

# SUNDAY MATTERS

F. B. SMITH

SUNDAY'S BLEND of freedoms and constraints made it unique among days. Shops, workplaces, schools, sportsfields, cinemas and pubs were closed, so most families spent Sunday together. Fathers were consigned to a longer spell of proximity to their children than at any other time in the week. Traffic noise was lulled, home deliveries and letters stopped. Private telephones were available in possibly a quarter of the nation's dwellings, but ordinary people were reluctant to use them, especially for non-business calls. About three-quarters of all dwellings housed a wireless, but its morning broadcasts were church services and its afternoon offerings were dull. Outside the house the only joyous human noise came from infrequent Salvation Army bands.

Sunday threatened boredom. For that majority of Australian families who did not go to church, it was a day without formal routines and responsibilities. Fortunes in South Australia, Queensland, Western Australia, New South Wales and western Victoria could find some relief in the fantasies of the *Sunday Mail*, *Truth* and similar sheets. Everywhere fathers and children might sleep in or laze about. Parents could resort to more leisurely sexual intimacies than on other days, while children played quietly in the backyard or got ready for Sunday school.

By late morning father and a mate or two might start on the beer they had laid in from yesterday, or sneak out to buy bottles from the neighbourhood sly-grogger. Alternatively father might do some unobtrusive gardening or household repairs; Larky Weise, Methodist and working-class, remembered Sandgate in Brisbane as a place where custom banned blatant activities like mowing the front lawn or fixing the roof. Mother and the older daughters, similarly banned from doing the washing in the copper with its telltale smoke, spent the morning mending and ironing clothes and preparing the one elaborate family meal of the week, Sunday dinner—the midday roast of lamb or beef trimmed with vegetables and Gravox, followed by apple pie or steamed pudding. Winter and summer, this repast was a symbol of family unity and good fortune, and its preparation, consumption and digestion might take most of the day.



*Kath Bulloche, a junior machinist with the Sydney firm of quiltmakers D.H. Clarke, is off to visit friends after going to church. 'We thought nothing of walking from one suburb to another to visit a friend on Sunday. What else did we have to do anyway?'*

K. ROGERS, 1938 COLLECTION

BOYS AND SCOOTERS

To the editor of the  
Herald

Sir—I think it is about time some action was taken to prevent scooters and billy-carts from being used on public streets and footpaths, endangering the lives of pedestrians and disturbing the peace of the neighbourhood. Numbers of boys and girls start from early morning making much noise, and they are so persistent on Sunday that one cannot rest. I am, etc,

HOPEFUL

Paddington, April 18  
*Sydney Morning Herald*,  
20 Apr 1938.

After dinner children might spend the afternoon swimming or playing in the bush, hunting rabbits or looking for birds' eggs, collecting swap cards, stamps or cicadas, or playing games so long as these were quiet and cost nothing. Sometimes the whole family changed into their best clothes and went out. City trains or trams ran only about once an hour, and most middle-class families used their private motor car. Eight hundred thousand cars and 80 000 motorcycles were registered by an adult male population of 2.2 million. The leisure use of private vehicles was already a ritual. Driven by father and armed with sandwiches cut by mother, a family might first detour to pick up an elderly relative or two, then 'go for a spin' to nearby 'beauty spots' or visit parents, aunts, cousins and in-laws. Such visits strengthened clan bonds. Women exchanged children's clothes, sewing patterns, flowers and cuttings, eggs and jam; men exchanged seedlings, returned borrowed tools or helped with small maintenance jobs. At afternoon tea the men might talk about money, sport and politics, and the women about children's ailments, the cost of things, the neighbours' marital upsets or their own medical problems. Children were commanded to silence and to play outside without dirtying their clothes. On Sundays as on schooldays good children were not heard.

Home again, the children's and fathers' weekly baths often preceded a scratch meal at 6 or 6.30 pm. Then, the family's religious scruples permitting, there were card games, jigsaw puzzles, listening to the Lux Radio Theatre, or reading novels from the local circulating library, until everyone went early to bed in preparation for the coming week.

For non-churchgoers, this kind of Sunday was remarkably uniform throughout Australia and remarkably like the Sunday of their relatives in the British Isles. They had enjoyed a cheap, quiet, generally comfortable family day. The bombing of Shanghai, the wars in Spain and Abyssinia, the persecution of Jews and anti-Nazis in Germany and Austria, and Stalin's cruelty in the Soviet Union were unhappy, far-off things, largely put out of mind.



Sunday was governed by statutes inherited from the United Kingdom. Sunday fairs and other forms of buying and selling, racecourse betting, pawnbroking, serving of writs and warrants, firing guns in towns, and billiards and bagatelle in places of public resort were prohibited by legislation which went back to 1448. But Scottish, Ulster and Welsh evangelical Protestant demands had ensured that Australia's Sunday laws exceeded English precedent. Sunday street trading and the opening of public houses, long accepted in England, had been proscribed in Scotland from 1853, in the Irish countryside from 1878 and in Wales from 1881. Australian Sabbatarians sought successfully to limit Sunday trains outside the hours of divine service and lobbied to close public art galleries and libraries. Picture theatres were closed, as in Scotland and Northern Ireland, although they had been open on Sundays in England since 1916. Sunday amateur sport was common in England, but when Italians began to play soccer on Sunday afternoons in Sydney in the early 1930s Protestant churchmen badgered the municipal authorities into stopping them. A less noisy class of sport was played, especially tennis. In New South Wales, at least, tennis had spread from private to municipal courts.

Sabbatarians declared that these prohibitions were protecting working men from exploitation and thereby promoting class mutuality. But they never sought laws to ban adult male Sunday labour or stop the two worst instances of exploitation and class distinction—the Sunday work of domestic servants and the unfettered sale of liquor in gentlemen's clubs. Spokesmen for railway workers,





milkmen, bakers, printers and others who had to work on Sundays rarely protested, except to demand overtime.

Although only Tasmania possessed a Sunday Observance Act (1908), the net of Sunday regulation was tight. Tasmania went beyond English legislation by outlawing professional sports and trading in real estate. South Australia similarly overstepped precedent by banning Sunday dealing in gold, precious stones and second-hand goods. Victoria was one of the few places in the world to proscribe Sunday newspapers. Victoria's high proportion of Presbyterians had seen to it that Melbourne was, as the Congregationalist Reverend A.A. Lee boasted, 'the quietest city in the Empire'. As cowed British, American and even New South Wales tourists discovered, only the zoo, churches and the odd confectionery shop opened in Melbourne on Sunday. Such prohibitions were meant, as the Western Australian Police Act of 1892 declared, 'To cause the Lord's Day to be observed', but they could never be absolute in a society whose citizens were free to acknowledge many gods or none and to choose between a multitude of competing confessional forms.

Sunday illuminated divisions and tensions in Australia which were shaded during the week. The deepest division was between practising Christians and their indifferent neighbours. The deepest tensions were between Catholics and Protestants. In the commonwealth census of June 1933 5.7 million Australians, or 86 per cent of the population, were described by their heads of households as Christian, and 873 600, or 13 per cent, as 'indefinite', owning no religion or making no reply. Nominal members of the Church of England were reported at 2.5 million or 44 per cent of Christians, Catholics at 1.2 million or 22.5 per cent, Presbyterians at

*'Dressed in our Sunday best.'*  
From left to right Clarice  
Perks, her mother Sarah  
Rutherford, sisters Ethel  
Murray and Ilma Rutherford  
and husband William stand in  
the driveway of Mrs  
Rutherford's home at 38 Park  
Crescent, Kew, Melbourne.

W. PERKS, 1938 COLLECTION



*St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Wollongong, featuring romanesque towers, was opened in July 1937. Photograph by Adriaan van der Weel, 1987.*



*Dr Madden with the parents of a newly baptised child. St Mary's Roman Catholic Cathedral, Sydney.*  
HOOD COLLECTION,  
MITCHELL LIBRARY

713 000 or 12.4 per cent, Methodists at 684 000 or 11.9 per cent, Baptists at 106 000 or 1.8 per cent and Congregationalists at 65 000 or 1.1 per cent. Presbyterians had twice their national average distribution in Victoria, as did Methodists and Congregationalists in South Australia, where Catholics were about 40 per cent below their national average.

Almost certainly most of these people were neither devout nor regular church attenders. On a normal Sunday, about three Australians in ten went to church, including as many as six Catholics in every ten and as few as one in ten of those calling themselves Anglicans. Except for Catholics, these figures indicate a slight but clear decline from attendances calculated for Sydney in the 1870s and 1890s, but no figures support the claim widely made by clergymen and earnest laity in 1938 that there had once been a golden age of universal Sabbath observance.

Protestant clergy, in particular, complained of a recent falling-off from active Christianity, by which they meant church attendance. Anglican clergy in Melbourne complained of newly vacant seats, and the Adelaide Anglican diocese had lost more than 5000 communicants since 1934. Presbyterian leaders called special meetings to discuss the new 'problem of empty pews'; in Melbourne, Hawthorn Presbyterian congregation was almost half what it had been a decade earlier. Some clergy attributed the empty pews to the poliomyelitis epidemic, but the fall-off had commenced before the epidemic.

People recording themselves as 'Christians' in the 1933 census were more likely to be employed and tended to have higher incomes than those admitting religious indifference. The proportion of employers was higher among Presbyterians, Methodists, Congregationalists, Anglicans and even Catholics (the most working-class of the churches), than among people returning 'no religion' or 'no reply'. The 'indefinite' also had much the lowest proportion of youths apprenticed, the highest proportion in part-time employment and the highest percentage unemployed—around 25 per cent, compared with the worst rate among the nominal Christians of 21.8 per cent among Catholics. Census figures also suggested that while most of the 'indefinite' were poor, the group also included a significant number of wealthy





and influential people. There were more 'indefinite' people in the highest income grouping than Catholics and even Anglicans—though not Presbyterians or Congregationalists. Catholics were at the bottom of the Christian income structure, but they were not as distinct from other Christians as they and disdainful Protestants liked to think, and they had more in common with their fellow Christians than with the 'indefinite'.



The content and form of divine service were inherited from Britain. Protestant services lasted over an hour, and usually combined several hymns, two Bible readings, a sermon, a blessing and, in morning services, communion. The sermon, up to 45 minutes in length, was the centrepiece, especially for non-Anglican Protestants. The congregation, even when singing, was decorous and rarely overtly enthusiastic. Catholic masses took one hour and, apart from the sermon and parish notes, were conducted in Latin, with the celebrant and boys engaged at the altar presenting their backs to the congregation, who were not expected to join the responses or sing. Catholics, the least formally educated of Christians, were expected by their clergy to carry the heaviest load of liturgical, historical and theological information, imparted through the separate Catholic school system. It was new in Australia for the congregation to stand when the priest emerged from the sacristy to say mass, and many congregations, used to sitting, had to be admonished to act properly. Dr J.D. Simonds, Archbishop of Hobart, had a 'revelation' when he studied a suburban congregation at mass:

Only about 10 per cent had prayerbooks. Another 10 per cent recited the Rosary to themselves, ignoring the Mass. While the majority—at least 60 per cent . . . gazed at the altar or round about them in a kind of patient awaiting the end of the Holy Sacrifice.

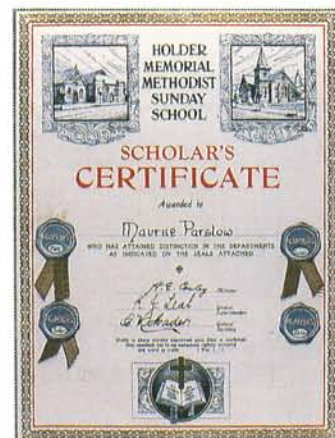
Even among churchgoers indifference may have been common.

Sunday school attendance was also falling. In 1936 Protestants lamented that 46 per cent of children nominally theirs had no links with Sunday schools or parishes. The Methodists, with one-third of all Sunday school children in Victoria, lost 10 per cent of their pupils and 318 teachers in 1937 and another 9 per cent in 1938, while the other states lost about 11 per cent each, totalling over 18 000 scholars and 1800 teachers. East Brunswick Presbyterian Sunday school in Melbourne typically reported a sharp fall in pupil numbers and a serious shortfall of teachers, although children were still turning up whose parents were not church members or even known to the superintendent.

Sunday schools followed antique systems of graded promotions, praise, pleas and admonitions. As well as picnics with corned beef sandwiches, jelly and raspberry cordial, scramble games and resolutely jolly adult organisers, there were concerts, annual prizegivings, and poorly-printed but gaudy stickers to encourage attendance. The Methodist Sunday school stickers at Kyabram in Victoria included pictures of a steam engine accompanied by the injunction, 'Go and Sin no More', and a kookaburra holding a snake in its beak, conveying the news that 'God is Love'. Most classes were conducted by underequipped junior teachers, and even experienced teachers appear to have known little about the world of their pupils. In February the Congregational Sunday school of the air offered 'Little Known Friends of St Paul, Priscilla and Aquila', about whom there is little known, stories about Lydia and Aristarchus, and a program on Epaphroditus, another shadowy fellow soldier of St Paul. Church of England programs contained strings of facts

*From 2.30 to 3.30 each Sunday afternoon, approximately 400 children and 70 teachers attended the Holder Memorial Methodist Sunday school at Mile End, South Australia. During 1937 the Sunday school committee decided to do away with the practice of giving book prizes for regular attendance. Instead, Scholar's certificates were introduced in January 1938. Five marks were allocated each Sunday—two for attendance, and one each for Bible knowledge, behaviour and expression work. At the end of the year, those who had scored above a certain level were awarded a certificate. Book prizes were still given to children who stayed long enough in the system and after 12 years some students at the age of 16 might undertake the teacher training class.*

W. MADER, ADELAIDE







Top.  
All aboard the annual  
Sunday school picnic bus,  
leaving the Methodist Church  
in Magill, South Australia, in  
October 1938.

Above and right.  
The picnic in full swing.  
L. LILLYWHITE,  
1938 COLLECTION

about ancient and modern Persia, 'what to think about while praying', 'our duty to obey God', and the geography of the Holy Land, while ten- to thirteen-year-old aspirants for the novice badge of the Soldiers of the Cross had to attend divine service regularly for six months, learn how to baptise, memorise Matthew 6-18, keep silent for two minutes every day, pray for five minutes privately in church on Sundays or at home on three weekdays, do an act of church work, give one shilling to the missions, write Roman numerals to 100, and learn the stories of Florence Nightingale and Saints Cuthbert, Francis and Joan of Arc. Two-thirds of the would-be soldiers were girls. Most children left Sunday schools at about age thirteen, perhaps aware that the old, literalist values taught there conferred no advantage in Australian life, or distracted by more appealing alternative activities. Secular diversions certainly blighted weekday observance: the hour's practice for the dwindling choir at Mordialloc Church of England, for example, was cut to 45 minutes and its time changed to 4.30 to enable choristers to listen to 'Dad and Dave'.

Nonetheless, a core of youngsters graduated from Sunday school into youth fellowships, with oaths, badges, uniforms, ranks, displays, leaders and military titles. The Church of England Boys' Society, Catholic Young Men's Society, Legion of Mary, Presbyterian Youth Fellowship, Methodist Order of Knights, Baptist Youth Fellowship and dozens of similar groups had all grown during the depression. The unemployed rarely stayed, but some employed found security in fellowship. Their



oaths enjoined daily prayer, regular worship, and abstinence from blasphemy, drunkenness and loose behaviour. Members were required to muster at church parades in full regalia.

At Easter or the King's birthday the fellowships ran camps, usually at a permanent site in the hills or at the seaside close to town. With concession fares, a camp cost about 22s a head, or about half the weekly dole. Whole families often went. The Brisbane Presbyterian Bible camps were typical. On arrival there was a roll-call, at which leaders of each parish or region announced where they had come from. Then they were divided into study groups, according to their Scottish clan names. The camp was controlled by a director, usually a clergyman, aided by a chaplain, a camp secretary who was usually a layman, and a camp mother, generally the director's wife. The day began at 6.45 with 'rousing music' over the public address system which thereafter directed the day's activities helped by bells. The morning's program comprised Bible study and 'inspirational' meetings. After lunch there was time for walking, swimming or tennis, then a quiet period before the evening meal, which was followed by communal devotions, a film or talk about missionary work and community singing, ending about 9 pm with 'Bright Walks' and 'Lasting Friendships'.

While older people knitted, cooked, ran the toddlers' creche, did jobs around the camp, listened to the doctrinal expositions, enjoyed the singing and exuded goodwill, camps were the main arena for mixing and courting among the young of churchgoing families, encouraging them to marry a partner of their own denomination. Counselling against mixed marriages was a regular feature of all Protestant camps and Catholic retreats, although the latter were unisexual. Sex was a problem for Protestant camp organisers. Girls' dormitories always had 'a senior appointed for oversight' and the Presbyterian Reverend J.C. Jamison of Melbourne advised his campers 'to strictly avoid thinking about ... sex relationships. Fill the mind with a multitude of other interests'. These other interests including dressing up, men as women, women as larrikins and footballers, and impromptu farces and satires on camp life. The rosters for the daily chores always provoked amusement because the males were set to the less skilled tasks under the supervision of females. Shy Christians must have found it an ordeal, while gregarious Christians thought their camps marvellous.

The denominational clan system extended to sport. Churches supported gymnasium classes and cricket, badminton and tennis teams in Protestant and Catholic leagues. Protestants were keen on gymnastics, Catholics specialised in handball. Church parades of uniformed cricketers and gymnasts, their captains serving the mass or reading the lesson, their clergy delivering appropriate sermons, were regular dates on the calendar.

The parish church was still a focus for community and family activities. Croydon North Independent church, in Melbourne, met almost every weeknight. Its girls' club presented 'Cinderella', written by a member, and in late May the ladies' and young people's clubs combined to present a 'practical talk' to over thirty people on making women's underclothing. The young men's debating and elocution club was waning, so the girls were encouraged to debate, and they essayed 'a humorous subject'. Among Catholics debating was a popular and serious pastime. The aspirations to self-improvement, so strong in earlier generations, survived best among Catholics because their low status and isolation made their way in the world harder. Protestants tended to be more frivolous. At Epping Street East Malvern Methodist church in Melbourne a typical young men's night involved an address by the minister on 'The Spirit of Christ', succeeded by a 'clever exhibition on stage of sleight of hand'. Churches, too, could still offer friendship and support in a

*Sunday school picnic, Christ Church, Launceston, 1937. Lantern slides from photographs by A.H. Masters.*  
QUEEN VICTORIA MUSEUM  
AND ART GALLERY,  
LAUNCESTON





society whose state services were rudimentary and smacked of charity. At Seddon Congregational church in Melbourne during May the editor of the parish newsletter was

pleased to report that Mr R. Jones has returned to his home in Tongue Street from hospital. Congratulations are extended to Harry Tribe on having obtained an industrial chemistry scholarship at the Footscray Technical School. We extend our sympathy to Mrs T. Bryan, of Seddon Street, on the death of her brother, Mr Neil McLeod, who died at St Kilda and was buried at Colac ...



Radio pictorial of  
Australia, 1 Nov 1938.

Yet Protestant parish life was in decay. Fellowship recruitment had slowed and the membership was ageing. Epping Street youth club collapsed at the end of 1938. Presbyterian club membership reached a plateau in 1936 and by 1938 was falling away. This decline coincided with increased attendances at the cinema, and the Anglican Reverend W.G. Thomas saw the shift as demonstrating a tendency among young people to find their entertainment 'as separate individuals or in very small groups' and a decline in 'the old social spirit'. Worse, he added, the new vogue of 'Saturday night late pleasures' kept parishioners in bed on Sunday mornings. Certainly the clubs' decline exacerbated the traditional Protestant problem of retaining the menfolk. Bible readings, sermonising and hymn singing about depravity, sin and future salvation apparently had too little to do with daily breadwinning. Men controlled the parish finances and policy but Protestant worship was predominantly a women's activity.

Catholics had done much better with their Holy Name Society, which had come to Australia from the United States in 1928 and by 1938 had claimed 100 000 members. Under central clerical direction this hierarchical army obliged every member to enrol his fellow and ensure that he kept his pledge to assist at monthly Holy Name masses, attend benediction on appointed Sundays, join regular communion breakfasts, and, whenever necessary in the workplace, rebuke blasphemy, defend the Church, profess his faith and maintain his dignity as a Catholic. Holy Name's badge and banner displayed the Cross, the sign under which Constantine had triumphed. It was, the Society's *Handbook* said, to be 'honoured as a ... regimental standard ... against socialism and irreligion'. In Melbourne in late 1937 and early 1938 a few members of the Society branched out to form the National Secretariat for Catholic Action, a group whose fortunes are taken up in the chapter on 'Religion' in the next volume.

Australian Catholics were raised in a tradition of piety which both derived from and reinforced their separate station. Their devotions centred on the Sacred Heart, in reparation for personal sin and unworthiness, and the possibility of personal regeneration through intercession and regular participation in the sacraments. It was an emotionally-held set of absolute presuppositions rather than an intellectual faith, a world of mental prayer, whispered acts of contrition, fear of hell, saints' medallions, scapulars, holy pictures and simplified prayer books. Heavy pseudo-Romanesque brick churches and convents, which the community continued to stint itself to build through the 1930s, housed pastel-toned sanctuary lamps, gilt altars, insipid plaster statues and wan stations of the cross; yet the ensemble engaged the imaginations and matched the tastes of its beholders in a way that Protestantism could not equal and scorned to try.

The certainties of Catholic dogma and the aggrieved cohesiveness of its believers fuelled the great priestly dramatic displays on the Feast of Christ the King and the Eucharistic festivals which had developed during the 1920s. In December 25 000 Melburnians gathered before Archbishop Mannix on his dais, flanked by bishops, priests, altar servers and Holy Name men. After high mass, the speech and the



blessing, the congregation roared their favourite, 'Faith of Our Fathers, living still, in spite of dungeon, fire and sword', happily unaware that it had been written about England by an English convert.

The Regional Missionary Congress in Newcastle in February was the great Catholic show of the year. Over 20 000 marchers, elaborately ranked by sodality and parish, occupied the principal streets which were arrayed with banners. Pipe bands, the Legion of Mary, parish schoolchildren, the Catholic Women's Social Guild, Catholic students, Catholic firemen, Catholic ironworkers and Catholic nurses, nuns, brothers and priests preceded the chariot of the Sacred Heart drawn by Holy Name Society prefects led by the mayor, and bearing Bishop Gleeson in shimmering white vestments, holding aloft the golden monstrance with the Host under a brilliant blue canopy. Such spectacles and miracles could sometimes puzzle Catholic laity. In September one asked Father Boylan, the Jesuit editor of the *Australasian messenger of the Sacred Heart*, whether the bodies of certain popes and saints were preserved incorrupt in the Vatican, like Phar Lap in the Melbourne Museum. Boylan was sharp but evasive: Phar Lap was not incorrupt, he was stuffed.

The Newcastle march fuelled Protestant distaste. It declared an arrogant, dogmatic grandeur that many Protestants condemned. At least one local Protestant family was furious that the mayor should lend his civic dignity to such ostentatious, un-British superstition, and the ranked tradesmen, doctors and nurses reminded Catholics and Protestants alike that denominational tribalism could extend beyond clubs and sport to preferential economic and professional dealing. Protestants were irritated by Catholic separatism and many thought, like Keith McCance, who belonged to the Kew Church of Christ, that Catholic loyalty to crown and empire was dubious. Schoolboys in the separate systems shouted rude rhymes at each other and threw stones; young Protestants, like the Anglican Keith Maurer of Sydney, were brought up to think Catholics 'dirty' and 'unholy' and not to have them as friends. Catholics, Protestants said, sought to monopolise the public service, they gambled, drank and danced. They supported the disloyal, turbulent and corrupt Labor party. Protestants, Catholics believed, were heretics whose forefathers had persecuted their forefathers and whose present representatives in masonic lodges, local councils and United Australia Party branches disdained them. This corrosive division remains the most vivid recollection many people have of 'religion' in 1938. While religion sometimes integrated individuals and groups, it also divided Australian society.

Denominational divisions were sharpest on the question of marriage. Catholics marrying non-Catholics were enjoined by papal order to convert the spouse, marry with Catholic rites and raise their children as Catholics. This rule offended notions of romantic love and freedom of choice and was deeply resented by Protestants, yet perhaps a quarter of Catholic marriages involved a non-Catholic partner. In Armidale, in the Protestant heartland of New South Wales, 80 per cent of Catholic marriages involved Catholic partners, compared with only 40 per cent in Hobart and 66 per cent in Sydney. No wonder the Catholic *Messenger* ran a marriage bureau, at 7s 6d an application. 'Dismal Desmond's' plea of 1 November is representative. His letter was editorially paraphrased to describe him as a good steady chap, 'financially sound', who said his rosary daily and attended mass regularly.

Correspondent has prayed for years to St Joseph and the Sacred Heart to assist him to search for a suitable partner and lately has been calling on the assistance of Our Lady [and] the Little Flower ... But somehow ... the problem seems as far off solution as ever ... Should he persevere?

*By the 1930s architects had begun designing church buildings in the Art Deco style.*

*Cathedral Hall, Armidale, built in 1938. Photograph by Peter Spearritt, 1985.*



*First Church of Christ Scientist, built in 1937. Photograph by Adriaan van der Weel, 1987.*



'Yes', said the editor, 'find a good Catholic girl, fairly presentable, and kind to her mother and ... take a bold plunge'. But most ordinary Australians were more relaxed than this. A vigorous correspondence developed in the *Women's weekly* about compatibility in marriage. The four most discussed elements were mutual respect, fair sacrifices, race and money. Religion was not mentioned.

Straitlaced Christians also had their sexual anxieties bruised in Sunday sermons. The Presbyterian *Messenger* in Victoria reported clerical objections to leggy advertisements for women's stockings in the daily press and pleaded, in another lost cause, to competitors in bathing beauty contests not to 'display ... their figures ... in skin tights to every eye ... Is it wise to go back to the manners of the ... lubra?'. The Catholic *Messenger* advised girls to adopt the cord of St Philomena, the patron saint of chastity, and the Very Reverend Walter Hurley told his St Mary's Sunday congregation in July that 'our bodies, which through the corruption of human nature by the fall of Adam, became our natural enemies ... must be mortified and denied'. Such teaching troubled the laity. 'Worried M.A.' reported her temptations to the Catholic *Messenger*. Father Boylan's answers indicate her questions:

1. Mortal sin; this must be stopped.
2. Even worse mortal sin, because it involves scandal ... Take up a horse whip and hit him hard if necessary.
3. If you said in Confession that you committed sin only once when it should have been ... 10 or 20 times, you must supply that in your next Confession.
4. No need to apologise.

Occasionally innocence was buoyed by clerical humanity. In October Father Boylan instructed 'Newly Wed':

1. As often as they feel inclined. At the same time, just as in eating and drinking a certain moderation is good for the health, so in the matter you refer to ...
2. Till each party has full satisfaction.
3. A mortal sin.

'Newly Wed' asked the third question about contraception.

The clergy was uncompromising in prohibiting contraception, preferring large families. The president of Methodist Ravenswood Ladies' College, the Reverend F.W. Hynes, told his Sunday congregation that 'in earlier days people were more devout and families were large', while Father Ferrari explained the implications to his Sunday congregation at St Mary's Cathedral: birth control threatened to make people too reliant on themselves and too little reliant on God and His ministers. When the Bourne judgment in England appeared to extend legal grounds for abortion, Archbishop Duhig of Brisbane warned Catholic doctors against ever mentioning the case, adding: 'Too much maudlin sentiment was shown to girls who were victims of designing men'. The girl involved was a rape victim aged fourteen. Nonetheless, the clergy was flouted: families were small in the hard 1930s.

Fear that their influence was declining showed in the fervid response of clergymen of all denominations to the Catholic prime minister's call, in early September, for a day of prayer for 'Divine guidance in world problems'. Dr John Mackenzie, a Presbyterian, welcomed the call as late acknowledgment that the clergy might yet lead in what 'was still a Christian country'. Despite the prayers, international tensions grew for a time, but then the British prime minister returned from Munich with an agreement that promised peace. The *Church of England messenger* proclaimed, 'Who will dare to deny that there is some connection between Australia's Day of Prayer and this unprecedented act ... Thank God we are British'. 'There was a real connection between prayer and politics', the Reverend T.E. Ruth told his ecumenical Sunday audience at Scots Church, Sydney,



citing as proof Chamberlain's achievement in Munich. In Melbourne Archbishop Mannix directed that a solemn high mass and Te Deum be sung on Sunday at St Patrick's, and in Sydney the Reverend R.F.C. Bradley told a returned servicemen's Protestant Sunday service that, with peace secured, the army had no need to hold proposed battle exercises on Sunday.

When the Munich agreement collapsed and the Germans marched into Czechoslovakia, the president of the Queensland Council of Protestant Churches suggested that Australian Christians raise £500 000 for Czech refugees. The response was cool. Anglican Archbishop Head 'reserved comment'; a Presbyterian minister remarked enigmatically that 'it is not merely a matter of money'; the Methodist, Reverend H. Worrall, President of the Victorian Council of Churches, considered the time 'not opportune. Such an action might be regarded as casting doubt on the intentions of Herr Hitler'; the chairman of the Victorian Baptist Union, Mr Book, refused to discuss 'any practical suggestion for raising money, [but]... believe[d] we ought to feel a great measure of sympathy for the people of Czechoslovakia'. The Catholics said nothing. Nobody suggested more prayers for Chamberlain.

Worshippers received poor guidance about the international labyrinth. In Adelaide the Methodist Conference refused to protest against the imprisonment in Germany of pastor Niemoller because he was imprisoned for 'political issues', not religious ones. The Catholic *Messenger* lauded Dr Salazar, the Portuguese dictator, for claiming to be against 'all the great heresies of our time', especially communism. The *Messenger* also reported that in Spain Generalissimo Franco assisted at mass every morning and recited the rosary with his family every evening, and that the Nationalist 'volunteers' went into battle singing hymns. It showed no sympathy when the chaplain to the anti-Nazi Cardinal-Archbishop of Berlin supposedly committed suicide by jumping from a fifth storey window at Gestapo headquarters. Instead the *Messenger* saw in the new Germany a bulwark against communism, its history echoing old Ireland's:

Whatever may be thought about their leaders... Herr Hitler, von Goering, von Papen and others... they were certainly virile... They rattled the sabre, they defied their oppressors, amid the applause of the lately depressed... people, they tore up the Treaty of Versailles... To unify the resurrected nation, the power of the Jews was repressed...

In December, after the anti-Semitism of Crystal Night and the round-up of Viennese Jews, the *Messenger* explained that the Jews had invited retribution by their conspiratorial control of banking and the press and that unless 'easy-going' Australians woke up, they too would find 'that the daily press... had got into the hands of... the Jewish commercial and theatrical ring'. The campaign to convert Jews had to be stepped up. At the annual pre-Melbourne Cup function of the Catholic Young Men's Society, P.J. Doyle spoke on 'Who Controls the World, the Jews or the Gentiles?' and was apparently well received. Anti-Semitism appears to have been widespread, but not virulent, among Catholics, while only a handful of Protestants spoke up for the Jews after Crystal Night.



Excepting among the Aborigines, whose religion whites were trying to extirpate, Australian Jews and gentiles grew up in a landscape devoid of sacred places. No cosmogony, again excepting that of the Aborigines, had a local basis, and even the stars did not correspond with European mythology. No saint had walked here, no



Although sporting activities on Sundays met with disapproval in some circles, the Midget Car Drivers' Association was one of many organisations to promote its activities on the 'day of rest'.

BOOROWA PRODUCTIONS





On Sunday 23 November, Lutherans celebrated the centenary of the Australian Lutheran Church at Wegener's Hill near Walla Walla, New South Wales. They used this German wagon as a pulpit. Photograph by F. Krause, 1938.

D. KOTZUR

martyr had been slaughtered, no miracle recorded. There were no places of pilgrimage, the seasons of the Christian festivals were out of joint, and believers enjoyed no confident sense that their forebears had lived in this land through generations of sacred history. It is a tribute to inherited tradition and the weakness of alternative associations that so many white Australians, rather than so few, kept the faith.

Yet Australia was a secular society. Unique among nations, it had created no national church or new denomination. Christianity in Australia, unlike that in Poland, Dutch-speaking South Africa or the United States, had never contributed to the sense of national destiny. Australian politicians rarely invoked God. Recruitment to the clergy was a constant problem. The pulpit accents in nearly all the larger parishes were British or Irish, as was the upbringing of most of the editors of the confessional journals and the teachers in the seminaries. It seems probable that sizeable proportions of the more regular worshippers had accents that matched their preacher's. Every church journal was full of news from 'Home'.

Immigrant clergymen and laity felt themselves beleaguered among a 'work-shy generation' of uncaring Australians. 'If Sunday goes in the drift', lamented the Scottish-born editor of the *Presbyterian Messenger*,

it does not go alone. Old courtesies, old habits, old songs, old books and authors go with it. Is Scott much read today? ... Are we better for the change—for the books that lift the curtain of privacy, and fling a halo about night club manners and ... morals; for jazz and crooning ... for Press pictures featuring in excess young girls in swimming attire; for the rush, roystering and noise of holiday Sundays?

Yet the atmosphere and taboos of Australia's Sunday persisted, evidence that religion held society in a grip of some kind. What Australians believed, and how belief shaped religious observance, remains unclear. At the heart of it, perhaps, some sort of religious faith remained for most Australians the fundamental, if





elusive, key to accepting life and death and the course of the world. Despite an increase in civil marriages and cremations and 'No religion' and 'No reply' responses to census questions, most Australians still resorted to churches and churchmen for marriages and funerals. The church remained the theatre for displays of joy or grief associated with the happy or cruel events of family life. The clergyman was a friendly, sympathetic, authoritative co-ordinator, his function more to do with this world than the next; his duty more to instil 'the right way', as Frank Toby was told during his working-class Anglican upbringing in Sydney, than to explain it. 'The right way' was moral rather than theological, a code of simple decency based on responsibility for oneself and one's fellows, deriving from the Sermon on the Mount. As Father John McCool lamented one Sunday at St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, Australians seemed to regard sin as an offence against society, a breach of good manners, rather than as an infringement of divine law, an insult to God and a departure from the path to heaven. The Salvation Army, the St Vincent de Paul Society, church sponsorship of children's homes, hospitals, rest homes for the aged and similar institutions, were more strongly approved, as were the visiting ministrations of the clergy at times of family upset. Australians regarded good works as the proper business of the churches.

The devout were most separated from the majority by their hostility to gambling, drinking, card playing and dancing. In Victoria the Protestant churches staked their all on the local option plebiscite, which, if won, would have reduced opportunities for public drinking. Despite their predictions and assertions that God was with them, they lost, with a massive 66 per cent against them—a 16 per cent swing since a comparable vote in 1930. They were dumbfounded; then began to agonise about their separateness, their sermonising which too few understood, and their inexperience in common 'business'.

Their control of Sunday was also slipping. During the summer of 1937–38 soft drink and ice cream manufacturers began to distribute to shops around Melbourne on Sunday. The Lord's Day Observance Council, led by Archbishop Head,

*Unemployed men receive their Christmas Sunday breakfast at the Sydney Methodist Mission in Francis Street, East Sydney.*

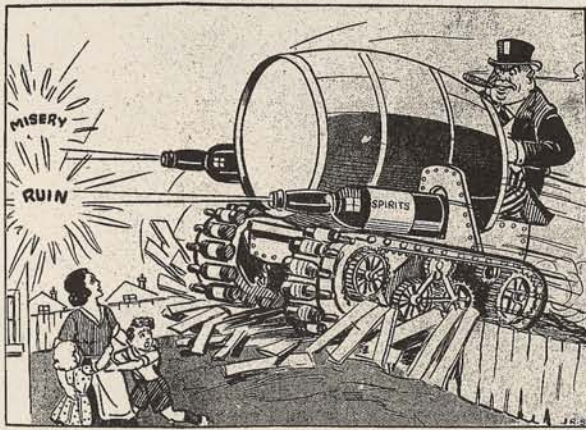
MITCHELL LIBRARY



Table talk, 6 Oct 1938.



THIS GREAT DESTROYER EVER MENACES THE HOME



A cruelly-soulless form of "self-determination," which we find it hard to forgive

War cry, 5 Feb 1938.

SPEEDING to the RESCUE



War cry, 1 Oct 1938.

On 8 October Victorians went to the polls to vote for or against the granting of liquor licences to sell liquor. The 'Yes' campaign was led by temperance reformers, many of whom had protestant religious affiliations. The Temperance Alliance urged women to vote 'Yes' and protect the home and family against the evil influence of drink. The Liquor Trades Alliance urged them to vote 'No' because prohibition would result in unemployment and loss of income. Percy Leason was employed by the publicans and brewers. His cartoons played on the fear that widespread corruption would follow a 'Yes' vote.

RUTH DUCKETT

An Editorial

OCTOBER 22, 1938.

VICTORIA'S POLL ON LIQUOR

BY an overwhelming majority, Victorian voters have decided against the proposal to abolish liquor licences.

Under the present Victorian Licensing Act, a poll must be taken every eight years. Voting is compulsory, and the Act provides that a 60 per cent. "No" vote is necessary to secure abolition.

In round numbers, 667,000 voted "No" and 345,000 "Yes." Victoria's vote is in keeping with the modern idea that it is not advisable to attempt a sudden change in social habits by harsh prohibitive legislation. Practical support for this attitude was provided by the American experiment, this great effort to suppress the sale of alcohol having led to the horrors of bootlegging and an alarming increase in crime.

Australian women's weekly, 22 Oct 1938.

Character building is the one safe foundation on which to build a temperate nation.

As a matter of sober fact, court records in all States show that drunkenness is on the decline in Australia.

Nor is drunkenness tolerated by the social consciousness. There is definitely a widespread feeling that over-indulgence in drink is as stupid as any other type of gluttony.

The days have passed when the hotel, or the "glittering gin palace," was the most attractive rendezvous for the man of average income. To-day, a better education and a far wider choice of intelligent amusements are offered him.

Radio, pictures, cheaper reading matter, increased facilities for healthy sport are all good friends to temperance.

The normal, healthy-minded, decently-educated Australian is not likely to degenerate into a drunkard.

Future generations may or may not decide on total abstinence from liquor, but the lesson of this poll seems to be that any change must only be effected through the gradual education of public opinion.

—THE EDITOR.

PROHIBITION COMES TO WIREGRASS



VOTE NO ☒ Against Prohibition

Authorized by J. A. LISTON and BRIG. GENERAL STEWART, Assistant Director, The Block, Culture Street, C.I.

Walkabout, 1 Sept 1938.





'Suitcase parade.' Women opponents of the hotel hours bill outside parliament house, Adelaide on 20 September. Marches were illegal in South Australia, so about 200 women stuck placards onto suitcases to parade their opposition to the bill. It proposed to extend hotel bar closing time from 6 to 6.30 pm. Closing time in New South Wales was 6 pm, Queensland 8 pm, Tasmania 10 pm, Victoria 6 pm, and Western Australia 9 pm. The bill had already passed the legislative council, but in December the new premier, Thomas Playford, announced he would oppose it, and it was defeated in the assembly. *Adelaide News*, 21 Sept 1938.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVES

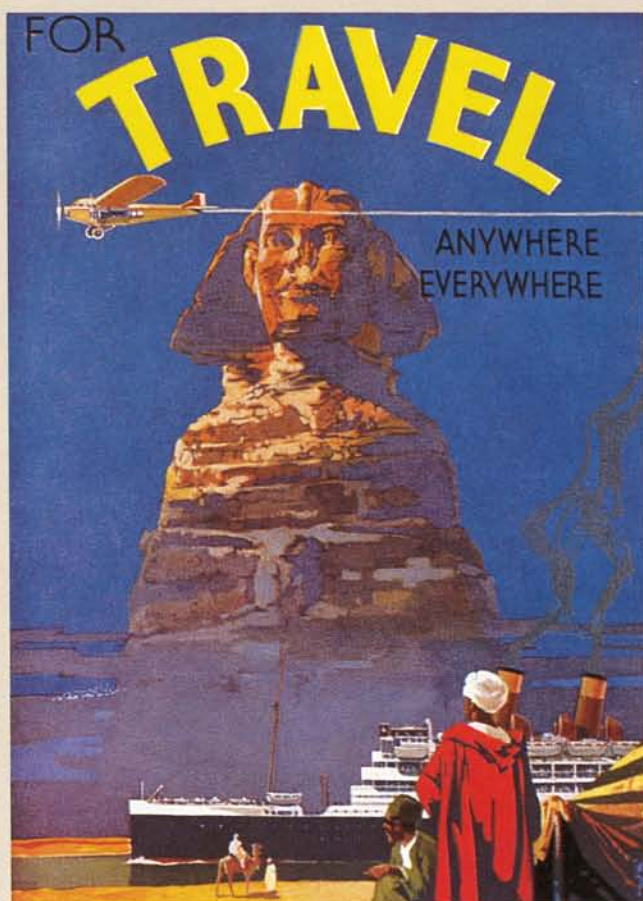
protested to the government, but the government temporised—ice cream could be legally defined as a perishable—and the deliveries continued. In New South Wales the commercial radio stations ignored Methodist protests against their new Sunday practice of broadcasting racing news and brewery advertisements. The Labor party increasingly used Sunday afternoons for its meetings, the public transport authorities introduced a seven-day roster and Anglican protests against the reduction of Sunday family rail fares failed. In Melbourne towards the end of the year the Lord's Day Observance Council lost the battle to stop builders working on jobs in the otherwise deserted central business district, and the united Protestant forces were also defeated by the powerful new Civil Aviation Board when they tried to prevent scheduled flights on Sundays. Protestants had earlier damaged their cause by demanding (unsuccessfully) that the government and Melbourne city council forbid a Sunday showing of a 'serious' film, the donated proceeds of which were to buy milk for undernourished children. Even more damaging was a defeat in the courts when the Bathurst Ministers' Fraternal unsuccessfully prosecuted a local football club with Catholic affiliations for selling tickets to a public performance on a Sunday.

While the influence of organised religion seemed to be waning, astrology was enjoying a revival. The *Women's weekly*, with sales of over 360 000 per issue, carried the predictions of Jane Marsden. In January her forecast for the year declared that the stars 'indicated' that an Australian girl would achieve worldwide fame as a film star, that another would marry into the English aristocracy, and that 'more money and security in the family ... are also foretold'. She added: 'it will be a great year for fashions'. The second prediction and the third, those pertinent to most readers, came true. The stars defaulted on the others. Jane Marsden was more circumspect during the rest of the year. Her advice for the week beginning 17 March was typical:

Aries—'Poor to fair'  
 Gemini—'Let patience predominate'  
 Leo—'An unspectacular week'  
 Virgo—'Rather poor for you'  
 Pisces—'Play safe'.

This was apt. These were just the ways that Australians, 'Christian' and 'indifferent' alike, went about their lives, on Sundays as on other days.





*The sphinx had been an icon for Australian tourists ever since the AIF's sojourn in Egypt in the Great War, BP magazine, June 1937.*



VI  
THE WORLD





*These middle-class Austrian refugees were among the first to arrive by ship in Sydney on 27 October. Two months later, as a result of the Erian Conference, the Australian government agreed to accept 15 000 Jewish refugees who were fleeing Austria and Germany as a result of Hitler's anti-Semitic policies.*

MAGAZINE PROMOTIONS