nature of Catholic identity / distinctiveness. The fairly high level of rational enquiry / questioning of institutional aspects of the Catholic Church among Catholics calls for further exploration of the relationship between Catholic individuals and the institutional level of the Church. Similarly, there is a call for exploration of the relationships between individual religiosity, participation in Church activity, and engagement in society.

So far, our findings cast doubt on the applicability of a radical and ineluctable religion-society dualism to the case of Australian Catholicism. The aim of the present chapter is to explore a little further this issue and related issues that have emerged from the previous chapters with reference not only to individual level data but also in consideration of evidence relating to the organisational level of the Catholic Church and its position in Australian society.

We ask whether the apparently organic nature of Catholicism has implications for the various relationships between individual Catholics, the institution of the Catholic Church and the wider society. We ask whether Catholic individual religiosity and openness to social transformation may be seen as two sides of the one coin and central to the mission of Catholicism. We examine the role of the Church institution in addressing this mission and the extent to which the type of rationale operating at the institutional level can be associated with the notion of service (both to God and humanity). This will be looked at specifically in terms of the role of the institutional Church in the provision of welfare services to society. Overall, these issues will be considered in terms of the extent to which the relationships between individual Catholics, Church institution and society may be seen as organic.

This will be viewed in terms of the extent to which a Catholic religious orientation can embrace human society in a way that, to some degree, can counter tendencies towards mutual exclusiveness between individual and institution, between individual religiosity and society, and between institutional religion and society. In the context of

a decline in the overall number of Australian Catholics who are regular church attenders, we ask whether those Catholics who remain regular attenders can be understood in terms of privatisation theory or church-sect theory.

The chapter is divided into three parts: Part I addresses privatisation issues, Part II addresses church-sect issues, and Part III addresses both sets of issues in the historical context of Australian Catholicism.

In Part I, in relation to privatisation theory, we explore various assumptions related to functional differentiation and pluralism that have contributed towards the theory that religion has become privatised and marginalised from society. We explore the implications of these assumptions for the construction of the relationship between the individual and the institution – with particular focus on the agency-structure relationship. In empirical terms, there is an attempt to examine the implications of “privatised” religiosity for engagement in society. In Part III there is also consideration of the ways in which the position of the Catholic Church in Australian history may be regarded as private or public vis a vis the wider society.

In Part II, in relation to the church-sect theory, we compare 1996 CCLS data and 2001 NCLS data for evidence of any changes relating to orthodoxy and in-group out-group relationships that may indicate a movement towards either sect-like or church-like characteristics. In Part III, we trace the history of Catholicism in Australia for evidence of any long-term tendencies towards either characteristic or towards a church-sect cycle. The focus will be on the extent to which Catholic individuals and the institutional Church are open to the wider society.

Overall, the main hypothesis is that Catholic individuals and the institutional Catholic Church have an openness to the wider society that does not support either the full-blown privatisation theory or the church-sect theory and that challenges assumptions of a total cleavage between individual religiosity and society, and between institutional religion and society. As the concept “society” is so often regarded as synonymous with “the secular”, the research in this chapter prepares the way for the explicit consideration of the relationship between the religious and the secular which is presented in Chapter 6.

## **PART I – THE PRIVATISATION THESIS**

By way of introduction, this section begins with a brief review of Bellah's (1964) theory that differentiation leads to social evolution in a way that characterizes Catholicism as a world-rejecting religion. This is followed by an examination of Berger's (1969) classic theory outlining the processes of privatisation on both the individual level and the structural level. Berger's theory is regarded as setting the scene for the discussion of privatisation theory and it is considered in some detail. Various concerns are expressed about Berger's work and some suggestions are made. The interpretation of structural level change as privatisation is then discussed in terms of approaches by writers such as Martin (1978), Luhmann (1982), and Casanova (1994). This is followed by consideration of Habermas' (1989) theory on the relationship between system and lifeworld and leads into consideration of Greeley's (2000) views on the necessity of interaction between institution / structure and living tradition. Finally, the relationship between religious institution and living religious tradition is explored in terms of its implications for ethics discourse in the public sphere of society.

### ***DIFFERENTIATION AND RELIGIOUS EVOLUTION***

Bellah's (1964) early work is strongly influenced by Weber's views on history, rationalisation, and differentiation and he builds on these in his theory of religious evolution. Bellah believes that religious symbolization tends to change over time, "in the direction of more differentiated, comprehensive, and in Weber's sense, more rationalized formulations" (1964: 358). Bellah equates this with "religious evolution" – assuming the notion of evolution to mean "a process of increasing differentiation and complexity of organisation that endows ...the unit in question...with greater capacity to adapt to its environment, so that it is in some sense more autonomous relative to its environment than were its less complex ancestors" (1964: 358ff).

Bellah (1964) sees processes of rationalisation and differentiation as influencing both individual human development and religious structural change. In proposing stages of religious evolution he says "The logic is much the same as that involved in

conceptualising stages of the life cycle in personality development” (Bellah 1964: 361). He views “the differentiation between experience of the self and of the world which acts upon it” (Lienhardt cited in Bellah 1964: 374) in terms of an evolving distinction between subject and object. However, at times Bellah seems to go beyond analogy in linking the psychological and the sociological and almost conflates the two.<sup>1</sup> The individual’s objectification of the world is associated with world rejection on the level of religion. According to Bellah, “World rejection marks the beginning of a clear objectification of the social order”(1964: 374).

Bellah (1964: 366-9) sees world rejection as being characteristic of Catholicism. Like Weber, he implies that the “externals” of the Catholic symbol system preclude inner faith (Bellah 1964: 369). In his assessment, the Catholic interpretation of the sacrament of the Eucharist is “fundamentally ritualist” (Bellah 1964: 369). Such characteristics are seen to render Catholicism incapable of adapting to a changing environment. In Bellah’s (1964: 368-371) model, Catholicism is classified as “historic” and is presumably regarded as not having a place in the modern world.<sup>2</sup> Yet, as we have seen, this type of interpretation of Catholicism is challenged by the findings of previous chapters of this thesis that suggest that many practising Australian Catholics appear to have a religious orientation that is both otherworldly and this-worldly and that the Eucharist is regarded by most as central to spirituality.

As was noted in the previous chapter, Bellah’s conceptualisation of religion as a symbol system has been regarded as particularly useful in relation to a religion such as Catholicism. However, it is possible that Bellah underestimates the importance of incarnational symbolism and sacramental sensibility in the Catholic religious

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<sup>1</sup> For example, it is possible that Bellah overplays the importance of the psychological distinction between self and world as part of religious evolution. Indeed, the differentiation between self and world would seem to be an inevitable aspect of the normal development of the human individual regardless of which historical era s/he lived in.

<sup>2</sup> Like Weber, Bellah (1964: 370) attributes great significance to Calvinism in the development of modern religion. Bellah (1964: 369) believes the Calvinistic version of “world acceptance” enabled adaptation to a changing environment; yet, he acknowledges that this was only possible within “a tight though voluntaristic religious group”. The problems associated with this in terms of a broader understanding of world acceptance were discussed in Chapter 2.

orientation. In this, it is also possible that Bellah underestimates the extent to which the type of “incarnational thinking” associated with a Catholic religious imagination may be, to some extent, resistant to the differentiating effects of rationalised symbolization. In his consideration of the rationalisation of symbolization, Bellah seems to preclude the possibility of a type of symbolic rationality that can accommodate instrumental rationality. As such, the possible effects of symbolic rationality do not appear to be factored in to his analysis.

The issues that have been raised here in relation to Bellah’s early work are intended as introduction to the rest of this discussion on the differentiating effects of rationalism and the implications for the relationship between religion and society. In summary, Bellah has applied the concept of differentiation on both the individual level and the structural level of his explanation of religious change. However, his particular way of linking individual-level and structural-level phenomena appears problematic. Also, there is little room in Bellah’s analysis for the religious imagination (see Chapter 4) – which could affect the characterisation of Catholicism. The concern is that such issues could ultimately bear upon the way the relationship between religion and society is understood. Attention is drawn to this because of similar concerns about some of the other theories to be considered.

### ***DIFFERENTIATION AND PRIVATISATION***

Like Bellah, Berger’s early work<sup>3</sup> also employs binary rationality at the first-order level of the approach to religion, focuses on the relationship between the individual and his / her world, and relates the type of objectification seen to be part of individual-level processes to structural-level phenomena. These elements form part of an analytical model that presents the trajectory of religion in terms of privatisation – with a corresponding separation from society.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> As has been noted previously, it is acknowledged that there have been changes in Berger’s argument since his early writings. However, Berger’s 1969 work is regarded as a classic exposition of some deeply rooted concepts in the sociology of religion and the intention here is to address these concepts at their root level.

<sup>4</sup> It is acknowledged that the theory of the privatisation of religion was also advanced by other sociologists in the 1960s; for example, from a more Durkheimian perspective, Luckmann (1967: 86) argued that religion was being transformed into “an increasingly ‘subjective’ and ‘private’ reality” – the “invisible religion” of modernity.

According to Berger, human beings are born “unfinished” and so require a socially constructed “world” as a means of survival (1969: 5). He refers to this social construction as a *nomos* – an ordering of human experiences and meanings (1969: 19). Reminiscent of Plato, he argues that “The original nomizing activity is to say that an item is this, and thus not that” (1969: 20). In other words, the *nomos* functions in terms of an ordering based on differentiation – i.e. binary-type rationality.

Berger sees the relationship between the human being and social structure as an interactive process comprised of three “moments”: externalization – the “outpouring of human being into the world”; objectivation<sup>5</sup> – the attainment of an external reality by the products of this outpouring; and, internalisation – the reappropriation of this objective reality by human beings into subjective consciousness (Berger 1969: 3-4). While Berger (1969: 9) sees this process as ongoing, the objectivation moment means that the objectified product is separated off from the individual. Humanly produced culture and institutions then “stand outside” the individual and confront him / her (1969: 9). Society is seen as coercive with the “capacity to impose itself upon the reluctance of individuals” (1969: 11). Moreover, “the structures of this world come to determine the subjective structures of consciousness itself” (1969: 15). Although Berger (1969: 6; 18) emphasizes that culture needs to be continually reproduced by human beings and attempts to distance himself from a deterministic view of the individual as being produced by society, overall, his account seems to place more emphasis on objectivation and internalization than on externalization. In other words, the impression is that in the relationship between society and the individual, the dominant partner is society.

Berger places much importance on the socialisation of individuals. Society is seen to function as the formative agency for individual consciousness (Berger 1969: 15). The human communities “within which successive generations of individuals are socialized” act as “plausibility structures” in that they provide the social base required for the continuing existence of a *nomos* (1969: 45-7). Berger argues that for

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<sup>5</sup> While Bellah uses the term “objectification”, Berger uses the term “objectivation”. The two terms are being regarded as interchangeable in this thesis.

successful socialisation it is best that the individual accepts the imposed order as taken for granted and internalizes it (1969: 24). Indeed, he believes that in the interests of legitimating the nomos it is desirable that “the institutional order be so interpreted as to hide, as much as possible, its *constructed* [original italics] character” (1969: 33). It is as if the prime focus is on the continued maintenance of the nomos.

According to Berger, nomization is the response to “a human craving for meaning” in the face of chaos (1969: 22, 24). Similarly, in relation to religion, Berger (1969: 26-7) sees the sacred cosmos as opposed to chaos. The nomic constructions / institutions that stave off chaos, then, also help to maintain the sacred cosmos (1969: 27). In turn, religion can legitimate social institutions “by *locating* [original italics] them within a sacred and cosmic frame of reference” (1969: 33). Berger sees “the institution of divine kingship” as exemplifying this (1969: 36). Correspondingly, on an individual level, “the cosmization of the institutions” endows the institutional roles played by the individual “with cosmic significance” – integrating his / her consciousness and self identity (1969: 37). Hence, when other humans “forget” him / her, “God remembers” (1969: 37).

Berger (1969: 129-132) argues that, on a structural level, the processes of rationalisation and modern industrialisation effect an institutional separation between the State and religion and “...the state no longer serves as enforcement agency on behalf of the previously dominant religious institution” (1969: 129). The church becomes an institution specialising in religion and there is a “Concentration of religious activities and symbols in one institutional sphere” (1969: 123). There occurs a process of “secularization” whereby “sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols” (1969: 107). According to Berger, this marks a differentiation between religion and the rest of society (1969: 123).

Berger believes that the further differentiation and expansion of sectors of society no longer under the influence of religion exposes the individual to a wide variety of “reality-defining” agencies competing for attention; with “none in a position to coerce” there is a “secularisation of consciousness” (1969: 126). For the individual,

religion tends to be restricted to the private sphere and is limited to enclaves segregated from secular society (1969: 132-3).

In Berger's view, religious pluralism threatens the plausibility of religion in general. He argues that in a religious monopoly (e.g. prior to Church-State separation) the influence of a foreign religion may be neutralised by State force, but that in a situation such as that following the fragmentation of Christendom "a process was set in motion that made further fragmentation much easier" exemplified by the American system of religious pluralism (1969: 135-6). According to Berger, fragmentation of religion results in a plurality of religious groups that, in attempting to gain a competitive edge in the religious market, increasingly rationalize and bureaucratize their socio-religious structures and tailor religious contents to consumer preference and the private needs of the individual – with the result that "religion becomes increasingly a matter of free subjective choice" (1969: 136; 138-9; 144; 146; 166). Religion can only be seen in terms of "fragmented universes of meaning" and its relevance is restricted to the private sphere (1969: 133; 146). Eventually, subjectivization erodes the *nomos* / "objective reality" of the religious world and "plunges religion into a crisis of credibility" (1969: 149-150).

In Berger's assessment, religious groups that affirm orthodox objectivities can only exist by maintaining "*sectarian* [original italics] forms of socio-religious organization" where members "huddle together closely and continuously" with each other vis a vis the wider society (1969: 163). Berger proposes the "sect" "as the model for organizing a cognitive minority *against* [original italics] a hostile or at least non-believing milieu" (1969: 163).

In relation to Catholicism, Berger points out that the Catholic Church as an institution has attempted to resist rationalisation through various means including the 1864 Syllabus of Errors and the 1870 doctrine of papal infallibility (1969: 169). While recognizing the liberalising influence of Vatican II, he sees this as being checked by "profound conservatism within the institution" (1969: 169). He notes that "The central administration of the Catholic church... has its own bureaucratic tradition, which so far has shown itself highly resistant to modernizing modifications" (1969: 139). To the extent that conservatism and orthodoxy are maintained within the Catholic

Church, Berger (1969: 163) tends to attribute it to an ability to move into “sect” mode. He argues that the sect imperative “may be seen in the Catholic case (despite the universalistic, profoundly anti-sectarian character of Catholic ecclesiology), wherever Catholicism seeks to maintain itself in a massively non-Catholic milieu” (1969: 163).

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Berger’s 1969 work has been referred to here as a classic example of the theory that processes of rationalisation effect a differentiation between religion and the wider society – privatising both institutional religion and individual religiosity. There is a large body of discussion of the privatisation theory and some of this will be referred to in due course. Firstly, however, there are some aspects of Berger’s theory that are considered to be especially relevant to the present thesis and these will now be addressed.

If we consider the observations about binary and organic forms of thought that were made in Chapter 2 of this thesis, we might expect that fullness of “meaning” would require not only the differentiating and ordering qualities of binary thought, but also the connectivity of organic thought. In so far as Berger conceives of a nomos constructed solely on the basis of objectivations, he appears to overlook the aspect of meaning associated with symbol and metaphor. The type of rationality proposed by Berger objectifies and separates and, while it may be a way of bringing order into meaning, in itself it does not seem to tap the flow of connectivity that is associated with the organic qualities of symbolic rationality (as discussed in Chapter 4). A nomos based on objectivations alone seems to lack the fullness implied by the claim that it represents a “universe of meaning”.

Berger claims that the nomos includes not only institutions but also culture and all its symbolic forms. However, the attempt to structure culture in binary mode seems to miss the symbolic dimension of culture that allows for ambiguity, contextuality, multiplicity etc. (see Chapter 4). It may be that human culture is anterior to nomic structure and cannot be contained by it. The very imposition of a “this or that” nomization upon culture renders it one-dimensional and empties it of the symbolism

that allows for openness to paradox and the holding together of apparent opposites – an openness conducive to organic meaning. This suggests that the type of organic meaning associated with paradox may remain with the individual in the living culture rather than being located in the structures of the nomos. The corollary of this suggestion is that Berger's nomic structures may not provide as much connectivity / integration of meaning as claimed.

There is little sense of individual input into the nomic structures as proposed by Berger. For Berger, the interaction process applies at both the individual level and the structural level. Yet, if we consider the individual level of the analysis, what the individual externalizes is miniscule compared to the historical accumulation of collective externalizations pre-dating the individual's existence that have been objectivated (e.g. structures and institutions of the nomos) and that are then supposedly internalised by the individual. In this case, the objectivation moment of the individual does not solely belong to the individual and it is difficult to locate it as part of a continuing individual-level process. It seems to pose a hiatus in the interaction process. The conflation of individual-level objectivation with the nomos renders individual input almost invisible. In turn, the internalization moment for the individual is so structure-dominant that it does not seem to provide a return to the level of individual human needs in a convincingly interactive way. In short, Berger's model of interaction appears to be based on a problematic conflation of individual-level and structural-level analysis.

Berger stresses the interactive nature of meaning-making, but his schema provides little sense of the individual exercising *imagination*, seeking connections, or making meaning in relationship with other human beings in the living culture. While Berger recognizes the importance of human community, this is mostly in terms of its "plausibility structure" value – i.e. by socialising the individual in a way that maintains the nomic structures. Human relationships appear as mainly instrumental to structure; there appears to be little room for them as part of meaning per se. When Berger applies the nomos to religion, he tends to endow the institutional structures of religion with transcendent status whereby the individual's institutional role provides the context for his / her relationship with God. The implication is that the individual-God relationship exists with little ramification for human relationships.

While Berger's nomic structure is presented initially as a means of fulfilling a human need – i.e. in performing the function of differentiating and ordering – in the process, the structure tends to become an end in itself. Berger stresses the need to see the nomic structure as substantive; hence, the performance of an ordering function is identified with the substantive status of a “universe of meaning”. It is as if means becomes end, function becomes substance, and order becomes meaning. Indeed, we are reminded of what Turner regards as the central flaw in Berger's analysis: the “theoretically illegitimate conflation of the problem of order and the problem of meaning” (1981: 169).

If we accept that structure derives from the type of rationality that differentiates and orders in an instrumental way, the differentiation of social structures themselves as a means to increased efficiency etc. would seem to be quite compatible with this type of means-end rationality. We would also expect that the relations between structures would accord with instrumental rationality. Hence, in relation to the differentiation between the structures of Church and State, the perception of a loss of Church influence over the State needs to be balanced, according to the same type of rationality, by the consideration that it may also entail a loss of State influence over the Church.

The notion that increased specialisation confining religion in a sphere of its own against the rest of society entails a loss of integrative influence throughout the rest of society assumes that inter-structural relations involve a degree of organic connectivity that may, perhaps, exceed the potential of the dynamics of instrumental rationality. In other words, this notion may overestimate the integrative influence of structure per se. As was suggested earlier, the organic connectivity potential associated with symbolic rationality appears to be left outside the structure by the process of nomization. Hence, it is necessary to distinguish between the institutional structure of religion and the living religious culture that retains the power of ambiguity and paradox. It may be helpful to view the living religious culture as located outside the religious institutional structure; or, perhaps more appropriately, we might locate the religious institutional structure within the living religious culture.

Moreover, it cannot necessarily be assumed that the religious institutional structure dominates individuals in the living religious culture any more than it can be assumed that the religious institutional structure dominates other social structures. As we have seen, notions of structural domination of the individual rest upon the exclusion of an important type of human symbolic understanding from structure and upon the assumptions of an interaction model that appears to conflate individual-level and structural-level analysis. The argument that the shrinking sphere of institutional religion corresponds to a shrinking influence of institutional religion over individual consciousness is also undermined by the above considerations. In short, Berger's theory may overestimate the potential of integration between structures and the potential of structure to integrate individual consciousness.

Similarly, in relation to the privatisation issue, because Berger accords such little importance to individuals within the living religious culture (outside structure) and because he seems to equate the structural level with the public sphere, he possibly underestimates the integrative potential of individual religiosity and religion in the "private sphere". Also, his conception of interaction in terms of structural dominance may lead him to underestimate the extent to which private sphere phenomena may have implications for the public sphere.

As we have seen, Berger pays specific attention to the role of religious pluralism in effecting the privatisation of religion. In examining this, it is helpful to return to a consideration of his basic premise. By viewing the *nomos* as being structured in binary mode, Berger does not seem to be able to accommodate ambiguity and multiplicity. When he applies the concept of the *nomos* to religious meaning, then, there is a stress upon uniformity. Reminiscent of the classical Greek conceptualizations referred to in the first chapter of this thesis, Berger endorses the opposition of chaos and the sacred; he speaks of the danger "...that one may lose all connection with the sacred and be swallowed up by chaos" (1969: 27). Berger's position implies the Greek notion of "the many" as negative – "a scattering of the One" – rather than an acceptance of the multiplicity of reality as positive. For Berger, pluralism is tantamount to chaos; hence, pluralism is cast as being antithetical to religion and forces the privatisation of religion. Berger's conception of the religious in terms of order and uniformity does not sit easily, therefore, with incarnational

symbolism that values the sacred dignity of humanity in all its cultural and religious diversity and that is open to the wider society (See Chapter 4).

Perhaps the dilemma of Berger's theory stems, in part, from the instrumental rationality that he employs at the first-order level of his approach to religion. The rationality that he uses to define religion in terms of uniformity is, by its very nature, differentiating, and inevitably leads to the pluralism that he sees as undermining religion.

Possibly because Berger does not seem to fully recognize the potential of symbol in the living religious culture, the only way structural religion can be expressed on an individual level is through adherence to objective belief / orthodoxy. He regards only the high boundaries of a sect as being capable of providing plausibility for such orthodoxy in a pluralist situation. Yet, if the symbolic potential of the living religious culture were recognised, there could possibly be more room for ambiguity and movement around orthodoxy on the individual level (See findings relating to Catholic orthodoxy in Chapter 3). An individual religious orientation that incorporates transformation potential would probably require less boundary maintenance than an orientation defined by objective belief. In other words, where the symbolic fullness of religion is realized, sect-like closure against the wider society may not be so necessary for religious maintenance.

Similarly, in relation to Catholicism, Berger regards what he sees as the strength of Catholic institutional dominance of the individual as being associated with the relative resistance of Catholicism to privatisation. Yet, in appearing not to recognize the symbolic potential of the living tradition, he does not seem to consider that Catholics immersed in this tradition may be attuned to the symbolic in a way that allows their faith to transcend definition by objectifications. We might consider the possibility that from a position in the living Catholic culture outside the institutional structure, the individual may be able to view objectifications / the institutional structure in a way that is not possible if the individual is conceptualized as being dominated and framed by the structure. We might speculate whether from a position outside the structure, the individual is able to perceive objectifications / structure in terms of ambiguity – whereby function may be recognised without always being conflated into substance.

For example, a Catholic propensity to view Biblical objectifications in a symbolic way and to view Church authority as being open to question (see Chapter 4) might be regarded as indicating a resistance to interpretation of the functionality of these objectifications in terms of substantive status. It might be helpful to attempt to understand such phenomena in terms of the vantage point from which Catholic individuals view the structure. We might ask whether positioning the individual in the overall living religious culture (as opposed to framing the individual by structure) may give individuals more room to deal with ambiguities and tensions surrounding objectifications / structure without totally succumbing to the phenomena that Berger associates with privatisation. We cannot rule out the possibility that the *way* Catholics view objectifications / structure may be a factor in the maintenance of their faith.

Berger implies that individuals must see objectifications as substantive – however as the findings of the previous chapter indicate, many practising Australian Catholics appear to have an orientation that allows some ambiguity towards Church institutional propositions and authority – suggestive of some type of distinction between living tradition and institution. It is possible that these individuals may view the Church institution in a way that allows for both substantive and functional aspects. It may be that the type of religious imagination referred to in the previous chapter paradoxically allows for an approach to instrumental rationality that is conducive to the perception of distinction between means and end and that is resistant to the tendency of instrumental rationality towards objectification of means into an end in itself.

In the foregoing commentary on Berger's early work various concerns have been raised and some suggestions have been made. It has been argued that Berger's construction of the meaning structure in terms of binary / instrumental rationality tends to leave the organic meaning associated with symbolic rationality in the living culture outside the structure. This has led us to ask whether Berger overestimates the integrative influence of structure and underestimates the integrative potential of the individual in religious culture. The element of structural dominance over the individual that Berger presents is also questioned insofar as it rests upon an interaction model that appears to represent a conflation of individual-level and structural-level analysis. There is a concern that, in Berger's model, human relationships become instrumentalized to structure which becomes an end in itself.

There is also a concern that Berger's use of instrumental rationality in his approach to religion is in itself differentiating and leads to the pluralism he associates with privatisation. In relation to Catholicism, we have questioned Berger's claim that institutional dominance of the Church provides resistance to privatisation; instead, we have postulated that if the religious institutional structure is conceptualised as being located within living religious culture, the way Catholics view instrumental rationality and structure may be a factor in the living of their faith. It has also been suggested that this perception of structure within living culture may enable religious maintenance without the sect-like closure against society that Berger believed was necessary.

Some of these concerns and suggestions will be built upon in the following discussion of other theoretical works.

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As we have seen, the theory of the privatisation of religion attributes such privatisation primarily to the differentiation of structures in society. While there appears to be general agreement that structural differentiation has occurred, there is some debate as to how the effects of differentiation are interpreted. According to Martin, "Differentiation is much accelerated in modern industrial societies even though it long antedates them. It denotes the process whereby each social sector becomes specialized. The hub is diminished and each social function forms a distinct specialised area" (1978: 69). Martin points out that, in the case of religion, "the effect of specialisation is sometimes regarded as loss of function and sometimes as a paring down to the 'true' functions" (1978: 69). While theorists such as Berger (1969) may have regarded this in terms of a decline in religion, theorists such as Casanova see it as an indication that "the religious sphere came fully into its own, specializing in 'its own religious' function and either dropping or losing many other 'nonreligious' functions it had accumulated and could not meet efficiently" (1994: 21).

The issue of the integration of differentiated institutional structures is also interpreted in various ways. For instance, Martin (1978) resembles Berger (1969) in his assessment that, "The institutions congruent with modern industry, with bureaucracy and technical rationality, are large, impersonal, and mechanical in their operation" which leads to the fragmentation of former bonds (Martin 1978: 87). On the other

hand, for Luhmann, “A gradual process of increasing differentiation has brought into being a type of society that is relatively stable even though it has no single centre and no subsector that can claim unchallenged supremacy” (1982: xv). He believes that the systems of politics, religion, economy, education, etc. “have become relatively autonomous and now mutually furnish environments for one another” (Luhmann 1982: xii). He does not believe that the type of integration (e.g. by religion) assumed by earlier theorists is required by the system and he regards notions of “crisis” in society as deriving from “antiquated concepts of integration and stability” (Luhmann 1982: xiv). Stark and Finke (2000: 93) also appear to challenge early theoretical approaches that assume a primary role of religion in integrating the structures of society.

Referring to the identification of differentiation / deinstitutionalization with secularisation, Stark observes,

If this were all that secularization means, there would be nothing to argue about...At issue is not a narrow prediction concerning a growing separation of church and state. Instead, as we have seen, from the start the prophets of secularization have stressed personal piety, and to the extent that they expressed macro interests, it has been to claim that they are so linked that a decline in one necessitates a decline in the other (1999: 4).

This brings us to the issue of the relationship between structural-level and individual-level phenomena. Like Berger (1969), Martin (1978: 3) argues that structural-level differentiation is associated with compartmentalisation and fragmentation at the individual level. He observes that “Confronted by privatisation and fragmentation and the segmented character of his role the individual may strive desperately for reintegration” through private religiosity / personal mysticism or sect membership (Martin 1978: 88) – hence supporting the privatisation theory. In contrast, Casanova (1994: 16) does not see that there is a necessary connection. He points out, for instance, that in medieval Christendom the undifferentiated structure itself appeared religious but that this did not necessarily apply to “the personal lives that people lived within it” (Casanova 1994: 16).

In various ways other theorists have presented analytical models of the relationship between social structure and human agency in a way that attempts to avoid bias in either direction. For example, Giddens’ theory of structuration proposes that social

structure and human agency interact. Giddens argues that “Society only has form, and that form only has effects on people, in so far as structure is produced and reproduced in what people do” (Giddens and Pierson 1998: 77). He believes that structural level analysis alone is inadequate because the actions of individuals can contribute to structural change.

Similarly, Habermas (1989) argues that structural analysis needs to be complemented by interpretive analysis. Habermas’ concern is that some analytical models undervalue “the interpersonal aspect of action and its linguistically mediated nature” so he proposes “that we conceive of society simultaneously as a system and as a lifeworld” (Habermas 1989: 166). However, he warns against any tendency to view the lifeworld as coextensive with the social system (1989: 183-4). For Habermas, communicative action in the lifeworld reflects “common understandings embodied in language, customs, and cultural traditions”. On the other hand, the social system is seen to operate according to instrumental logic, processes of bureaucratisation, etc. Habermas (1989: 183-4) insists that the social integration of the lifeworld should not be confused with the mechanistic integration of the system.

Habermas proposes an interactive relationship between the lifeworld and the social system. He argues, however, that while systemic mechanisms originally need to be anchored in the lifeworld to be institutionalised, they can become independent of communicatively structured lifeworld relations. Organisations can become increasingly autonomous. In this “uncoupling of interaction from lifeworld contexts” processes of consensus-oriented communication are bypassed and cultural traditions etc. can be undermined (Habermas 1989: 215; 227).

Insofar as Habermas recognizes the living cultural tradition outside the system, we might possibly regard his “lifeworld” as offering space for the symbolic rationality external to the structures produced by instrumental rationality (e.g. Berger’s *nomos*). Habermas recognizes both the power and the limitations of the system – and this seems to include recognition of the propensity of instrumental rationality to objectify the means into an end in a way that disconnects it from an interactive dynamic. If applied to religion, Habermas’ model would seem to locate the living religious tradition / lifeworld as anterior to the institutional structure of the religion. If so, the

institution would be seen as instrumental to the overall religious tradition.

Accordingly, on the level of structure, the differentiation of the instrumental structure of religion from the instrumental structures of other sectors of society might seem less critical in the trajectory of religion than was thought by theorists such as Berger for whom structure was associated with the embodiment of substantive meaning. Instead, there would seem to be a call for more consideration of the role of individuals in the living religious tradition and the extent to which there is genuine interaction between the tradition and its institutional structure.

We now turn to consideration of this type of “bottom up” theory that begins at the level of the individual. Greeley’s theory is referred to as a prime example of this type of theory.

Like Berger, Greeley sees the importance of interaction between the individual and society in the socialisation process. However, Greeley’s (1973) account tends to give more scope to the individual human as playing an active role in the process vis a vis society than does Berger. While Berger emphasizes the “unfinished” condition of humans when they enter the world and their inherent need to be socialised, Greeley stresses that “hope for and expectation of survival” is inherent in the human condition and that the human person searches for “...symbols that will underwrite and validate his [sic] constant efforts at self-fulfilment...” (1973: 91, 96).

Greeley (1969: 96ff) agrees with Berger that belonging to a community and holding a religious meaning system are connected. However, there is less sense of structural dominance in Greeley’s account which states that “Religion is man’s [sic] attempt to provide ultimate explanations of life; in most instances it is a communal explanation, *although he also makes it uniquely his own*” (italics added) (1969: 99). Greeley appears to have more confidence (than does Berger) in the human individual’s ability to create meaning in a context of multiplicity and is less concerned about the need for uniformity in relation to plausibility structures. Greeley observes that individuals can be very skilful at blocking out of their perceptions many things that are at variance with commitments they have already made – “which is simply another way of saying that one can create a psychological world in which one’s plausibility structure is quite intact” (1969: 28).

As was discussed in the last chapter, Greeley believes that “the origins and raw power of religion are at the imaginative (that is, experiential and narrative) level both for the individual and for the tradition” (2000: 4). He adopts a perspective that begins at the level of the human experience of reality (Greeley 2000: 6). According to Greeley,

Religion becomes a communal event when a person is able to link his own grace experience with the overarching experience of his religious tradition (or a religious tradition), that is to say, when he perceives a link between his experience of grace and the tradition’s experience of grace when he becomes aware that there is a correspondence or a correlation between the resonating picture or story in his imagination and the story passed on by his religious heritage. Till that point the experience of grace is a private event (1981: 17).

Hence, for Greeley, private religiosity is the original condition. In other words, Greeley allows for movement from private religiosity to more public religious expression in a communal religious tradition.

Greeley believes that “...religious sensibilities do not depend on scholars or bureaucrats for continuity. They are passed on locally, intimately ...” (2000: 174). He argues that religious socialization occurs in relationships rather than in formal teaching (Greeley 1981: 135). His empirical findings show the strongest religious socializing influences to be: “parents, religious experience, closeness to nature, friends, religious community, quality of religious education, quality of preaching, and spouse...” (Greeley 2000: 175).

While Greeley (2000: 76-9) sees religion as being grounded in the experience of the living “popular” tradition, he also argues that doctrine is an essential element of religious heritage. Referring specifically to Catholicism, he argues that the cognitive and propositional teachings of theologians and the magisterium are essential in providing structure for the lived tradition and that there is need for constant dialogue between them (2000: 76-9). He regards church structure in terms of a Catholic acceptance of the need for order and organisation in community (2000: 138). Moreover this is seen to go with “the conviction that the most effective order is that which reaches directly into the community in which it is emerging...” (2000: 142). Again, this points to the need for ongoing interaction between the lived tradition and the institutional structure.

Greeley (2000: 147) subsumes hierarchy under structure – presenting hierarchy as having both positive and negative potential. He argues that bureaucratic power “is both absolutely essential in any large organization, and it is also open to abuse” (2000: 142). Yet he observes that, in the case of Catholicism, the very visibility of the obviously hierarchical and bureaucratic structure of the church institution may enable Catholics, to some extent, to adopt a certain perspective towards that structure.<sup>6</sup> In Greeley’s words, “Perhaps an acknowledged religious bureaucracy has less power than an unacknowledged one” (2000: 142). Greeley (2000: 138) refers to the functionality of the roles played by members of the hierarchy (priests, bishops, popes etc.) and the realistic attitudes that most ordinary Catholics have towards them (2000: 154). For example, he points to empirical findings indicating that “the laity react to their parish priests...with a mixture of respect for their role and tolerance of their humanity” (2000: 147). Similarly, he points to the observation that “Popes may be good and holy men, but they are not God. Like the rest of us, they have limitations and imperfections (some of them serious) and make mistakes (some of them serious, too)” (2000: 149). Greeley (2000: 147) argues that Catholics tend to have the capacity to perceive the duality relating to clerical roles and that they attach importance to a member of the clergy in terms of “*what he does*” (italics added) (2000: 149). In other words, Catholics may recognize the pros and cons associated with the *functionality* of structure.

The functionality of the institution is also visible to the extent that it begins in and keeps returning to the communal tradition – hence helping to prevent the institution from becoming an end in itself. Like Habermas, Greeley sees a propensity for the institutional structure to become separate from the lived tradition if genuine interaction does not occur. In Greeley’s (2000: 79) assessment, the main problem of the contemporary Church is that there is very little interaction / dialogue between the popular communal tradition and the “high” tradition of the institutional structure. He argues that the institutional dimension of Catholic tradition “must listen carefully to the stories that the popular tradition tells or it will find itself cut off from the origins

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<sup>6</sup> For example, he refers to empirical findings that American Catholics “who are members of a church which is admittedly hierarchical...and frequently authoritarian are much less likely than Southern Baptists, members of an allegedly free church, to insist on the importance of the teachings of church leaders” (2000: 142).

and the raw power of religion” (2000: 79). According to Greeley “... the Church must always return, from the high philosophical system to the basic story and from the elaborate administrative bureaucracy to the fireside around which the story is told” (1981: 240). By the same token, leadership is seen to impact on the popular tradition only when it is adept enough “to speak from within that tradition instead of outside it” (2000:180).

For Greeley, the importance of the communal tradition in Catholicism is associated with a Catholic inclination to perceive human groups in terms of “a network of relationships” – indicating an “image of organized community” (2000: 125; 138). Greeley sees Catholic communalism as extending to the wider society insofar as society is viewed as “a community of communities” (2000: 144). He argues that this communal image of society is evident in empirical findings indicating that, compared to other Christians, Catholics are more likely to feel close not only to their own local communities but also to the wider society (2000: 143). He interprets this in terms of a paradigm that links local and global issues (2000: 144).

Greeley (2000: 131) also sees Catholic communalism as being reflected in Catholics’ ethical concerns. He argues that this is supported empirically by findings indicating that, compared to other Christians, “Catholics are more likely to emphasize ‘fairness’ and ‘equality’” (as opposed to “freedom and individualism”) in the workplace and “to support government intervention in the economy, government ownership of industry, and equalization of income” (2000: 129-130). Along similar lines, Catholics are found to be less likely than other Christians to regard taxes as being too high (2000: 129). Greeley regards such findings as suggesting Catholic “support for orderly restraints instead of rugged individualistic competition” (2000: 144). The implication appears to be that Catholics may be inclined to perceive a functional role for certain types of structure in society.

Greeley regards the institutional Church’s emphasis on communal concerns as one way that it can maintain its grounding in the communal tradition. Referring to research that indicates a continuing emphasis on community in papal encyclicals, he interprets this communitarian emphasis as a reflection of the way Catholics view human relationships (Greeley 2000: 123-5). In this sense, Greeley sees papal

encyclicals as a manifestation of “the distinctive Catholic view of human networks” (2000: 127). Moreover, he argues that the papal teaching tradition has “applied the vision of local community to the problems of the world society” working out of the local-global paradigm of society as “a community of communities” (2000: 123; 144). According to Greeley (2000: 132), it is this organic worldview that underlies the Catholic “communal ethic” referred to in the previous paragraph.

From Greeley’s account, then, it would appear that Catholicism may be associated with an organic view of society that can accommodate within it an instrumental view of structure. A model of society grounded in human community may have different implications from a model of society grounded in structure; for example, from the structure-model perspective, the effects of structural change may appear more critical than they do from the community-model perspective. Indeed, for Greeley (1969: 25), structural-level differentiation is not necessarily equated with the decline of religion. He likens differentiation and specialisation of structures in society to the sloughing off of “accidental functions” which does not necessarily signify a decline in religious influence over other spheres of society (1969: 18; 83). While the privatisation argument tends to be defined in terms of structural change and implies uni-directional movement from public to private, the model of Catholicism referred to by Greeley, in its communal grounding, allows for movement from private to public. This would seem to caution against automatic application of the full privatisation theory to Catholicism and the assumption of complete separation between Catholicism and society.

In summary, Greeley attaches more importance to the grounding of religion in human community than do sociologists such as the early Berger who focus on the structural dimension of religion and the assumed effects of structural change in society. Greeley’s analysis also accords more scope to the ability of the human imagination to find meaning within a context of multiplicity than is the case for Berger. Greeley presents the Catholic approach to structure in terms of an acceptance of the need for organisation in community and he allows for the possibility that, from the perspective of the communal tradition, Catholics may have some ability to recognise the functionality of structure. Greeley’s interpretation of the Catholic model of society as “a community of communities” sees it as compatible with local-global association and

movement from private to public. In this view, Catholic communalism can be extended to the wider society through articulation of Catholics' ethical concerns, papal encyclicals, etc. However, this presumes continuing interaction between the communal tradition and the institutional structure and Greeley does not gloss over the propensity of structure to separate from tradition and to become an end in itself. He regards a low level of interaction between living tradition and institution as a significant problem in contemporary Catholicism. According to the model referred to by Greeley, this would have implications for the extent to which Catholicism and society can be regarded as separate.

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Insofar as the “grass roots” grounding of Greeley’s analysis of Catholicism points to the possibility of outward movement of religious ethics into the wider society (e.g. local to global, private to public), we might expect to see corroboration of this in terms of some type of distinctiveness of Catholicism at the societal level. Indeed, Martin (1978) and Casanova (1994) make observations along these lines.

Martin (1978) observes that, on the societal level, Catholicism differs from other Christian denominations in its patterns of relationship with society. Martin (1978: 18ff) argues that Catholicism is inclined towards organic connections with society – the nature of which vary according to the history and form of a given society. For example, Martin views Catholicism as being able to enter into “organic oppositions or united institutional stands” with sectors of society in a way that denominations tending to be “impregnated with individualism” do not (1978: 23). He appears to see this as being related not only to communalism but also to the local-global dynamic of Catholicism:

Given the international nature of the Catholic Church there is a persistent interaction of local and universal considerations, whereby the central tendency of the church reflects a whole series of cultures at different developmental points and reacts back on them in accordance with the impact of the most crucial pressures (Martin 1978: 43).

This appears to be compatible with the relevant part of Greeley’s analysis. It also seems to resonate with the concept of “the concrete-universal” associated with the Catholic type of religious imagination referred to in Chapter 4.

Casanova (1994) also sees Catholicism as having a distinctive trajectory in the wake of structural differentiation. Casanova (1994: 63; 186-8; 204) stresses that separation of Church and State / separation of the spheres of institutional religion and politics etc., do not necessarily signify privatisation of the Catholic church because the Church is still able to participate in public debate and play a public role in the arena of civil society. For example, Casanova cites instances of (American) Catholic Church involvement in the public sphere (through Pastoral Letters of Catholic bishops etc.) in relation to the defence of human rights, social justice issues, “the ‘morality’ of the arms race”, etc. (1994: 57).

Like Berger, Casanova refers to the long period of Catholic Church resistance to the forces seen to be associated with the privatisation of religion; yet, he points out that, even after the Second Vatican Council’s “aggiornamento” to modernity when the nature of being Catholic became less compulsory, Catholicism still “refuses to become a private religion” (1994: 9; 57). This, then, does not tend to support Berger’s interpretation that the institutional Church’s strong resistance to privatisation derives from its institutional dominance over Catholics. The explanation would appear to lie elsewhere. Indeed, we are reminded of Greeley’s argument that it is the *interaction* between Church institution and living tradition mediated by local community (rather than institutional dominance) that allows for the flow of Catholic ethical concerns into the public realm of society.

Casanova’s analysis implies a particular relationship between the institution of the Catholic Church and the living community of Catholics along the lines that Catholics distinguish between the acceptance of institutional doctrine and belonging to the overall Catholic tradition. In Casanova’s assessment,

American Catholics seem to reserve for their own consciences the ultimate inalienable right to decide which doctrines from the traditional deposit of faith are truly essential. Even when Catholics accept voluntarily the authority of certain teachings as dogma or authoritative doctrine, the interpretive problem...still remains (1994: 54).

Casanova observes that American Catholics’ general rejection of some institutional doctrines (e.g. relating to sexual morality) indicates

not only that Catholics were ready to disobey church commandments, something which as sinners Catholics have always done, but that they were consciously dissenting from church doctrines, in good conscience, without thinking that they were acting immorally and without believing that they were unfaithful to the Catholic church (1994: 205).

These observations are in line with Hoge's (2005) finding that a relatively low proportion of American Catholics are accepting of institutional teaching relating to sexual morality and our findings in Chapter 4 that many practising Australian Catholics can adopt a rational / questioning approach to institutional authority and doctrine within a context of overall acceptance of Catholic tradition. Our suggestion that there may be a tendency for Catholics to approach the institutional level of the Church in terms of instrumental rationality (See Chapter 4) also resonates with the implication in Greeley's work that, from within the communal tradition, Catholics may have some ability to recognise the functionality of Church structure. Overall, this points to an implication of a tendency among Catholics to view the Church institution in a way that allows for its functional rationality without themselves being dominated by it.

From a more theological perspective, Lakeland interprets the functional nature of the institutional dimension of the Catholic Church as follows:

Structures of leadership and authority in the church exist to serve the mission of the church. The church's mission cannot be defined with the intention that it fit in with hierarchical structures and patterns of authority. Mission cannot be subordinated to structure (2002: 176).

Lakeland (2002: 174-6) interprets the mission of the Church in terms of service to God and humanity. However, he sees this mission as being disrupted whenever "...the system becomes self-justifying and the human reality of the church is made subservient to it" (Lakeland 2002: 177).

Lakeland (2002) expresses similar concern in relation to the wider society when the structures of society dominate the human condition. Building on the work of theorists such as Lynch and Habermas, he points to the propensity of means-end rationality and system imperatives to treat human beings "as objects" (2002: 182). Lakeland considers it necessary to recognise the place of scientific rationality / "technique" in society but also to recognise that, if unchecked, it can lead to a dehumanizing situation of "efficient means independent of ends" (2002: 160; 163). As a way of

retaining the human aspect of society, he emphasizes the importance of “discourse ethics” in society and the corresponding need to distinguish “between instrumental and communicative reason” (2002: 166; 182).

Lakeland (2002: 172ff) goes beyond the parallel drawn between Church and society and links the mission of the Catholic Church to the predicament of differentiated society. Apropos of the perceived dehumanising aspects of secular society, he views efforts “to make a more human world” as an essential part of the Church’s work towards the “reign of God” (2002: 174). He interprets the concept of salvation in terms of a struggle against both personal sin and structural sin (2002: 165). Invoking the image of the “people of God” as not only the worshiping community but all humanity, Lakeland indicates that the mission of the Church must be open to the whole of society (2002: 172; 176).

As can be seen, Lakeland’s (2002) work is pertinent to some of the themes that have been addressed in this discussion. He points to the functional nature of the institution of the Church in its mission of service and the need for genuine interaction between the institution and human reality in performance of this mission. He sees the mission as reaching into the whole society – responding to human need and playing a role in ethical discourse. In turn, this is seen to involve implicit recognition of the strengths and limitations of instrumental rationality as the *modus operandi* of science / technology and institutional level processes.

Lakeland’s ideas also resonate with some of the findings of the present research. His interpretation of salvation in terms of an ongoing struggle involving both personal and structural dimensions is compatible with the Chapter 3 finding of a dominant Catholic view of salvation in terms of transformation. Lakeland’s acknowledgment of the need to perceive instrumental rationality in its functional context fits with findings from Chapter 4 that suggest an association between the dominant type of religious imagination among Catholics and possible recognition of instrumental rationality as the mode of science and the institution. Lakeland’s view that the Catholic mission embraces the whole society is compatible with Chapter 4 findings of Catholic openness to humanity in all its diversity. In the empirical part of this chapter, Lakeland’s perspective on the role of Church structure in the mission of service to

humanity will be kept in mind in our examination of Catholics' attitudes towards the role of the Church in providing welfare in society.

In varying ways, the works of theorists such as Greeley, Casanova and Lakeland all point to an impetus from within Catholicism leading to a role of the Church in ethical discourse in the public sphere of society – thus challenging the privatisation theory notion that the institutional specialisation of religion cuts off the involvement of religion in the wider society.

Moving away from our focus on Catholicism, it is important to note that some other commentators also see an inherent potential in religious faith, in general, to overcome pressure to confine religious ideals to the private sphere. For instance, Riis maintains that “ethics form the active and public outcome of religious discourse” and he goes on to argue that the expression of spiritual values in the community and welfare work carried out by religious organisations, gives these organisations a base for voicing their opinion on social policy etc. (1998: 262). For Riis, religion “tends to reemerge in the public debates by taking up ethical issues” (1998: 262). Similarly, Beyer (1998: 161) sees activity such as the provision of services to the wider community as one of the ways in which religion retains societal significance. In relation to the specific purposes of the present research, these observations point to the relevance of a consideration of the role of the institutional Catholic Church in the public sphere of Australian society in terms of both engagement in ethics discourse and community service.

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Returning to our overall discussion on the theory of the privatisation of religion, it will be recalled that the classical theory proposes not only the decline of religion's involvement in the public sphere of society, but also, on the individual level, a shift away from institutional forms of religion to a more subjective, private, and individualistic approach to spiritual belief and practice. We now refocus on individual level considerations and refer to some relevant empirical studies.

## ***EMPIRICAL STUDIES***

According to the classic privatisation theory, a crisis of credibility is associated with the erosion of the plausibility structures of religion; in other words, there is an expectation that a decline in the level of religious belief is associated with a decline in the level of church attendance. In Chapter 3 reference was made to the decline in the number of Australian Catholics who attend Mass regularly – from around 18% in 1996 to around 15% in 2001. However, as was also noted in Chapter 3, analysis of World Values Survey data indicated a considerable degree of persistence of various religious beliefs among non-attending Catholics. This suggests that the plausibility of religious belief per se is not necessarily the main catalyst for Catholics ceasing attendance at Mass.

While the decline in participation in institutional forms of religion has been well documented, the recent research by Dixon, Bond, Engrebretson, Rymarz, Cussen and Wright (2007) is possibly the most pertinent study for our purposes. Dixon et al. (2007) examined the response data of non-attending Australian Catholics who completed a 1996 survey of parents of Catholic school students. Dixon et al. (2007: 5) found that the main reason given for non-attendance at Mass was the belief that weekly Mass attendance was not a requirement of Catholic commitment. The next most common reason was disagreement with Church teaching on personal sexual issues (2007: 5). The major part of Dixon et al's research project was a qualitative study of the reasons for Catholics' non-attendance at Mass. This showed the main reasons for non-attendance to be the irrelevance of the Church to participants' lives (particularly in relation to sexual morality teachings) and dissatisfaction at the misuse of power and authority in the Church (2007: 18-22).

While the participants' responses generally reflected a considerable amount of criticism of the institutional dimension of the Church, there were indications of support for Church engagement in public discourse relating to social ethics (2007: 33; 36). For example, one participant said,

I agree with the Church's teaching to the extent that it proclaims and expands the realm of God. I believe it is the vocation of God's realm to bring life and not death, love and not oppression, being and not the diminishment of humanity, to a secular society. I agree with Church teaching in every instance where justice and equality is upheld ("Elizabeth" in Dixon et al 2007: 36).

Dixon et al (2007: 44-5) found that the majority of participants said that they still had faith even though they did not attend Mass and most continued to identify as Catholics and to have some connection to Catholic life. Some participants “saw themselves as living their commitment to their faith” through involvement in Catholic organisations (2007: 50). As one Catholic commentator observed,

Agencies such as Catholic schools, Centacare / Catholic Community Services, St Vincent de Paul, Catholic Health and the social justice agenda are valued and valuable points of connection for the disaffected Catholic ... It signals again the importance of credible institutional witness” (Carroll in Dixon et al 2007: 55).

Overall, then, Dixon et al’s (2007) findings point to the possibility of Catholics’ identifying with the living Catholic tradition whilst adopting a fairly pragmatic stance towards the institutional dimension of the Church. Participants’ dissatisfaction with the Church institution’s exercise of authority and the perceived irrelevance of institutional teachings on sexual morality would seem to support Greeley’s observation about inadequate genuine interaction between the living tradition and the institution in the contemporary Church. Yet, as we have seen, while the institution may be perceived as irrelevant in matters of private sexual morality, there is still some level of support for Church institutional involvement in the public sphere of society in relation to social morality. This does not necessarily fit the classical privatisation trajectory.

In our examination of individual-level data, there will be an attempt to explore individuals’ attitudes towards the role of the institutional Church in society and towards institutional involvement in social morality issues. There will be specific focus on Catholics’ attitudes towards the function of the Church in providing welfare to the wider society and the extent to which Catholics support Church institutional involvement in social welfare activities. There will be an attempt to identify the type of perspective on structure that is implied by these attitudes. This will be viewed in terms of the relationship between Catholics and the Church institution.

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As has been previously noted, privatisation theory proposes that, on the individual level, declining participation in institutional forms of religion corresponds with trends towards a more private and individualistic approach to spiritual belief and practice. For our purposes, a relevant concern is the extent to which such privatised religiosity may affect openness towards and engagement in the wider society.

Some studies have linked a trend towards privatised religion with decreasing civic involvement. There is a growing body of research (particularly in the U. S.) about the factors which sustain civil society (e.g. Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler and Tipton 1985; Verba, Schlozman and Brady 1995; Wuthnow 1998; Putnam 2000) and the term “social capital” – defined in terms of “social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (Putnam 2000: 19) – is in common usage. Along with this there appears to be a re-evaluation of the role of altruism and charity in modern society and their relationship to religion.

Beyer (1999: 8) argues that individualised religiosity cannot generate the kind of religious critical mass required for broad social influence. Similarly, Marty expresses the concern that “Unless religious impulses find a home in more than the individual heart or soul, they will have few long-lasting public consequences” (1994 cited in Putnam 2000: 69). According to Putnam, “In part, the tie between religion and altruism embodies the power of religious values” (2000: 67). However, his assessment is that while privatised and individualised religion may provide meaning to the individual believer, in lacking a shared, communal dimension it is unlikely to inspire strong group involvement; hence, it is seen to embody less social capital (Putnam 2000: 74).

One area of the American research points to a relationship between religious involvement and the acquisition of skills that can be relevant in civic engagement. For example, Verba et al’s (1995: 282) research indicates that American churches provide opportunities for members to develop civic skills that enable them to participate more fully in the wider society. American research also points to a relationship between religious involvement and volunteering. Putnam’s study finds that in the U.S. “religious involvement is an especially strong predictor of volunteering and philanthropy”; “nearly half of all associational memberships in America are church

related, half of all personal philanthropy is religious in character, and half of all volunteering occurs in a religious context” (2000: 66-67). This relationship between religious involvement and volunteering is also supported by other studies such as Becker and Dhingra’s (2001) research which finds that both high religious salience and church attendance predict volunteering. In the Australian context, some support for the connection between church attendance and involvement in voluntary charitable activities comes from the research of Bellamy, Kaldor and the NCLS Team (2002: 26-7) which shows that church attenders make a significant contribution to voluntary welfare activity in the Australian community.

Putnam’s (2000: 67) research leads him to the conclusion that the social ties embodied in religious communities are at least as important as religious beliefs per se in accounting for volunteerism and philanthropy. He argues that people are more likely to volunteer if asked, and the more involved people are in community networks the more likely they are to be asked. This is supported by Eckstein’s (2001: 838) study which shows how volunteerism can hinge on personal solicitations. Further support comes from Becker and Dhingra’s (2001) finding that it is the social networks associated with religion, rather than belief orientation, which dominate as the mechanism leading to volunteering.

However, it is necessary to point out that while the type of volunteering that is based within a religious group and directed towards the interests of that group may contribute towards “bonding capital” among group members, it may not necessarily be so relevant in terms of social capital more broadly understood – i.e. in terms of openness towards and engagement in the wider society. Indeed, if the members of a religious group are kept so busy within that group that they tend to be cut off from the wider society, such a situation could be seen to resemble a sect-like situation. This type of situation could, in fact, be supportive of the classic privatisation scenario of religious groups huddled together in sects vis a vis the wider society – a scenario conducive to religion-society dichotomy. Hence, there is a need to distinguish between voluntary activity based within and in the interests of the religious group and voluntary activity directed towards the welfare of the wider society.

Another consideration relates to the extent to which individual volunteering and institutional activity directed towards the welfare of the wider society can be seen as complementary. Some commentators have implied that Catholics may be more inclined than Protestants to see a role for “the state or the church establishment” in addition to individual efforts in responding to community needs (See Curtis et al 2001: 785).<sup>7</sup> This seems compatible with Greeley’s suggestion that Catholics tend to be more open to the possibility that, for some social problems to be addressed adequately, a structural component may be required. This brings us back to the issue of whether Catholics may have a tendency to regard structure per se in a fairly pragmatic way.

As has already been indicated, in the present research this issue will be explored through examination of Australian Catholics’ attitudes towards institutional involvement in addressing social issues. Some of the other arguments mentioned above relating to privatised religiosity and volunteering will also be tested. There will be examination of the patterns of involvement in voluntary charitable organisations by respondents according to the nature of their religiosity (e.g. the extent to which it may be regarded as “private”). In relation to Catholics, patterns of private and communal religious activity and their relationship to involvement in charitable / welfare activities will be analysed. A distinction will be maintained between parish-based welfare activities and those that are based in the wider society.

## **PART I – ADDRESSING THE ISSUES**

The relationship between religion and society is the broad concern of the research in this chapter. There appears to be little disagreement that, on the structural level,

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<sup>7</sup> Some relevant background is also provided in Verba et al’s (1995: 245) research which indicates that, in the American context, Catholics tend to be more likely than Protestants to attend church regularly, but less likely to engage in other church-based activities. Verba et al argue that “Protestant congregations tend, on average, to be smaller than Catholic parishes; compared to the Catholic Church, most Protestant denominations allow for greater lay participation in the liturgy; and most Protestant denominations are organized on a congregational basis with authority vested in the congregation itself rather than in a church hierarchy” (1995: 321). Hence, Verba et al see the mode of church governance as a prime factor affecting opportunities for individual participation in church-based activities. However, while Verba et al observe that the institutional Catholic Church “often acts as an advocate for the poor” (1995: 521), they do not appear to consider the possibility that Catholics may see this advocacy as an important function of Church structure – in the sense that some structural problems of society may be seen to call for engagement at the structural level.

religion has become “specialised” and that, on the individual level, there has been a decline in the rate of participation in institutional forms of religion. However, there are other aspects of the privatisation thesis that call for examination in terms of their implications for the relationship between religion and society. Keeping in mind the nature of the data available for analysis in this research, three themes that have emerged from the discussion in Part I of this chapter have been selected for empirical analysis. They relate to:

- a) the extent to which the nature of religiosity (i.e. the degree to which it is “private”) may affect the level of individual voluntary charitable activity in the wider society
- b) the extent to which individual religiosity and charitable activity may be related to social ethics
- c) the nature of attitudes towards the function of the Church institution and Church institutional involvement in addressing the problems of the wider society.

These three themes have been selected as one means of tapping into the way individual religiosity and institutional religion may be viewed in terms of openness towards and engagement in the wider society.

The empirical dimension of this first part of Chapter 5 is mainly based on data from the 1996 World Values Survey (WVS) (Australian Component) (N=2048) and the 2001 National Church Life Survey (NCLS)(Catholic component). The NCLS data used is mostly derived from Questionnaire A-C (N=54,076), Questionnaire X (N=1473), and Questionnaire N (N=615).

### ***RESEARCH QUESTIONS***

The precise research questions and the mode in which they are addressed in the particular data sets are as follows:

1. What is the relationship between the nature of individual religiosity and voluntary charitable activity in the community? This question is addressed firstly through analysis of WVS data (in relation to the general population) and then through analysis of NCLS data (in relation to Catholics). WVS data is used to examine the patterns of involvement in voluntary charitable organisations by respondents who are “non-religious”, respondents who appear to adhere to “private religion”, and respondents who participate in communal religious activities. Following this, in relation to Catholics, NCLS

data is analysed for patterns of private and communal religious activity, patterns of involvement in charitable / welfare activities, and the relationship between them.

2. What is the relationship between religiosity and social ethics attitudes and between charitable activity and social ethics attitudes (among Catholics)? NCLS data is used here.
3. Is the Church institution regarded by Catholics as having a function in addressing social justice issues and engaging in social welfare? NCLS data is used here.

In the data analysis each of the three research questions is addressed in a section of its own.

## **PART I – DATA ANALYSIS**

### ***SECTION 1: THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGIOSITY AND VOLUNTARY CHARITABLE ACTIVITY***

*Data Sources:* 1996 World Values Survey (WVS) (Australian Component) (N=2048)  
2001 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) Survey A-C (N=54,026)  
2001 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) Survey X (N=1473)

#### **The Australian context**

By way of introduction, we examine the relationship between religiosity and voluntary charitable activity in the Australian population generally. The 1996 WVS has questionnaire items on self-described religiosity<sup>8</sup> and on attendance at religious services.<sup>9</sup> These two items are used as indicators of the nature of religiosity. The WVS also has a questionnaire item on membership of charitable organisations<sup>10</sup> and this item is used as an indicator of voluntary charitable activity. It needs to be noted

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<sup>8</sup> “Independently of whether you go to church or not, would you say you are...” (Possible responses: A religious person; Not a religious person; A convinced atheist) (V182).

<sup>9</sup> “Apart from weddings, funerals and christenings, about how often do you attend religious services these days?” (Possible responses: More than once a week; Once a week; Once a month; Only on special holy days; Once a year; Less often; Never, practically never) (V181).

<sup>10</sup> “Now I am going to read off a list of voluntary organizations; for each one, could you tell me whether you are an active member, an inactive member or not a member of that type of organization?” (There were nine types of organization mentioned including “Charitable organization”) (V35).

that this item is fairly general and does not specify the nature of the charitable organisation / activity; nor does it specify whether the organisation is church-based or not. The WVS Codebook also points out that the format of the question tends to elicit inflated levels of claimed organisation membership.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, the item is still regarded as being useful for our purposes in placing the relationship between religiosity and voluntary charitable activity in the overall Australian context.

### *Religiosity*

The analysis begins with an examination of the relationship between the two variables used as indicators of religiosity (i.e. self-described religiosity and attendance at religious services). Table 5.1 shows that 59% of Australians describe themselves as “A religious person”. As might be expected, the overwhelming majority of regular attenders at religious services describe themselves as religious (94%).

**Table 5.1: Crosstabulation: SELF-DESCRIBED RELIGIOSITY \* ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES**

		ATTENDANCE	AT RELIGIOUS	SERVICES	
		Regular	Infrequent	Never	Total
SELF DESCRIBED RELIGIOSITY	Religious	94%	65%	36%	59%
	Not religious	6%	34%	54%	36%
	Atheist	0%	1%	11%	5%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

*Source: World Values Survey 1996 (N=2048)*

While the overwhelming majority of regular attenders may describe themselves as religious, as Table 5.2 shows, only 39% of the self-described religious are regular attenders. Indeed, 27% of the self-described religious never attend religious services. It is possible that these latter respondents who consider themselves to be religious but do not appear to have a communal dimension to their religious expression may adhere to a type of “private” religiosity. These respondents are of interest to this investigation and will be referred to again.

<sup>11</sup> According to the World Values Survey Codebook, “A question about membership in these organizations was asked in the 1981 and 1990 surveys, but it had a different format, asking first if one ‘belonged to’ any of these organizations; and then, if one did unpaid work for any of them. The format used in 1995 tends to elicit higher levels of claimed ‘membership’, both active and inactive” (Inglehart 2000: 25).

**Table 5.2: Crosstabulation: ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES \* SELF-DESCRIBED RELIGIOSITY \***

		SELF	DESCRIBED	RELIGIOSITY	
		Religious	Not religious	Atheist	Total
ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES	Regular	39%	4%	1%	25%
	Infrequent	34%	30%	8%	31%
	Never	27%	67%	91%	44%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

*Source: World Values Survey 1996 (N=2048)*

The above findings indicate that the majority of Australians consider themselves to be religious but the majority of these are not regular church attenders. This suggests the existence in Australia of a fairly widespread type of “private” religiosity that does not have a communal dimension to it. On the other hand, nearly all regular church attenders consider themselves to be religious – suggesting that communal religiosity implies private religiosity.

#### *The relationship between religiosity and charitable activity*

We now turn our focus to participation in charitable organisations and its relationship with religiosity.

Table 5.3 indicates that 18% of Australians (in general) are actively involved in voluntary charitable organisations.

**Table 5.3: VOLUNTARY CHARITABLE ORGANISATION MEMBERSHIP**

	Percent
Active member of charitable organisation	18
Inactive / Not a member of charitable organisation*	82
Total	100

*Source: 1996 World Values survey (N=2048)*

\* “Inactive” combined with “Not a member”

As a first step to examining the importance of religiosity in involvement in charitable organisation activity, we consider the relationship between self-described religiosity and membership in charitable organisations. Table 5.4 shows that 10% of atheists, 13% of the “non-religious”, and 22% of the “religious” are active members of charitable organisations. This indicates that respondents who describe themselves as religious are much more likely than those who do not describe themselves this way to be actively involved in charitable organisations.

**Table 5.4: Crosstabulation: CHARITABLE ORGANISATION MEMBERSHIP \* SELF-DESCRIBED RELIGIOSITY**

		SELF	DESCRIBED	RELIGIOSITY	
		Religious	Not religious	Atheist	Total
CHARITABLE ORGANISATION MEMBERSHIP	Active member	22%	13%	10%	18%
	Inactive / Not a member	78%	87%	90%	82%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

*Source: World Values Survey 1996 (N=2048)*

Table 5.5 shows that, in terms of attendance at religious services, 12% of non-attenders, 17% of infrequent attenders (i.e. who attend up to a few times a year / on special holy days), and 28% of regular attenders (i.e. who attend at least monthly) are active members of charitable organisations. This indicates that there is a positive relationship between attendance at religious services and active membership of charitable organisations. It is to be noted that the proportion of regular attenders actively involved in charitable organisations (28%) is higher than the proportion who describe themselves as religious who are similarly involved (22%) (See Table 5.4).

**Table 5.5: Crosstabulation: CHARITABLE ORGANISATION MEMBERSHIP \* ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES**

		ATTENDANCE	AT RELIGIOUS	SERVICES	
		Regular	Infrequent	Never	Total
CHARITABLE ORGANISATION MEMBERSHIP	Active member	28%	17%	12%	18%
	Inactive / Not a member	73%	83%	88%	82%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

*Source: World Values Survey 1996 (N=2048)*

These findings, then, indicate that both measures of religiosity (i.e. self-description as “A religious person” and regular attendance at religious services) are positively associated with voluntary activity in charitable organisations. This lends support to the argument by Putnam (2000) and others of a relationship between religion and volunteering. Our observation that regular attendance at religious services is an even stronger predictor of active involvement in charitable organisations than self-

described religiosity may also lend support to Becker and Dhingra's (2001) argument about the importance of social networks in volunteering.

### *The implications of "privatised" religiosity*

We now attempt to locate the type of "privatised" religiosity referred to in the earlier discussion in an effort to examine its relationship with charitable organisation involvement. As was noted earlier in this thesis, the majority of Australians are not religious in the churchgoing sense. Tables 5.4 and 5.5 have indicated that respondents who are atheists or not religious in any sense are much less likely to be involved in charitable organisations than those who are religious. But to what extent do individuals who appear to adhere to their own form of "private" religion participate in charitable organisations?

It is possible to examine the influence of self-described religiosity per se (i.e. without the influence of attendance at religious services) on charitable organisation activity if we select only respondents who indicate that they never attend religious services. Table 5.6 shows a cross-tabulation of charitable organisation membership with self-described religiosity among respondents who never attend religious services. The respondents here who describe themselves as "religious" could probably be considered as indicating a type of private religiosity (in the sense that they describe themselves as "a religious person" but never attend religious services). The findings indicate that a higher proportion of the "religious" are actively involved in charitable organisations (16%) than is the case for either the non-religious (11%) or atheists (9%). This suggests that self-described religiosity is, in itself, an influence on involvement in charitable organisations.

The charitable activity of the 16% of privately religious persons cannot be dismissed from consideration. The privately religious persons identified here in WVS data could probably be akin to the non-attenders interviewed by Dixon et al (2007) who continue to identify as Catholic / religious and who participate in various welfare organisations.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Although it needs to be noted that Dixon et al (2007: 11) do not claim that the participants in their study resemble a representative sample of Catholic non-attenders. Indeed, Dixon et al (2007: 13) point

**Table 5.6: Crosstabulation: CHARITABLE ORGANISATION MEMBERSHIP \* SELF-DESCRIBED RELIGIOSITY (“Never attenders” selected)**

		SELF	DESCRIBED	RELIGIOSITY	
		Religious	Not religious	Atheist	Total
CHARITABLE ORGANISATION MEMBERSHIP	Active member	16%	11%	9%	13%
	Inactive / Not a member	85%	89%	91%	88%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: World Values Survey 1996 (N=2048)

\* “Never attenders” represent 44% of the sample.

Table 5.7 is a cross-tabulation of charitable organisation membership with attendance at religious services among respondents who describe themselves as “religious”.

Table 5.7 shows that whilst 16% of the “privately religious” may be involved in charitable organisations, the involvement rate is much higher among “religious” persons who attend religious services regularly (28%).

**Table 5.7: Crosstabulation: CHARITABLE ORGANISATION MEMBERSHIP \* ATTENDANCE AT RELIGIOUS SERVICES (Self-described “religious” respondents selected)**

		ATTENDANCE	AT RELIGIOUS	SERVICES	
		Regular	Infrequent	Never	Total
CHARITABLE ORGANISATION MEMBERSHIP	Active member	28%	19%	16%	22%
	Inactive / Not a member	72%	81%	85%	78%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: World Values Survey 1996 (N=2048)

\* Respondents describing themselves as “religious” represent 59% of the sample.

Overall, these findings lend support to the relevance of studies by Putman and others to the Australian situation. While those Australian individuals who appear to embrace a type of “private religion” (insofar as they describe themselves as religious but are not engaged in communal religious activities) are involved to some extent in charitable organisations, much higher rates of charitable involvement are seen among those whose religiosity also involves regular participation in communal religious activities.

out that their process of recruiting participants may have made it more likely that the non-attenders they interviewed had, in the past, been fairly active parishioners.

However, as mentioned earlier, in the data that we have been examining, the type of charitable organisation is not specified. Hence, it is not possible to be confident that the charitable activity referred to does, in fact, involve openness towards and engagement in the wider society. If we wish to examine the extent to which charitable activity can be associated with the flow of religious ethics into the wider society it is necessary to be more specific about the nature and direction of the charitable activity. There will be an attempt to do this in the following enquiry relating to practising Catholics.

### **Catholic Church attenders**

At 27% of the population (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002), Catholics comprise the largest single religious group in Australia and around 50% of all church attenders in Australia are Catholic (Bellamy, Kaldor et al 2002: 6). While this in itself is good reason to examine the pattern of voluntary charitable activity of Catholic attenders, our main purpose here is to examine the relationship between religiosity and charitable activity as part of the overall consideration of the extent to which the religious imperative of charity may lead to involvement in the wider society.

The NCLS contains some survey items that are more specific than the WVS items used in the foregoing analysis and that also distinguish between charitable activity that is church-based and charitable activity that is based in the broader community. In moving to an examination of NCLS data it is important to remember that this data is collected from church-attenders rather than the population at large (as is the case for WVS data). It also needs to be remembered that the rates of charitable organisation membership indicated in WVS data are probably inflated (See Footnote 10).

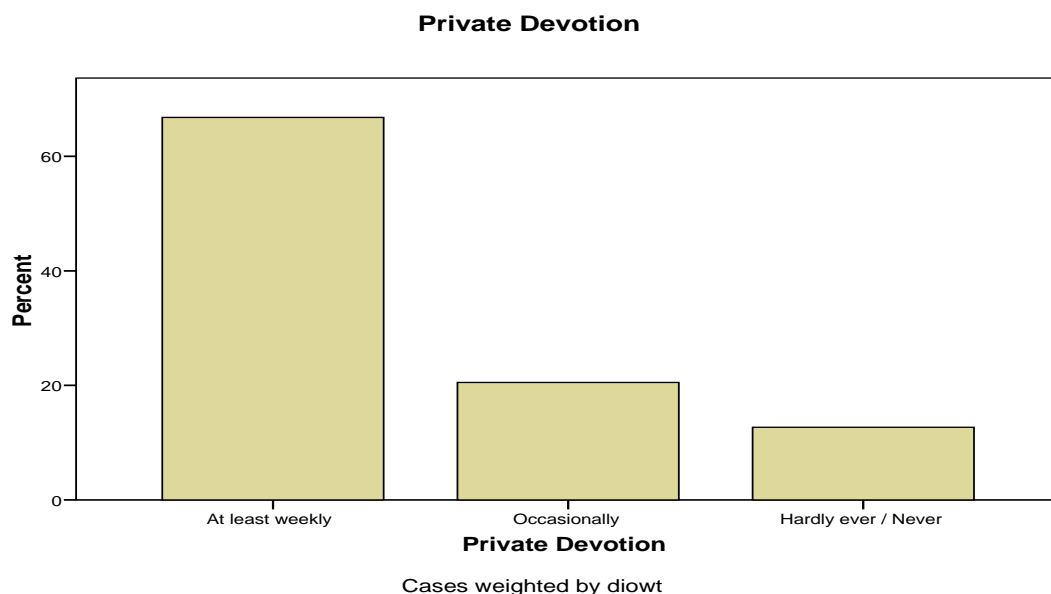
The 2001 NCLS contains questionnaire items on private devotional practices and Mass attendance. These two items will be used in the analysis as indicators of private religiosity and communal religiosity respectively. There are also several items on charitable activity: There is an item on parish-based charitable activity that reaches out to the wider community and an item on involvement in community welfare / social action / justice groups based in the wider society. These two items will be used as indicators of voluntary charitable activity and will also be used to distinguish

between parish-based and community-based activity. Another item on informal charitable actions will be considered briefly in terms of providing some general context for the analysis.

### *Religiosity (among Catholics)*

Figure 5.1 shows the response to the question “How often do you spend time in private devotional activities (e.g. prayer, meditation, reading the Bible alone)?” The findings indicate that 67% of practising Catholics engage in these private devotional activities at least weekly<sup>13</sup>, 21% of respondents engage in these activities occasionally, and 13% engage in these activities hardly ever / never<sup>14</sup>. The strong response to engagement in private devotion suggests that most Catholics surveyed have this type of private dimension to their religiosity.

**Figure 5.1: “HOW OFTEN DO YOU SPEND TIME IN PRIVATE DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITIES (E.G. PRAYER, MEDITATION, READING THE BIBLE ALONE)?”**



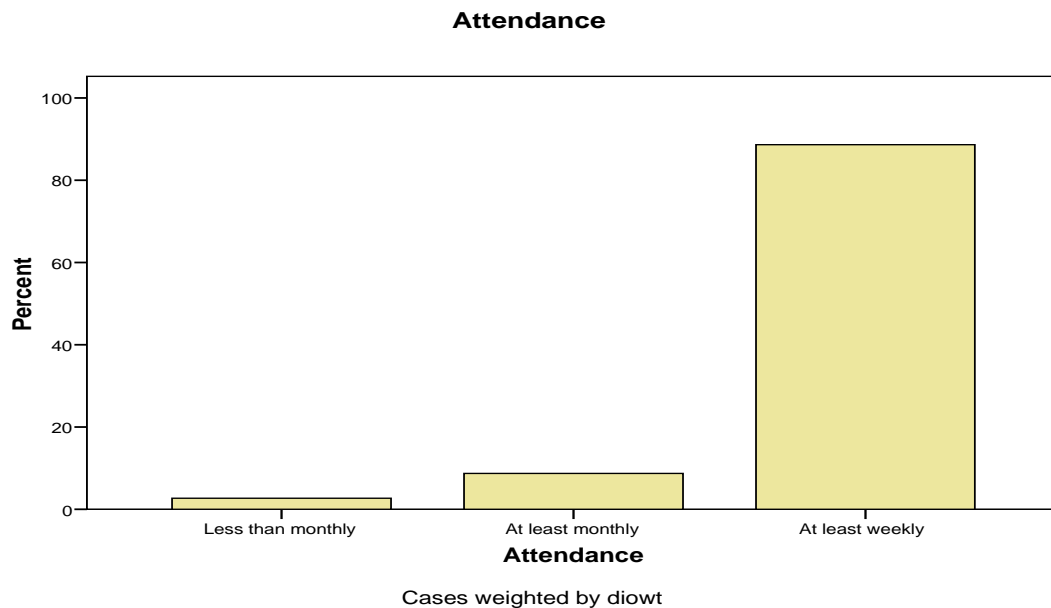
Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey (A-C) (N=54,026)

<sup>13</sup> The category “At least weekly” combines the responses “Every day / most days” (46%), “A few times a week” (16%), and “Once a week”(6%).

<sup>14</sup> The response to “Hardly ever” is 9% and the response to “Never” is 4%.

Response to the question “How often do you go to Mass?” is shown in Figure 5.2. This indicates that 89% of respondents attend Mass at least weekly<sup>15</sup>, 9% of respondents attend at least monthly<sup>16</sup>, and 3% attend less than monthly<sup>17</sup>. Hence, the overwhelming majority of Catholics surveyed by the 2001 NCLS are, indeed, regular attenders.

**Figure 5.2: “HOW OFTEN DO YOU GO TO MASS?”**



Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey (A-C) (N=54,026)

\* “First-timers” excluded. # See Footnotes 13-15.

Table 5.8 shows a crosstabulation of private devotional activities by the communal element of attendance at Mass. Among weekly attenders, an overwhelming 89% (i.e. 69% + 20%) engage in private religious devotion at least occasionally. Only 11% of weekly attenders hardly ever / never engage in private devotion. In comparison, among infrequently-attending Catholics (i.e. who attend less than monthly), the pattern of private religious devotion is fairly evenly spread (i.e. 32% At least weekly, 31% Occasionally, and 37% Hardly ever / Never). For 63% of these infrequently-attending Catholics (i.e. 32% + 31%) then, some level of private religious devotion takes place in the relative absence of a communal dimension to their religiosity.

<sup>15</sup> The category “At least weekly” combines the responses “Usually every week” (73%) and “More than once a week” (15%).

<sup>16</sup> The category “At least monthly” combines the responses “Once a month”(2%) and “Two or three times a month”(7%).

<sup>17</sup> The category “Less than monthly” combines the responses “Hardly ever / special occasions only” (1%) and “Less than once a month” (1%).

It needs to be remembered that the NCLS was conducted in a church situation and that infrequently-attending Catholics represent only a tiny proportion (i.e. 3%) of NCLS respondents. However, these infrequently-attending Catholics may, in some way, approximate the large proportion of Catholics who identify as such on the Census but never attend Mass. While a fairly large proportion (63%) of those with little communal dimension to their religiosity (i.e. who attend less than monthly) indicate some level of private religiosity, only a minority (11%) of Catholics with a strong communal dimension to their religiosity (i.e. who attend at least weekly) do not indicate some level of private religiosity. This seems to support our previous WVS finding that, among Australians generally, communal religiosity tended to imply private religiosity – rather than vice versa. Among *practising* Catholics the overall pattern is of a positive relationship between the private and the communal dimensions of religiosity. This casts doubt on the notion that Catholic communal religiosity such as Mass attendance precludes a private relationship between the individual and God, as Bellah (1964: 369) appears to have thought. On the contrary, on the basis of the evidence, it is more likely that, among practising Catholics, the private and the communal aspects of religiosity reinforce one another.

**Table 5.8: Crosstabulation: PRIVATE DEVOTION \* MASS ATTENDANCE**

		MASS ATTENDANCE			
PRIVATE DEVOTION		Less than monthly	At least monthly	At least weekly	Total
	At least weekly	32%	48%	69%	66%
	Occasionally	31%	29%	20%	21%
	Hardly ever / Never	37%	23%	11%	13%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

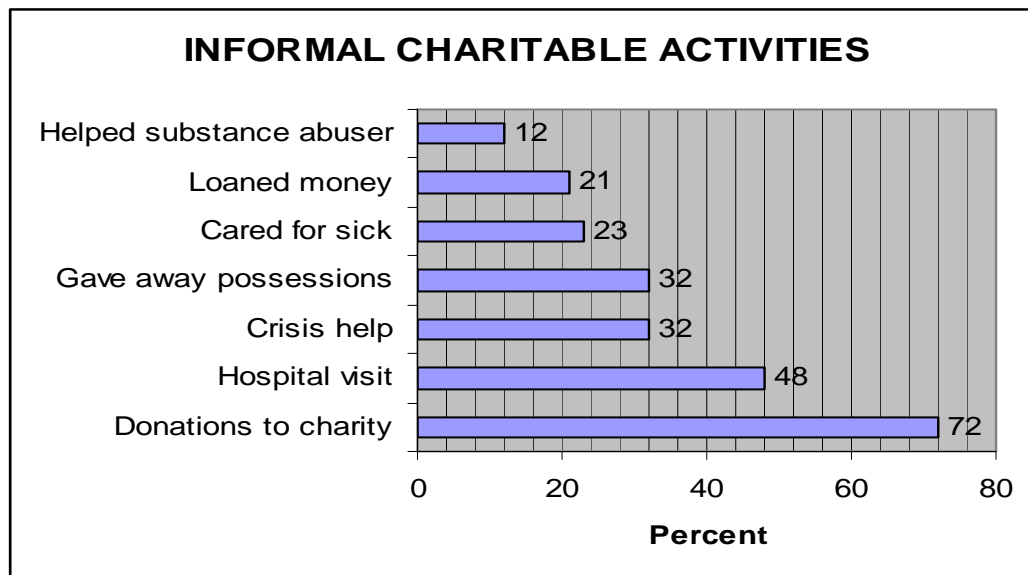
*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey (A-C) (N=54,026)*

*The relationship between religiosity and charitable involvement (among Catholics)*

By way of introduction to an examination of Catholics' charitable involvement, we consider some informal charitable actions. Figure 5.3 shows that in response to the question "In the past twelve months have you done any of the following?", 72% of Catholics indicate that they donated money to charity, 48% visited someone in

hospital, 32% helped someone through a personal crisis, 32% gave away possessions to someone in need, 23% cared for the very sick, 21% loaned money to someone outside the family, and 12% helped a substance abuser. Overwhelmingly, then, financial contribution is a very important way in which Catholic individuals support charitable causes.

**Figure 5.3: INFORMAL CHARITABLE ACTIVITIES OF PRACTISING CATHOLICS**



Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey (A-C) (N=54,026)

We now turn to consideration of more organised charitable activities – beginning with parish-based activities followed by activities based in the wider community.

#### *Parish-based community welfare activities*

As previously mentioned, the NCLS has questionnaire items that allow for charitable activity to be narrowed down to specific types of activity. Table 5.9 shows that, in response to the question “Do you regularly take part in any parish activities reaching out to the wider community (e.g. community service, social justice, welfare, outreach, evangelisation)?” 15% of practising Catholics indicate that they regularly participate in “community service, social justice or welfare activities”. This rate may seem fairly low, but it needs to be remembered that it represents one specific type of charitable activity that has been singled out.

**Table 5.9: “DO YOU REGULARLY TAKE PART IN ANY PARISH ACTIVITIES REACHING OUT TO THE WIDER COMMUNITY...?”**

	Percent
Yes, in community service, social justice or welfare activities of this parish	15
Other response*	85
Total	100

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey (A-C) (N= 54,026)

\* “Other response” includes “Yes, in outreach and evangelisation activities”, “No, we don’t have such activities”, and “No, I am not regularly involved”.

When participation in these parish-based welfare activities is cross-tabulated with participation in private devotional activities, we find that the rate of participation in community service / social justice / welfare activities is 7% among respondents who do not engage in private religious devotion, 11% among those who engage occasionally in private devotion, and 17% among those who engage in private devotion at least weekly (See Table 5.10). This indicates a positive association between the frequency of engagement in private religious devotion and participation in parish-based welfare activities.<sup>18</sup>

**Table 5.10: Crosstabulation: PARISH-BASED WELFARE ACTIVITIES \* PRIVATE DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITIES**

		PRIVATE	DEVOTIONAL	ACTIVITIES	
		At least weekly	Occasionally	Hardly ever / Never	Total
PARISH-BASED COMMUNITY WELFARE ACTIVITIES	Community/ Social Justice/ Welfare	17%	11%	7%	15%
		83%	89%	93%	85%
	Other response				
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey (A-C) (N= 54,026)

Table 5.11 shows that there is also a positive association between parish-based welfare activities and the communal dimension of religiosity – i.e. Mass attendance. The rate of participation in these activities is 4% among respondents who attend Mass infrequently (less than monthly), 7% among respondents who attend Mass at least monthly, and 16% among those who attend at least weekly.

<sup>18</sup> As the NCLS was conducted in a church situation, it is not possible to select a comparable group to the WVS “Neverattenders” in order to test the influence of private religious devotion per se. The NCLS question on Mass attendance does not have a “Never” response category. The very fact of a respondent completing a NCLS survey indicates that s/he has attended church on at least that occasion.

**Table 5.11: Crosstabulation: PARISH-BASED WELFARE ACTIVITIES \* MASS ATTENDANCE**

		ATTENDANCE			
		Less than monthly	At least monthly	At least weekly	Total
PARISH-BASED COMMUNITY WELFARE ACTIVITIES	Community/ Social Justice/ Welfare	4%	7%	16%	15%
	Other response	96%	93%	84%	85%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey (A-C) (N= 54,026)

Hence, the private and the communal indicators of religiosity are both positively related to participation in parish-based community service / social justice / welfare activities that reach out to the wider society. Even though these activities are parish-based, the fact that they are directed outwards to the wider society lends some support to the argument that one way in which religiosity may be expressed in the wider society is through charitable activity.

#### *Community welfare involvement not connected to the parish*

Table 5.12 shows response to the questionnaire item “Are you involved in any community service, social action or welfare groups *not* connected to this parish?” We find that 21% of Catholics are involved in these groups in the wider society. This is slightly higher than the proportion of Catholics involved in parish-based welfare activities (See Table 5.9).

**Table 5.12 “ARE YOU INVOLVED IN ANY COMMUNITY SERVICE, SOCIAL ACTION OR WELFARE GROUPS NOT CONNECTED TO THIS PARISH?”**

	Percent
Community service, care / welfare, social action, justice / lobby groups*	21
Not involved with such groups	79
Total	100

Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey (A-C) (N= 54,026)

\* “Yes, community service, care or welfare groups” combined with “Yes, social action, justice or lobby groups”.

Table 5.13 shows that when this type of welfare / social justice involvement based in the wider community is cross-tabulated with private religious devotion, there is a higher rate of welfare involvement among Catholics who engage in private religious devotion frequently (i.e. at least weekly) (23%) than among those who do not (14%).

This indicates a positive association between the frequency of private devotion and welfare / social justice involvement in the wider community.

**Table 5.13: Crosstabulation: COMMUNITY WELFARE INVOLVEMENT\* PRIVATE DEVOTIONAL ACTIVITIES**

		PRIVATE	DEVOTIONAL	ACTIVITIES	
		At least weekly	Occasionally	Hardly ever / Never	Total
COMMUNITY WELFARE INVOLVEMENT	Welfare / Justice /Action	23%	19%	14%	21%
	Not involved	77%	81%	86%	79%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey (A-C) (N= 54,026)*

Table 5.14 shows a similar association between community welfare involvement and Mass attendance. Catholics who attend Mass frequently (at least weekly) (22%) are more likely to be involved in welfare / social justice groups in the wider society than are Catholics who attend Mass less than monthly (13%).

**Table 5.14: Crosstabulation: COMMUNITY WELFARE INVOLVEMENT\* MASS ATTENDANCE**

		ATTENDANCE			
		Less than monthly	At least monthly	At least weekly	Total
COMMUNITY WELFARE INVOLVEMENT	Welfare / Justice /Action	13%	18%	22%	21%
	Not involved	87%	83%	78%	79%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey (A-C) (N= 54,026)*

Hence, the indicators of private religiosity and communal religiosity are both positively associated with involvement in welfare / social justice type groups in the wider society. There is little difference between the two indicators of religiosity in terms of their association with this type of group involvement.

Overall, we have found that 15% of Catholics are involved in parish-based welfare activity directed towards the wider community and, in addition, 21% of Catholics are involved in welfare activity based in the wider community. While a slightly higher proportion of Catholics are involved in the latter type of welfare activity, the pattern of association between religiosity and welfare involvement is the same: Both the private and the communal aspects of religiosity are positively associated with

voluntary welfare activity – whether it is parish-based or not connected to the parish at all.

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In summary of the Section 1 findings: Our analysis of WVS data relating to Australians suggests that while “private” religiosity can exist without a communal dimension, communal religiosity tends to imply a private dimension. Those Australians who claim a type of “private” religiosity are more likely to be involved in charitable organisations than the non-religious, but there is greater charitable involvement by those who also have a communal dimension to their religiosity. Among the Catholics surveyed by the NCLS, the overwhelming proportion of respondents attend weekly Mass and also participate in some level of private religious devotion. For these practising Catholics, the communal and private dimensions of religiosity appear to be mutually reinforcing. Both Mass attendance and private religious devotion are positively associated with charitable / welfare activity and there is little difference between them. Moreover, this applies whether the activity is parish-based or not.

## ***SECTION 2: SOCIAL ETHICS***

*Data Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) Survey X (N=1473)*

The examination in Section 1 prompts consideration of the extent to which Catholics’ charitable / welfare activity is grounded in a commitment to social ethics. The aim of Section 2 is to examine the relationships between religiosity, charitable / welfare activity, and social ethics.

We begin this section on social ethics by returning to consideration of a survey item relating to social justice that was referred to in an earlier chapter. In Chapter 3 we found that a very high proportion of practising Catholics (86%) agreed / strongly agreed that “Christians should work to change the structures of society in order to create a more just society”. It may be helpful to unpack this statement and interpret it in the light of some of the issues referred to in the theoretical discussion in this chapter. First, the statement implies a view that it is possible for human agency to

change social structures; as such, there is an assumption of the possibility of interaction and change which also allows room for movement from private level to public level. Second, there is no sense of individuals being so dominated / framed by structure that they are unable to perceive a structural dimension to society. Indeed, the statement implies a criticism of existing social structure as not responding adequately to the justice needs of the human community. The statement also implies that working towards human justice through social transformation is part of a type of Christian mission. These interpretations of the survey statement are relevant to the analyses of Catholic religiosity advanced by commentators such as Greeley and Lakeland. The very high rate of agreement by Catholics with the survey statement, then, is being regarded here as a key finding and will be referred to again in this chapter.

We now attempt to examine the relationship between this survey statement and variables relating to religiosity and charitable / welfare activity.

The NCLS Survey X contains items that allow for examination of the relationship between the social justice statement and our indicators of religiosity. Cross-tabulation of attitudes towards the statement “Christians should work...to create a more just society” and frequency of private religious devotion indicates high levels of agreement with the social justice statement across the private devotion categories. Nevertheless, the more frequently respondents engage in private religious devotion, the more likely they are to agree with the social justice statement: 74% of respondents who hardly ever engage in private devotion agree / strongly agree with the statement; 85% of respondents who occasionally engage in private devotion agree / strongly agree with the statement; and 89% of those who engage in private devotion at least weekly agree / strongly agree with the statement.<sup>19</sup> We also find a similar pattern between attitudes towards the social justice statement and frequency of Mass attendance: 75% of respondents who attend less than monthly agree / strongly agree with the social justice statement; 76% of respondents who attend at least monthly

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<sup>19</sup> The pattern of religiosity (as measured by the indicators of private religious devotion and Mass attendance) evident in data from NCLS Survey X (N=1473) is almost identical to that already examined in Survey A-C data. Hence, rather than continuing to display detailed tables of the relationship between the religiosity indicators and other variables, it is considered sufficient to just report the salient features of such relationships in the text.

agree / strongly agree with the statement; and 87% of those who attend at least weekly agree / strongly agree with the statement.

Hence, while the overwhelming majority of respondents are in agreement with the statement, the higher the frequency of each indicator of religiosity, the higher the proportion who agree that Christians should work towards social change in the interests of social justice. This suggests a link between individual religiosity and openness to social transformation among Catholics.

The NCLS Survey X does not contain the items that we have been using as indicators of charitable / welfare activity. However, there is one item which, although it is differently constructed, can be used as an indicator of parish-based welfare / social justice activity reaching out to the wider community.<sup>20</sup> Comparison between participants and non-participants in parish-based welfare activity in terms of their attitudes towards the statement “Christians should work to change the structures of society in order to create a more just society” shows high levels of agreement with the social justice statement across both categories of participation. Still, participants in welfare activity are slightly more likely to agree with the statement (93%) than are those who do not participate in welfare activity (86%).

We have found, then, a very high level of support among Catholics for the social justice statement. The data indicates some relationship between agreement / strong agreement with the statement and our indicators of religiosity. Similarly, there is indication of some relationship between agreement / strong agreement with the statement and parish-based participation in welfare / social justice activities directed to the wider society. This lends support to the argument that, among practising Catholics, social ethics are associated, to an extent, with religiosity and charitable activity.

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<sup>20</sup> “Do you regularly take part in any of the following parish activities which reach out to non-parishioners?” Possible responses: “Parish outreach or evangelisation activities which spread the Good News of the Gospel”; “Parish welfare activities which assist people from the non-parish community with personal needs”; “Parish service activities which contribute to the wider community in some other way”; “Parish activities which promote social justice”. Respondents who indicated any of the last three responses are treated as participants in parish-based welfare activity.

These findings, then, point to the grounding of individual Catholic charitable / welfare activity in a type of Christian social justice mission. The issue of whether, for Catholics, social justice implies not only a personal mission but also a church mission is the focus of the following section.

### **SECTION 3: ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHURCH INSTITUTIONAL INVOLVEMENT IN CHARITABLE/WELFARE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE ACTIVITIES**

*Data Sources:* 2001 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) (Survey N) (N=615)  
2001 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) Survey X (N=1473)

The aim of Section 3 is to examine Catholics' attitudes towards the involvement of the Church institution in welfare and social justice activities in society. There is also an attempt here to explore the extent to which such attitudes may imply a particular approach to structure – in the sense of Church structure and social structure.

Table 5.15 shows that in response to the statement “It is very important for the Church to provide social welfare services” the overwhelming majority of respondents (91%) agree / strongly agree. This indicates an extremely high level of support for Church institutional engagement in society in the provision of these services.

**Table 5.15: “IT IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE CHURCH TO PROVIDE SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES”**

	Percent
Agree / Strongly Agree	91
Neutral / Unsure	6
Disagree / Strongly Disagree	3
Total	100

*Source:* 2001 National Church Life Survey (Questionnaire N) (N=615).

The most salient aspect of our finding here is that the view of the Church institution as having an important role to play in the provision of welfare services to society is held by the vast majority of Catholics and so appears to be a fundamental aspect of Catholic social ethics.<sup>21</sup> It lends support to the notion that Catholics perceive the Church institution to have a role to play in the mission of service to humanity.

<sup>21</sup> NCLS Survey N has a smaller sample size than the other surveys referred to in this chapter and the extremely high rate of agreement with the statement about the importance of church provision of welfare services means that attempts at cross-tabulation with indicators of religiosity and participation

It is noted that the level of support for Church engagement in social welfare services (91%) is even higher than the level of support for the statement “Christians should work to change the structures of society in order to create a more just society” (86%) which was referred to in the examination of NCLS Survey X data. These findings point to social ethics as being a very high priority among Catholics.

It is possible to examine the relationship between attitudes towards Church provision of social welfare and attitudes towards the statement “Christians should work ... to create a more just society” because the latter variable is also present in NCLS Survey N data. Analysis of the relationship between the two variables shows that 93% of respondents who agree that Christians should work towards changing the structures of society also agree that the Church should provide social welfare services. Therefore, there is a huge overlap in terms of Catholics’ attitudes towards the transformation of social structure and towards the engagement of the Church institution in social welfare.

Catholics’ views of the Church’s role in social ethics are also indicated in response to the NCLS Survey X question “What is your view of the work of the Catholic Church in promoting social justice and supporting human rights?” The possible responses outlined in Table 5.16 show that this question taps views about both the role of the Church in promoting social justice and the amount of work that the Church is doing in the area. The table shows that 83% of respondents (i.e. 36% + 47%) consider that the church is playing a positive role in promoting social justice. However, the 47% of respondents who consider that more could be done and the 9% (i.e. 8%+1%) who

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in welfare activity result in too many small cell sizes. However, in a 2x2 cross-tabulation of response to the statement with private religious devotion, we find that respondents who engage in private devotion at least occasionally (including “At least weekly”) are more likely to agree with the statement (92%) than are those who hardly ever / never engage in private devotion (81%). (In the 2x2 table the variable relating to Church provision of welfare, “Neutral / unsure” is combined with “Disagree”). This indicates some degree of relationship between private devotion and agreement with the statement about church provision of welfare services. When the statement about the importance of church provision of welfare services is cross-tabulated (in a 2x2 table) with our indicator of communal religiosity (i.e. Mass attendance), we find that at least 86% of respondents agree with the statement regardless of the frequency of their Mass attendance. More precisely, agreement with the statement is indicated by 86% of those who attend Mass less than monthly and by 90% of respondents who attend Mass frequently (i.e. “At least monthly” including “At least weekly”); however, this difference is not statistically significant ( $p > .05$ ). There are similar findings in analyses of relationships between levels of agreement with the statement and either participation in parish-based welfare activity or participation in community-based welfare activity.

consider that only a token effort or nothing is being done suggest that these respondents have expectations of the Church role in social justice which are not being fully met. Nevertheless, this still implies that these respondents view the Church as having a role to play in the area.

**Table 5.16: “WHAT IS YOUR VIEW OF THE WORK OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN PROMOTING SOCIAL JUSTICE AND SUPPORTING HUMAN RIGHTS?”**

	Percent
The Church is playing a very positive role	36
The Church is playing a positive role but much more could be done	47
The Church is making little more than a token effort	8
The Church is doing nothing	1
Don't know	9
Total	100

*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey (Questionnaire X) (N=1473).*

The findings raise two other points for consideration. Firstly, the reservations about the Church's performance in its social justice role indicated by more than half of the respondents (i.e. 47%+8%+1%) suggest that respondents are not necessarily so dominated / framed by the Church institution that they are incapable of taking an evaluative stance towards the way the Church functions in its role. Secondly, there is the issue of whether the implicit criticism is justified. Respondents' *perceptions* of the amount of work the institutional Church is performing in the area of welfare / social justice and the actual amount of work that is being performed are, of course, separate issues. In Chapter 6 there will be consideration of factual evidence about the work that the institutional Church does in the area of welfare and social justice. For our present purposes, however, the most salient point about the findings shown in Table 5.16 is that the vast majority of respondents appear to expect the Church to play a role in promoting social justice and supporting human rights.

Cross-tabulation of this Survey X item on the view of the Church's work in social justice with the Survey X item on “Christians should work ... to create a more just society” indicates a relationship between them: A positive view of the Church's social justice work is held by 86% of those who agree with the statement “Christians...just society”, by 61% of those who are neutral about the statement, and by 53% of those who disagree with the statement. In other words, the higher the level of agreement

with the statement “Christians...just society”, the more likely a positive view of the Church’s work in social justice.

So far, then, we have found that a very high proportion of Catholics regard working towards social transformation in the interests of social justice as a type of Christian mission. Yet, there is a strong sense that the social justice mission applies to Christians not only as individuals but also as “Church”. The Church is regarded as playing an important role in social ethics: the vast majority of Catholics expect the Church to promote social justice and to engage in welfare services in society. Moreover, the more likely Catholics are to support the Christian social justice mission, the more likely they are to have a positive view of the Church’s social justice work. In one way, this could be interpreted in terms of the importance placed by Catholics upon institutional witness to Catholic social ethics.

In another way, we could speculate whether these findings might also hint at a more pragmatic element of the Catholic approach to social ethics – i.e. a recognition of the limitations of individual-level efforts in addressing structural-level problems and of the need for organisation / structure in engagement at the societal level. If so, this could be compatible with the dynamics of the community model of Catholicism referred to by Greeley which presents structure as necessary for organisation in community and which takes this from the local level to the level of the wider society in the paradigm of society as a community of communities. To the extent that our findings indicate an impetus from ordinary Catholics for the institutional Church to play a social ethics role in the wider society, the findings could be regarded as evidence of interaction between the Catholic living tradition and the institution (in the area of social ethics). If viewed in this way, there is little sense of Catholics being completely dominated by the institution (as was implicit in Berger’s analysis).

Earlier in this chapter there was reference to the implication of Greeley’s work that from the standpoint of the communal tradition, Catholics may have some ability to recognise the functionality of Church structure. In other words, there was a suggestion that from the perspective of communal tradition, there may be a tendency among Catholics to see the instrumentality of rationalised propositions and bureaucratic institutional-level processes in a wider context. This could be seen to parallel the type

of traditional and contextual approach to understanding the Bible that was associated with the majority of practising Catholics in Chapter 4. If there is some basis for the hypothesis that respondents who adopt a traditional / contextual approach to religious understanding – i.e. Traditionalists – are more inclined than others to see the functionality of the Church institutional role, we might expect this to show up in relation to data findings on the role of the Church in social welfare services.

We now return to the type of analysis that was presented in Chapter 4 and compare the responses of Traditionalists and Literalists to the survey item on Church involvement in social welfare. Table 5.17 shows that while large proportions of both Traditionalists and Literalists agree / strongly agree that “It is very important for the Church to provide social welfare services”, this applies to a higher proportion of Traditionalists (96%) than Literalists (83%). Indeed, it is noteworthy that nearly all Traditionalists (who represent the majority of practising Catholics) agree / strongly agree with the statement. This finding lends some support to the notion that a perspective grounded in communal tradition may be associated with a heightened view of the Church as having a functional role to play in certain areas. It suggests that Catholics whose religious orientation is closely associated with the communal tradition are more likely than others to regard the institutional church as a suitable vehicle for addressing social disadvantage.<sup>22 23</sup>

**Table 5.17: “IT IS VERY IMPORTANT FOR THE CHURCH TO PROVIDE SOCIAL WELFARE SERVICES” (Literalists & Traditionalists selected)**

	Literalists	Traditionalists
	%	%
Agree / Strongly agree	83	96
Neutral / Unsure	8	4
Disagree / Strongly disagree	9	0
Total	100	100

Source: NCLS 2001 Survey N (N= 615)

\* Literalists represent 15% of Survey N sample; Traditionalists represent 53%.

<sup>22</sup> However, this does not mean that Traditionalists are more likely to relegate the task of attending to social justice concerns away from themselves and the local church community to the larger institution. On the contrary, Traditionalists are more likely to be involved in parish-based welfare activity directed towards the wider community (16%) than are Literalists (14%); Traditionalists are also more likely to be involved in welfare activity not connected with the parish (23%) than are Literalists (16%) (Source: NCLS 2001 Survey A-C).

<sup>23</sup> There is more differentiation between Traditionalists and Literalists relating to this item on the role of the Church in social welfare than in relation to the other social ethics survey item “Christians should work ... to create a more just society” with which 89% of Traditionalists and 86% of Literalists agree / strongly agree.

The extremely high level of support for Church involvement in social welfare services within the overall survey sample points to the relevance of investigating Catholics' attitudes towards welfare services in a more general sense. Table 5.18 shows response to the statement "Programs to help the poor are generally best left to private charities rather than run by government agencies". The findings indicate a mixed response to the statement: 36% of respondents agree / strongly agree and a slightly higher proportion (45%) disagree / strongly disagree. The proportion of respondents who are unsure (19%) is somewhat higher than usual. These findings indicate that, among Catholics as a whole, there are different ways of viewing the issue of private / Government welfare programs and suggest that the issue may be fairly complex.

**Table 5.18: "PROGRAMS TO HELP THE POOR ARE GENERALLY BEST LEFT TO PRIVATE CHARITIES RATHER THAN RUN BY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES"**

	Percent
Agree / Strongly Agree	36
Neutral / Unsure	19
Disagree / Strongly Disagree	45
Total	100

*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey (Questionnaire N) (N=615).*

This survey item on private / Government welfare programs does not, of course, give us insight into respondents' reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with the statement. We could speculate whether respondents who favour the running of welfare programs by private agencies only – presumably including religious agencies – might be of the view that social welfare is not a Government issue; or, perhaps these respondents regard the ethos and mode of service delivery of private / religious agencies as a factor in their preference. While our survey does not allow for testing of such speculation, in Chapter 6 there will be reference to qualitative research on welfare service delivery by Catholic agencies which may provide some helpful leads. We could also speculate whether respondents who disagree that welfare programs should be left solely to private agencies might be of the view that Government ought to adopt interventionist policies or assume some responsibility in the area of social welfare. Again, however, we are unable to test this speculation here.

When the survey statement on private / Government welfare programs is cross-tabulated with social ethics survey items the mixed response pattern persists. Thirty-eight percent of respondents who affirm that "Christians should work...to create a

more just society” also agree / strongly agree with the statement about private / Government welfare programs; 46% of those who affirm that “Christians ... just society” disagree / strongly disagree with the statement about private / Government welfare programs. A similar response pattern exists among those who affirm the importance of Church involvement in social welfare (i.e. 36% agree / strongly agree with the statement about private / Government welfare programs and 46% disagree / strongly disagree). This suggests that the overall Catholic support for Church involvement in social welfare cannot necessarily be interpreted as indicating that Catholics in general exclude a role for Government in social welfare.

Rather, our finding that 46% of Catholics who affirm the importance of Church involvement in social welfare do not agree that such welfare activity should be left solely to private / religious agencies suggests a “both / and” rather than an “either / or” approach to the issue. Clearly, for these Catholics, it is possible to envisage both Church and Government as being involved in the area. In view of our Chapter 3 findings relating to the religious imagination (i.e. its association with a particular perception of institutional-level processes and with the transcendence of dualistic views), this prompts consideration of the extent to which respondents’ religious orientation may be associated with their attitudes towards private / Government involvement in social welfare. In Table 5.17 we saw that Traditionalists were more likely than Literalists to place importance on the role of the Church in social welfare. This was interpreted in terms of Traditionalists as being more likely to see the Church in a functional role. If we interpret disagreement with the survey statement on private / Government welfare programs in terms of awareness of the functional role of *both* religious and Government institutions, we could, then, hypothesize that Traditionalists will be more likely than Literalists to disagree with the statement.

Table 5.19 shows the respective response rates of Traditionalists and Literalists to the statement “Programs to help the poor are generally best left to private charities rather than run by government agencies”. The findings indicate that Traditionalists are much more likely to disagree / strongly disagree (48%) with the statement than are Literalists (17%). While the response pattern of Traditionalists resembles that of the overall sample of Catholics, the response pattern of Literalists differs markedly.

**Table 5.19: “PROGRAMS TO HELP THE POOR ARE GENERALLY BEST LEFT TO PRIVATE CHARITIES RATHER THAN RUN BY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES”  
(Literalists & Traditionalists selected)**

	Literalists	Traditionalists
	%	%
Agree / Strongly Agree	64	33
Neutral / Unsure	19	19
Disagree / Strongly Disagree	17	48
Total	100	100

*Source: 2001 National Church Life Survey (Questionnaire N) (N=615).*

*\* Literalists represent 15% of Survey N sample; Traditionalists represent 53%.*

If the findings shown in Table 5.17 and Table 5.19 are viewed alongside each other, they would seem to support the hypothesis that Traditionalists (who represent a majority of practising Catholics) are more likely than Literalists to perceive a functional role for both Church and Government institutions in the area of social welfare. One possible interpretation, then, is that Catholics grounded in the communal tradition have a tendency to recognise the functionality of structure – whether it is Church structure or structures associated with the State.

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The analysis in Section 3 has reinforced the Section 2 finding that social ethics is a very high priority among the Catholics surveyed. While in the previous section we saw that the social welfare activities of Catholic individuals were grounded in a Christian mission of social justice, in Section 3 we have found that the Church is also regarded as having a role in this mission. There is impetus from ordinary Catholics for institutional involvement in the area of social welfare / justice yet this does not imply relegation of social ethics away from individual Catholics themselves and the local church community to the larger institution. Hence, the social justice mission appears to embrace both individual and institutional involvement and it has been interpreted here as a site of genuine interaction between individuals in the living Catholic tradition and the Church institution.

Similarly, while the vast majority of surveyed Catholics place importance on the Church role in social welfare, this does not necessarily preclude them from seeing a role for Government in the area. More Catholics are inclined to view both Government and private / religious agencies as having a role in social welfare than are

inclined to relegate social welfare to private / religious agencies only. Moreover, the “both / and” approach to social welfare programs appears to be more strongly related to a religious orientation grounded in communal tradition than does the approach that relegates social welfare to the private sphere.

The finding that Catholics whose religious orientation is grounded in tradition and contextual understanding are more inclined than Literalists to see roles for both Church and State institutions in the area of social welfare, also suggests the possibility that the Traditionalists may be more open to recognising the functionality of institutional structures.

When this is viewed alongside the finding of very strong overall support for changing the *structures* of society in the interests of social justice, another dimension is added to the interpretation: Insofar as the vast majority of surveyed Catholics identify with a view that implies that structural factors are at least partly responsible for social injustice, the endorsement of institutional-level means of addressing social injustice suggests a tendency among Catholics to see a role for Church structure in engaging social structure. This would signify a pragmatic approach to inter-structural relations in society.

Indeed, the pattern of individual-level involvement in social ethics flowing into institutional-level involvement appears to be compatible with the organic model of Catholicism referred to by Greeley. This implies commitment to an organisational structure that allows for movement from the local level to the level of the wider society in its paradigm of society as a community of communities.

### ***FINDINGS (PART I)***

The findings in Sections 1, 2 and 3 have implications for the themes discussed earlier in the chapter.

In Section 1 the WVS finding suggesting that private religiosity can exist without a communal dimension resonates with Greeley’s suggestion that private religiosity is at the basis of all religion. Yet the NCLS data relating to practising Catholics shows that

private individual religiosity and communal religious expression can exist together and even reinforce each other; in other words, religiosity can be seen in “both / and” terms. Bellah’s argument that the externals of Catholicism preclude or suppress an inner relationship between the individual and God is not supported.

Our finding of an association between religiosity and charitable activity lends support to the argument advanced by researchers such as Putnam (2000) about a link between religiosity and altruism. Moreover, the finding that (among the surveyed Catholics) this link persists in relation to welfare activity directed towards the Other in the wider society points to a way in which individual religiosity can lead to engagement in the wider society. This builds on the findings in the previous chapter which challenge the Weberian notion of a cleavage between individual religiosity and openness to society.

Reinforcement of this interpretation comes from the Section 2 finding that the individual religiosity of the surveyed Catholics orients them towards a social justice mission in the wider society – i.e. that “Christians should work to change the structures of society in order to create a more just society”. This finding shows Catholics conceiving of a more interactive relationship between human agency and structure than Berger expects. It suggests that while Catholics see structural factors generating social injustice they also see structure open to influence by individuals and, indeed, requiring individual response if a more just society is to be achieved. This implied dynamic accords with the type of interaction model referred to by Greeley that begins in and keeps returning to humanity.

As we have seen, the link between individual religiosity, charitable activity and a mission of social transformation fits with our previous finding of the dominant Catholic view of salvation in terms of transformation. This reinforces the notion of Catholic religiosity and orientation as having a “both / and” tendency – i.e. as aspiring to both personal and structural transformation – as opposed to the “either / or” interpretation of salvation referred to in Chapter 3.

There are other ramifications of the findings presented in these sections. What Greeley calls the community-model perspective in which religion can be *both* private *and* public appears to be vindicated over the structure-dominated perspective adopted

by Berger in which structural differentiation leads to progressive privatisation of religion.<sup>24</sup> The Section 3 findings are also compatible with Greeley's community model in the sense that they point to the possibility of a greater degree of interaction (than is assumed by the structure-dominant model) between Catholic individuals in the living tradition and the Church institution, and between the Church institution and other institutions of society.

In our analysis, this interaction appears to accompany a predominantly "both / and" approach to religious engagement in society: For Catholics, the Christian mission in society presents as *both* an individual mission *and* a Church mission; moreover, the implementation of this mission in terms of social welfare services is more likely to be regarded by Catholics as a matter for *both* Church *and* Government than as a matter for private / religious agencies only. This, perhaps, could go some way towards explaining the type of organic relationships forged between Catholicism and other sectors of society that Martin has characterized as being distinctive of Catholicism.

Furthermore, in our analysis, the association of the "both / and" approach with a perspective grounded in communal tradition has been interpreted as signifying a type of implicit recognition of how institutional-level rationality and bureaucracy operate and of the location of structure in functional context. To the extent that this entails

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<sup>24</sup> A community-model perspective that incorporates the notion of transformation appears to have certain theoretical ramifications. From the perspective of a religious tradition oriented towards transformation, the concept of structural change may appear to be *de rigueur*. However, from a structure-dominant perspective that portrays structure as substantive, the concept of structural change may be problematic. The view that social structure can change endows structure with a flexibility and openness to transformation that does not reconcile with the type of substantive permanence – and even transcendence – attributed to structure as conceptualised by Berger. While Berger interprets the process of structural differentiation in terms of a type of continuing crisis for both individuals and society, from a perspective grounded in human community, the critical issue would seem to centre around the likelihood or otherwise of ongoing interaction between structure and members of the human community. While a structure-dominant perspective presents a trajectory of increasing individualism, a community-model perspective appears to allow more scope for interaction between the individual and social structure – in which structure can be tempered by individual agency and individualism can be tempered by some degree of structural restraint. As Greeley has intimated, from the community-model perspective, human needs are not necessarily equated with rugged individualism. Furthermore, while Berger interprets structural change in society as leading to the privatisation of religion, from the perspective of a communal religious tradition such as Catholicism, it would seem that the openness of social structure to change can be regarded as an aspect to be utilized in the mission of maintaining a link between human needs and structure – and of allowing for movement from the private level to the public level. Hence, the phenomenon that, according to the structure-dominant model, leads to the privatisation of religion can, according to the community model, be seen to indicate a way in which religion can be *both* private *and* public.

recognition of the potential of structure to disconnect from human reality – and, hence, recognition of the need for ongoing interaction between structure and human reality – it would seem to parallel Lakeland’s characterisation of Catholicism’s mission to humanity.

In Chapter 6 there will be consideration of the way Catholic welfare service organisations attempt to “humanize the system” within a particular type of alliance between Church and Government institutions. There will also be consideration of the extent to which the Church’s engagement in social welfare may undergird its involvement in social ethics discourse in the public arena. Our concern here, however, has been to attempt an understanding of the findings of Sections 1, 2 and 3 in terms of a community model of organic interaction that implies the possibility of “both / and” relationships between individual religiosity and openness to society, between the individual and the Church institution, and between the Church institution and society. Viewed in the context of social ethics, such relationships suggest that Australian Catholicism has the potential to be *both* private *and* public and indicate an orientation that allows for the possibility of an organic relationship between religion and society rather than a cleavage between them.

## **PART II**

### **IS AUSTRALIAN CATHOLICISM BECOMING MORE SECTLIKE?**

Insofar as Part I of this chapter has challenged the notion of a necessary cleavage between religion and society in the case of Australian Catholicism, it would also seem to challenge any notion of Australian Catholicism as being a *sect* – in the sense of a religious group segregated from the rest of society. Yet our analysis to date has not addressed the issue of the type of trends in Australian Catholicism that have been occurring over time. In view of the debate in some circles that Catholicism is destined to become a sect, it seems appropriate to examine the issue of whether Australian Catholicism is becoming more sect-like. This is the main question to be addressed in Part II of the chapter.

This second part of the chapter focuses on the issue of religious change and its implication for the religious sect. Earlier in the chapter we saw that, according to Berger's theory, the effects of rationalisation led to the privatisation of religion whereby orthodox religious belief could only be maintained within sects closed towards the wider society. Yet, not all authors view the sect in terms of this concept of religious change. As we will see, authors such as Stark and Finke (2000), whilst resembling Berger in their emphasis on the role of the sect in maintaining orthodox belief, nevertheless do not ascribe to the privatisation thesis or to the notion that the advancement of rationality and the survival of religion are mutually exclusive.

Part II begins with examination of Stark and Finke's approach to church-sect analysis. It then proceeds to a consideration of the applicability of this type of analysis to Catholicism. Some concerns are expressed here and reference is made to Casanova's (1994) study of American Catholicism as offering an alternative view. This is followed by the empirical analysis section in which findings (relating to variables salient to church-sect analysis) from the 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey are compared with those of the 2001 National Church Life Survey.

### ***CHURCH-SECT ANALYSIS***

In Chapter 2 we discussed the Weberian theory that the rationalised forms of the institutional church interfered with the type of individual-God relationship that was possible in the charismatic sect. Weber's belief was that church-type tendencies could not co-exist with sect-type tendencies. This resonates with Finke and Stark's theory that assumes "the inability of a single religious organization to be at once worldly and otherworldly..."(1992: 18). It is this type of assumption that underlies Finke and Stark's (1992) church-sect typology. However, Finke and Stark differ from Weber in that they see the church-sect dynamic in terms of an ongoing cycle – instead of pointing towards the inevitable overall decline of religion.

Finke and Stark's (1992) church-sect typology is located within a theory of "rational choice". While many Weberian-inspired theories propose a trajectory in the direction of the mutual exclusiveness of rationality and religion, Stark and Finke find a way to accommodate both. However, it is not in the sense of religious faith as being inclusive

of rationality; rather, it is in the sense of rationality as defining religious faith. Stark and Finke take their interpretation of Weber in the direction of their first theoretical axiom that "...given their information and options, humans generally act in a rational way..." (2000: 21; 40). They regard this as "the preferable starting point" for theories of religion (2000: 21). Stark and Finke argue that "people are as rational in their religious behaviour as they are in any other area of life" and that "when faced with choices, humans try to select the most rational or reasonable option" (2000: 36). This underlies their "rational choice" or "market" theory of religiousness (Finke and Stark 1992; Stark and Finke 2000).

Finke and Stark argue that churches and sects "are best conceptualized as the end points of a continuum made up of the degree of tension between religious organisations and their sociocultural environments" (1992: 40). In this, they can be seen to build upon Stark and Glock's (1968) proposition that orthodoxy of religious belief tends to preclude openness towards the wider society (discussed in Chapter 3). For Finke and Stark, "strong" religion (i.e. of the "sect" variety) implies distinction / separation from the wider society. It is argued that

When a religious body has no beliefs or practices setting it apart from its environment, no tension will exist. Churches are religious bodies in a relatively low state of tension with their environments. Sects are religious bodies in a relatively high state of tension with their environments (Finke and Stark 1992: 40).

According to Finke and Stark, "New religious bodies nearly always begin as sects..." (1992: 42). The church-sect dynamic is described as follows:

...successful religious bodies nearly always shift their emphasis toward this world and away from the next, moving from high tension with the environment toward increasingly lower levels of tension. As this occurs, a religious body will become increasingly less able to satisfy members who desire a higher-tension version of faith...The result is an endless cycle of sect formation, transformation, schism, and rebirth (Finke and Stark 1992: 42).

This is seen to reflect the exercise of rational choice among individuals in response to the differential abilities of churches and sects to satisfy various human needs (1992: 41). Finke and Stark argue that "People tend to value religion on the basis of how costly it is to belong – the more one must sacrifice in order to be in good standing, the more valuable the religion" (1992: 238). It even extends to the stigma attached to belonging to particular religious groups (1992: 238). This means that "in terms of real costs and benefits, the more 'mainline' the church ... the lower the value of

belonging to it, and this eventually results in widespread defection” (1992: 238). Finke and Stark believe that “Because many results promised by religion can occur only elsewhere and far in the future, religion is an inherently risky good. Individuals therefore rely on interactions with others to help them determine whether the value of religious rewards outweighs the risks...”(1992: 252). Hence, the level of religious commitment of other members of the religious organisation is an important factor (1992: 252-5). “Sectarian members are either in or out; they must follow the demands of the group or withdraw. The ‘seductive middle-ground’ is lost” (1992: 254). In strong religious groups, there is no room for “free-riders” (1992: 254).

Stark and Finke (2000) observe that a decline in church participation means that more people become free riders. In their assessment, “it is a form of free-riding to show up only for services at Christmas and Easter, expecting them to occur despite the fact that you have relied on others to keep things going the remainder of the year” (Stark and Finke 2000:148). They argue along the lines that in fairly open churches, there is a disinclination to withhold religious services from anyone and hence there are many free-riders; yet this can be prevented by excluding those who do not make a high commitment (2000: 148). Weber’s argument that it is “only relatively small congregations” in which strict membership standards can be enforced, is cited (Stark and Finke 2000: 155). It is the *density* of the networks within a congregation that is seen to provide reinforcement for religious commitment (2000: 155). Stark and Finke’s overall argument is based on the “rational choice” premise that “the more your religious group asks of you, the more resources it has to reward you” (2000: 22); hence, “members of strict churches give more because they receive more” (2000: 52). A fundamental principle is that strong, effective churches are both strict and exclusive (2000: 142).

In some respects, Stark and Finke’s theory fits with Kelley’s (1977:178) “strict church” proposal which advocates exclusiveness and the “power of the gate” to preserve the seriousness of the religious meaning system. For Kelley (1977: 120), strictness relates to the effort and struggle implied by a demanding belief system. He sees efforts towards ultimate meaning as being linked to the social strength of the religious group rather than to social ethics beyond the group (1977:146; 175). Hence, there is the implication that strong religious belief is somehow incompatible with the

type of ethical involvement in the wider society that is exemplified by non-judgmental care for those in need. As such, Kelley's approach seems more applicable to denominations that emphasize "faith alone" than to those that emphasize "faith and works". The same might be said of Stark and Finke's theory.

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At this point, we turn our attention to the question of the applicability of rational choice church-sect analysis to Catholicism. Finke and Stark argue that the church-sect dynamic is applicable to Catholics because it is "only where the Catholic Church is in the minority and is somewhat embattled" that vigorous participation occurs (1992: 109). They identify early American Catholicism as an Irish 'Sect Movement' that created a parallel society within which Catholics "were protected from Protestant insults as well as from Protestant influences" (Finke and Stark 1992: 136, 139). In their analysis, "Recent declines in the vigour of American Catholicism reflect one more cycle of the sect-church process whereby a faith becomes a mainline body and then begins to wilt" (Finke and Stark 1992: 261).

Stark and Finke (2000: 263) consider that it was mainly the abandonment of some teachings in the wake of Vatican II that led to a decline in Catholic mass attendance and lessened the tension between Catholics and their socio-cultural environment.<sup>25</sup> They argue that "a softening of doctrines" – which they see as ensuing from Vatican II – is a sign of a religious organisation moving from a sect to a church (Finke and Stark 1992: 268).

However, Finke and Stark acknowledge that, as Catholicism is an international faith

Decisions made in Rome can have substantial impact on Catholicism in other nations. Some recent decisions have been meant to make the church more otherworldly again and to restore firmer hierarchical authority. Conservatives appear to outnumber liberals among American bishops once more, for example, and disciplinary actions have been taken against several liberal Catholic theologians who have challenged various doctrines of the church. Clearly, John Paul has been trying to make the church less mainline in terms of theology (1992: 272).

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<sup>25</sup> For example, elsewhere they argue that abandonment of the belief that eating meat on Friday constituted mortal sin enabled Catholics to blend more easily into the wider society; similarly, they argue that when Catholics no longer believe that missing Sunday mass constitutes mortal sin, it leads to "fewer people in the pews" (Finke and Stark 1992: 264).

The implication is that American Catholicism could be moving towards sectarianism. Indeed, Stark and Finke argue that, under certain conditions, “religious organisations will shift in the direction of higher tension with the environment” (2000: 259). In other words, “liberal religious groups can turn conservative” (2000: 22).

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There are some concerns about the applicability of Finke and Stark’s church-sect typology to American Catholicism. One main difficulty is evident in Finke and Stark’s own observation that

Unlike sect movements within Protestant bodies (which often depart in anger when their demands for reform are not met), however, thus far the Catholic sect groups have remained within the formal structure of the church...(1992: 273).

As we have seen, Finke and Stark locate church and sect at either end of a single continuum – making them mutually exclusive. Yet, if sects are seen to be contained within the Catholic Church, the one-dimensionality of Finke and Stark’s church-sect typology is challenged.

Another problem appears in the work of one of Stark’s colleagues, Lawrence Iannoccone, who integrates Kelley’s strict church thesis with Finke and Stark’s church-sect typology through a “rational choice theory of organisational strictness” (1994: 1204-5). Building on Stark and Glock’s (1968) ranking of American denominations from liberal mainline denominations through to sects, Iannoccone produces a ranking of denominations in terms of distinctiveness of doctrine, morality, life style, and so on. He finds this measure of denominational distinctiveness to be positively related to average rates of church attendance and inversely related to membership in non-church organisations (Iannoccone 1994: 1191; 1194). He argues that strictness gives rise to distinctiveness, which “limit[s] participation in competing activities and thereby raise[s] levels of participation within the group” (1994: 1197). Catholicism is ranked around the middle in the range of denominations in terms of the relationship between distinctiveness and attendance, and in terms of the relationship between distinctiveness and non-church memberships (1994:1191; 1194). While, on the surface, this may seem fairly bland, if we ask what it really means, it would seem

to be suggesting that Catholicism avoids the extremes where in-group and out-group activity become mutually exclusive. Hence, instead of contributing to an understanding of the dynamics of Catholicism, Iannoccone's mid-range ranking of Catholicism tends to obscure the very characteristic that may well be most distinctive of Catholicism – i.e. its defiance of the principle of mutual exclusiveness between religious commitment and openness to the wider society.

It seems that the “either / or” nature of church-sect analysis presents as an obstacle to an understanding of American Catholicism. The one-dimensional church-sect continuum cannot explain the Catholic Church's apparent ability to accommodate both church-like and sect-like tendencies. The church-sect cycle may show how some religions can be constructed by change but it does not explain how a particular religion may continue to accommodate ongoing tensions and change within it.

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In contrast, Casanova's (1994) analysis of American Catholicism as multidimensional is able to show the ongoing tensions within it. Casanova's account presents American Catholicism as being shaped by a number of factors. In structural terms, he sees Catholicism as functioning as a sect in the sense of being “a minority religion in a predominantly Protestant country” (1994: 167). He also sees waves of immigration as shaping American Catholicism to function congregationally as “a multiethnic, territorially organised national church” (1994: 167). In addition, Casanova sees Catholicism as becoming the largest religious denomination in America as well as being “a member of the transnational universal *Roman Catholic church*” (original italics) (1994: 167). Hence, in Casanova's analysis, American Catholicism performs a multiplicity of functions which are not regarded as mutually exclusive because they are seen to relate to different dimensions / spheres of Catholicism.

Casanova regards the tensions relating to such functions as cutting across each other and “in need of constant resolution” (1994: 175). However, he considers noteworthy

the fact that unlike every other major religious body in America, Christian or Jewish, which fell prey to the dynamics of American denominationalism and split along national, linguistic, doctrinal, regional, class, or racial lines, the Catholic church in

America has been able to keep the overwhelming majority of Catholic immigrants and their descendants within one single American Catholic church (1994: 176).

At the same time, Casanova exposes the seriousness of ideological struggles within the Roman Catholic Church, observing that “The present Vatican project of once again centralizing the control of doctrinal teaching through the replacement of liberal bishops with conservative ones throughout the world is at best a process fraught with contingencies...” (1994: 187). Yet, Casanova does not see a necessarily sectarian future for Catholicism; instead, he points to the possibility for a church that engages society – such as the Catholic Church – to be able to accommodate tensions “within its walls” (1994: 207).

Hence, there appears to be some basis for concern about the applicability of church-sect analysis to American Catholicism. Sect-like groups tend to remain within the Church, as do tensions relating to a variety of factors. Mutual exclusiveness between religious commitment and openness to the wider society is not immediately apparent. There is, perhaps, an organic quality to the way American Catholicism has engaged its own multidimensionality and the wider society that goes beyond binary analysis in terms of a church-sect continuum. However, these issues concerning American Catholicism cannot be pursued in this research; they have been referred to as a means of providing some context and comparison for consideration of the applicability of church-sect analysis to Australian Catholicism.

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As previously noted, the findings from the first part of this chapter casting doubt on the notion of a necessary cleavage between Australian Catholicism and society, would also seem to cast doubt on the applicability of church-sect analysis to Australian Catholicism. Moreover, the findings from Chapters 3 and 4 of this thesis raise additional questions about some of the specific assumptions of Stark and Finke’s church-sect theory. We might ask whether Stark and Finke’s basic assumption of the inability of a single religion “to be at once worldly and otherworldly” reflects an underestimation of the incarnational nature of Catholicism (see Chapters 3 and 4). We might ask if the location of sect and church at either extreme of the one continuum precludes an understanding of sect-like and church-like characteristics in terms of the

type of holding together of apparent opposites that has been associated with the religious imagination found among a significant number of practising Australian Catholics (see Chapter 4). We might ask how relevant the conception of religion as a “risky good” because of the otherworldly nature of its promises is to those Catholics who see salvation in terms of transformation involving both otherworldly and this-worldly elements (see Chapter 3). We might ask if the perceived need to bolster belief orthodoxy by exclusion of those outside the religious group is appropriate to those Catholics whose incarnational beliefs lead them to see the image of God in *all* humanity (see Chapter 4). We might ask whether the exclusion of members from the religious group based on judgment of who is deserving / undeserving would sit easily with the Catholics who are inclined to suspend judgment of others (see Chapter 4). Finally, we might ask why religion and society should be regarded as separate if individual religiosity can be linked to openness to humanity (see Chapter 4).

As we consider these questions however, we have to weigh possible implications of the great decline over recent decades in the proportion of Australian Catholics who regularly attend Mass. As we have already seen, for the period 1996-2001 alone, the proportion of identifying Catholics who attend Mass weekly has decreased from 18% (in 1996) down to 15% (in 2001). We cannot discount the possible implications of this trend for the minority of Catholics who remain regular attenders. For example, the decreasing size of congregations might mean an increase in the density of the network of committed Catholics. Moreover, as we saw in Chapter 3, a high level of orthodoxy of belief among Catholic Church attenders has been indicated in the 2001 NCLS. If this level were to represent an increase upon the 1996 level of orthodoxy, we could not discount the possibility of the type of “reinvigorated orthodoxy” that Stark and Finke (2000: 22) regard as the hallmark of sect formation. Hence, notwithstanding our reservations about the applicability of church-sect analysis to Australian Catholicism, it still seems prudent to compare the 1996 and 2001 data on practising Catholics across a range of variables salient to church-sect analysis.

It is acknowledged that the time period available for analysis (i.e. 1996 – 2001) is short and therefore only capable of showing very recent rather than historical trends. It cannot be regarded as comparable with the wide-sweeping historical accounts provided by Finke and Stark (1992) and Casanova (1994). However, in Part III of this

chapter there will be some attempt to redress this limitation by locating Australian Catholicism in a wider historical context.

## **PART II – ADDRESSING THE ISSUES**

In the empirical section of Part II the principal issue to be addressed concerns the extent to which practising Australian Catholics may be becoming more “sect-like” – as indicated by increased levels of orthodoxy and religious commitment and decreased levels of openness towards the wider society. This approach reflects an attempt to test some of the propositions derived from Stark and Finke’s church-sect theory.<sup>26</sup> Comparisons will be made between data from the 1996 CCLS and the 2001 NCLS.

Firstly, given Stark and Finke’s emphasis on the role of orthodox belief in the church-sect cycle, our investigation looks for evidence of a sect-like trend in terms of an increase in the level of orthodox belief among practising Australian Catholics between 1996 and 2001. The same indicators of orthodox belief will be used as in the Orthodox Belief Index of Chapter 3 – i.e. relating to the Virgin birth of Jesus, the Eucharist, and the Trinitarian concept of God.

Secondly, according to Stark and Finke’s theory, there is an expectation that in a sect-like trend an increase in levels of orthodox belief would be accompanied by an increase in levels of religious commitment such as faith experience and communal religious practice. The indicators of faith experience available to us here relate to the experience of faith commitment, growth in faith, and the importance of God in respondents’ lives. The available indicators of attitudes towards and involvement in communal religious practice are Mass attendance, liturgical support activity, and sensibilities about the spiritual effects of Mass attendance.

Thirdly, Stark and Finke’s theory would lead us to expect an increased level of involvement in / density of the church community network as part of a sect-like trend.

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<sup>26</sup> See previous references to Stark and Finke’s theory – e.g. Finke and Stark 1992: 255; Stark and Finke 2000:107.

The available indicators of church community involvement relate to participation in parish groups, participation in parish decision-making, involvement in ministry / leadership roles, the closeness of friends in the parish, the sense of belonging to the parish, the importance of the parish to the respondents' lives, the perception of spiritual needs being met in the parish, and the perception of parish growth in unity and strength.

Fourthly, we examine whether there is any evidence of decrease in the levels of openness towards the "Other" and concern for / involvement in the welfare of those in the wider society. According to Stark and Finke's (2000: 161) theory, a decrease in the level of the indicators of social concern and involvement would be expected as evidence of a sect-like trend. In an important way, this aspect of Stark and Finke's theory builds on Stark and Glock's (1968) proposition of an inverse relationship between orthodoxy and ethicalism that was discussed in Chapter 3. The indicator of openness to the "Other" available for comparison between 1996 and 2001 relates to attitudes towards social diversity resulting from immigration. The indicators of social concern to be used are the same variables examined in Part I relating to parish-based welfare activity directed towards the wider society, welfare activity based in the wider society, and attitudes towards the importance of Church engagement in welfare services in society. There will also be an attempt to revisit the relationship between orthodoxy and ethicalism in terms of the relationship between our orthodox belief index and welfare activity directed towards the wider society – comparing this relationship across 1996 and 2001 data.

The empirical dimension of this second part of Chapter 5 is based on analysis of data from the 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey (CCLS) and the 2001 National Church Life Survey (NCLS)(Catholic component).

### ***RESEARCH QUESTIONS***

The precise research questions and the mode in which they are addressed in the particular data sets are as follows:

1. Has there been an increase in levels of orthodox belief between 1996 and 2001? In answer to this question there is comparison of data from 1996 CCLS Survey A and 2001 NCLS Survey V.
2. Has there been an increase in levels of religious commitment between 1996 and 2001? Data from 1996 CCLS Survey A and 2001 NCLS Survey V are used here.
3. Has there been an increase in the level of involvement in the parish community between 1996 and 2001? Data from 1996 CCLS Survey A and 2001 NCLS Survey V are used here.
4. Has there been a decrease in levels of openness to social diversity and social concern / welfare involvement in the wider society? Data from 1996 CCLS Surveys A, E, G and P and 2001 NCLS Surveys V and N are used here.

## **PART II – DATA ANALYSIS**

*Data Sources:* 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey (CCLS) Survey A (N= 65,046)  
 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey (CCLS) Survey E (N= 1258)  
 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey (CCLS) Survey G (N= 1645)  
 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey (CCLS) Survey P (N= 1014)  
 2001 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) Survey N (N= 615)  
 2001 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) Survey P (N= 630)  
 2001 National Church Life Survey (NCLS) Survey V (N= 2256)

The method of data analysis employed in this section is primarily a comparison of 1996 and 2001 frequencies of variables regarded as salient to church-sect analysis. For the most part, data from 1996 CCLS Survey A is compared with data from 2001 NCLS Survey V (which replicates much of 1996 CCLS Survey A).

At the outset it is important to note that the NCLS set of surveys used in 2001 incorporates an attempt to improve upon the CCLS set of surveys used in 1996 in various ways – including in relation to questionnaire format, wording of questions etc. This has implications for comparison between 1996 and 2001 data. For example, the main survey used in Catholic parishes in 1996 (i.e. CCLS Survey A) is not the same

as the main survey used in Catholic parishes in 2001 (i.e. NCLS Survey A-C). While these two surveys contain some of the same question topics, the particular format and wording of the questions are not always identical. The same applies to questions in some of the other 2001 surveys that have already been referred to in this research. This needs to be kept in mind because some of the question topics that have already been examined will be revisited in the comparison between 1996 and 2001 data, however the 2001 data will now be drawn from the 2001 surveys that contain exactly the same questions as in the 1996 surveys. Hence, any apparent discrepancies within the 2001 results need to be understood in terms of the different structure of some of the questions now being used.

In the comparison of 1996 data and 2001 data there is also a need to consider demographic factors such as age. In 1996 55% of attenders were over 50 years whereas in 2001 60% were over 50. This reflects an ageing profile of practising Australian Catholics that needs to be kept in mind when observing changes over the period in question.

### ***ORTHODOX BELIEF***

Bearing in mind Stark and Finke's (2000) proposition that reinvigorated orthodoxy is the hallmark of sect formation, we begin by comparing the 1996 and 2001 data on orthodoxy of belief. Keeping to the three belief topics used in the Chapter 3 orthodoxy index – i.e. relating to the Virgin birth of Jesus, the Eucharist as Christ's body and blood, and God as Trinity – we compare the 1996 and 2001 rates of orthodox response to these topics using data from 1996 CCLS Survey A and 2001 NCLS Survey V.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> It is to be noted that the survey questions from which the orthodox responses here have been selected are not exactly the same as the questions that appear on 2001 NCLS Survey W referred to in Chapter 3. More specifically, the format of the 2001 W question on ideas about God does not include the "Don't know" response that is included in the 2001 V / 1996 A question; also, the 2001 W question mentions "three divine persons" in the "orthodox" response whereas the 2001 V / 1996 A question does not. The 2001 W question on the Eucharist contains only two response categories whereas the 2001 V / 1996 A question contains seven response categories; moreover, the 2001 W "orthodox" response to this question includes the phrase "by receiving them we take part in his sacrifice" whereas the 2001 V / 1996 A response does not. The format of the 2001 W question on the Virgin birth of Jesus contains only two response categories, whereas the 2001 V / 1996 A question contains four.

Table 5.20 shows that between 1996 and 2001 there was a small increase in the proportion of respondents choosing the orthodox version of two of the three beliefs we examined earlier. During this time period the proportion who believed that “Mary gave birth to Jesus without having had sexual intercourse” increased from 65% to 68%. The proportion who believed that “There is one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit” increased from 74% to 76%. The proportion of respondents who believed that “the consecrated bread and wine” “truly become the sacred body and blood of Christ” remained stable at 70%. Overall, then, there are only slight differences between 1996 and 2001 in levels of belief orthodoxy; nevertheless, they are in the direction of greater rather than less orthodoxy.

**Table 5.20: (Summary Table) ORTHODOX RESPONSES TO BELIEFS (1996 & 2001)**

	1996	2001
	%	%
Mary gave birth to Jesus without having had sexual intercourse	65	68
The consecrated bread and wine: Truly become the sacred body and blood of Christ	70	70
There is one God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit	74	76

*Source: 1996 CCLS Survey A (N=65,046) & 2001 NCLS Survey V (N=2256)*

When the orthodox belief data is presented in terms of an orthodox belief index (as in Chapter 3) the increases in orthodoxy between 1996 and 2001 (Table 5.20) show up mainly as a small increase in the High Orthodox category – from 45% in 1996 to 48% in 2001 (See Table 5.21).

**Table 5.21: ORTHODOX BELIEF INDEXES (1996 & 2001)**

	1996	2001
	%	%
No Orthodox (0)	13	12
Low Orthodox (1)	16	16
Medium Orthodox (2)	26	25
High Orthodox (3)	45	48
Total	100	100

*Source: 1996 CCLS Survey A (N=65,046) & 2001 NCLS Survey V (N=2256)*

So far then, our data comparison has indicated a slight increase in orthodoxy of belief among Church attenders between 1996 and 2001 – to be explained, perhaps, by the overall decline in Mass attendance as the less orthodox drop out disproportionately.

## ***RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT***

A sect-like trend as characterised by Stark and Finke would also entail an increase in levels of religious commitment such as faith experience and positive attitudes towards and involvement in communal religious practice. In the following presentation of findings, each of these dimensions of religious commitment provides the topic heading for a summary table of the variable responses considered relevant to that topic.

### **Faith experience**

Table 5.22 is a summary table of certain variable responses considered relevant to the faith experience dimension. Table 5.22 indicates that in 1996 71% of practising Catholics considered their faith to be a life-long experience and in 2001 this increased to 73%.<sup>28</sup> We also find that the proportion of respondents who believe that there had been much growth in their Christian faith over the last year (through the parish, other groups or churches, or their own private activity) increased from 28% in 1996 to 32% in 2001.<sup>29</sup> In terms of the importance of God in respondents' lives, we find that in 1996 45% of respondents indicated that God is "The most important reality in my life" and this increased to 48% in 2001. These findings suggest a small increase in a positive subjective experience of faith among respondents between 1996 and 2001.

In addition, from the details provided in the footnotes, there are other findings of relevance: The indication that the growth in respondents' faith appears to be mainly due to parish influence is suggestive of an increasing significance of congregational bonds that might be associated with a sect-like trend. On the other hand, the nature of most respondents' faith experience as a life-long commitment rather than as a

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<sup>28</sup> More precisely, in response to the question: "Some people feel that they come to the faith gradually. For others, it began at a definite moment of commitment. Have you ever experienced such a moment of decisive faith commitment or Christian conversion?" these respondents answered "No, I've had faith for as long as I can remember". Only a minority (13%) of respondents had ever experienced a "moment of decisive faith commitment or Christian conversion" and this remained the same for both 1996 and 2001.

<sup>29</sup> This was in response to the question "Over the last year, do you believe that you have grown in your Christian faith?" It is to be noted that within the "Much growth" category, the subcategory "through this parish" had the highest response rate in both survey years and increased from 14% in 1996 to 18% in 2001. The response category "Some growth" elicited the overall highest proportion of response in both 1996 (i.e. 47%) and 2001 (i.e. 48%). The rate of response to "No real growth" decreased from 25% in 1996 to 20% in 2001.

“moment” of conversion does not necessarily sit easily with the type of conversion experience often associated with sects.

**Table 5.22: (Summary Table) FAITH EXPERIENCE (1996 & 2001)**

	1996	2001
	%	%
Respondents experience faith as a life-long commitment	71	73
Much growth in respondents' Christian faith over the last year (through the parish / other groups / own private activity)	28	32
God is “The most important reality in my life”	45	48

Source: 1996 CCLS Survey A (N=65,046) & 2001 NCLS Survey V (N=2256)

### Communal religious practice

Table 5.23 shows that in 1996 90% of surveyed Catholics attended Mass at least weekly and that by 2001 this remained stable (89%). The table also shows that in 1996 20% of respondents were involved as a “Special minister of communion, reader, or member of a music group or liturgy group” and that this increased slightly to 22% of respondents in 2001. In response to the question “Do you feel that attendance at Mass strengthens you spiritually” we find that 84% of respondents indicated “Always” or “Mostly” in 1996 and 87% indicated this in 2001.

As with the faith experience findings mentioned previously, there is an increase between 1996 and 2001 in the indications of *subjective* experience of communal religious practice (i.e. of Mass as spiritually strengthening). In terms of *active involvement*, there is little change – i.e. while there is a slight increase in liturgical support activity,<sup>30</sup> there is a slight decrease in weekly Mass attendance.

**Table 5.23: (Summary Table) ATTITUDES TOWARDS / INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNAL RELIGIOUS PRACTICE (1996 & 2001)**

	1996	2001
	%	%
Weekly attendance at Mass	90	89
Special minister of communion, reader, or member of a music group / liturgy group	20	22
Attendance at Mass strengthens spiritually (always / mostly)	84	87

Source: 1996 CCLS Survey A (N=65,046) & 2001 NCLS Survey V (N=2256)

Taken together then, the findings relating to faith experience and communal religious practice indicate a small increase between 1996 and 2001 in the level of religious

<sup>30</sup> This may need to be viewed in the context of the greater encouragement of lay participation in liturgical support activities that has occurred due to factors such as the growing shortage of priests.

commitment of practising Catholics as measured by subjective attitudes / experiences – although there was only slight variation in terms of active religious practice. Hence, the indications of increased religious commitment are not really matched by the type of zealous activity usually expected of sect-like conversion / re-conversion dynamics.

### ***INVOLVEMENT IN THE PARISH COMMUNITY***

We now investigate whether there has been an increase between 1996 and 2001 in the level of positive attitudes towards and involvement in the parish community among practising Catholics – as an indication of a sect-like movement towards higher density of congregation networks.

Table 5.24 shows that between 1996 and 2001 the proportion of respondents who participated in parish group activities (i.e. social / youth / prayer / scripture / faith groups) remained the same at 24%. The proportion of respondents who participated in parish decision-making remained stable (from 11% to 10%). Twenty-one percent of respondents were involved in a ministry or leadership role in the parish in 1996 and this increased slightly to 22% in 2001. Hence, in terms of *active involvement* in the parish there is little change – just a slight increase in ministry / leadership roles and a slight decrease in participation in parish decision-making.

Table 5.24 also shows that between 1996 and 2001 there was an increase in the proportion of respondents who had close friends (including closest friends) in the parish (from 48% to 51%), who indicated a strong, growing sense of belonging to the parish (from 34% to 39%), who regarded the parish as extremely important in life (from 19% to 24%), who indicated that their spiritual needs were being met in the parish (from 69% to 72%), and who believed that the parish had grown in unity and strength in the past year (51% to 55%).

**Table 5.24: (Summary Table) ATTITUDES TOWARDS / INVOLVEMENT IN PARISH (1996 & 2001)**

	1996	2001
	%	%
Participate in parish groups (social / youth or prayer / scripture / faith groups)	24	24
Participate in parish decision-making	11	10
Involved in ministry or leadership role in the parish	21	22
Close / closest friends in parish	48	51
Strong, growing sense of belonging to parish	34	39
Parish community is extremely important in life	19	24
Spiritual needs are being met in the parish	69	72
In the past year parish has grown in unity and strength	51	55

*Source: 1996 CCLS Survey A (N=65,046) & 2001 NCLS Survey V (N=2256)*

Overall, then, the changes relating to parish involvement between 1996 and 2001 follow a similar pattern to that of religious commitment in the sense that there tends to be general increase in the levels of positive subjective experience of the parish community – perhaps explained by a decline in the attendance of those who did not experience the parish positively – yet there is little change in terms of active involvement in the parish community. In other words, the increase in positive perception of the parish and in the density of congregational networks is not matched by the type of energetic involvement that would be expected of a sect-like trend.

### ***OPENNESS TO THE “OTHER” AND THE WIDER SOCIETY***

Earlier in this chapter we saw that some researchers postulate a link between religious faith and altruism and, indeed, there were indications of this in our Part I findings. However, this is in contrast to Stark and Finke’s association of religious faith with a type of rational self-interest. As we have seen, for Stark and Finke, strong religious faith tends to be incompatible with openness to the “Other” and the wider society. Hence, a sect-like trend, in Stark and Finke’s sense, would exhibit a decrease in openness to the “Other” and the wider society. This is a crucial characteristic that we would expect to see among practising Catholics if the hypothesis of a sect-like trend is to be supported.

Table 5.25 shows comparisons between 1996 and 2001 data relating to social concern and openness to social diversity. The table shows that the proportion of respondents who indicated a positive attitude towards the social diversity resulting from immigration – i.e. a type of openness towards the “Other” – increased from 58% in 1996 to 63% in 2001. The proportion of respondents involved in parish-based welfare

activity directed towards the wider society remained fairly stable – just a very slight increase from 15% in 1996 to 16% in 2001. Rates of involvement in social welfare based in the wider society increased from 23% to 26% over this time period. The proportion of respondents who considered Church provision of welfare services in society to be very important increased from 82% to 91%.<sup>31</sup> These findings of increased openness towards and concern for others in the wider society, then, are contrary to what would be expected from a sect-like trend.<sup>32</sup> They do not present as evidence of a decrease in orientation towards and involvement in the wider society that would translate as increased tension between faith and socio-cultural environment – and hence qualify for interpretation as a sect-like trend.

**Table 5.25: (Summary Table) SOCIAL CONCERN & OPENNESS TO SOCIAL DIVERSITY (1996 & 2001)**

	1996	2001
	%	%
Positive attitude towards the social diversity resulting from immigration <sup>a</sup>	58	63
Involvement in parish-based welfare activity reaching out to the wider society <sup>b</sup>	15	16
Involvement in welfare activity based in the wider society <sup>c</sup>	23	26
Consider that Church provision of social welfare services is very important <sup>d</sup>	82	91

<sup>a</sup> Source: 1996 CCLS Survey E (N=1258) & 2001 NCLS Survey P (N=630)

<sup>b</sup> Source: 1996 CCLS Survey A (N=65,046) & 2001 NCLS Survey V (N=2256)

<sup>c</sup> Source: 1996 CCLS Survey G (N=1645) & 2001 NCLS Survey N (N= 615)

<sup>d</sup> Source: 1996 CCLS Surveys G & P (N=2659) & 2001 NCLS Survey N (N= 615)

In our earlier discussion questioning the appropriateness of Stark and Finke's church-sect analysis to Australian Catholicism it was pointed out that Catholicism appears to have an organic type of relationship between religious commitment and social concern that does not fit the dichotomous relationship between the two that is central to the church-sect dynamic proposed by Stark and Finke. In Chapter 3 we observed that Stark and Glock's (1968) proposition of an inverse relationship between orthodoxy and "ethicalism" appeared to be problematic for Catholicism. We now pursue this line of investigation a little further.

<sup>31</sup> The 1996 figure of 82% represents combined data from CCLS Surveys G and P as the relevant variable is present in both. Viewed separately, Survey G (N=1645) data indicates that 79% of respondents agreed with the statement about Church provision of social welfare while Survey P (N=1014) data indicates that 88% of respondents agreed with it.

<sup>32</sup> It cannot be inferred that the small increase in openness can be explained in terms of religious belief. The point is only that there are no grounds for inferring a sectarian trend.

In Table 5.26 the relationship between belief orthodoxy and participation in parish-based welfare activity directed to the wider society is presented for 1996 and 2001.<sup>33</sup> It shows that in 1996 12% of the No Orthodox, 13% of the Low Orthodox, 14% of the Medium Orthodox, and 18% of the High Orthodox were involved in welfare activity in the wider society. The 2001 relationship between the two variables is similar – except that the rate of welfare activity among the Low Orthodox is slightly higher (i.e. 14%) than in 1996 (i.e. 13%). There is certainly no sign in either year of an inverse relationship between orthodoxy and “ethicalism” as postulated by Stark and Glock.

**Table 5.26: (Summary table) RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ORTHODOX BELIEF INDEX AND PARTICIPATION IN PARISH-BASED WELFARE ACTIVITY DIRECTED TO THE WIDER SOCIETY (1996 & 2001)**

	ORTHODOX BELIEF INDEX				Total
	No Orth	Lo Orth	Med Orth	Hi Orth	%
1996	12	13	14	18	15
2001	12	14	14	18	16

*Source: 1996 CCLS Survey A (N=65,046) & 2001 NCLS Survey V (N=2256)*

Taken together, the findings of Table 5.25 and Table 5.26 reinforce each other. Instead of finding indications of increased closure towards society between 1996 and 2001, we have found indications of increased openness towards and concern for others in the wider society. Just as there is no sign of an inverse relationship between orthodoxy and social ethics *within* either survey year, there is no evidence of such a relationship over the time period *between* the survey years. Indeed, as levels of orthodoxy have increased slightly between 1996 and 2001, so have levels of social concern. This does not fit the dynamics of a sect-like trend as characterized by Stark and Finke.

## ***FINDINGS (PART II)***

In summary, we have found a slight increase in orthodoxy of belief among practising Australian Catholics between 1996 and 2001. For this increase in orthodoxy to be interpreted in terms of a sect-like trend, we needed to see some evidence of increased vigour in religious commitment and church life as well as increased tension between the faith and the socio-cultural environment. Although we found increased levels of

<sup>33</sup> It is not possible to examine the relationship between belief orthodoxy and any of the other variables relating to social concern / openness to society because the latter are not present in the surveys containing the relevant belief items.

subjective perception of religious commitment and of church life, there was little change in terms of active involvement in either of these areas. Hence, there was not the overall increase in energetic group involvement that would be expected of a sect-like trend. We have speculated that increased levels of subjective perception of religious commitment and church life within our sample of practising Catholics may reflect the changed composition of the sample as Catholics who are less religiously committed or attached to the parish cease attending church. It is also possible that the overall lack of increased levels of activity could, in part, be related to the ageing profile of practising Catholics. Yet these factors cannot be regarded as masking a sect-like trend because one of the most important features of such a trend – i.e. increasing closure towards the “Other” / society – is absent. If anything, there is a trend towards inclusiveness and outreach rather than towards exclusiveness. There is no evidence of a trend towards the “high state of tension” with the socio-cultural environment that Stark and Finke see as a defining characteristic of the sect. In short, the hypothesis that practising Australian Catholics are becoming more sect-like is not supported by the findings here.

Just as Stark and Glock’s proposition of an inverse relationship between orthodoxy and “ethicalism” does not appear to be applicable to Catholicism, Stark and Finke’s church-sect theory does not appear to offer an adequate explanation of increased levels of both orthodoxy and social concern among practising Australian Catholics between 1996 and 2001. Once again, we are reminded of Catholicism as an “organic” religion which can engage the socio-cultural environment in a way that transcends the dualistic tensions of Stark and Finke’s theory.

The strict church thesis and its rational choice variations may explain the dynamics of decline and regeneration in relation to some religious denominations but they appear problematic when applied to the case of Australian Catholics. Just as the small increase in orthodoxy found here among practising Catholics is accompanied by increased openness towards the “Other” in society, our findings throughout this thesis have pointed to practising Australian Catholics as expressing an organic religion that defies placement in mutually exclusive categories. As we have seen, rational choice theory constructs religion in terms of instrumental rationality; but the dichotomous implications of this approach have so far not helped us to understand the dynamics of

Australian Catholicism. The cost-benefit ledger of rational choice seems unable to weigh up the relationship between orthodoxy and social concern when there appears to be an incarnational nexus of orthodoxy and social concern at the fulcrum of the religious tradition.

At this point then, our Part II findings suggest that the rational choice notion that “strong” religion can only exist in a sect-like situation disconnected from the wider society does not appear applicable to the case of Australian Catholicism. Yet, our findings mainly relate to fairly small changes based on comparisons across a limited time period (i.e. 1996 – 2001). Hence, it may be helpful to locate this period in broader historical context. Also, these findings – along with the Part I findings that also challenged the applicability of a religion-society dualism to Australian Catholicism – are based solely on analysis of individual-level data. It would seem appropriate, then, to attempt to complement the findings from a more macro-level perspective. Therefore, in Part III of this chapter there will be an attempt to round off our examination of the relationship between religion and society as it applies to Australian Catholicism by providing some sense of historical and macro-level context.

### **PART III**

#### **LONG-TERM TRENDS IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AUSTRALIAN CATHOLICISM AND SOCIETY**

Part III of this chapter attempts to set the relationship between Australian Catholicism and the wider Australian society in broader context. As part of this, we present a brief glimpse of the Australian Catholic story that attempts to focus on the relationship between Catholicism and the wider society over time and touch upon the questions posed in Parts I and II relating to whether Australian Catholicism is becoming privatised or more sect-like. However, it is emphasized that the purpose is only to give contextual flavour. An analysis of the history of Australian Catholicism would be far beyond the scope of this thesis.

Both privatisation theory and church-sect theory could possibly be construed as being of some relevance to certain aspects of the Australian Catholic narrative. In the initial British settlement in Australia the Anglican Church had the support of the State and was also virtually an arm of the State. In this situation of relatively little separation between Church and State, the force of the State was able to label Catholicism a deviant religion. The story of Catholicism in Australia begins, therefore, in a way that might seem to accord with Berger's (1969) theory and it is conceivable that some might approach an understanding of Australian Catholicism in terms of its place in a society in which there is an establishment religion and the later onset of Church-State differentiation. At first sight, then, privatisation theory could be regarded as potentially offering an explanation of the place of Catholicism in Australian history. On the other hand, the story of Australian Catholicism might also appear ripe for church-sect analysis. Like the American Catholics of Finke and Stark's (1992) historical study, the history of Catholics in Australia is one of journey from the margins to the mainstream – beginning as an ethno-religious minority and eventually broadening into a mainstream religion. Hence, on the surface, elements of both privatisation theory and church-sect theory could seem to be applicable. As we tap into the story of Australian Catholicism, there will be an attempt to consider each theoretical strand where it appears to be relevant.

At the outset, it needs to be noted that the initial British settlement in Australia in 1788 was a convict colony. Anglican chaplains were appointed to the colony by an act of the British state (Cahill, Bouma, Dellal and Leahy 2004: 23). According to Hogan (1987: 11-24), the colonial authorities viewed the purpose of religion in terms of the reinforcement of social order and, to this end, all convicts were forced to attend Anglican services. It was assumed that "religion had the capability to rid convicts of their criminal tendencies" (Cahill et al 2004: 23). Moreover Anglican clergy doubled as magistrates – Rev. Samuel Marsden being referred to as "the flogging parson" (Cahill et al 2004: 23; Hogan 1987: 11-15). It would seem, then, that in the rawness of the colony, the structural relations between Church and State were of a visibly instrumental nature.

It also needs to be noted that elements of religious discrimination were present from the beginning of settlement. Campion (1982: 44) points out that a significant part of

Governor Phillip's oath was the rejection of the doctrine of transubstantiation – a fundamental Catholic belief. Moreover, for many years Catholic convicts were forced to attend Anglican services and were denied permission to have a Catholic priest or to hold their own religious services – a situation against which they vehemently protested (Hogan 1987: 24). The colonial authorities saw religious diversity as a threat to social order. Eventually this situation was to change, but for some time the official attitude towards the efficacy of Catholic priests fluctuated between the fear that they would engender unrest and the hope that they would do the opposite (Woolmington 1976: Nos. 58, 62, 75). Ultimately, the apparent movement towards religious pluralism seems to have been due more to a calculation that clergy could subdue a restive population than to principles of religious tolerance (Hogan 1987: 25).

In the early colony Catholics were marginalized not only in terms of their religion, but also in terms of their ethnicity – as most were Irish. Around 25%-30% of all convicts transported to the colony were Irish and about 90% of Irish convicts were Catholic (McConville 1987:19; Hogan 1987: 19-24). Yet, rather than huddle together defensively, these Irish-Catholics fought marginalization and when a Catholic priest was finally appointed in 1820, he also articulated their concerns (Hogan 1987: 37). Despite the movement towards religious pluralism, an Anglican ascendancy<sup>34</sup> continued for some time and Catholic priests publicly criticized this and other structural inequalities of the colonial system (O'Farrell 1986: 40). Gradually, the belief that all churches should be treated equally gained ground in the wider colonial society and, by the 1830s, State financial aid was also made available to non-Anglican churches (Cahill et al 2004: 25).<sup>35</sup> Hence, instead of the State ceasing to fund religious activities as might be expected from the privatisation thesis of ever-increasing separation between the State and religion, the State actually extended financial assistance to a plurality of religions.

When immigration of free settlers began in the 1830s more Irish Catholics began to arrive in the colony and, like many emancipated convicts, made the most of the available opportunities such as land ownership (O'Farrell 1986: 46; McConville 1987:

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<sup>34</sup> Anglican clergy received government-subsidized stipends and financial help to build churches. The Anglican ascendancy was enshrined in the 1825 Church and Schools Corporation Act (Woolmington 1976: No 137).

<sup>35</sup> The Church and Schools Corporation Act was dissolved and replaced by the Church Act.

141). In 1850 79% of assisted immigrants were Irish (Hogan 1987: 63). With the discovery of gold in Australia, Irish immigration peaked in 1854 and then continued for the rest of the nineteenth century (McConville 1987: 29). Overall, around 80% of Irish immigrants were Catholic (Fitzpatrick 1984: 25). Moreover, McConville (1987: 29-35) estimates that in the 1850s 50% of these immigrants were single women of whom 50% married non-Irish (and presumably non-Catholic men).<sup>36</sup> This fairly high incidence of mixed marriage, together with the opportunities offered by a growing economy may have militated against the type of Irish-Catholic enclaves that had developed in America.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, this is the type of conclusion that Fitzpatrick (1984: 24, 30) forms from his comparison of Irish-Catholics in America with those in Australia. Hence, the situation of Irish-Catholics in America at this time, described as sect-like by Finke and Stark (1992)<sup>38</sup>, is not necessarily comparable to that of their contemporaries in Australia.

Social justice was always at the forefront of Irish Catholics' concerns in Australia and they actively engaged the wider society in these concerns.<sup>39</sup> O'Farrell argues that, in the long term, their articulation of social justice issues contributed to an atmosphere less able to sustain social inequality and that their questioning of the system eventually led to its modification befitting "the character of a mixed people on the basis of equity" (1986: 11). Similarly, Fitzpatrick (1984: 27) argues that the greater measure of equality and democracy that was eventually achieved, presents Irish Catholicism as an important force in Australia's nation-building process. In relation to this, a telling point is made by O'Farrell that, without Irish-Catholics, "any protest would have been *within the structure* rather than *about the structure* itself" (Italics added) (1986: 12). This would seem to resonate with earlier findings in this chapter that were interpreted as suggesting that many Catholics may tend to be able to

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<sup>36</sup> The Government had granted a higher level of passage assistance to women in an effort to balance the ratio between men and women (McConville 1987: 29-35).

<sup>37</sup> It also needs to be noted that the mass migration of desperate, poverty-stricken Irish-Catholics triggered by the 1840s Irish famine was mostly to countries like America which involved a shorter voyage and required less preparation than the voyage to Australia (Jupp 1966: 3).

<sup>38</sup> It also needs to be kept in mind that in Part II some doubts were expressed about the applicability of church-sect analysis to American Catholicism.

<sup>39</sup> For example, Irish Catholics expressed concerns about convict transportation and were at the forefront of the move to liberalize the land laws in order to create a more equitable society (McConville 1987: 47-49).

distance themselves from structural hegemony and view structure from a more organic perspective.

While it may be difficult to separate Irishness from Catholicism in the early social justice orientation, it needs to be noted that the initial leaders of the Catholic Church in Australia were *English* Benedictine monks<sup>40</sup> who, from the beginning, took a socially activist stance on such issues as the campaign against convict transportation (Cahill et al. 2004: 27). This tends to present the social engagement in terms of Catholicism per se – albeit it with an Irish flavour. It would seem to exemplify the type of Catholic institutional leadership grounded in the living Catholic communal tradition and engaging the wider society that was referred to earlier in this chapter.

Eventually, State aid to Church schools ceased with the introduction of free State-run non-denominational schools (Ryan 1988: 20). This would seem to be a further step in Church-State separation; however, Catholics fought this and continued to argue the case for State aid in the public arena. Still, the Catholic Church in Australia managed to maintain a Catholic school system with the very substantial assistance of religious teaching orders.

As time went on, there were periods when Catholics in Australia still suffered discrimination – sometimes because of extremist activities in Ireland such as Fenianism.<sup>41</sup> Even though Catholic clergy condemned Fenian violence and Australian Catholics affirmed their loyalty, the hostility against them continued and they tended to close ranks in solidarity as Catholics (Hogan 1987: 105). Catholics responded pragmatically to discrimination by developing their own support structures such as Catholic hospitals, provident funds, and a plethora of clubs and organisations (Campion 1982: 67; Hogan 1987: 115). In addition, there existed other factors that

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<sup>40</sup> Vicar-General Ullathorne was appointed by the Vatican in 1832 and Bishop Polding was appointed in 1834 (Cahill et al. 2004: 24)

<sup>41</sup> From the 1860s, the Fenian movement's endorsement of the use of violence to achieve Ireland's independence from Britain caused anxiety among the Ulster Protestant Irish in Australia and led to the targeting of Irish Catholics – as did the 1886 assassination attempt on the Prince of Wales (Hogan 1987: 171). This hardened divisions within the Irish and any British-Irish division in Australia was more firmly redefined in terms of Protestant versus Catholic. Catholics were attacked in the press and there was an orchestrated campaign to bring about the downfall of Catholic politicians (Pawsey 1983). Overt economic discrimination appeared in the form of employment advertisements specifying that applicants should be Protestant (Hogan 1987: 105, 121).

could potentially facilitate social closure: In the latter part of the nineteenth century a high proportion of bishops, priests, brothers and nuns were Irish-born and this helped Catholicism to retain an “Irish” flavour (Hogan 1987: 114). Moreover, the clergy brought with them a reinvigorated religious devotionism that had developed in post-famine Ireland and which spoke to popular tastes in its prayers and hymns (Campion 1982: 63). Such tendencies towards communal self-containment, distinctive religious identity and renewed religious fervour then, could possibly be seen as characteristics that Finke and Stark (1992) would associate with a sect. However, the extent to which the Australian Catholicism of this time could be described as sect-like in Finke and Stark’s sense is clouded by other factors: firstly, the turn to self-containment began in response to political rather than religious factors; secondly, moves towards self-containment also worked towards enabling participation in the wider society – for example, while Catholic clubs offered support and companionship, they also offered training in public speaking so that Catholics (who at that stage were mostly working class) could articulate concerns in the wider society (Campion 1982: 67).<sup>42</sup> Hence, an orientation towards engagement in the wider society could be maintained.

It must be emphasized that Catholic leadership did not retreat from social comment in the public sphere of Australian society. For example, in the context of the social, political and industrial upheaval of the 1890s, Cardinal Moran gave an address on the “Rights and Duties of Labor” (1891) in which he articulated the need for workers to receive a just wage and asserted the right of the Church to speak on social issues (O’Farrell 1968: 184-6).<sup>43</sup> Similar sentiments were expressed in later pastoral statements and implicit support was given to the growing alignment of Catholics with the Australian Labor Party (ALP) evident from the turn of the century (O’Farrell 1968: 184-8).

In the context of the 1930s depression, pastoral statements called for Catholic action to address problems in the working environment and from the 1940s the Australian bishops initiated annual social justice statements that recommended practical

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<sup>42</sup> Similarly, in the long term, Catholic schools prepared Catholic students for participation in the wider society by assisting them to achieve their full academic potential and to become socially mobile: for example, teaching brothers and nuns encouraged promising students to sit for scholarship examinations and showed great dedication in training them intensively for those examinations.

<sup>43</sup> This corresponds with the teachings of the 1891 papal encyclical “*Rerum Novarum*” (O’Farrell 1968: 184-6).

measures for the improvement of Australian social conditions (Hogan 1987: 222; Australian Catholic Bishops 1941 in Hogan 1990). Some lay Catholics formed groups within the ALP which, in response to industrial militancy resulting from increasing communist influence in the labour movement, confronted the “left-wing” of the ALP and eventually abandoned the ALP to form the Democratic Labor Party in the mid 1950s (Hogan 1987: 243-249). This had painful consequences for the Church<sup>44</sup> and subsequent social justice statements did not contain the “practical application” element. The issue of the relationship between religion and politics became very much a matter of reflection and debate (Hogan 1987: 257; O’Farrell 1968: 274). Since then, Church leadership appears to have retreated from such close involvement with political parties.

In the 1960s Vatican II documents stressed the rendering of mutual service as part of the communitarian nature of humanity and this influenced the nature of the call to social action.<sup>45</sup> The laity’s role in Christian social action in terms of practical charity was emphasized (Collins 1986: 84-5). Vatican II also influenced the style and content of social justice statements. In 1968 the Australian bishops established the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in recognition of a need for factual research to inform social justice teaching. Some bishops indicated that in an age of professional expertise, governments could ignore their social justice statements less easily if they were informed by reliable factual information (Beward 1988: 96). This would seem to be another indication of the ability of the Catholic Church to be inclusive of rational enquiry and to adopt a pragmatic approach to relations with the State as part of the social justice mission. There has since been a proliferation of social justice statements produced by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference.

In the 1960s, Catholic pragmatism towards inter-structural relations was also evident in the continuing Catholic campaign for State aid to denominational schools. Mass immigration from diverse nations in the 1950s had over-burdened many Catholic schools and Catholics raised the prospect of sending Catholic students to Government schools. The realization that it was less expensive for the Government to assist

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<sup>44</sup> The issue split the Catholic Church with Sydney bishops supporting the continuation of Catholics within the ALP and Melbourne bishops vehemently against it (Hogan 1987: 243-249).

<sup>45</sup> See “*Gaudium et Spes*” / “The Pastoral Constitution of the church in the Modern World” (1965).

Catholic schools than to establish extra Government schools finally led to the granting of aid to non-Government schools. This marked a repositioning of the relationship between religion and the State (Cahill et al 2004: 23; 28).

Since the 1970s, government funding for welfare services provided by Catholic organisations has also been increasing (Cleary 2001: 55) but there have been dramatic increases in recent years with the implementation of government economic policies of privatisation and deregulation in welfare funding. Many church organisations have successfully tendered for Government contracts for the delivery of welfare services and this has led to the Catholic Church becoming a major provider of community and social welfare services in Australia (Cleary 2001: 6). With all its schools, hospitals and welfare organisations, the Catholic Church is now the largest employer in Australia and its main source of revenue is Government (Mannix 2005a). Due to this type of relationship between Church and State, the Catholic Church now has a significant position in Australian society. There has been some debate as to how the Church's new relationship with the State will affect the Church's roles in advocacy and social critique; however, the evidence to date suggests that the Church critique continues.<sup>46</sup>

For many years now, the profile of Catholics in Australia has resembled that of the population in general. Catholics are pluralized in many ways and cannot be seen as congruent with any one ethnic, socio-economic, or politically-affiliated group. Decades of immigration from all parts of the globe have made Catholics one of the most ethnically diverse religious groups in Australia. Catholics are found in all walks of life and Catholic politicians sit on both sides of Parliament. Given the increasing religious diversity resulting from immigration, Catholicism now finds itself as a mainstream religion in a pluralist context that contains not only a variety of Christian denominations but also non-Christian religions such as Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism etc. In response, the Catholic Church has established ecumenical and interfaith committees that work towards interfaith understanding and co-operation.<sup>47</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>46</sup> This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6.

<sup>47</sup> Some examples: For several years the Ecumenical and Interfaith Commission (EIC) of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne has joined with the Jewish Community Council of Victoria in holding annual Jewish Catholic Fellowship dinners; the EIC has co-hosted ifta meals during Ramadan with

Catholic individuals are well-represented in the myriad of interfaith groups that have sprung up in the multi-faith environment and actively participate in interfaith efforts towards social justice – for example, in helping to combat discrimination against religious minorities such as Muslims.<sup>48</sup> In this context, there is no evidence of Catholicism as a sect vis a vis the wider pluralist society.

Hence, on both institutional and community levels, Catholicism in Australia appears to be a very socially-engaged religion.

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In this brief look at the historical relationship between Australian Catholicism and society we have seen a type of interweaving of phenomena pertinent to privatisation theory and church-sect theory. In relation to privatisation theory we have focused on the relationship between the Catholic Church and the State and, in relation to church-sect theory, we have focused on the nature of the Catholic community and its experiences vis a vis the wider society at various stages of Australian history.

Historically, the relationship between the Catholic Church and the State has assumed varying positions. In general, the State approach to the relationship appears to have been mainly in the interests of social order and economic efficiency: Catholicism was banned in the initial convict colony, and then permitted; State financial aid was extended beyond the Anglican Church to a plurality of churches (including the Catholic Church) in the 1830s, then removed from all churches in the 1860s, before the re-instatement of State aid to Church schools in the 1960s and the contracting of a large proportion of State welfare service provision to Church organisations in more recent times. On the other hand, the Catholic Church has approached the relationship with the State in the interests of justice for both the Catholic community and the wider society: the Catholic Church protested against the inequality of the Anglican ascendancy and argued for State aid to all Church schools; Catholic leadership has continually articulated social justice concerns in the public arena and has encouraged

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Muslim organisations; EIC members and other Catholics participate in annual live-in “Abraham” Conferences of Jews, Muslims and Christians; the Australian Catholic University has established the Fethullah Gulen Chair in the Study of Islam and Muslim-Catholic Relations.

<sup>48</sup> This appears to reinforce the Chapter 4 finding that a high proportion of practising Catholics indicate an openness to the religious “Other”.

the State to address them; moreover, the Catholic Church has also adopted a pragmatic approach to its social justice mission and has engaged the realities of the social environment. In the present situation the State provides financial support for projects conducted by Church organisations and Catholic leadership continues to speak on social justice issues in the public sphere. In short, from our brief glimpse into history, the story of the Catholic Church in Australia does not appear to be a story of ever-increasing privatisation and Church-State separation.

The Catholic community in Australia has also been positioned in various ways vis a vis the wider society. Beginning as a marginalised minority, Catholics fought against their own marginalisation and that of others as a matter of social justice. In arguing for their own religious rights, Catholics were arguing, in effect, for religious diversity. Australian Catholics tended not to form enclaves. In the face of discrimination that was initially political rather than religious, Catholics became relatively self-sufficient as a community; however, they continued to work pragmatically towards full participation in society. Even under potentially sectarian-inducing conditions, Catholics maintained an openness to the wider society by articulating social justice concerns that affected the whole society, not only the Catholic community. In this, their concerns could be seen to relate to the *structure* of society per se. While the pressures that at one stage might have produced sectarianism have long disappeared, Catholics in the mainstream of Australian society still argue on behalf of the marginalized – including marginalized religious minorities. It would seem that the Australian Catholic community has resisted the type of sect dynamics postulated by Stark and Finke.

Overall, in Australian history, there does not appear to have been the type of disjunction in the relationship between Catholicism and society that would be expected from the propositions of either privatisation theory or church-sect theory.

This suggests a background that is compatible with the findings from Parts I and II. Indeed, in the context of the historical phenomena referred to in Part III some of the observations emerging from Parts I and II of the chapter seem particularly apt. Insofar as Australian State processes appear to have historically reflected a mostly utilitarian approach to religion, they suggest the type of structure-dominant perspective that in

Part I was observed to be inadequate in accounting for the organic mode of a communal religious tradition. The implication that the value of religion lies in its presumed support for the status quo is associated with the expectation that religion will confine itself to issues of personal morality / charity *within* the structure. Such an approach instrumentalizes religion to the social structure – locating it within a framework of the dichotomies of instrumental rationality. However, the historical account suggests that Australian Catholicism has been concerned not only with issues of personal morality and charity but also with issues associated with the morality of the social structure. This “both / and” approach to morality would seem to have defied the dichotomies of the establishment framework. It resonates with the “both / and” approach that was observed in relation to the findings reported in Part I of the chapter. It is also consistent with the observations in Part I of a Catholic propensity to view structure in a certain way. The historical examples suggest that the Catholic Church in Australia has adopted a pragmatic stance towards the structures of the State in the pursuit of social justice. Again, this resonates with the Part I findings. Further, it highlights the difference between the Catholic and establishment perspectives: While the establishment may view religion as instrumental to social order, Catholicism seems open to viewing State structures as instrumental to its social justice mission, including its critique of the status quo order. Both views suggest the instrumental nature of inter-structural relations.

According to the communal model of society presented by Greeley, it appears to be the grounding of Catholicism in the communal tradition that allows for this approach to structure. This could well be illustrated in the history of the Catholic social justice mission in Australia whereby the Catholic community articulated social justice concerns affecting the whole society – suggestive of the notion of society as community of communities. This involvement in the wider society appears to have precluded sect-like closure in times of potentially sectarian conditions. The observation that communal bonds could be consistent with a universal ethic would seem to be another example of the “both / and” characteristic of Catholicism that enables particulars and universals to co-exist. Moreover, the involvement of committed Catholics and the Church institution in inter-faith activity would seem to exemplify the absence of the type of orthodoxy-ethicalism cleavage referred to in Part II.

## CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

In this chapter the applicability of a Weberian-type religion-society dualism to the case of Australian Catholicism has been challenged by empirical and historical evidence indicating a religious imperative to charity / social ethics among Catholics that involves openness towards and engagement in society. We have found that Catholicism can be both private and public. Neither privatisation theory nor rational choice church-sect theory has been able to offer an appropriate explanation for the findings presented in this chapter which indicate that Australian Catholicism is neither privatised nor sect-like. On the individual, communal and institutional levels, the religion-society dualism implied by the privatisation and church-sect theories seems inappropriate to Australian Catholicism.

Berger's classic theory that processes associated with rationalisation privatise religion separating it from the wider society was seen to represent a structure-dominant perspective which tends to instrumentalize religion to the social structure. In its implication of dichotomous relationships, Berger's theory underestimated the degree of interaction in the relationships between individual Catholics, Church institution and society that has been indicated by our findings relating to the area of social ethics.

Also locating religion within the confines of instrumental rationality, Stark and Finke go so far as to reduce religion to cost-benefit ratio considerations. Their theory, like Berger's theory, cannot account for the organic nature of the relationships found within Australian Catholicism. While Stark and Finke (2000: 37; 83) acknowledge the limits of instrumental rationality, this does not tempt them to look beyond it for an understanding of religious faith.

On the other hand, the model of religion as grounded in communal tradition that is presented by Greeley is inclusive of, but not confined by, instrumental rationality and has offered a more satisfactory interpretation of the chapter findings. This model allows for an organic view of society that, paradoxically, can accommodate instrumental rationality and a pragmatic approach to structure and bureaucracy – a

view that has been suggested by our findings. The model allows room for the type of “both / and” orientation that has been found in the research.

Privatisation theory and rational choice church-sect theory are both theories of religious change but neither has offered an appropriate explanation of the story of Australian Catholicism. In contrast, the communal model has been able to accommodate our findings that suggest a Catholic propensity to see structure as functional and open to change and a Catholic mission of both personal and social transformation. As such, the model fits with Lakeland’s emphasis on the recognition of instrumental rationality in its functional context as part of the Church’s mission “to make a more human world” (2002: 174). In the next chapter the way Church organisations address this mission in the world will be explored further.

## **Chapter 6**

# **AN ORGANIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN “THE RELIGIOUS” AND “THE SECULAR”<sup>1</sup>**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter seeks to examine a little more deeply some of the themes arising from Chapter 5 and earlier chapters, and to consolidate some of our findings. The construction of the relationship between religion and its various supposed antitheses (i.e. “nature”, “the world”, society, etc.) will be viewed more explicitly in terms of the relationship between the religious and the secular. A dominant theme of this thesis – that the religious imperative to charity implies engagement with the secular – will be explored further through consideration of Catholic Church engagement in welfare activity as a site of interface between “the religious” and “the secular” – the aim being to focus on what the point of interface looks like. This will involve some examination of Catholic welfare service organisational practice which will, in turn, be viewed in the context of Church-State relations and the Vatican II mission of service referred to in Chapter 5. A general hypothesis is that Church-State relations in the provision of Church welfare services in a secular society may serve as instances of how relationships governed by a binary logic and exclusively instrumental considerations may be part of the realisation of a religious mission to individuals conceived of holistically and to society conceived of organically.

In the data analysis section there will be examination of Catholics’ response to an explicit statement about Christian engagement in the world. This is regarded as providing the context for consideration of the religious mission to secular society. There will also be analysis of data relating to Catholics’ opinions about the explicit motivation for Church welfare activity and an attempt to identify the spiritual / religious

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<sup>1</sup> This chapter builds on a paper that was presented at the annual meeting of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion in Norfolk, Virginia (October 2003) and an article published in Australian Religious Studies Review Vol 17 No 2 (Spring 2004).

orientations underlying Catholics' support for such activity. This is regarded in terms of the communal inflow into the institutional level of the mission. The extent to which the Catholic approach to institutional involvement in welfare may be distinctive will be examined through comparison of Catholics' attitudes with those of other Australians. As will be seen, the data analysis in this chapter augments some of the analysis in earlier chapters – insofar as deeper or more explicit aspects of earlier findings are explored.

Following the data analysis there is consideration of the way Catholic welfare services are organised. We also consider some of the tensions and concerns relating to State funding of Church welfare services and the nature of the institutional relationship between Church and State in this area. Findings from studies of Catholic welfare services are then viewed in relation to the religious / spiritual orientations expressed in service delivery. These are regarded in terms of the outflow from the institutional-level mission and are compared with our findings relating to the religious / spiritual orientation inflow. To the extent that the mission outflow into secular society reflects a response to human needs rather than institutional dominance, it will be interpreted as part of an organic religious-secular mission cycle. While our research does not set out to distinguish between religion and spirituality, such a distinction does emerge in a somewhat inductive fashion as the relationship between the religious and the secular is examined. It leads to the suggestion that, in relation to Church welfare activity, there is a type of “spirituality” at the point of interface between the religious mission and secular society.

## **THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

### ***THE RELIGIOUS AND THE SECULAR***

In this thesis, we have questioned theories that position religion within a framework of dualisms. While we have focused on Weberian-style theories, this focus has not been intended to preclude recognition of the many other perspectives and commentaries on the construction of religion within a dualistic framework that are found within the sociology of religion.<sup>2</sup> In such perspectives, religion is frequently associated with the

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<sup>2</sup> For instance, among Weber's contemporaries, Nietzsche considered that in Western religion “...the concept ‘nature’ had been devised as the concept antithetical to ‘God’” and that this postulated antithesis could engender a distorted religious other-worldliness that precluded engagement with earthly needs

“other world” vis a vis “this world”. Yet, as we saw in previous chapters of this thesis, a “this world - other world” dualism and attendant dualisms were found to be less than helpful in understanding the beliefs, orientations and practices of Australian Catholics. A “this world - religion” dualism is clearly problematic in the light of evidence of a particular type of religious engagement in the world.

Casanova brings a little more clarity to the dualism problem by referring to “a double dualist system of classification” whereby there is a dualism between “this world” and “the other world”, but also a further dualism within “this world” between a religious and a secular sphere (1994: 15). While Casanova’s conceptual distinctions still indicate the application of binary analysis at first-order level, they do, at least, serve to sharpen the focus as being on the relationship between the religious and the secular within “this world”. However, it needs to be noted that Casanova is referring here to structural-level (i.e. institutional-level) analysis (1994: 14). As such, the proposition of a binary-type relationship between religious institutions and secular institutions within the parameters of “this world” would seem to be compatible with our Chapter 5 observation relating to the instrumental nature of the relationship between the Church institution and the State (and with our suggestion of a Catholic propensity to recognise the instrumental nature of the relationship).

An institutional-level interpretation is also suggested by Beckford’s argument that acceptance of the distinction of the religious and the secular as separate categories stems from the separation of religious and political authorities (e.g. when Christianity was adopted in the late Roman Empire) and endorsement of the distinction in early Protestant states (2003: 33). However, Beckford cautions that “The boundary between the religious and the secular is by no means clear, fixed or impermeable” (2003: 33). Martin also hints at this in his observation that “There is almost nothing regarded as

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(1889/ 1968: 124-5). Similarly, in addressing the two categories of “profane” and “sacred”, Durkheim observed that Western Christianity had conceptualised the material world as profane – effecting the separation of religion’s intellectual functions from its more practical functions (1915/1976: 428-9; 1887/1972: 241). Later theories have continued in many and varied ways to associate religion with dualistic constructions. Some have arrived at a religion-society dualism similar to that of Weber: for example, from a predominantly Durkheimian perspective, Luckmann argues that the segregation of the sacred cosmos from the profane world which was postulated by the Judeo-Christian tradition had the potential to localize religion in special institutions whereby tensions could develop between religious affairs and everyday life resulting in an antithesis between “religion” and “society” (1967: 66-7).

religious which cannot also be secular, and almost no characteristics appearing in secular contexts which do not also appear in religious ones” (1969:3). As Beckford points out, the religious-secular boundary “is a highly contestable social construction” (2003: 33). It is this construction that we are attempting to probe.

It is possible that some of the difficulties concerning the religious - secular relationship are associated with the inappropriate imposition of dualist analysis outside the boundaries of instrumental rationality and institutional-level interpretation.

In this thesis we have examined many dualisms that have been applied to Catholicism – e.g. this world / other world, immanence / transcendence, nature / grace, reason / faith, rationality / enchantment, etc. – and all have at times been equated with a secular / religious dualism in the literature. Yet our analysis has suggested that these dualisms do not fit the incarnational faith of many Catholics – a faith grounded in non-binary rationality.

A related problem with the religious-secular relationship appears to be its association with the application of structural-level interpretation to other levels of relationship. If we accept that instrumental relationships apply at the institutional level, we can envisage a binary relationship between the religious institution and the secular State. However, as Stark (1999: 4) has observed, interpretations of the secular are rarely confined to the structural level. To the extent that the religious-secular relationship is assumed to also imply individual-level and communal-level phenomena, it goes beyond the confines of structural-level dynamics. To the extent that the structural-level meaning of the religious-secular relationship is applied to other levels, it resembles the structure-dominant approach that was found to be less than helpful in Chapter 5.

Accepting the common usage of the term “secular society” as the society in which the secular State is grounded, the problematic nature of its extra-structural dimension is apparent in the sense that such a society is made up of individuals, some of whom indicate affiliation with religious groups and some who do not. Hence, there is a type of multidimensionality inherent in the very concept of “secular society”. A similar problem occurs when “secular” is used in the extra-structural, cultural sense of “worldly” – as was seen in Chapters 4 and 5. Yet, in the main, these are still received

meanings of “secular” in sociological literature. So long as this is the case, a binary construction of the overall religious-secular relationship (i.e. encompassing both structural and extra-structural) would seem to be problematic.

If we recall our Chapter 5 conception of structure as being grounded in community – i.e. religious structures as being grounded in the living communal religious tradition and secular structures as being grounded in society<sup>3</sup> – it would seem necessary to be open to the possibility that the extra-structural dimensions of the religious-secular relationship may be more organic than instrumental in nature. Viewing all levels as a whole, then, could lead us to postulate an overall organic relationship between the religious and the secular which accommodates within it an instrumental relationship between religious institutions and secular institutions. This could be seen to parallel Lynch’s conception of the analogical imagination as containing a dialectical component within it and our understanding of symbolic rationality as being inclusive of instrumental rationality (see Chapter 4).

In Chapter 5 we identified social ethics as an area in which there appeared to be genuine interaction between individuals in the Catholic community and the Church institution. We saw strong support by Catholics for a social justice mission that was addressed on individual, communal and institutional levels and we located the historical relationship between the institutional Church and the State in terms of this mission. To set this in an analytical framework, then, we could postulate an overall organic dynamic whereby the social justice mission grounded in the human Catholic community is expressed through individual, communal and institutional activities directed towards the welfare of humanity in the wider secular society. Within this, in relation to institutional activities, we could envisage an instrumental Church - secular State relationship concerning social welfare to be functioning as one part of an overall organic relationship involving the religious mission in secular society.

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<sup>3</sup> Whilst it would have been preferable to have balanced our communal-model consideration of Catholicism and our inference of a Catholic view of society as “a community of communities” with empirical investigation of the applicability of a communal model to Australian society per se, this has not been possible due to the minimal amount of societal-level data available for analysis in this research.

In the context of this framework, State-funded Church provision of welfare services to society could be regarded as a peak site of interface between the religious and the secular because at this point the Church institution interfaces not only with the secular State in terms of its funding relationship but also with the secular society in terms of its service delivery.

In order to sharpen our focus on this interface we will look more closely at some of the issues related to State-funded Church welfare services. In an effort to identify how the religious mission feeds into Church welfare services we endeavour to probe more deeply into the orientations and motivations underlying Catholics' attitudes towards Church welfare. In an effort to identify how the religious mission is expressed in welfare service delivery to society we consider some of the qualitative research on this issue. The rationale is that even if the Church-State institutional dynamic is instrumental, so long as the inflow and outflow of the religious mission either side of it – i.e. *from* religious community and then *to* secular society – is not impeded by the institutional dimension, the overall cycle of the religious-secular relationship in the area of social welfare can be considered to be organic.

Overall, we would expect that, to the extent that the religious mission employs the institutional Church-State relationship in a purely functional way, Church welfare services to secular society will be resistant to structural-level objectification hence allowing for the mission cycle to keep returning to the human level as part of an organic relationship between the religious and the secular.

### ***THE RELIGIOUS MISSION TO SECULAR SOCIETY***

It may be helpful to spell out the religious mission referred to in Chapter 5 in a little more detail.

Some commentators have identified the Christian mission to human society as an original element of Christian life. For instance, O'Collins refers directly to the behaviour and teaching of Jesus as an example of the co-existence of concern for humanity and orientation towards divinity:

On the one hand, his healthy realism let him sweep aside a religiosity which obscured the genuine needs and responsibilities of human beings as such. On the other hand, such horizontal thinking did not exclude man's [sic] vertical relationship to the Father (O'Collins 1974: 58).

Moreover, Guthridge stresses that the wisdom, compassion and humanity enshrined in the life and teachings of Jesus "...struck a deep chord within the hearts of many people in Roman times..." and that "...no other philosophy or religion laid any comparable emphasis on the duty to love one's neighbour" (1999: 17-19). According to Guthridge, in the first few centuries of Christianity, the Good Samaritan ideal of extending compassionate engagement in society beyond the bounds of race, class, religion etc., profoundly affected the wider society (1999: 19-21). Such commentaries indicate that it was its very engagement with society that made early Christianity so distinctive.

The Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) has been seen as making this Christian mission to the world more explicit. The very title of one of the main documents of Vatican II – "The Pastoral Constitution of the Church in the Modern World" (*Gaudium et Spes*) puts religious engagement in the world centre stage. This document is concerned with the themes of human dignity and social justice. It emphasizes the Church's duty of "scrutinizing the signs of the times" and of understanding "the world in which we live" (*Gaudium et Spes* 2-4). The document clearly situates the world as the mission of the church. According to O'Collins, Vatican II makes it explicit that "The Christian obligation is to transform the world, not renounce it" (1974: 80-81).

Vatican II documents elaborate the concept of "the people of God" in terms of all humanity. Moral theologians such as Baker (2002) see these documents as explicating a need to be "Other"-centred through a social global morality (from *Gaudium et Spes*) and a morality of total charity (from *Lumen Gentium*). Baker (2002) interprets the moral principle of Christian life as discipleship of Christ and a universal way of being human which finds a resonance beyond those in the Christian community. This type of interpretation of Vatican II theology counters any view of the Church as separate from the world. Together with the Vatican II emphasis on a "preferential option for the poor" as an aspect of charity, it also points to significant implications for Church engagement in social welfare. Arguably, one of these implications is that of service out of a type of unconditional love for the "Other".

Cleary argues that the Vatican II explication of the Christian mission in terms of service meant that social and political responsibility for all humanity was interpreted as fundamental rather than tangential to the Church's work and that the Church's "human services became its powerful tool" (2001: 218). This would seem to add further support to our proposition that Catholic Church engagement in social welfare is an important site of interface between "the religious" and "the secular" in this world.

### ***THE CATHOLIC ETHIC***

It would seem that attitudes supporting engagement in the world through the assistance of those in need such as the poor and underprivileged in society have become recognised as an important aspect of Catholicism. In Chapter 5 we found that practising Catholics were very supportive of Church provision of welfare services in society and reference was also made to Greeley's (2000) research indicating that Catholics were more likely than other Christians to hold the type of social ethic discussed.

This is reinforced by the findings of other researchers. For example, Tropman finds an observable Catholic emphasis on "being altruistic, benevolent, bountiful, charitable, compassionate, generous, humane, philanthropic" that he describes as a "Catholic ethic" (1995: 271). Tropman does not suggest that other Christians do not also value these qualities (1995: 270). His point is that the value placed on such qualities tends to be "dominant" rather than "subdominant" among Catholics. According to Tropman, the Catholic ethic is unconditional in nature – valuing assistance to those in need regardless of "whether a person was worthy or not" (1995: 274).

Australian studies have also indicated a difference between Catholics and others in attitudes towards charity / welfare. Hughes, Thompson, Pryor & Bouma (1995: 84-5) found that Catholics accorded higher importance (than did those of other Christian denominations) to functions of the Church such as providing charity for the poor and challenging social injustice. Similarly, Kaldor, Dixon, Powell & the NCLS team (1999: 8-9) found that compared to other Christians, Catholics placed greater emphasis on the role of the Church as a provider of charity for the poor. In the context of these findings, our Chapter 5 findings could be viewed as lending some

support to the notion of an Australian Catholic ethic. In the present chapter we attempt to test this notion further by using Australian Community Survey data to compare Catholic attitudes towards charity / welfare with those of other Australians.

Our interest also extends to probing more deeply into the religious / spiritual orientations underlying such attitudes.

### ***SPIRITUAL DIMENSIONS UNDERLYING ATTITUDES***

Cieslak's (1999) research demonstrates one way in which the spiritual dimensions underlying the attitudes indicated by survey respondents may be identified. In Cieslak's study, 55,000 Catholics in the Diocese of Rockford, Illinois, were surveyed about parish programs. One of the main findings of the study related to the multi-dimensionality of spirituality. Cieslak's factor analysis suggested the presence of both "horizontal spirituality" (i.e. a focus on community or "people of God" and "the sense of finding God through others", especially the poor and dispossessed) and "vertical spirituality" (i.e. an emphasis on the sacramental and devotional aspects of religion and "the sense of God as transcendent, outside and above the human condition") (1999: 1, 4). Cieslak reports:

One may hear suggestions made in religious writings or conversation which suggest that a spirituality which emphasizes God's immanence (the horizontal dimension) is the opposite of one which emphasizes God's transcendence (the vertical dimension). The unspoken assumption is that there is one dimension to spirituality, with immanence found at one end and transcendence at the other. This research has shown that the two spiritualities actually compose two different dimensions. The opposite of high transcendence is low transcendence, not high immanence (1999:13).

Significantly, the highest loading variable in Cieslak's horizontal spirituality factor was the item "Reaches out to the poor" (1999: 3). According to Cieslak's conclusion about multidimensional spirituality, placing a high value on this "horizontal" element of reaching out to the poor can also be consistent with the holding of a "vertical" orientation towards sacramentality and the sense of God as transcendent. While Cieslak does not distinguish between religion and spirituality, the implication is that religion can hold together different dimensions of spirituality.

Cieslak's findings resonate with O'Collins' (1974) comments on the Christian co-existence of horizontal and vertical orientations and our own Chapter 4 findings

suggesting that Catholics are oriented towards both immanence and transcendence. In the present chapter, we build upon Cieslak's terminology and follow some aspects of his method in deepening our exploration of the spiritual orientations underlying Catholics' attitudes.

## **ADDRESSING THE ISSUES**

In addressing the issues two data sets are used. For the sake of convenience, the research is presented in two sections – according to data set. Section 1 presents analysis of data from the 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey (CCLS). Section 2 presents analysis of data from the 1998 Australian Community Survey (ACS).

### ***RESEARCH QUESTIONS***

The following indicates how the research questions are addressed in particular data sets:

1. How do Catholics view the concept of maintaining a religious orientation in a secular setting? For this question, CCLS data is analysed (in Section 1).
2. How do Catholics view the motivation behind Church social welfare? CCLS data is analysed here (Section 1).
3. What functions of the Church do Catholics regard as most important? This question is addressed in Section 2 where there is analysis of ACS data on respondents' rankings of the importance of various general church functions.
4. Is it possible to identify a religious / spiritual orientation underlying attitudes towards Church social welfare? This question also relates to the motivation behind Church social welfare, but in a more indirect way. Factor analysis of ACS data on the ratings given by Catholics to the importance of various church functions is conducted in order to identify any underlying orientations. There is analysis of variance of the extracted factors (orientations) and church attendance in order to increase understanding of such orientations (This analysis is in Section 2).

The issues addressed in the data analysis lead on to consideration of how the religious / spiritual orientations underlying Catholics' attitudes to Church welfare may possibly be seen as feeding into the Church mission of service. There is then consideration of how such orientations might be paralleled in the mission and practice of Catholic welfare organisations in terms of service delivery to secular society.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

### ***SECTION 1***

*Data Source:* 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey (CCLS) Questionnaire G (N=1645)

Section 1 involves analysis of survey items relating to religious engagement in a secular world and to the motivation behind Church welfare activity. The aim is to provide some added insight into the way members of the Catholic community view the religious mission in secular society.

#### **Maintenance of a religious orientation in a secular setting**

Findings from the previous chapters have suggested a Catholic openness to engagement in the secular world. There is one survey item in the 1996 CCLS that comprises a more explicit statement about this – i.e. “Christians must keep themselves separated from worldly things in order to avoid contamination by the world’s attitudes and behaviour”.<sup>4</sup> Table 6.1 is a cross-tabulation of this statement by Mass attendance. It shows that the vast majority of respondents (78%) disagree with the statement. In other words, the majority of practising Catholics appear to believe that Christian life is possible in a secular setting. When this questionnaire item is cross-tabulated with the frequency of church attendance, the level of disagreement remains remarkably stable. These findings would seem to imply strong acceptance of the notion that it is possible to maintain a religious orientation in a secular setting – regardless of the level of formal religious involvement of respondents. These results reinforce our previous findings and make them more explicit.

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<sup>4</sup> The 2001 NCLS does not contain this survey item.

**Table 6.1: CROSSTABULATION: “CHRISTIANS MUST KEEP THEMSELVES SEPARATED FROM WORLDLY THINGS...” \* ATTENDANCE**

		Attendance			
		Less often	At least monthly	At least weekly	Total
<b>Christians should avoid worldly things</b>	Agree	9%	9%	11%	11%
	Neutral / Unsure	14%	13%	11%	11%
	Disagree	78%	78%	78%	78%
Total		100%	100%	100%	100%

*Note: “Strongly Agree” combined with “Agree”; “Strongly Disagree” combined with “Disagree”.*

*Source: 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey (Questionnaire G) (N=1645)*

Such findings of Catholic openness to the secular world may be seen as providing context for an understanding of the type of mission to the secular world that appears to be grounded in the Catholic community.

### **Motivation behind Church social welfare**

As we have seen in the previous chapter, the overwhelming majority of respondents consider it very important for the Church to provide social welfare services and this was presented as a significant part of the Catholic mission. We can investigate attitudes about the explicit motivation behind this by examination of response to the statement “The primary reason for the church’s social welfare work is to earn the right to talk to people about faith in Jesus Christ”.<sup>5</sup> Table 6.2 is a cross-tabulation of this statement by Mass attendance. It shows the results to be fairly mixed. Forty-six percent of respondents agree with the statement, 32% disagree, and 22% are unsure. This suggests that some respondents see Church social welfare activity as a means of explicitly sharing faith and some do not. It may be that respondents see different motivations for Church social welfare. It is noteworthy that while 47% of weekly attenders see Church social welfare in terms of an explicitly religious purpose, 53% do not identify with this position.

<sup>5</sup> The 2001 NCLS does not contain this survey item.

**Table 6.2: CROSSTABULATION: “THE PRIMARY REASON FOR THE CHURCH’S SOCIAL WELFARE WORK IS TO EARN THE RIGHT TO TALK TO PEOPLE ABOUT FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST” \* ATTENDANCE**

		Attendance			
		Less often	At least monthly	At least weekly	Total
<b>Talking about Jesus is the reason for Church social welfare</b>	Agree	39%	40%	47%	46%
	Neutral / Unsure	38%	25%	21%	22%
	Disagree	23%	35%	32%	32%
<b>Total</b>		100%	100%	100%	100%

*Note: “Strongly Agree” combined with “Agree”; “Strongly Disagree” combined with “Disagree”.  
Source: 1996 Catholic Church Life Survey (Questionnaire G) (N=1645)*

This may well relate to the issue of whether Catholic welfare services are seen to function fundamentally as the practical expression of Catholic beliefs and values or whether they are seen to function as both the expression and the explicit sharing of such beliefs and values. At this stage, it would seem that both views apply. We will return to this issue later when our findings are viewed alongside studies of Catholic welfare service delivery.

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In summary of the analysis of CCLS data in Section 1, we have found that the vast majority of practising Catholics explicitly identify with the possibility of Christian engagement in secular society. However, views on the motivation behind Catholic social welfare work are more mixed – some respondents seeing it in terms of sharing religious faith and some not seeing it in these terms. This prompts the question of whether the different perceptions of motivation may reflect different orientations.

## SECTION 2

*Data source: 1998 Australian Community Survey (ACS) (N=1027)<sup>6</sup>*

The aim of Section 2 is to widen the context for viewing attitudes towards the importance of Church engagement in social welfare and to deepen this context by identifying the orientations underlying such attitudes. Factor analysis is used in a similar way to that of Cieslak.

### Importance of Church engagement in social welfare

In the ACS the question “How important do you think it is for the churches to do the following?” was accompanied by response categories across several levels of importance for each of thirteen church functions. We begin by viewing response to the function “Support the poor”. Table 6.3 shows that 37% of the total sample of Australians regarded this church function as “Most important”. In comparison, a much higher proportion of Catholics (i.e. 49%) regarded the church function of supporting the poor as “Most important”. This Catholic rate was much higher than that of the other denominational categories and lends further support to the notion of an Australian “Catholic ethic” mentioned earlier and points to the possible distinctiveness of Catholics in this area.

**Table 6.3: CROSSTABULATION: “HOW IMPORTANT DO YOU THINK IT IS FOR CHURCHES TO ...(SUPPORT THE POOR)?” \* DENOMINATION**

		Denomination				
		Catholic	Other Christian	Non-Christian & Other	No Religion / Unstated	Total Sample
<b>Support the Poor</b>	Most Important	49%	32%	26%	38%	37%
	Other Response	51%	68%	74%	62%	63%
	Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

*Source: 1998 Australian Community Survey (N=1027)*

<sup>6</sup> The 1998 Australian Community Survey, conducted by researchers from Edith Cowan University and NCLS Research, was made possible by a grant from the Australian Research Council, the support of ANGLICARE (NSW) and the Board of Mission of the Uniting Church (NSW). The research was jointly supervised by Alan Black and Peter Kaldor. The research team included John Bellamy, Keith Castle, and Philip Hughes. Some data has been made available for the analysis in this paper.

The ACS surveyed the wider Australian society including respondents from a variety of religions as well as those who have no religious affiliation or involvement at all. Given our particular interest in Catholics, this allows us to make comparisons between Catholics and the rest of the population. It also allows for comparison between practising Catholics and non-practising Catholics (whereas parish-administered surveys such as Cieslak’s and the Australian CCLS / NCLS are less likely to contain a representative proportion of the latter). The ACS comprised a mixed set of questionnaires involving a total of 8500 respondents. Our research uses data from Questionnaire 7.

While this comparison between Catholics and other denominational groups places Catholic attitudes towards Church social welfare in wider perspective, our main purpose in using ACS data is to tap into the differences among Catholics themselves.

Table 6.4 shows that among Catholic Non-Attendees (i.e. those who never attend religious services) “Support the poor” elicited the highest response rate as the “Most Important” Church function, whereas it elicited the second highest response among All Catholics, and the fourth highest response among Catholic Attendees (i.e. those who attend at least monthly up to and including more often than weekly). Catholic Attendees gave higher response rates to “Give meaning and direction to life” and “Provide opportunities for worship” than they did to “Support the poor”.

**Table 6.4: RANKING OF “MOST IMPORTANT” FUNCTIONS OF CHURCH (Catholics)**

Most important function of Church	All Catholics	Catholic Non-Attendees	Catholic Attendees
"Encourage good morals"	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
<b>"Support the poor"</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>
"Provide opportunities for worship"	3 <sup>rd</sup>	4 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>
"Give meaning and direction to life"	4 <sup>th</sup>	6 <sup>th</sup> *	2 <sup>nd</sup>
"Challenge injustice in society"	5 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>

Source: 1998 Australian Community Survey (N=1027)

\* “Provide accommodation for the homeless” as “Most important” elicited the fifth highest response rate among Catholic Non-Attendees.

The different ranking order between non-attendees and attendees requires some explanation. It is possible that for those who regularly attend religious services, charitable activity such as supporting the poor is seen more as part of an overall multi-dimensional religious orientation. Factor analysis offers some insight into this possibility.<sup>7</sup>

### **Orientations underlying attitudes towards Church social welfare**

Factor analysis was conducted on the ratings given by Australian Catholics on a scale of importance of various church functions. The aim was to discover any underlying

<sup>7</sup> Factor analysis is a technique which enables the reduction of a large number of interrelated variables into a small number of underlying “factors”.

factors in the response pattern.<sup>8</sup> Only one variable loaded significantly on more than one factor (using the convention that loadings of at least .3 are significant). This variable is italicised in Table 6.5 which shows all significant loadings (i.e. >.3) in the two factors that resulted from the factor analysis.

**Table 6.5: FACTORS & PRIMARY LOADINGS DERIVED FROM RATINGS OF IMPORTANCE OF CHURCH FUNCTIONS (Catholics)**

<b>Factor 1</b>	
"Give meaning and direction to life"	.923
"Encourage good morals"	.803
"Provide opportunities for worship"	.784
"Provide chaplains in hospitals and other institutions"	.775
"Challenge injustice in society"	.761
"Run social activities"	.678
"Convert people to the Christian faith"	.649
"Provide schools"	.640
"Provide counselling services"	.615
<i>"Support the poor"</i>	.422
<b>Factor 2</b>	
"Provide accommodation for the homeless"	.949
"Provide homes for the aged"	.851
"Allow community groups to use church buildings"	.503
<i>"Support the poor"</i>	.484

*Source: 1998 Australian Community Survey (N=1027)*

As Table 6.5 shows, the two factors that were extracted include a general multi-dimensional factor and a factor relating to community needs.

Factor 1 is a general factor which suggests a multi-dimensional church function of providing a system of meaning ("Give meaning and direction to life") and moral guidance ("Encourage good morals") which has both a "vertical"<sup>9</sup> dimension ("Provide opportunities for worship") and a "horizontal" dimension ("Challenge injustice in society", "Run social activities", "Support the poor"), together with an educative / missionary element ("Provide schools", "Convert people to the Christian faith") and a pastoral element ("Provide chaplains in hospitals and other institutions", "Provide counselling services"). Factor 1 seems to indicate the richness of what the church has to offer – including both "vertical" and "horizontal" dimensions. It is

<sup>8</sup> After examination of factor loadings in several different analyses, an oblique (Oblimin) rotation with a Principal Component extraction method was chosen on the basis that it had the least number of variables loading significantly on more than one factor.

<sup>9</sup> Cieslak's terminology is being used.

possible that this factor gives us an added insight into the type of “organic” orthodoxy that is inextricably linked to social ethics and that has been associated with Catholicism in this thesis.

Factor 2 has significant loadings with “Provide accommodation for the homeless”, “Provide homes for the aged”, “Allow community groups to use church buildings” and “Support the poor”. This factor suggests the function of caring for the needs of the wider community – especially the needs of the disadvantaged – hence, it appears to relate to a mainly “horizontal” dimension.

While it is not possible to make direct comparisons with Cieslak’s findings because very different questions and different interpretive schemes have been used, our findings would seem to support Cieslak’s general observation that horizontal spirituality can be inclusive of vertical spirituality. Our findings also suggest that horizontal spirituality can stand alone.

To the extent that our factor analysis calls for a distinction between the two factors, Factor 1, in its multi-dimensionality, could be seen as suggesting a “religious” orientation, while Factor 2 suggests an orientation towards one type of spirituality.

It is interesting that, in our study, the one item that loads significantly on both Factor 1 and Factor 2 is “Support the poor”. This suggests that charity is regarded as a core function – in both a richly religious sense and in a less-defined spiritual sense.

This, in turn, can be seen to bear upon our earlier proposition that the different ranking order between non-attenders and frequent attenders in relation to “Support the poor” might be interpreted in terms of an approach to charity as integral to an overall religious orientation on the part of frequent attenders.

Such an interpretation can be tested in terms of the factors that were extracted in our factor analysis. If there is a significant relationship between those who score highly on the multi-dimensional religious factor (i.e. Factor 1) and those who attend church frequently, there would be some support for this interpretation.

Table 6.6 shows that when a oneway ANOVA (Analysis of Variance)<sup>10</sup> is conducted between (“Multi-dimensional”) Factor 1 and levels of Church Attendance (Catholics), it is found that there is a significant difference in the mean Factor 1 scores of those in different attendance categories ( $F(4,189)=14.93$ ,  $p<.001$ ).

**Table 6.6: ANOVA (FACTOR 1 & CHURCH ATTENDANCE) (Catholics)**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	46.238	4	11.560	14.931	<.001
Within Groups	146.320	189	.774		
Total	192.559	193			

*Source: 1998 Australian Community Survey (N=1027)*

Table 6.7 shows that while the mean score for Factor 1 in the “Never” attendance category is  $-.779$ , the mean score for this factor in the “At least weekly” category is  $.574$ . This indicates that those who frequently attend church tend to have much higher Factor 1 scores than those who do not attend church. Moreover, calculations based on Table 6.6 indicate that 24% of the variation in Factor 1 scores can be explained by different levels of attendance.<sup>11</sup>

**Table 6.7: SELECTED DESCRIPTIVES (FACTOR 1 & CHURCH ATTENDANCE) (Catholics)**

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Never	$-.779$	1.034
Less than yearly	$.048$	.950
At least yearly	$-.048$	.891
At least monthly	$.184$	.756
At least weekly	$.574$	.749
Total	$-.012$	.999

*Source: 1998 Australian Community Survey (N=1027)*

On the other hand, as Table 6.8 shows, the difference between the mean (“Horizontal”) Factor 2 scores of those in different attendance categories is not statistically significant ( $F(4,189)=2.362$ ,  $p>.05$ ). In other words, the horizontal-only orientation tends to cut across attendance categories. This tends to present the horizontal-only orientation as the base spirituality.

<sup>10</sup> Analysis of Variance is a technique used to test for significant differences between means.

<sup>11</sup> The value of Eta squared is  $.240$  (i.e.  $46.238 / 192.559 = .240$ )

**Table 6.8: ANOVA (FACTOR 2 & CHURCH ATTENDANCE) (Catholics)**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	9.190	4	2.297	2.362	.055
Within Groups	183.853	189	.973		
Total	193.043	193			

*Source: 1998 Australian Community Survey (N=1027)*

Hence, it would appear that while practising Catholics are just as likely as non-practising Catholics to view the Church function of charity from a horizontal-only orientation, practising Catholics are more likely than non-practising Catholics to view it in the context of a multi-dimensional religious orientation – i.e. a perspective from which charity is bound to the overall religious meaning system.

In summary of the Section 2 findings: Examination of ACS data on rankings of church functions placed Catholic attitudes towards Church social welfare in a wider perspective – showing that Australian Catholics attached a much higher level of importance to this than did other Australians – suggesting the notion of an Australian Catholic social ethic. The question of different underlying orientations was addressed through factor analysis of the ACS data (on Catholics' perceptions of Church functions). Two factors were extracted indicating two orientations: a richly religious “multi-dimensional” orientation (i.e. including both “vertical” and “horizontal” dimensions) and a more loosely spiritual (“horizontal-only”) orientation. The factor analysis also showed that, for Catholics, the Church function of supporting the poor loaded significantly on both the multidimensional factor and the horizontal-only factor – presenting this welfare activity as a core function in both a multi-dimensional religious sense and in a mainly horizontal spiritual sense. Analysis of variance between the respective factors and frequency of Church attendance (of Catholics) indicated the tendency of frequently attending Catholics to view welfare activity as integral to the overall multi-dimensional religious orientation. Catholics less frequently involved in formal religious practice were less likely to hold this orientation. However, the holding of the horizontal-only spiritual orientation cut across attendance categories – suggesting this as the base spirituality.

### ***FINDINGS (SECTIONS 1 & 2)***

The findings of Section 2 complement those of Section 1. Just as we have found the overall perception of the purpose of Church social welfare activity to be partly in terms of the exposition of religious faith and partly not in these terms (Section 1), so

too we have found that the Church function of supporting the poor can be associated with a multidimensional religious orientation and a spiritual orientation that is less explicitly religious. These motivations and orientations concerning Church welfare activity expressed by members of the Catholic community suggest that the overall community inflow into Church welfare activity is to some extent explicitly religious and to some extent more loosely spiritual.

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A main part of our enquiry in this chapter concerns the question of whether these orientations found among Catholics towards Church welfare activity are paralleled in welfare practice.

## **CATHOLIC CHURCH SOCIAL WELFARE PRACTICE (AUST)**

This section focuses on the welfare service practice of Catholic organisations and some of the issues related to Government funding.

As noted briefly in Chapter 5, the Catholic Church is a major provider of community and social welfare services in Australia. Catholic dioceses in Australia provide welfare services through local parishes, Catholic organisations such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and professionally staffed agencies such as Centacare (Dixon 1996: 41). According to Catholic Social Services, the mission is

- to enable the Catholic Church to fulfil the gospel imperatives to:
- (a) Stand with and serve those who are poor and disadvantaged and
- (b) Work for a just and equitable society (Catholic Social Services 2003).

This social mission is regarded as “not peripheral but central to the life and identity of the Church” (Catholic Social Services 2003). Services “are offered to any person in need, not just to Catholics” (Dixon 1996: 41). Moreover, “services are not offered from a position of superiority or aloofness but from one brother or sister in the Lord to another, as we together struggle for wholeness and meaning” (Catholic Social Services Victoria 2002: iv). These specific statements about the mission of service correspond with the theological approach to the mission considered earlier.

A range of diverse services is offered relating to aged care, youth / family, disability, housing / homelessness, migrants / refugees, bereavement, alcohol / drug dependence, palliative care, employment assistance – to name just a few (Catholic Social Services Victoria 2002). Overall, there are huge numbers of Catholic organisations, groups and societies involved in welfare. They vary in the closeness of their relationship to the central Church structure and range from small local parish-based organisations to large national bodies. They also vary according to sources of funding – i.e. “income they generate themselves, grants from the Church, and grants from the State and Commonwealth governments”; moreover, some agencies are funded by a mix of all three (Dixon 1996: 41).

### ***GOVERNMENT FUNDING OF CHURCH WELFARE SERVICES***

The issue of government funding of Church welfare service delivery is particularly relevant to our research.

As mentioned in Chapter 5, in recent times the Australian Government has been implementing policies of privatisation and deregulation in areas of the economy such as welfare funding. Government contracts for the provision of welfare services are open to tender and are awarded on the basis of cost-efficient achievement of results. In this sense, instrumental rationality governs the way in which welfare delivery services are contracted out.

In tendering for welfare delivery contracts, church agencies appear to have a competitive edge in that they can offer “high quality for a low cost” because of the compassion, dedication and goodwill of both their voluntary workers and paid workers (Maddox 2001a: 185). Also, as not-for-profit organisations, church agencies enjoy a level of tax exemption that commercial agencies do not (Maddox 2001a: 183). Hence, Government devolution of welfare responsibility has meant that church-related organisations, in particular, have become “major sites of welfare services” (Brown, Kenny, Turner and Prince 2000: 83). This applies especially to the Catholic

Church, which has the largest collection of human service organisations of all the churches in Australia (Cleary 2001: 6).<sup>12</sup>

As we have seen, for the Catholic Church, the provision of welfare services is part of its mission of service to humanity. As such, the procurement of Government contracts for welfare service delivery could be seen, from a Catholic perspective, as a pragmatic way of assisting the Church to perform its mission. Insofar as Catholic organisations regard Government contracts as a *means* to a greater end, they could be seen to operate according to instrumental rationality. It would appear, then, that from the perspectives of both State and Church institutions, the relationship between them concerning the funding and delivery of welfare services may be instrumental in nature.

However, Government funding of Church organisations for the delivery of welfare services has given rise to some debate in Australia. The main concerns appear to be that the Church-State relationship reflects an exploitation of religion by the secular State and compromises the Church in its role of advocacy / critique in the public sphere of society and in its service delivery to individuals in the private sphere.

In Chapter 5 we saw that in the historical relationship between religion and the secular State in Australia the State has tended to view religion in the utilitarian sense of contributing to social order / acceptance of the status quo through the encouragement of personal morality. This State perspective was presented as being based on an assumption of individual-structure dichotomy that did not fit with a Catholic approach that views issues of personal morality and structural justice as complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

Some commentators argue that in present times the awarding of Government welfare service contracts to religious organisations is still underpinned by a Government perspective that relegates the relevance of religion to issues of personal morality in the private sphere. For instance, Voyce suggests that a view of the unemployed as requiring moral reformation underlies the government policy of providing self-help to

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<sup>12</sup> However, Catholic Church involvement in social welfare needs to be seen in the context of similar involvement on the part of other churches. The Salvation Army, the Anglican Church, and the Uniting Church – to name just a few – all make significant contributions to social welfare in Australia.

the unemployed through punitive measures (such as “breaching”<sup>13</sup>) and also fits the notion that contact with religious community (through Church-run employment assistance services) may promote moral reformation of the unemployed (2000: 4-5). In this, Voyce claims that “religious ideology has been repackaged as a useful tool” by the Government (2002: 8).

Similarly, Maddox (2005) argues that the Government operates on the rationale that social problems such as poverty stem from personal failings and that contact with religious agencies may help improve the moral fibre of welfare service clients and thereby contribute to social order. Maddox believes that, in this utilitarian approach to religion, the Government has appropriated aspects of religious language to explain and justify the church agencies’ success in tendering for government welfare contracts (2001a: 189). Maddox sees this as political borrowing of implicit religious language out of its explicit “confessional context” to reinforce the secular structure. She regards it as a type of exploitation of the “interweaving of explicit and implicit religion” (Maddox 2001a: 189).

Hence, both Voyce and Maddox see the utilitarian approach of the Government to the funding of Church-based welfare services as being exploitative of religion in some way and as expressing the view that individual morality serves structural interests – i.e. the structure-dominant perspective. However, regardless of whether or not the interpretations by Maddox and Voyce are valid, the type of judgmental behaviour by religious community implied by the supposed Government view does not accord with the statement of mission and practice by Catholic Social Services (see earlier section); nor does it fit with our findings in Chapter 4 suggesting a tendency among many members of the Catholic community to refrain from judgment of others. A Government view of the attitudes / behaviour associated with religious groups does not necessarily accord with the reality of those attitudes / behaviour.

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<sup>13</sup> One of the notable conditions placed upon those receiving unemployment benefits has been the requirement to comply with various job-seeking activities – non-compliance being subject to punitive measures such as possible withdrawal of benefits (“breaching”). According to an independent inquiry, “while breaching has obvious motivational and compliance benefits, its presence can also reduce the quality of the experience for (genuinely job seeking) clients...weaken trust between case managers and job seekers, and even adversely affect job seekers’ employment prospects” (Productivity Commission 2002).

Nevertheless, participants in the debate about State funding of Church welfare services express concern that State dominance of the funding relationship may impede the Church's ability to perform its roles in social critique and welfare service delivery. For instance, Maddox notes that "refraining from criticism [of government] is increasingly one of the terms of a contract" for government funding of welfare services (2001a:183). Similarly, Brown et al. (2000: 18) argue that the more Church organisations become dependent on government funding, the less they can function as independent forces in society; in other words, "their roles in advocacy and criticism" are undermined (Brown et al 2000: 65).

On the other hand, Caddy (2002) observes that the very diversity of Catholic organisations in terms of their structures and funding relationships can, to some extent, protect the independence of the Catholic welfare sector as a whole. Caddy (2002) describes the Catholic welfare sector as a "rabbit warren" (compared to the more centralized welfare systems of other religious denominations) making it less vulnerable to conditions attached to Government funding. In addition to the diversity of organisational arrangements, we might also expect that Catholic values and the type of Catholic resistance to structural dominance that was suggested in Chapter 5 would have an influence in this area.

Indeed, the evidence indicates that at all levels of the Catholic Church in Australia there is action and advocacy in relation to social justice issues. Many parish groups and religious orders are involved in action for social justice and attempt to influence public policy (Dixon 1996: 42). On the national level commissions have been established which "provide input to the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference and which act as the bishops' voice in fields such as social welfare, education, immigration and industrial relations" (Dixon 1996: 34). Examples of these are: the Australian Catholic Social Welfare Commission (ACSWC) which develops and promotes "social welfare policies, strategies and programs which seek to enhance the economic, social and spiritual well-being of the Australian community" (ACSWC 1995 cited in Dixon 1996: 34); Australian Catholic Relief which "sees its primary role as educating Australians about the reality and causes of poverty, hunger and injustice, and encouraging them to act with others to overcome injustice" (Dixon 1996: 35); and the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council whose program of work is based on the

principles of Catholic social teaching, has included projects such as the (1991) bishops' inquiry into the distribution of wealth in Australia, and usually prepares the annual social justice statement issued by the bishops (Dixon 1996: 35).

All of this indicates that despite Government funding of some Church welfare services, Catholic Church engagement in advocacy and ethics discourse in the public domain continues. Indeed, according to Brennan, "The last decade in Australian politics has been marked by the increasing impatience of political leaders with the interventions and concerns of church groups agitating for social justice" (Brennan 2001: 56). For Maddox (2005), such Government impatience with "meddlesome priests" is yet another reflection of the Government view that Church figures should refrain from public critique and confine their comment to issues of personal morality; in other words, the view that religion belongs in the private sphere.

This brings us to the other concern expressed by participants in the debate about Government funding of Church welfare services – i.e. that State structural dominance of the funding relationship may result in a service-delivery focus that serves structural interests rather than individual human needs. For example, Brown et al. (2000) believe that the conditions attached to Government funding of welfare services can create structural impediments to the appropriate response to human need. They argue that operating through State bureaucratic regulations can hamper welfare agencies' attempts to respond to the diverse needs of clients (Brown et al. 2000: 93). Their findings indicate that the pressure to adopt practices and directions tied to government funding were often regarded as a problem by welfare workers and one "that contradicted their views of their own work" (2000: 134). (The pressure to adopt the practice of "breaching" is possibly a pertinent example of this).

### ***VALUES-BASED WELFARE DELIVERY***

However, according to Cleary's (2001) research into the management dilemmas of Catholic welfare organisations, an emphasis upon certain values can assist in the management of such contradictory pressures.

Cleary found that the CEOs of Catholic welfare organisations believed that the religiously-based *purpose* behind Catholic welfare services made a difference and they emphasized the importance of having an openness to the religious dimension of the organisation (2001: 62, 124, 149). Cleary found that the CEOs believed that the (high) quality of their service delivery was due to the fact that it was values-based (2001: 124). They also considered that their organisations made “a valuable contribution to society and to the Church” by virtue of the fact that “they exist to promote and develop a particular set of values” (2001: 159). The values identified included: “the care for the individual, the importance of holistic care, the choice of the individual over the system combined with issues about the generosity of the response of the system, belief in the supremacy of good over evil, the ‘specialness’ of the interaction with clients, the service delivery as a form of human liberation, and respect for the dignity of the human person” (2001: 149).<sup>14</sup> These values are compatible with Catholic Social Services mission statements and also with the general thrust of ordinary Catholics’ values as indicated by the findings of this thesis.

Cleary discovered that Catholic organisations’ emphasis on such values could enable client-specific service delivery. She found that tensions between the business or corporate aspects of the organisation and the religious / spiritual aspects were often addressed specifically in terms of “the choice of the individual over the system combined with issues about the generosity of the response of the system” – sometimes referred to as the “Back-door Principle” (Cleary 2001: 207). One reading of this is that it is a pragmatic way of attempting to create more flexibility around the conditions placed upon welfare delivery – hence, making the delivery more client-specific and less conditional. It is possible that this makes it more in tune with the “unconditional” aspect of the “Catholic ethic”.<sup>15</sup> In other words, any potential

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<sup>14</sup> There is no mention of values that would encourage moralistic or judgmental behaviour towards clients and thereby validate the type of assumptions about religious organisations that Voyce and Maddox attribute to the Government.

<sup>15</sup> While it has not been possible to find details on the breaching rates of Catholic welfare agencies per se, it is perhaps noteworthy that not-for-profit agencies (which include a large proportion of religious agencies) have significantly lower breaching rates than other agencies (Productivity Commission 2002: Ch 6).

institutional dominance was undercut by the conscious prioritisation of individual human need above institutional-level operations.

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Overall, the evidence to date suggests that Church-State funding relationships have not impeded the Church social justice mission either in terms of its engagement in ethics discourse in the public sphere of secular society or in its delivery of welfare services to individuals in the private sphere of secular society. Concerns about the instrumentalisation of religion to the secular State in relation to Government-funded Church welfare services imply a view of religion that does not seem to take account of Catholic values that focus on the dignity (rather than the sinfulness) of humanity and that can accommodate a pragmatic approach to “the system”. Such values tend to fit with the Catholic ethic and a communal view of society in which structure / institution is functional rather than substantive (see Chapter 5). It is possible that a religious worldview that embraces a holistic conception of individuals and an organic conception of society may be able to transcend the instrumentality of structural-level operations.

In the next section we move from consideration of State pressures on Catholic welfare services to consideration of Church institutional-level pressures on these services and the way they are addressed.

### ***SPIRITUAL ORIENTATIONS UNDERLYING CATHOLIC WELFARE SERVICE DELIVERY***

The foregoing discussion of the values that guide the Catholic approach to welfare delivery raises the question of the type of religious / spiritual orientations underlying such values. More specifically, how do the above-mentioned values sit with the religious / spiritual orientations that were found in our data analysis to underlie ordinary Catholics’ attitudes towards the Church function of assisting those in need? It will be recalled that our data analysis identified a multidimensional, explicitly “religious” orientation and a horizontal, more loosely “spiritual” orientation. These were regarded in terms of the spiritual inflow into the Church mission of service to secular society. Our present concern relates to the extent to which similar spiritual /

religious orientations are associated with the values identified in Catholic welfare service delivery – i.e. the outflow of the mission.

We approach this part of the enquiry by first considering institutional-level religious pressures upon Catholic welfare services. It is to be noted that Cleary's study also found that there could be tension between official religious teaching and the delivery of client-specific service. Interestingly, she found that the same values preferencing the individual over the system referred to in relation to State pressures were also brought to the fore in dealing with these other tensions (Cleary 2001: 228). For example, in response to the dilemma of "how to respond to the needs of the 'whole person' when that response might not be in accordance with Church teaching" she reports:

On one hand [Church] teaching is publicly proclaimed as fixed... while on the other, its pastoral practice values 'the individual over the system'. It does this by placing its teaching in its public arena and individual decisions in its private arena. The problems occur when situations in the private arena are moved into the public arena. The institutional Church then feels obliged to affirm its public position (Cleary 2001: 228).

This, again, seemed to suggest the "Back-door Principle" of addressing such tensions. It seems to indicate a type of rolling back of institutional-level considerations in response to human needs.

It would appear, then, that Catholic welfare organisations draw upon certain values relating to the care of the individual in the management of tensions resulting from institutional sponsorship per se – whether this be from government or church institutions.

The spiritual / religious orientations associated with these values become clearer with further consideration of the nature of the tensions involved. Cleary (2001: 132, 223) points out that both staff and clients came from a variety of belief orientations (including non-religious orientations); moreover, some clients indicated that their lives had been damaged by certain church policies. According to Cleary, many Catholic organisations "struggled with the concept as to the degree to which they should appear to be Catholic or religious" (2001:148). She found a tendency for CEOs to try to overcome such difficulties by making a distinction between religion and spirituality – by linking the human person with the spiritual "rather than by seeing the

formal practices and beliefs of the Church as essential to the relationship” (2001: 161). This suggests that the values espoused by welfare organisations in relation to service delivery reflect a certain type of spirituality.

The irony is that this spirituality appears to be fed by the explicitly incarnational nature of the Catholic tradition. Yet it is as if the tradition is rich enough in its interweaving of explicit and implicit elements to allow for the implicit to facilitate interface with the “Other”. This may also be related to a view of Christian charity as the implicit expression of religious values rather than their explicit promotion – i.e. the notion that due to its very nature, Christian charity is compatible with the principle “actions speak louder than words”.

## **SPIRITUALITY AND RELIGION**

The distinction between religion and spirituality in Catholic welfare practice – i.e. in the outflow of the religious mission to secular society – brings us back to consideration of the mission inflow that we identified in the data analysis in this chapter.

In our factor analysis, the term “religious” has been used in reference to the multi-dimensional orientation evident in Factor 1. This orientation includes the vertical element of formal worship (which, for Catholics, implies sacramentality), the horizontal element of concern for the community and the poor, as well as other elements relating to the religious meaning system, morality and organisation. This interpretation of “religious” would seem to be compatible with the interpretation indicated by the participants in Cleary’s study. Similarly, the horizontal orientation towards community needs evident in Factor 2 seems to correspond with the interpretation of “spiritual” as indicated by Cleary’s participants. Hence, a particular type of distinction between religion and spirituality has emerged from empirical investigation.

Yet, as Hanegraaff (1996:1) points out, what is meant by the term “spirituality” can be “extremely vague”. He argues that distinctions arising from the *emic* perspective (e.g. the participants’ perspective) should not be left unrefined (Hanegraaff 1996: 6-7). Accordingly, reference to the Factor 2 orientation as “spiritual” requires qualification

as meaning one type of spirituality. In so far as the horizontal spirituality of Factor 2 relates to an ethical orientation, there is aptness in Lindsay's observation that "In some sense the area of spirituality overlaps that of ethics. Nevertheless, it cannot be reduced to it" (2002: 27).

While the characterisation of spiritualities identified in this chapter follows Cieslak's approach and is ultimately derived from data analysis, it seems prudent to place it in the context of the wider discourse on religion and spirituality.

Writers such as Tacey (2000) have argued that the concept of spirituality as a form of intensity within religion has been transformed into the concept of an all-encompassing spirituality within which religion exists as one form of expression. The latter concept would seem to be supported by the growing body of research suggesting that biology "compels the spiritual urge" (Newberg, D'Aquili & Rause 2002:8) and that spirituality "is rooted in a universal human awareness" (Hay & Nye 1998: 4). Yet, in this view, spirituality is usually associated with a privatised mode of expression. Hay and Nye (1998: 18-19) argue that spirituality underpins ethical behaviour, but they also note that the privatised nature of spirituality can reduce the potential for a social vision of ethics.

The institutional dimension of religion is often portrayed as a major feature distinguishing it from spirituality. However, Schneiders believes that a "partnership" between religion and spirituality is possible through immersion in the spirituality of the religious *tradition* "...while sitting lightly to institution" (2000: 15-16). Schneiders' distinction between the religious tradition and the institution resonates with the findings of previous chapters of this thesis. In the case of Australian Catholicism, it seems to allow more room for the notion that the base spirituality is interwoven with the explicitly incarnational nature of the religious tradition. The Catholic ethical tradition that has been identified in this thesis may well be an illustration of how religion and spirituality intertwine.

While individual spirituality may be expressed through informal acts of kindness in the private sphere, this does not necessarily reach those in the wider society who are in genuine need of assistance and are in danger of "falling through the cracks".

Chapter 5 has shown that Catholics involved in the communal religious tradition are

more likely to be involved in welfare activities reaching out to the wider society than are those who are more “privately” religious. If we view the institutional aspect of Catholicism as being located *within* the communal religious tradition (see Chapter 5) it is also possible to see how the tradition gives rise to the development of welfare organisations that can address the needs of the underprivileged on the scale required. This brings us back to an understanding of the institutional level as functioning as a means of implementing the mission grounded in the communal religious tradition.

The research in this chapter has identified spiritual and religious orientations in both the inflow and the outflow of the religious mission to secular society. The crux of the matter, however, is that at the point of contact between Catholic social welfare organisations and secular society, the prime focus is on the needs of the *individual* in the *private* sphere. In other words, at the point of interface between the religious mission and secular society we find a type of spirituality – with religion providing a vehicle for this spirituality. In this sense, a sense supported by the various types of data analysed in this chapter, institutional religion in the secular public realm of welfare, not only expresses the Catholic spirituality of many Catholics but also, intentionally, seeks to nurture the spirituality of recipients, Catholic or otherwise.

## CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

This chapter has presented Catholic Church engagement in social welfare activities as a point of interface between the religious and the secular.

We have found that most Australian Catholic attenders can conceive of the possibility of maintaining a religious orientation in a secular setting – in line with the Vatican II mission “in the world”. Moreover, the theological importance attached to Church provision of welfare services in secular society as part of this mission has been paralleled in our findings of strong support for these services by Australian Catholics – suggesting an Australian Catholic ethic. This is demonstrated in a concrete way by the great scope of social welfare services provided by Catholic organisations in Australian society.

We have identified both explicitly religious and more loosely spiritual orientations flowing from the Catholic communal tradition into the mission of service and we have seen similar orientations among Catholic service providers. While we identified institutional-level tensions in relation to both State and Church institutions, these tensions appeared to be transcended through values that subordinated institutional-level interests to concern for human needs. In this sense, the mission cycle could be seen to keep returning to the human level. Insofar as the inflow and outflow of the religious mission was not impeded by the institutional dimension, the overall cycle of the religious-secular relationship in the area of social welfare can be regarded as organic. The point of interface between the religious mission and secular society presented as a type of spirituality. It would seem, then, that insofar as the religious moral imperative requires engagement with the secular, the religious impulse seems to flow to the secular through the “spiritual”.

Overall, our study has found some evidence of a Catholic ethic in Australia that bears upon the relationship between the religious and the secular. We have also seen that the type of unconditional love interpreted as the mission of the post Vatican II church is suggested by the attitudes of those at the coalface of welfare delivery. Yet this tends to occur on the basis of a distinction between spirituality and religion (cf Cleary 2001) and seems to parallel the interfacing of the religious and the secular. It is as if in fulfilling its mission, a rich, multi-dimensional Catholicism needs to engage with the secular and as it does so, a more horizontal type of spirituality tends to come into play. This ultimately gives witness to the richness of the religious tradition from which it flows and presents as part of an organic cycle of the religious mission in secular society.

In conclusion, the main theoretical concern of this chapter has been to refine our focus on the secular-religious relationship. From the general view of the relationship as being mainly based on a “this world-other world” distinction, we have narrowed the focus to the context of “this world”. We have attempted to refine the conception of the secular-religious relationship still further by distinguishing between structural and extra-structural dimensions of the relationship. We have found that evidence based on analysis of Catholic survey data and studies of Catholic welfare service lends support to the hypothesis that an instrumental relationship between the religious and the

secular may be possible at the structural / institutional level but that this does not appear to apply beyond this level. The extra-structural dimensions of the relationship tend to be organic in nature. Indeed, our examination has suggested that when all levels are viewed as a whole, the instrumental structural dimension can be seen to function as one part of an overall organic relationship between the religious and the secular.

## CONCLUSION

This thesis has sought to examine the relationship between “the religious” and “the secular” as it pertains to Australian Catholics. This has involved consideration of a very broad theoretical issue in reference to a specific national and religious category of individuals. The aim of the research has been to address the theoretical issue in a way that could be empirically examined by analysis of survey data relating mostly to practising Australian Catholics. However, the broad nature of the main theoretical question has required that it be broken down into subsets of questions and often articulated in stages to bring it to a level where it was possible to formulate hypotheses testable by analysis of empirical data.

Due to the nature of the available data, the relevant questions could sometimes only be addressed in a roundabout way; it was not always possible to test desired hypotheses directly. Nevertheless, the extensive range of variables across the available surveys has enabled most of the theoretical issues deemed relevant to be at least touched upon in some way. In some cases, this has meant that the data findings have been viewed mainly in terms of the flavour or nuance that they contribute to a particular issue. In some cases, it may have been an accumulation of observations of a certain trend that has been interpreted as theoretically relevant. However, in all chapters containing empirical analysis (i.e. Chapters 3 to 6) there has been an effort to acknowledge what the data findings are indicating and the range of interpretations that could be drawn from them.

As the data findings are summarized in each chapter and interpreted fairly comprehensively, they will not be re-stated here. Instead, this final chapter will attempt to pull together the various strands of enquiry pursued in the thesis in a way that builds on the conclusions of the preceding chapters.

The first point to be made concerns the perspective used in the thesis. As was indicated in Chapter 1, this thesis has been approached from the perspective of symbolic rationality – a perspective we have presented as being inclusive of instrumental rationality. From this perspective, a main theoretical concern has been

the sociological construction of religion solely in terms of instrumental rationality. It has been argued that such a construction casts religion into a binary mould that fails to recognise fully the overarching organic nature of religions such as Catholicism and, hence, skews interpretations of the religious and the secular.

In negotiating the difficulties in the relationship between religion and social theory, our enquiry has referred for initial guidance to Milbank's critique of classical sociology as presuming to encompass religion in a "policing of the sublime" (1990: 106). The Weberian theoretical tradition has been used as an example of a sociology that not only focuses on the effects of instrumental rationality but that also appears to be itself founded in such rationality. This thesis has questioned Weberian-style analyses of religion and rationality as mutually exclusive – arguing that religion can be inclusive of rationality. Similarly, we have challenged the dualistic constructions of "this world-other world", society-religion, and secular-religious that, in the Weberian tradition, have been associated with the supposed rationalisation process in the development of religious doctrines and institutions.

More specifically we have argued that, from a position of instrumental rationality, religious faith tends to be constructed in "either-or" terms thereby precluding full appreciation of the "both-and" nature of incarnational faiths such as Catholicism. The findings in Chapters 3 and 4 have lent support to the argument that the incarnational nature of the Catholic worldview closely links it to an ethos oriented towards humanity and openness towards the "Other". In line with this we have questioned theories that postulate an inverse relationship between orthodoxy and social ethics in relation to Australian Catholicism<sup>1</sup> and the associated notion of a cleavage between religion and society (see Chapters 3 and 5).

Our findings have suggested that among many practising Australian Catholics there is a type of incarnational thinking that sees Christ as both fully human and fully divine, salvation as both this-worldly and otherworldly, and humanity as both sinful and graced – a type of thinking that would seem to go beyond the confines of binary rationality (see Chapters 3 and 4). Moreover, it has been found that a sacramental

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<sup>1</sup> In this chapter the intended meaning of the term "Australian Catholicism" refers to Catholicism as indicated by the beliefs, orientations, and practices of a majority of practising Australian Catholics.

sensibility can also be associated with openness to the co-existence of apparent opposites. On the basis of this it has been proposed that the study of a faith characterized by incarnational thinking and sacramental sensibility is best approached from a perspective sensitive to symbol and paradox – a perspective that employs an understanding of symbol as enabling the co-existence of apparent opposites. We have adopted Greeley's approach to symbol as an holistic communicative image resonating with the human experience of reality – a type of imagery of relationships that is anterior to binary propositional form.

In developing this position we have drawn from studies that postulate an analogical imagination grounded in human culture and community – an imagination that is big enough to be inclusive of dialectical thinking without being incorporated by it. This analogical imagination is regarded as allowing for the holding together of apparent opposites as well as the propositions and processes of binary logic. As such it is seen to support a view of reality as both organic and structured (see Chapter 4).

In relation to Australian Catholicism, the relevance of sociological approaches from the perspective of instrumental rationality that focus almost exclusively on the propositional aspects of religious faith has been questioned. We have associated the analogical imagination with the Catholic tradition that places importance on narrative symbol and context in religious understanding and our Chapter 4 findings have lent support to the argument that Catholics immersed in this tradition may be attuned to the symbolic in a way that allows their faith to transcend definition by objectifications. To the extent that an analogical imagination allowing for both organic and structured aspects is present among practising Australian Catholics, it has been suggested that this enables Catholic acceptance of the Church teaching tradition in a way that can accommodate the tensions relating to individual conscience and rational enquiry (see Chapter 4).

It has been argued that, in a similar way, the overall Catholic tradition can be inclusive of the institutional-level processes and structures of the Church. Insofar as the symbolic dimension of human culture allows for ambiguity, paradox, contextuality, multiplicity etc., culture has been regarded as anterior to structure.

Accordingly, we have located the Catholic institutional structure within the ongoing Catholic communal tradition.

Concern has been expressed that, from within a predominantly structural perspective, the human individual can appear to be framed by structure – leaving little room for genuine interaction between the individual and structure. From such a perspective, there can be a tendency for human relationships to be seen mainly in terms of how they support the structure. In contrast, we have suggested the possibility that from a positioning of the individual in the living Catholic cultural tradition that encompasses the institutional structure, there may be more room for interaction. From this position the individual may be able to view objectifications and / or the institutional structure in a way that is not possible if the individual is conceptualized as being dominated and framed by the structure. We have suggested that from a position in the overall communal tradition the individual may be better able to perceive structure in the context of human needs and recognise its functionality. As such, we have suggested the possibility of a view of structure as being instrumentalised to human relationships, rather than just vice versa. In short, our findings have led us to suggest that, from a perspective grounded in the religious cultural tradition, Australian Catholics may have some ability to recognise the instrumental nature of structural dynamics and to approach them in like manner (see Chapters 4 and 5).

This was seen as compatible with Greeley's interpretation of the Catholic approach to structure in terms of an acceptance of the need for order and organisation in community. Moreover, applying this notion of structure in (religious) community to the level of the wider society through the organic paradigm of society as a community of communities allowed for the notion of relationship between Church institution and secular State – without the necessary Church-State dichotomy associated with structure-dominant sociological perspectives. This paradigm also allowed for a view of Catholics as simultaneously members of religious community and members of the wider secular society. In other words, the communal model of both religion and society allowed for more interaction in relationships between the religious and the secular than did the structure-dominant perspective. The findings of Chapters 4, 5 and 6 have been interpreted as supporting this paradigm.

We have argued that interaction between the living Catholic tradition and the institutional level of the Church is a key factor in the type of relationship that Catholicism can have with secular society. Identifying social ethics as one area where there appears to be genuine interaction between the communal tradition and the institution, we have suggested that this interaction underpins the way the Australian Catholic social justice mission flows into secular society. The research has shown that this mission is pursued through engagement in both ethics discourse in the public realm and charity / social welfare services to individuals in the private sphere of secular society. Rather than viewing the options of religious engagement in society as either private or public, our findings have led us to propose that the mission is an indication of how Australian Catholicism, in terms of its orientations and engagements, can be seen as both private and public (see Chapters 5 and 6) .

Based on our Chapter 5 findings, the recognition that the Catholic social justice mission involves not only individual and communal efforts but also institutional-level engagement, has been viewed as another reflection of the both-and worldview of most practising Australian Catholics. To the extent that the mission is grounded in the human experience of religious community and is directed towards the reality of human needs in secular society, we have proposed the possibility of an organic relationship between the religious and the secular. The inclusion of an institutional / structural dimension in the mission has been interpreted as an indication of how such an overall organic relationship between the religious and the secular can also be structural. Moreover, we have argued that recognition of the role of structure is an important aspect of the Catholic ethic – not only in terms of Church institutional involvement in social welfare activity, but also in recognising that the social justice mission addresses the structures of secular society as well as the needs of individuals in secular society (see Chapters 5 and 6).

In our brief overview of Australian history, we have pointed to historical examples of Catholic efforts to change the structures of society (see Chapter 5). We have suggested that a religious tradition oriented towards transformation would seem to be compatible with the notion that social structure is open to change. Accordingly, based on findings from Chapters 5 and 6, the Catholic social justice mission has been portrayed as attempting to keep the social structure open to change through continued

interaction with human needs – an attempt to “humanize” the system that is in line with Lakeland’s view of the Church’s role in “the humanization of secular reality...” (2002: 176).

Such linkage of human needs with structure has been seen as another example of the propensity of an organic religion to be both public and private – hence countering some basic tenets of privatisation theory. Moreover, our argument that an organic religion can be inclusive of transformation and the tensions associated with it rather than being constructed by such tensions into mutually exclusive categories, also ran counter to church-sect theory. In short, on the basis of the Chapter 5 findings, we have proposed that the apparent ability of many practising Australian Catholics to have an inclusive approach to instrumental rationality, doctrinal and bureaucratic structures and their associated tensions rather than being shaped by them, cannot be adequately accounted for by theories of religious change such as privatisation theory and church-sect theory.

We have also argued that interaction between human reality and structure is an important aspect of the relationship between the religious and the secular. Insofar as the interaction is such that the role of institutional structure in the religious mission to secular society does not impede the flow of the mission’s orientation towards humanity, there can be an overall organic relationship between the religious and the secular (see Chapter 6 findings). This would seem to be possible in the case of a religious worldview that values the individual in his / her wholeness over the instrumentalities and tensions of the system. Such values have been identified in the mode of service delivery of Catholic Church welfare agencies in Australia and have been interpreted in terms of spiritual witness to the incarnational religious tradition underpinning the social justice mission. In relation to this, we have argued that the type of spirituality referred to at the coalface of Catholic welfare service delivery presents as part of an organic cycle of the religious mission to secular society and, as such, can be viewed as an important site of interface between the religious and the secular (see Chapter 6).

Overall, we have found that many practising Australian Catholics seem to have some ability to hold apparent opposites together in the living of their faith and hence their

beliefs, orientations, and practices cannot be fully understood from within a dualistic framework. We have found indications that Australian Catholicism is an organic religion with a capacity to engage the socio-cultural environment of secular society. These findings have led us to suggest that some of the difficulties concerning the classical construction of the religious - secular relationship are associated with the inappropriate imposition of dualist analysis. In examining the theme of a Catholic imperative towards charity and social responsibility we have focused on the area of social welfare and our research in this area has pointed towards an instrumental Church - secular State relationship to be functioning as one part of an overall organic relationship involving the religious mission in secular society. As such, we have argued for the possibility of an overall organic relationship between the religious and the secular which can accommodate within it an instrumental relationship between religious institutions and secular institutions.

# **Appendix 1**

## **CATHOLIC CHURCH LIFE SURVEY 1996**

### **& NATIONAL CHURCH LIFE SURVEY 2001**

(Note: Some of the documentation relating to the surveys is lengthy so only excerpts are shown here.)

#### **Catholic Church Life Survey 1996**

The following is comprised of excerpts from:

Mason, M. (1999). *The Catholic Church Life Survey: Its origin, objectives, research design and methodology*. Melbourne: Australian Catholic Bishops Conference, Pastoral Projects Office.

#### ***Origins of the Project***

*In 1991, a group of researchers who had gained considerable experience and credibility in working with an increasing range of Protestant churches initiated the National Church Life Survey (NCLS). It was a census of church attenders in virtually the whole range of Protestant churches in Australia – several hundred thousand attendees in all...*

*When a repeat of the NCLS was planned for 1996, to coincide with the Australian Government Population Census, the Catholic Church was invited to participate. The Australian Catholic Bishops conference sought advice, and agreed to take part, stipulating that questionnaires suitable for Catholics be developed...*

#### ***Objectives***

*The survey is basically client-oriented research. It has been funded by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference (ACBC), which gathered resources from a variety of church agencies, notably the State Catholic Education Commissions. As such, its principal objectives are as follows:*

*Parish Vitality Project...*

*Profile of the contemporary Australian Church...*

*Research on Catholic Education...*

*Small Research Projects on behalf of Church agencies...*

*Major issues in the Sociology of Religion...*

#### ***Research Design***

*Built-in to the CCLS are seven distinct major research projects, each with its own specific aims and content: Parish Vitality; Spirituality and Religious Experience; Catholic Education; Priests working in parishes; Pastoral Associates; the Participation of Women in the Church; and the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)...*

## **Methodology**

### **a) Sampling**

*Although the NCLS was able to achieve a “census” of attenders in some Anglican dioceses and the various Protestant denominations, this was not possible in the Catholic case. Given that over 850.000 Catholics attend church, it was obviously necessary to sample. With advice from the Statistical Consulting Service of the Monash University Department of Mathematics, a random sample of parishes stratified by diocese and urban/rural was selected. For individuals, the design is two-stage cluster sampling with stratification. The use of multiple questionnaires in different proportions means that sampling occurs within the parish as well...*

*The target sample was about 100,000 individual responses from individual parishioners in [281] parishes (out of a total of about 1412 in the universe of Australian Catholic parishes) which are part of the sample...Average parish size was 5000 attenders; 100,629 responses were received...*

### **b) Administration**

*After a large operation to produce an appropriately mixed set of questionnaires for each parish, they were mailed direct to the parish survey coordinator in each of the 397 parishes...in time to be administered on one of the last three weekends in November, 1996...The survey was conducted at every parish Mass that weekend; usually during the time ordinarily devoted to the homily...*

### **c) Questionnaires**

*In all, 31 different questionnaires were utilised: 25 in English...and one each in Italian, Spanish, Polish, Croatian and Vietnamese...*

*The A questionnaire was received by 67% of parishioners, so that there is an adequate sample from which to generalise to the parish itself; questionnaires H and N went to 5% of individuals, B to 3%, C-G, I-M to between 1 and 2%, and P-T to 1% each...*

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## **National Church Life Survey 2001**

The National Church Life Survey 2001 (Catholic component) builds on the Catholic Church Life Survey 1996 and, in many respects, follows the objectives, research design, and methodology mentioned above.

The following is comprised of excerpts from:

Australian Catholic Bishops Conference Pastoral Projects Office. (2001). *National Church Life Survey*. Melbourne: ACBC.

<http://www.ppo.catholic.org.au/researchcharts/ncls.shtml>

### ***About the survey***

*Every five years the churches in Australia take part in the National Church Life Survey (NCLS). In 2001 around 435,000 attenders from over 7,000 parishes and congregations representing 19 denominations took part in the survey. These denominations represent more than 80 per cent of regular church attenders in Australia.*

*The NCLS project seeks to obtain a clear picture of church life and mission in a changing Australia. To this end, the survey collects information about the involvement of attenders in church and in the wider community: their background, experience of church life and how they live out their faith...*

*The survey was carried out in a sample of 255 Catholic parishes that was statistically representative of parishes from each of Australia's 28 territorial dioceses... Over 77,000 attenders completed a questionnaire in parishes that made up the national sample...*

*NCLS 2001 was made up of not just one but many different questionnaires. Most attenders in each parish completed one of the main survey forms (Questionnaire A, Catholic version). Survey forms B to X were distributed randomly to the remaining attenders, allowing the creation of small national samples.*

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## Appendix 2

### OTHER DATA SOURCES

#### **National Social Science Survey (& International Social Survey Programme)**

The following is comprised of excerpts from:

Kelley, J., Bean, C., Evans, M.D.R., & Zagorski, K. (1996). *National social science survey 1993: Inequality II [computer file]*. Canberra: Australian Social Science Data Archive, Australian National University.

<http://assda.anu.edu.au/codebooks/ing93/about.html>

*The National Social Science Survey (NSSS) is an annual survey which has been conducted since 1984-85 by Jonathan Kelley (principal investigator), R.G. Cushing (1984-85), Bruce Headey (1984-85), Clive Bean, M.D.R. Evans and Krzysztof Zagorski. The principal sponsor is the Research School of Social Sciences at The Australian National University. The survey measures a wide range of variables of interest in the social sciences, particularly political science, labour economics and sociology, and typically includes some 35 pages of questions on attitudes and values and about 25 pages of detailed background and demographic questions. The data are representative of a non-institutionalised population aged 18 years and over in all States and Territories in Australia.*

*In addition, the NSSS is the Australian member of the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP), a major collaborative project by leading academic surveys in Europe and the United States. Since its inception in 1984, the ISSP has aimed to collect precisely comparable data which reveal similarities and differences between countries on social attitudes, values and politics. Each year, participating nations field a short self-completion survey module. These modules are 15 minute supplements to regular national surveys (or special surveys if necessary) which add a cross national perspective to the individual, national studies....Comparative data from all countries in the Programme are processed and distributed by the Zentralarchiv for Empirische Sozialforschung (ZA) at the University of Cologne.*

#### **[Data Disclaimer]**

*...those who carried out the original analysis and collection of the data bear no responsibility for the further analysis or interpretation of them.*

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## **World Values Survey**

The following is comprised of excerpts from:

Inglehart, R. (2000). *World values surveys and European values surveys, 1981-1984, 1990-1993, and 1995-1997 [Computer file]*. ICPSR version. Ann Arbor, MI: Institute for Social Research [producer], 2000. Ann Arbor, MI: Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2000.

<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org>

*The World Values Surveys grew out of a study launched by the European Values Survey group (EVS) under the leadership of Jan Kerkhofs and Ruud de Moor in 1981. The EVS carried out surveys in ten West European societies; it evoked such widespread interest that it was replicated in 14 additional countries.*

*Findings from these surveys suggested that predictable cultural changes were taking place. To monitor these changes, a new wave of surveys was launched, this time designed to be carried out globally, with Ronald Inglehart coordinating the surveys outside Western Europe...*

*The World Values Survey is a worldwide investigation of sociocultural and political change. It is conducted by a network of social scientists at leading universities all around the world.*

*Interviews have been carried out with nationally representative samples of the publics of more than 80 societies on all six inhabited continents...*

*The surveys are coordinated by an executive committee...[which] is funded by the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation.*

*The World Values survey module for Australia is run by the ACSPRI Centre for Social Research at the Australian National University, Canberra.*

### **[Data Disclaimer]**

*The original collector of the data, ICPSR, and the relevant funding agency bear no responsibility for uses of this collection or for interpretations or inferences based upon such uses.*

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## **Australian Community Survey (1998)**

The following is comprised of excerpts from:

Kaldor, P., Bellamy, J., Powell, R., Castle, K. & Hughes, B. (1999). *Build my church: Trends and possibilities for Australian churches*. Adelaide: Openbook Publishers (pp. 96-100).

*NCLS Research [is] an organisation jointly sponsored by the Uniting Church Board of Mission and ANGLICARE NSW...*

*Since its inception in late 1990, NCLS Research has carried out several major projects, including:*

- *1991 National Church Life Survey*
- *1996 National Church Life Survey*
- *1998 Australian Community survey (with Edith Cowan University)...*

*The focus of NCLS Research work has always been on exploring the relationship between the church and the wider community. Both NCLS96 and NCLS91 were designed to explore that relationship, looking from the life of the congregation out into the wider community...*

*Following on from the design of NCLS91, it seemed important to collect data on wider community attitudes, values, religiosity and image of the church during the 1990s. Over a period of time a proposal for such a project was developed in conjunction with Professor Alan Black, formerly of the University of New England and now at Edith Cowan University in Western Australia.*

*The survey was designed through 1996 and 1997 using the staff and expertise of NCLS Research alongside that of Edith Cowan University. It was distributed in late 1997 by mail. Survey respondents were chosen randomly from a selection of postcodes across Australia. The sampling was done in such a way that it was possible to obtain meaningful samples from particular types of communities in order to explore differences in the relationship between the church and the wider society in different kinds of social contexts.*

*Around 50% of people responded, providing a database of some 8500 persons. Adjustments were made by a weighting process to account for lower proportions of men and young adults in the database.*

*As with the NCLS, the ACS was made up of several different survey forms. Eight different surveys were constructed, each with a different focus, with a set of core questions common to all surveys.*

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