

Radio ministries:

Religion on Australian commercial radio from the 1920s to the 1960s

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the first forty years of religious broadcasting on commercial radio in Australia, a subject largely neglected by historians of Australian religion and the media. It reveals the diversity of religious broadcasting on Australian commercial radio, the ambiguities of the regulatory framework within which it operated, the influence of American religious broadcasting in Australia, and the challenges confronting religious broadcasters, particularly in the decade between the introduction of television and the emergence of talkback radio. The article concludes in the second half of the 1960s, when religious programming faced mounting commercial pressures, as well as a new opportunity in the shape of ‘talkback’ radio.

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Religious history, it is often said, has been neglected by writers of mainstream Australian history who are inclined to represent Australia as a secular country without a significant religious culture. To the argument that Australian religious history has been largely confined to denominational historyⁱ can be added another observation: historians of Australian religion have largely overlooked the nexus between religion and the electronic media. Ian Breward's history of the Australian churches pays scant attention to religion on radio and television,ⁱⁱ and few denominational histories go much further.

Certainly, isolated studies of religious broadcasting in Australia have been undertaken. K. S. Inglis' magisterial histories of the government-funded radio and television broadcaster, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), address religion and, more recently, Alison Healey has explored at length religious broadcasting on the ABC.ⁱⁱⁱ Several useful pages are also to be found in Jacqueline Kent's book about the "golden years" of Australian radio in the 1940s and 1950s, and Jill Roe considers 2GB in her history of Australian theosophy.^{iv} Implicit in some writings on the subject, however, is the assumption that religious broadcasting has been principally confined to the ABC and the community radio sector, established in the 1970s to cater to special-interest groups. This article focuses on the commercial radio sector, which has traditionally dominated Australia's radio ratings. By tracing something of the history of religious broadcasting on commercial radio stations, it builds on J. L. F. Buchner's thesis

examining Australian religious broadcasting on public and commercial radio and television, and William B. Aliprandi's thesis about Catholic broadcasting in Australia.^v

Drawing on radio periodicals, official reports, manuscript collections and government and church archives, as well as writings by, and about, individual religious broadcasters, this article focuses on the first forty years of religious broadcasting in Australia. It concludes in the second half of the 1960s, when religious programming faced mounting commercial pressures, as well as a new opportunity in the shape of "talkback" radio. The article seeks to demonstrate the diversity of religious broadcasting on Australian commercial radio, the ambiguities of the regulatory framework within which it operated, the influence of American religious broadcasting in Australia, and the challenges confronting religious broadcasters, particularly in the decade between the introduction of television and the emergence of talkback radio.

The early years

"The intention is to conduct the station on ideal principles and solely with the object of uplifting our Australian people ... prominent local speakers will give addresses on citizenship, social reform, philosophy, science, religions, on the great men of history, and on art in all its branches ..." declared A. E. Bennett in April 1926 in a letter accompanying an application for a radio licence from the Theosophical Broadcasting Station.^{vi} While the name broadly hinted at the station's wish to theosophise Australia, the backers of what became 2GB tried to wear the appearance of non-partisanship by mobilising notions like "citizenship" and cultural uplift. In September Bennett assured *Wireless Weekly* that 2GB would not be used for "semi-religious or religious matter only"; the station, dedicated to "Australia's service, to its advancement and uplift", would offer a varied program of music, humour and talk. 2GB was the station perhaps most

vulnerable to criticism, associated as it was with an exotic, at times controversial, Eastern religion. Even so, at the 1927 royal commission, Bennett was not the only person affiliated with a religious or political cause to proclaim a desire to educate and enlighten the general Australian community.^{vii} Some Christians, meanwhile, were sceptical, even fearful, of radio, with its “worldly” serials and “shocking” modern music.^{viii}

One of the earliest outside broadcasts in Australia had been of a service from the Congregational Church in Pitt Street, Sydney, in about 1924.^{ix} Shortly before Christmas that year, the Salvation Army band was heard over 5DN; the following year the station commenced regular broadcasts of church services.^x By 1927 several *Wireless Weekly* correspondents were complaining that Sydney’s airwaves had become congested with religious services and other programs on a Sunday, which was for some listeners their only day of leisure. One of the complainants wondered whether the churches were simply wasting their time as most city folk spent their Sundays outdoors. Other listeners retaliated by arguing that many people, due to sickness and family responsibilities, were not always able to physically get to church: “even in this jazz age, there are those who find their comfort, joy and inspiration in religion”.^{xi}

2GB did emerge as resolutely highbrow, establishing the Theosophical String Quartet and staging topical debates and lectures as well as explicit theosophical offerings.^{xii} The Catholic church was also quick to seize the opportunity to use the airwaves for evangelical purposes. When Father (late Monsignor) James Meany was deputed to organise the International Eucharistic Congress to be held in Sydney in 1928, he decided to rent time for the Catholic church on 2UE. For months the station broadcast special services from St Mary’s Cathedral, as well as lectures in preparation for the Congress. Meany also arranged for a theologian, Rev. Dr Leslie Rumble, to do a weekly broadcast explaining Catholic doctrine. At first the talks were too theological, but with

Meany's encouragement Rumble gradually learned the art of popularisation and began carefully addressing questions sent in by listeners. These broadcasts were designed in part to challenge the hostility of some Protestant groups, which were denouncing the Congress as "worship of the wafer" and demanding that civic authorities ban the Eucharistic procession.^{xiii}

The broadcast of the Congress itself represented one of the biggest logistical exercises yet attempted by the Australian broadcasting industry. Meany urged all Catholics to obtain a radio receiver wherever possible, remarking that broadcasting should in future be made an essential feature of Christian life. Amalgamated Wireless Australasia (AWA) installed six microphones at various points, from above the pulpit to amongst the congregation, so that listeners to 2UE and many other stations could hear the Congress' opening Mass. The commentary was provided by Father John Egan.^{xiv}

After these ambitious broadcasts, 2UE was happy to retain Rumble in his short weekly spots. Impressed by the interest in the Congress, Meany raised the finances to allow Archbishop Michael Kelly to form the Catholic Broadcasting Company Ltd. When awarding the licence in 1931, the powerful secretary of the Postmaster-General's (PMG) Department, (later Sir) Harry P. Brown, reminded the licensees of the point he had been making for years: every station had a duty to "cater for the entertainment and interest of listeners as a whole", not just one section of the community. Now Brown's comments coincided with his department's attempts to censor political talks at a time of considerable domestic and international turmoil, and with his own private worries about the way in which commercial stations were being used to broadcast "propaganda" and "extremist views". The company secretary of what became 2SM sought to reassure Brown that purely religious broadcasts would be confined to Sundays.^{xv} The station was also to provide an outlet for talks hostile to communism and sympathetic to fascism; not

long after 2SM's launch in November 1931, Archbishop Kelly could be heard airing his admiration for Mussolini.^{xvi}

That year, the debate about the merits or otherwise of religion on radio revived. *Wireless Weekly* criticised religious broadcasters, particularly those on the ABC, for treating listeners as though they were merely eavesdroppers. A "Farmer's Wife" declared that she now belonged solely to the "Broadcast Church" as she found it difficult to physically attend services and, alluding to the Depression, her best clothes were sometimes a little shabby. This testimony was all the more reason, declared *Wireless Weekly*, for more thought to be given to religious broadcasts. Several ministers agreed with common listener complaints: sermons were tedious and uninspiring, hymns were not well-known, ministers moved about too much to be heard. None, however, was persuaded by the proposal that services should be broadcast from studios rather than churches. But nor did what might have been a predictable argument—that religious broadcasts would reduce church attendances—gain much currency. (Even so, one listener sneered at "deeply religious individuals" who opted to listen in rather than put money on the plate.)^{xvii} A Perth radio periodical, remarking that religious broadcasters deserved to "feel like the Jesus of Galilee preaching to the multitude", wondered whether talks, sermons, orchestral music or hymns were the most appropriate fare.^{xviii}

Religious ministers mostly shared Meany's enthusiasm for the medium, with Rev. W. J. Grant declaring that broadcasting gave preachers the "opportunity of a lifetime to put a message over". *Australian Radio News* editorialised that radio "is greater as a means of touching the consciences and hearts of the people ... than that of any other engine the world has known. The radio is the universal teacher and preacher ...".^{xix}

Several churches were determined not to let this opportunity go to waste. The NSW Council of Churches obtained a licence for 2CH in 1931, with (later Sir) Frederick

Stewart, a prominent businessman and Member of Parliament, providing the financial backing. Stewart, who announced at the opening in 1932 that the station's mission was "to educate, to evangelise, and to edify", gave over Sunday to the churches, and also allocated free time for daily devotions from Monday to Saturday. When AWA acquired the lease in 1936, the churches retained entitlements to free time.^{xx} 2SM also steadily built on its Sunday night religious programming, broadcasting sessions on church doctrine and history, reading Catholic news from international journals and covering special religious events. Meany, who was managing director, co-ordinated appeals for charities and single-handedly ran the extended Good Friday and Christmas Day sessions.^{xxi} Surveying a decade of Catholic broadcasting in 1937, he observed that there had been no falling off in church attendances, partly because practising Catholics were obliged to attend Mass; listening in allowed people to quietly listen to and think about the word of God and appreciate the musical beauty of Mass.^{xxii}

Rumble and Father John Thompson, another able controversialist, transferred from 2UE to 2SM in 1931. "Dr Rumble's Question Box" became the most famous religious program on Australian radio until his retirement in 1968. Using plain language and short sentences, and avoiding rhetoric, each hour-long program on a Sunday night addressed ten letters on a variety of themes: "by listening-in to other people's difficulties, you will find many of your own problems solved, apart from your interest in what fellow men are actually thinking". Rumble categorised his correspondents as Catholics looking for a deeper instruction in their faith, "careless Catholics", and non-Catholics. Some of this latter group wrote to Rumble to acknowledge that their prejudices had been dispelled as a result of his program; others—up to 30 a month—informed him that they had converted to Catholicism. Rumble's replies were published each week in Catholic newspapers across Australia and in 1934 inspired the publication of *Radio Replies*. As

Meany wrote in his introduction, “A thing is heard on the air and it is gone on the air”. Rumble’s various collections, published over decades, sold millions of copies worldwide, particularly in the United States, and became popular religious quasi-encyclopaedias.^{xxiii}

Other religious broadcasters populated the Australian airwaves, giving rise to many publications. Broadcasting provided a minister with the profile required for the publication and dissemination of books and periodicals. He (they were all men) and his sponsors hoped that these titles would allow listeners to reflect and ponder on the issues addressed, or the answers supplied, on-air. In 1931 the Newcastle Baptist Tabernacle took up an offer, apparently from the ABC’s 2NC, to broadcast services once a month. By the end of the decade the church’s minister, Rev. Leslie J. Gomm, was also broadcasting a morning devotional on 2KO Newcastle. Writing as “The Radio Padre”, Gomm published a book of inspiring talks, *Wings of the Morning*, dedicated to his listeners, while Dr W. Cumming Thom of 2CH wrote *Presbyterianism on the Air*.^{xxiv} In the postwar years what were now casually referred to as radio ministries were to form the basis of many other books.

In August 1934 Rev. Reginald Gordon Nichols of St Mark’s Anglican church, located in the working-class Melbourne suburb of Fitzroy, began publishing *Brother Bill’s Monthly*. Nichols, better known as “Brother Bill”, had been heard first on the ABC’s 3LO, before securing daily spots on 3DB and a Sunday session on 3AW. His ambition was to develop a vast national “Radio Church”, linking together listeners in “sacred corporate worship”: “It requires no mental effort to realise that if human spirits far away can thus be linked by radio, then surely space cannot separate God from those who in spirit and truth seek His presence”. But the second issue of Nichols’ magazine announced that 3DB had decided to drop his session because it was turning away listeners and advertisers. His plans for a national hook-up of commercial stations also

failed to eventuate. Apparently unaware of what 2CH was doing in Sydney, *Brother Bill's Monthly* declared it was time for churches to come together and demand “of Canberra [the Commonwealth government] a franchise over the air”. In the meantime, Nichols had to content himself with running the “Radio Church” on 3AW. Membership fees from members of the “Unseen Fellowship” paid for daily airtime. As well as prayers and annual thanksgiving services for the “blessings of radio”, listeners heard about Nichols’ work with underprivileged boys, his insistent advocacy of child migration from Britain and his agitations against the liquor industry. His media endeavours ceased abruptly in 1943, when he was arrested in Townsville and convicted of sending obscene letters to women in Victoria.^{xxv}

Broadcasting stations could also be affected by divisions within religious groupings. By the 1930s 2GB enjoyed popular appeal and prestige. The Theosophical Society (TS), by contrast, was divided and dispirited, in Australia and abroad. Late in 1935 A. E. Bennett, riding high as managing director of a successful commercial broadcaster and apparently impatient with his co-religionists, took 2GB into a resource- and programming-sharing arrangement with 2UE. This manoeuvre may have sparked fears that the TS would lose control of 2GB, and coincided with a bizarre and increasingly convoluted battle over the location of a new transmitter. In November 1936 Bennett facilitated the sale of a controlling interest in 2GB to Denison Estates Ltd, owner of 2UE. The TS was granted four sessions per week for 21 years, and 2GB also agreed to broadcast the Sunday morning service at St Alban’s Liberal Catholic Church. This at least meant that theosophy and allied movements retained links with the station.^{xxvi}

A number of ministers were heard on both commercial and ABC stations, and once they had acquired some broadcasting experience they were able to move fairly easily between stations. The Rev. A. D. McCutcheon, for instance, was heard first on the

ABC in Adelaide and 2BH Broken Hill; shortly after being appointed superintendent of the Port Adelaide Central Methodist Mission in 1935, he introduced the “Friendly Voice” program to 5DN. McCutcheon advanced a simple and practical theology, blurring the edges between faith in Christ and struggling through this world’s trials, and his program probably helped to maintain the flow of donations to sustain the mission’s welfare work.^{xxvii} There was also room on the commercial airwaves for figures less formally aligned with religious denominations. One was Jimmy James (Mitamirra), a famous Aboriginal tracker, who preached from Lygon Street Methodist church and spoke on 3DB in the 1930s.^{xxviii}

Another was Frank Sturge Harty, who had been born in the West Indies and served as a Church of England minister in New Zealand. Deciding to stay in Sydney following a lecture tour, Harty edited the *Church Standard* before moving into general journalism and then broadcasting. In 1934 he began hosting an afternoon advice session on 2UE, inviting listeners—generally assumed to be housewives—to write to him about their problems. Although Harty’s programs were not examples of religious broadcasting as such, he seems to have used his earlier incarnation as a clergyman to give them extra credibility. Like some radio clergymen, he addressed subjects that directly affected people’s lives and geared his message to women at home. He spoke of the “sacred” trust placed in him by listeners and the important “service” he was providing, and took credit for arranging the adoption of illegitimate children and even preventing suicides. Publicity photographs showed Harty, dapper and moustached, with his chin cupped thoughtfully in his hand. Moving to 2KY and then 2GB, “The Radio Adviser on Life’s Problems” was given an even grander title, “The Man Who Knows the Confidence of TEN THOUSAND WOMEN”. At 2GB he introduced two new sessions, explaining that the first, “Between Ourselves”, was “designed to be intimate, so that every woman, sitting alone, will feel

that it belongs to her individually”. The other program, “Cupid’s Conquests”, featured Harty announcing engagements and playing a favourite piece of music suggested by the couple. Lest the program appear frivolous, he assured radio periodicals that he met privately with couples before announcing their engagements and proffered sage advice on the secrets of happy marriage.^{xxix}

Religious broadcasting as a source of anxiety

World War II brought both tighter regulatory control over, as well as new opportunities for, religious broadcasting. Monsignor Meany, who had admiringly described Rumble’s style as “piquant” and “provocative”, wrote to Archbishop Norman Gilroy to express some concerns about the session. Possibly alluding to Rumble’s stance on Mussolini, Meany wondered whether the federal government might feel that the session was “stirring up strife in the community” when unity of all was called for. But the session was not taken off air, and over the next twelve months there was a 10 per cent increase in religious programming on 2SM. Listeners heard daily prayers for victory and peace, as well as talks by Gilroy and wartime appeals. Meany proposed that Gilroy quote “What Shall I Do for the Land that Bred Me”, a poem by the British poet and Jesuit Gerard Manley Hopkins, and consider options for postwar reconstruction. In 1940 Meany credited to this additional religious programming, with its patriotic overtones, an unexpectedly large growth in 2SM’s audience.^{xxx} Some stations opted to self-censor. In July 1940 2CH cut off a talk on the international situation by Rev. Frank Rayward, superintendent of the Sydney Central Methodist Mission and a popular preacher.^{xxxi}

The most spectacular instance of government intervention in religious broadcasting occurred in 1941. The targets were 5KA and other stations associated with the Jehovah’s Witnesses, which had long been the source of official scrutiny and

unease.^{xxxii} In 1930 Alexander MacGillivray, the man responsible for the activities of the Witnesses throughout Australia and the Pacific, had arrived in Australia and bought all the issued shares in 5KA. Over the next few years, he and the church invested heavily in several other stations. At 5KA, announcers were replaced by members who were charged to proclaim through radio “the message of the Kingdom of Christ”. One disgruntled former employee complained to a politician that the Witnesses had taken control of 5KA. The Witnesses tried to be circumspect about their ownership of various radio stations, saying that they simply bought airtime. But this was just the first in a decade-long string of complaints about 5KA, with the PMG’s Wireless Branch well aware of who was behind the station as it carefully monitored 5KA broadcasts. In 1931 the station began broadcasting the “electronic recordings” of the sect’s leader, “Judge” Joseph Franklin Rutherford. In 1933 his diatribes against the established churches, especially the Catholic church, as well as the British empire and the United States government were banned. That year the PMG’s Department issued two circulars to stations reminding them of the importance of taking precautions to prevent broadcasts from offending people whose beliefs “may not be in harmony with those of the speaker”.^{xxxiii} In 1937 the Returned Servicemen’s League (RSL) complained that the station was not conforming to “accepted British traditions” by failing to broadcast the national anthem at the close of each day’s programs. Catholic and Methodist leaders continued to complain about offensive material in the Witnesses’ radio broadcasts and publications.

In 1940, the year the Witnesses were declared an illegal body in both Canada and New Zealand, Attorney-General Billy Hughes ordered an inquiry into the organisation’s activities in Australia. Security and intelligence services assiduously looked for evidence of subversion. A report to naval intelligence detailed an alleged security breach by 5KA on 18 November 1940. The core allegation—that a cheerio call may have contained a

code referring to the imminent departure of a transport ship—was as muddled as the jumbled words competition that similarly worried the junior intelligence officer. Bureaucracy was remarkably slow to move, with monitoring continuing until 6 January 1941. Some of the new items of concern bordered on the farcical. It was not until 8 January 1941 that Hughes approved a Navy and Army proposal that 5KA be closed down “as an essential measure of National Security”. The measure may have been regarded as essential, but it had certainly not been urgent. Hughes took the opportunity to direct that the other three stations controlled by the Witnesses—2HD Newcastle, 4AT Atherton and 5AU Port Augusta—also be closed. Listeners were left without explanation until the following morning, and even then there was confusion about the precise reasons for the closures. That the Witnesses actually owned the stations was still not widely known publicly; *Broadcasting Business* remarked that it had been “alleged that there was some connection between the stations and the sect”.^{xxxiv}

A solicitor acting for the Witnesses gained naval approval for the stations to re-open on five conditions suggested by his clients, including the replacement of announcers by security-approved personnel and the censoring of scripts. Hughes was prepared to allow the stations to re-open, forcing cabinet’s hand. On 17 January the Jehovah’s Witnesses was declared an illegal organisation. The commercial radio industry’s peak body, the Federation of Australian Radio Broadcasters (FARB), and trade unions expressed their opposition to the station closures. Even the august *Sydney Morning Herald* declared the handling of the situation “incredibly bungled”. But the Catholic archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix, was delighted, with the *Age* summarising his view: “For a number of years Jehovah’s Witnesses had given great trouble to the people of Australia generally”. The war had provided an ideal opportunity to get rid of licensees

long regarded as deviant. 2SM, by contrast, was at pains to express the loyalty of Catholics to the nation and to the Allied cause.

Lutheran church services, which had begun in 1938 with 2DU's broadcast of a service from Gilgandra to mark the church's centenary in Australia,^{xxxv} were also closely monitored. In 1942 commercial stations were issued with strict instructions for Lutheran broadcasts: musical items were to be chosen by the station and devotional talks had to be submitted to censorship and read over the air by a station announcer. In short, "persons of enemy origin", including pastors, were not to have access to microphones and broadcasts in the language of an enemy nation were banned. A year later, the Chief Publicity Censor sent a secret message to all station managers declaring it essential that they closely monitor all church services: "dangers lurk in impromptu observations innocently made by some ministers, who either lack a sense of security or are not conversant with security arrangements".^{xxxvi} A particular source of disquiet was Stephen Yarnold, a Presbyterian minister who helped found the socialist Common Wealth Christian Movement. He was a well-known, if not universally popular, commentator on 3AW until 1943, and in 1944 a commercial station refused to broadcast a talk he had prepared for the movement.^{xxxvii}

At least one outspoken religious minister seems to have escaped both station and government censure. Shortly before the outbreak of war, Alan Walker, a young Australian Methodist minister, had had the opportunity to preach in some of England's largest Methodist churches and, through listening to the BBC, think about broadcasting's potential for spreading a message. Appointed to Cessnock in April 1939, Walker strode into 2CK and secured a weekly half-hour session bringing news of the coming war and other current issues. Within six months the station was also broadcasting a Pleasant Sunday Afternoon (PSA) program from the Cessnock Methodist church. Walker worked hard, determined to use the sessions to provide a path into the large non-church

community in the coalfields district, and had to submit each script to the censor. His forthright opposition to the war demonstrated to some conscientious objectors that they were not alone, although his pacifist stance saw his own church delay his appointment as superintendent of Waverley Circuit. In 1944 Walker was finally appointed to Waverley and also become convenor of the Methodists' Select Broadcasting Committee.^{xxxviii}

Some commercial stations provided safe havens for controversial religious broadcasters. In the 1920s first Rev. J. H. Cain, and then Rev. C. I. (Irving) Benson, had found a radio home for Melbourne's Central Methodist Mission PSA. The broadcasts on the ABC's 3AR had brought new popularity to the PSA. Crowds of up to 2000 people attended the afternoon meetings, which featured well-known public figures, musical soloists and Benson's opening comments on current issues. He was an enthusiastic Anglophile and patriot, but ABC management objected to his aggressive style and failure to submit his speakers' scripts in advance. There was also uncertainty about whether the national broadcaster should be providing a forum for the views of one religious institution. In September 1942 there was a final rift with the ABC, leading to accusations of censorship from Benson and his friend, former Prime Minister R. G. Menzies. By early 1943 the PSA was being heard over 3DB and its regional stations. Benson had been writing a weekly column for the stations' stablemate, the Melbourne *Herald*, for 20 years, and was on good terms with its managing director, Sir Keith Murdoch. Through this media group he was able to enter the living rooms of Melbourne's suburban homes and bring women into debates on spiritual and political issues. In due course the *Argus* stations, as well as other stations beyond Victoria, were added to the hook-up.^{xxxix}

Reconstruction and regulation

By the time a select parliamentary committee (known as the Gibson Committee) began its hearings into broadcasting, an increasing number of religious bodies were recognising the advantages associated with holding a broadcasting licence. Most, however, were not interested in actually purchasing time on existing stations and there was little testimony concerning the need for airtime for religious broadcasts to be embodied in legislation. When the committee delivered its report in 1942, it was clear that its attitude to religious broadcasting had been affected by the social anxiety created by Australia's participation in the war, as well as by the expressed desire of religious and other leaders to see created a new world order.^{x1} In official quarters it was now assumed that religious broadcasting was a force for good and should be encouraged. Christian teaching, concluded the Gibson Committee, was "of great importance to national morale and national development". But FARB, resistant as always to any suggestion of compulsion, had to be coaxed into accepting this opinion. The peak body maintained that many stations were unenthusiastic about religious broadcasts because of the poor presentation of some existing religious sessions, an argument conceded by the Gibson Committee.^{xli}

In 1943 the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Broadcasting (PSCB), chaired by Arthur Calwell, a devout Catholic and a frequent critic of the commercial media, set about investigating religious programming on the ABC and commercial stations. Of the 98 commercial stations, 50 reported that they never broadcast religious services and 18 that they did so only occasionally. The survey indicated, unsurprisingly, that local religious organisations helped to co-ordinate broadcasts on several stations: for instance, the Ministers' Fraternal determined the services that would be rotated on 4TO Townsville and 7BU Burnie. It also demonstrated that half-hour broadcasts from the British Israel World Federation featured on a number of New South Wales and Victorian stations and transcriptions of the Salt Lake Tabernacle Choir were heard throughout Australia.

FARB's contention that there should be no more obligation to broadcast church services than horse races was deplored for its "lack of long-range vision of the national interest".^{xlii} The PSCB recommended that each commercial station should be compelled to allocate one hour of free time on Sundays for a religious session. FARB's opposition, coupled with the decreasing influence of the PSCB, delayed the enacting of the recommended legislation.^{xliii}

This debate coincided with Jehovah's Witnesses emerging victorious from a High Court action against the Commonwealth. Their properties were returned and they received compensation. Even though the ban was lifted, the Witnesses had no desire to get back into Australian radio.^{xliv} 4AY had become part of the ABC in 1941, and hundreds of applications had since been received for the other licences. In December 1943 5KA and 5AU were re-opened; 80 per cent of the shares were obtained by the Central Methodist Mission and the balance was secured by a labour newspaper. Like 2CH, the stations banned liquor advertising and racing broadcasts. The mission's superintendent and chairman of the board, Rev. Samuel Forsyth, declared at the opening of 5KA:

We shall endeavour, to the best of our ability to represent the Christian Church—
all sections of it ... we shall not allow ourselves to be dominated by the profit
motive to the detriment of higher things.^{xlv}

Although its general recommendation for religious broadcasting had not been implemented with alacrity, the PSCB succeeded in imposing some conditions on these reallocated licences. As the Catholic church had also shown interest in acquiring the 5KA licence, the PSCB stipulated that major Christian denominations should have airtime. The

Catholic church obtained one hour of free time on Sunday evenings, the Sunday morning services were divided between various Protestant denominations, and the evening service was broadcast weekly from Maughan Church.^{xlvi}

The Church of England's bid for control of 2HD was unsuccessful; some years earlier, Newcastle's Bishop Francis de Witt Batty had been one of those leaders to lament the quality of religious broadcasting. Following a convoluted public spat, the Trades and Labour Council secured the 2HD licence in 1945, but was obliged to make free time available to local churches. The handful of new licences that were awarded over the next few years—to 4KQ, 6CI Collie and 6NA Narrogin—contained a similar provision.^{xlvii} Such provisions were seen as a way of appeasing disappointed religious applicants and also helping to ensure that licensees adequately served their local communities.

The 1943 survey indicating that many stations did not feature regular religious services also showed that most broadcast hymns. "Sacred music" was often heard in a block on a Sunday and sometimes early on weekday mornings, as well as at Easter and Christmas. A good deal of the music, including that of the Salt Lake Tabernacle Choir, was in the form of transcriptions; 5DN had 200 hymns in its record library. Local church choirs were also broadcast, though less commonly.^{xlviii} On one occasion 2GB hired out Sydney Town Hall to stage a choral presentation of "Hymns of all Churches", heard regularly over several stations, with proceeds going to the 2GB Community Chest.^{xlix} In 1944 an individual who wished to remain anonymous offered to sponsor "Hymns of Prayer and Praise" over 3KZ. The sponsor was impressed by the sincerity of the host, Norman Banks, the station's star announcer and a committed Anglican, and believed that the weekly program did a great deal of good for Christians of all denominations. Some observers also thought that the feature helped 3KZ's image and profile; after attending a performance at Collins Street Baptist Church, an executive at Myer described it as a

“magnificent piece of “public relations”“ for Banks and the station.¹ As was the case at the ABC, music and other religious programs on the commercial stations seem to have under-represented the Catholic church. While Methodists were particularly strong in congregational singing, Catholics preferred to sing hymns that expressed Catholic doctrine and devotion, rather than general Christian acceptance. In some Catholic circles there was also criticism of “watered down religion presented on air”.^{li}

“Why Believe?” asked W. G. Hilliard, Anglican bishop of Sydney, in the program of the same name he introduced to 2UW in 1945. One of his earliest broadcasts, on 26 August, celebrated the approach of peace and Spring:

Good night, everybody! Spring has come to us early this year and it has brought with it the spring of new hope of better days in a peaceful world. The long Winter of War is over ... There is something of this spirit in the music of Mendelssohn’s beautiful Spring Song which we take as our first piece of music tonight ...

Established in the context of postwar reconstruction, the program of devotions and music was to remain a feature of 2UW until Hilliard’s death in 1960. Some of his sermons were also heard on 2CH and the ABC. Poet, orator and headmaster, Hilliard was, with considerable help from radio, a household name in the Sydney of the 1940s and 1950s. His easy, sometimes flamboyant manner, coupled with a warmth and richness of tone, ensured a steady listening audience. As the ABC’s Director of Religious Broadcasting observed, religious broadcasting was a “technique of intimacy”; the qualities of a good radio speaker were “the ability to convey sincerity, freshness, wisdom and often humour”.^{lii}

The Australian Broadcasting Act of 1948 established a new statutory authority, the Australian Broadcasting Control Board (ABCB). Among the board's responsibilities was ensuring that "divine worship or other matter of a religious nature" was broadcast for adequate periods and at appropriate times. It had also to ensure that no matter which was not of a religious nature was broadcast during divine worship,^{liii} a requirement that generated considerable confusion. FARB wrote to Prime Minister Ben Chifley asking for clarification; it wondered whether the clause might affect the broadcasting of sermons that touched on matters that were not explicitly religious, and made particular mention of the PSA broadcasts from Melbourne's Wesley Church. Arthur Calwell, who was on friendly terms with the well-connected Irving Benson and was now Minister for Information, advised parliament that it was not the government's intention to prevent any PSA broadcasts from taking place. But he also stated that people broadcasting religious matter "should not try to mix politics with religion".^{liv} This ambiguity was never to be fully resolved.

The infant ABCB was left to despatch to all ABC and commercial stations a questionnaire about religious broadcasting. In late 1949, acknowledging that the task was "exceedingly difficult" partly due to the demands that emanated from a plethora of denominations, the board issued a series of guidelines: each station should devote at least one hour on Sundays, at no charge, to religious broadcasts; each station should approach local churches substantially represented in a district and work out a roster for broadcasts; and capital city stations should consult amongst themselves, and the churches, in order to avoid too many broadcasts of divine worship at the same time.^{lv}

The ABCB continued to hope for clarification of what was meant by "non-religious matter", but both the Labor and the coalition governments seem to have been content to tread warily in such a sensitive area. Some of Australia's leading politicians

took a keen personal interest in religious broadcasting. On one occasion Chifley was so impressed by a talk by Alan Walker over 2CH that he sent away for the script. In 1949, when the NSW Council of Churches submitted a list of possible advisers to the Australian delegation to the United Nations assembly, Chifley seized on Walker's name.^{lvi} In Benson's introduction to the PSA there was hardly a current political issue on which he did not comment, and both Menzies and R. G. Casey made frequent appearances.^{lvii}

One of the religious broadcasters who intervened quite directly in the political sphere was Rev. Victor James, who arrived from England in 1947 to join Rev. William Bottomley in the ministry of the Melbourne Unitarian Church. Known as the "Church of the Wider View", it published a magazine, the *Beacon*, and bought a Sunday afternoon slot on 3XY. Listeners heard James question the usual Christian belief in the infallibility of the scriptures as he stressed people's ability to save themselves and to use their powers of intellect and reason to recreate their society. He also spoke about his visit to China to inquire into its beliefs, condemned newspapers for trying to condition minds in preparation for another war, and defended the interests of the Australian Council for Civil Liberties and of a fellow 3XY broadcaster, the historian and socialist Brian Fitzpatrick. James assured listeners that he himself was not a member of the Communist Party or even in agreement with communist philosophy; what he was about, he insisted, was putting Unitarianism into action and encouraging people to think for themselves. Although his broadcasts seem to have escaped the scrutiny of ASIO, he struggled to secure enough subscriptions to keep the session on air. In 1965, after various interruptions and changes to timeslot, James and his church presented their final talk on 3XY.^{lviii}

The ABCB's annual reports summarised the commercial industry's compliance in the field of religious broadcasting. Some stations actively solicited religious involvement in an effort to improve their standing with the regulator. In 1952, when 3AK renewed its lobbying efforts to be allowed to extend its overnight broadcasting hours, it offered free time to the RSL and the Victorian Council of Churches. The council was happy to support a bid that might allow the churches to "make a contribution to the development of individual, family and national character", although it hoped that its own long-standing application for a broadcasting licence might eventually be accepted.^{lix}

The notebooks of the ABCB's Director of Program Services indicate that the religious broadcasting requirements were sometimes a source of frustration for individual station managements. In 1952, for instance, Adrian Jose recorded that the free weekly spots on 4LG Longreach rotated between various Protestant denominations were "mostly badly handled". The hymns supplied were "scarce and deteriorating", the local clergy "too unreliable". Also in 1952, a listener informed the ABCB that although she liked Dr Rumble's Question Box, she was fed up with the way different denominations had turned "religious broadcasting into a competition [for] who can "howl the others down"". When S. R. I. Clark, manager of 4BK, fronted the Royal Commission into Television in 1953, he reported that in his experience some religious bodies assured of free time made little attempt to "train personnel in broadcasting technique".^{lx}

Professionalism and sectarianism

Complaints such as these helped to inspire more co-ordinated religious programming. In the vanguard was a Presbyterian minister, Rev. Vernon Turner, who had become fascinated by radio during his childhood in Adelaide. After the war he began broadcasting "Morning Devotions" on 4BC and presenting "The Sunshine Hour", a

community hymn-singing broadcast, from the historic Ann Street Presbyterian church in Brisbane. He and 2CH also produced some amateur drama, featuring stories about men addicted to alcohol or drugs who heard the gospel, converted to Christianity and reformed their lives. In 1953 Turner formed the Christian Broadcasting Association (CBA) in Sydney to produce a variety of programs, including “From the Bible”, “World Church News”, “Counsellor” and even a drama, “Dangerous Mission”. One of the regular broadcasters was another Presbyterian minister, Rev. Gordon Powell, author of a popular memoir of his wartime chaplaincy.^{lxi}

The CBA, which was funded by donations from listeners across Australia, distributed programs free of charge to commercial stations. In 1955 Turner wrote *The Art of Christian Broadcasting*, which went into three editions. At first the CBA’s recording facilities consisted of a tape recorder on the back seat of Turner’s car, but in 1961 new headquarters, consisting of a chapel, three studios, two production booths, and library facilities, were opened. The impetus for expansion came partly from television, which provided new opportunities for religious broadcasting. By 1966 the CBA was providing nearly 500 religious programs to 83 commercial radio stations across Australia, and publishing *Australian Radio Times*.^{lxii} One of these stations was 2CH, although it also continued to produce and source much of its own religious programming.

The Catholic church was not aligned with the CBA, for there had long been an element of sectarian rivalry on Australia’s commercial airwaves. It was perhaps most marked in Sydney, where Rev. Thomas C. Hammond, principal of Moore Theological College and a trenchant Anglican, was heard on 2CH. A digest of his talks was published as *The Case for Protestantism*, with chapter headings like “Why We Reject Transubstantiation” and “Blunders of the Pope”. Eventually by popular demand the broadcast schedule was arranged so that Hammond and Rumble did battle at the same

time on Sunday nights; ironically, the two programs on 2CH and 2SM shared the same AWA transmitter.^{lxiii}

Some Catholic broadcasting centred on popular displays of piety: in 1953 4BK's racing commentator, Tom Foley, compered the "Living Rosary" ceremony, involving 6000 children from every Catholic school in Brisbane.^{lxiv} In Melbourne, Archbishop Mannix set up an organisation called "Catholic Radio Programmes", with a Father Miller at the helm. By 1953 it was producing recordings which were being regularly broadcast in six dioceses. However, Mannix felt that the issue of Catholic broadcasting was of such importance that it needed to be addressed by bishops across Australia. Four years after the release of the ABCB's guidelines, some form of Catholic broadcast was being regularly undertaken at only 61 commercial stations, meaning that there was no significant Catholic presence on the other 42 stations. As the introduction of television approached, the Catholic hierarchy of New South Wales proposed the formation of a central body to represent Catholic thought in the field of broadcasting.^{lxv}

These deliberations coincided with significant changes at 2SM.^{lxvi} On 23 June 1953 Monsignor Meany collapsed and died in his office. Just an hour before his death, reported the *Catholic Weekly*, the 74-year-old had finalised plans for the reorganisation of Sunday night programming, involving the introduction of some popular Catholic programs from the United States. This anodyne statement obscured the ugliness of a situation that was developing at the station. As a committee of inquiry led by Bishop James Carroll would later report, "Meany's name was regarded generally as being interchangeable" with that of 2SM. Meany's position as managing director had been ambiguous as he had generally not exercised the duties of a chief executive, leaving the management of the station to the general manager. At the same time he had passed on

little information to the board of directors, a group of people lacking much expertise in broadcasting and found by the inquiry to be a “rubber stamp”.

When Meany had asserted himself in administration, wrote Carroll, a clash with the general manager, B. B. Stapleton, had developed. It is not entirely clear whether Meany’s plan for more American religious programming was the sole trigger for the deterioration in their relations. The acting managing director, Rev. Dr Thomas Muldoon, called a special board meeting at which he presented a report that was “read in shocked silence”. Although the report has not survived, it seems that there was concern that the station was stagnating as no new program had been introduced for several years and ratings were low. Stapleton angrily agreed to the request that he resign, and five other employees quit in sympathy.

With another general manager, Kevin Byrne, Muldoon set about introducing new programs and revamping the advertising department. In 1955 the station reported a record profit of £17 407. But still all was not well behind the scenes, resulting in Carroll’s inquiry. At the heart of the problem was the delineation of responsibilities between the (priest) managing director and the (lay) general manager, an issue that the board had never satisfactorily faced. In 1955-56 the committee recommended that the position of managing director be abolished and the administration of the station be left to the general manager. Cardinal Norman Gilroy and the board assented to the recommendations, which concluded that “broadcasting is a highly specialised business and ... a priest’s qualifications are not such as to equip him for this role”. From now on a priest who served on the board, probably as chairman, was to exercise full authority in the making of religious broadcasts and “promote a good spiritual atmosphere at 2SM”. This meant that Sydney’s two religious stations—2CH and 2SM—were in the hands of secular managers, with ordained ministers largely confined to co-ordinating religious programming.

2SM seems not to have fulfilled Carroll's ambition for it to become a leader in religious broadcasting by supplying programs to other stations. In 1962 the National Catholic Radio and Television Centre was formed, with its own sound and film studios, to provide Catholic programs for weekly distribution. Even though Catholic broadcasting organisations remained separate from the CBA, some Protestants were on the look-out for any signs of interest in "pre-Reformation antics". One of the most attentive policemen was Rev. Bernard Judd, a Church of England minister who in 1942 had begun hosting morning devotionals, followed by forthright commentaries, on 2CH. Thirty years later, as secretary of the NSW Council of Churches, Judd expressed his horror at hearing a report about Pope Paul VI bending low to receive ashes on Ash Wednesday; Judd urged member churches to provide the CBA with more and better material in order to eliminate space for "Marxist and Roman items".^{lxvii}

American evangelism

In 1956, following requests from Lutheran and other religious communities for church services in foreign languages, the ABCB determined that such services could be broadcast as long as alternative programs in English were available at the same time on other stations in the area.^{lxviii} The most dominant overseas influence on Australian religious broadcasting, however, came from the United States.

One of the most successful radio ministries in postwar Australia was established by Seventh Day Adventists. Since the arrival of its first missionaries in Australia, the Adventist church had been active in distributing publications to disseminate their faith. In the 1930s they had moved into radio, with the "Advent Choir" heard from 2UE and Pastor Charles Boulting making use of radio in Mildura. In 1938 Pastor Laurie C. Naden had established a more regular service, the Advent Radio Church, which had introduced

to seven stations around Australia his mellow voice and bright personality, as well as the dulcet tones of a quartet. In 1946 Naden moved from Western Australia to Sydney to further the cause of radio evangelism. A year later his weekly broadcast was re-named “The Voice of Prophecy”, bringing it into line with the Adventist radio ministry in the United States. Naden recruited Pastor Ross C. Piper as an associate broadcaster, as well as editor of *The Voice of Prophecy News: The Newspaper of the Air*, and principal of the Bible school at the Adventists’ headquarters on Sydney’s north shore. The monthly magazine published listeners’ letters, which Naden insisted were acknowledged personally, coupons for free Bible correspondence courses, and appeals for money. The names of people who had expressed an interest in the broadcasts and/or studying the Bible were passed on to ministers to arrange personal visits. By 1950 the half-hour Sunday program was being heard on some 57 commercial stations in every state of Australia, and also in Fiji.^{lxix} The Seventh Day Adventists were possibly the first religious denomination in Australia to actively involve women in broadcasting, featuring at least one woman missionary in a talk on 2CH; in most other religious broadcasts women were only heard singing hymns. In the mid-1960s the Adventists, who had also moved into television, formed Advent Radio Television Productions, under Naden’s direction, and *The Voice of Prophecy News* was re-named *Channels of Faith*.^{lxx}

Another dynamic religious broadcaster was Alan Walker, who in 1952 was appointed head of “Mission to the Nation”, a nationwide evangelistic campaign inspired by the American Crusade for Christ. Solomon (“Sim”) Rubensohn, Walker’s colourful and erratic Jewish-Christian friend from the Hansen Rubensohn-McCann Erickson advertising agency, encouraged him to set an ambitious budget and to use radio to communicate with “ordinary people”. A central feature of the campaign was a polished drama series that aimed to interpret the Christian message in terms of modern life. The

first instalment of “Drama with a Challenge” went to air in 1953, with many churches forming listening groups to which members invited their unchurched friends to hear and discuss the plays over a cup of tea. Not all went smoothly. Walker had to fend off an attack broadcast over 2CA by T. C. McGillick of the People’s Union suggesting that the Methodist church was well on the way to becoming a communist agency. In 1954 FARB rejected Walker’s request for assistance in arranging an Australia-wide religious program on Sunday mornings, stating that it co-operated with blanket broadcasts only in cases of national emergency and indicating that the program might upset existing denominational arrangements. 2UW finally agreed to assume 2GB’s role in broadcasting the drama in Sydney, and 40 stations across Australia continued to take the series, which rated solidly. The Methodist church felt that the exercise, which wound up in 1957, was a remarkable success, inspiring over 2000 letters seeking spiritual or other advice.^{lxxi}

By the 1950s American Pentecostal groups and charismatic movements were becoming attractive to Protestants. Radio helped to ensure that Australians would hear about this renewal in the American churches, and Australian commercial radio was one part of a worldwide expansion of evangelical Protestantism. Many of these American programs were also more professionally produced than their Australian equivalents.^{lxxii} Some of the religious material emanating from the United States that was broadcast on Australian commercial radio in the decades after the war took the form of “entertainment”, with specific denominational origins difficult to discern.

In 1953 Pastor Alec T. Davidson, Commonwealth chairman of the Assemblies of God, presented “Revivaltime” on 12 country stations in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. In the 1950s the fundamentalist Back to the Bible organisation bought time on 18 Australian radio stations to present spots by Theodore H. Epp of Nebraska.^{lxxiii} One of Australia’s leading Christian broadcasters, Gordon Powell, helped to co-ordinate the

Sydney visit of the American evangelist Billy Graham in 1959. Graham's meetings in the capital cities drew unprecedented crowds and were a sign of the spiritual search that was important to so many postwar Australians. He left an enduring legacy, with his "Hour of Decision" heard on as many as 62 stations across Australia.^{lxxiv}

In 1956 the eight-station AWA network began broadcasting Herbert W. Armstrong's "The World Tomorrow". Twenty years earlier, Armstrong had founded one of the most active religious broadcasting propaganda machines in the United States. When his son, Garner Ted Armstrong, visited Sydney in 1959, he arranged an increase in the number of stations taking the program and established offices in North Sydney. The program, which verged on the hysterical, was soon dropped from 2CH. The NSW Council of Churches regarded the program as both heretical and "awful broadcasting" and unhappily paid out the contract. "The World Today" then moved to 2KY, where it was squeezed in between horse races, and by 1961 it was still being heard several nights a week on 30 stations around Australia.^{lxxv} Another American Pentecostalist, Oral Roberts, also made his way onto Australian radio in the 1960s; one listener recalls Roberts' invitation to place hands on the receiver to be healed.^{lxxvi}

It was probably "The World Today" that prompted Labor's Senator Jim Ormonde to mock "American hot momma stuff" in 1962: "one night I was tuned to a commercial station waiting to hear the races when on came ... five minutes of the hottest religion I have ever heard". Religious sessions, Ormonde informed parliament, should be restricted to services from established churches, rather than paid time consisting of "crank religious message[s]".^{lxxvii} Vernon Turner was inspired to build up the CBA after becoming aware that "'lunatic fringe" religious sects" took radio more seriously than did the "mainline churches".^{lxxviii}

Regulatory challenges and commercial pressures

Organisations like the CBA and the National Catholic Radio and Television Centre were established at much the same time as commercial radio's very commitment to providing free time for religious broadcasting showed signs of waning. As radio stations did battle with the new medium of television, as well as with each other, the competition for audiences and advertising revenue became increasingly cutthroat. The ABCB, meanwhile, was concerned about both the quality of, and times for, religious programs broadcast on television. The result was an Advisory Committee on Religious Programs, consisting of six senior clergymen (no women or lay people were involved), to identify the "problems inherent in associating religious matter with highly competitive commercial media".^{lxxxix} While its first report in 1961 concentrated on issues pertaining to television, religious broadcasting on radio was hardly thriving.

In 1960 2HD upset a local Methodist minister by moving "Daily Devotions" from 10 a.m. to 11.40 p.m.^{lxxx} At 2GB, management eagerly awaited the lapse of its contract with the Liberal Catholic Church later that year so that it could replace the 10.30 a.m. Sunday service with an extended "100 Top Tunes" music program; in 1961, the station sought to further streamline its religious offerings.^{lxxxii} Between 1961 and 1964 the weekly amount of free time for religious programs on commercial radio stations decreased from 283 to 222 hours, while the amount of time sponsored by religious organisations jumped from 186 to 320 hours. American programming was a significant contributor to this development. The ABCB was somewhat uneasy that sponsored religious programs appeared to "stem from movements outside the main streams of religious belief".^{lxxxii}

Although some religious radio broadcasters had moved into television, at least one organisation—the Christian Television Association of Victoria—became interested

in moving in the opposite direction. In 1964, partly as a result of lobbying by this organisation, the ABCB asked its advisory committee to investigate the whole question of religious broadcasting. The committee produced more specific guidelines, which were adopted by the ABCB. Under the guidelines, commercial radio stations were to include at least some of a range of programs: a service of divine worship on Sundays, a devotional service several days a week, talks about the teaching and works of the church, and scatter announcements. The committee also indicated a clear preference for free time over sponsored programs in the selection of suitable times for transmission.^{lxxxiii} The jaw of the ABCB's chairman dropped when he learned that FARB's annual convention had accepted the proposals. Through its advisory committee, the board had finally taken the time to develop some clear and unambiguous guidelines for religious broadcasting, and the plan supported the right of stations to choose the type of programs they wished to broadcast.^{lxxxiv}

The ABCB was most perturbed by the committee's findings that there was a tendency for long established religious programs to be replaced by syndicated material; the formation of the Protestant and Catholic broadcasting associations referred to above were presumably responsible in good part for this trend. While the board recognised the value of syndicated programs for country stations, in particular, it hoped that a substantial volume of locally produced programs would continue to be used: "radio should be particularly suited to the task, generally regarded as desirable, of assisting in the involvement of the Church in the life of the community".^{lxxxv}

The ABCB continued to monitor, but lacked the power and the authority to censure, those stations that failed to heed the minimum requirements for religious broadcasting. One particular source of disquiet was 3UZ, which confined its religious programming to 30-second scatter announcements from midnight-to-dawn.^{lxxxvi} The

successful 2GB came to view religious broadcasting as simply another of its community service responsibilities. When the station launched the “At Your Service” program on weekday afternoons in 1966, callers could ring in and record queries for consideration by a variety of experts. Terry Dear, the former host of *Australia’s Amateur Hour*, coordinated the hour-long discussions drawn from the fields of medicine, vocational guidance, science, law, psychology—and religion. On Mondays the subject of At Your Service was religion, with a rotating panel consisting of Rev. Neil Adcock (Baptist), Rev. Dr Howard Guinness (Church of England) and Father Tom Fitzgerald (Catholic).^{lxxxvii}

Some established religious broadcasters were struggling to stay abreast of the times. In the last few years of his broadcasting career, Dr Rumble had to expend a great deal of energy explaining the clarifications and changes in doctrine and liturgy wrought by the Second Vatican Council; “some positions I previously maintained”, remarked Rumble, “no longer hold good”.^{lxxxviii} The Melbourne PSA also underwent something of a decline and in 1969 was moved out of its 3 p.m. slot on 3DB in order to make way for pop music. Irving Benson had little time for Alan Walker’s aggressive evangelism or progressive social views.^{lxxxix}

For forty years religion had played a small but distinctive role on Australian commercial radio. Religious organisations had been amongst the first to seize the opportunity to apply for broadcasting licences in the 1920s and early 1930s, and a range of denominations—from Catholics to Methodists, Seventh Day Adventists to Jehovah’s Witnesses—secured free or paid airtime to extend their ministries. By 1943 around half of Australia’s commercial stations broadcast some religious programming. The formation of the ABCB in 1948 ensured that virtually all stations featured regular religious programs and that the involvement of local churches and ministers would be particularly prized.

While politicians and regulators became increasingly enthusiastic about religious broadcasting in the 1940s, there were limits to what was acceptable: Lutheran broadcasts, like all foreign-language broadcasts, were viewed suspiciously and Jehovah's Witnesses were essentially forced off the air. Nevertheless, the fact was that some small religious communities that were excluded from the ABC were able to buy their way on to commercial radio.^{xc} Jehovah's Witnesses survived on-air for a time, and Seventh Day Adventists established one of Australia's most thriving radio ministries in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Religious broadcasting may have become synonymous with Christian broadcasting, but at least the commercial radio sector was able to look a little beyond the Christian mainstream given a voice by the ABC. Even so, there were few opportunities for women to be involved in these commercial broadcasts.

By the second half of the 1960s religious radio broadcasts were somewhat adrift due to commercial pressures and changing social mores. In 1967 a regulatory change that legalised the recording and broadcasting of telephone conversations facilitated the introduction of talkback radio and provided the churches with, perhaps unexpectedly, a new opportunity. Since the 1930s and 1940s religious broadcasters (and pseudo-religious broadcasters like Frank Sturge Harty) had been addressing the ordinary lives and problems of their listeners. This capacity was enhanced by the ability to talk to these listeners live on-air, and a number of religious broadcasters moved into providing formal off-air counselling services. Some of commercial radio's earlier religious broadcasters had belonged in the tradition of the charismatic or fashionable preacher. This trend was built on from the late 1960s, with the emergence of a new generation of less authoritarian and more accessible religious broadcasters. Popular figures who entrenched themselves on the airwaves included Neil Adcock and Father Jim McLaren. But the portents for religious broadcasting were not all good: on legal advice in 1970, the ABCB removed the

special conditions attached to the licences of 2HD and the other five stations; in 1986 the standard requiring one hour of religious programming a week was changed to an even less enforceable “direction”; and increasing networking and deregulation were accompanied by religious groupings selling off their licences.

* I am grateful to Dr David Hilliard for many helpful suggestions; Ron Robb, archivist at the Baptist Archives and Historical Society of New South Wales, for information about Leslie J. Gomm and other matters; Rev. Neil Adcock for allowing me to read his unpublished autobiography; Rose-lee Power of the Adventist Heritage Centre; Brother T. A. Hall and Pauline Garland of the Sydney Archdiocesan Archives; Associate Professor Stuart Piggin; and Dr Anne-Maree Whitaker. Please note that this article will only identify the region of a radio station (for example, “2KO Newcastle”) if it was located outside a capital city.

ⁱ Hilary M. Carey, “Religious history”, in *The Oxford Companion to Australian History*, eds G. Davison, J. Hirst and S. Macintyre (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1998), 551-553.

ⁱⁱ Ian Breward, *A History of the Australian Churches* (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1993).

ⁱⁱⁱ K. S. Inglis, *This is the ABC: The Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1932-1983* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1983) and *Whose ABC? The Australian Broadcasting Corporation, 1983-2006* (Melbourne: Black Inc.); Alison Healey, *Spirit and Substance: ABC Religious Broadcasting 1941-1991*, PhD thesis, University of Sydney, 1993 and “A critical alliance: ABC religious broadcasting and the Christian churches (1932-1977)”, *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society* 26 (2005): 15-28.

^{iv} Jacqueline Kent, *Out of the Bakelite Box* (Sydney: ABC Books, 1983), 194-202; Jill Roe, *Beyond Belief: Theosophy in Australia, 1879-1939* (Sydney: New South Wales University Press, 1986).

^v J. L. F. Buchner, *Religious Broadcasting in Australia*, MA (Hons) thesis, Macquarie University, 1989; William B. Aliprandi, *God and Mammon: The Catholic Church and Commercial Broadcasting in Australia*, EdD thesis, Cornell University, 1974.

^{vi} Letter from Bennett to Chief Manager Telegraph and Wireless, 7 April 1926, Item 2GB Main File, Series MP522/1, National Archives of Australia, Victoria [NAA/Vic].

^{vii} *Wireless Weekly* [WW], 3 September 1926, 7, 19; Lesley Johnson, *The Unseen Voice: A Cultural Study of Early Australian Radio* (London: Routledge, 1988), 60.

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- viii Vernon Turner, *God Gave Me a Microphone* (n.p., 1996), 31.
- ix Kent, 195.
- x *5DN—21st Anniversary—1924-1945* [booklet].
- xi *WW*, 26 August 1927, 6.
- xii Roe, 297-298.
- xiii *WW*, 3 February 1928, 4; 1 June 1928, 10; *Observer*, 17 September 1960, 7; *Catholic Weekly*, 26 February 1968, 14.
- xiv *WW*, 21 September 1928, p. 10; *The Story of the Twenty-Ninth International Eucharistic Congress*, (Sydney: Smith & Julius, 1928), 78-79.
- xv Letters from H. P. Brown to William Ross, 2 June 1931 and Ross to Director-General of Posts and Telegraphs, 16 June 1931, Item 2SM File 1, Series MP522/1, NAA/Vic. See also letter from Brown to Sir John Reith, 16 September 1931, File 1A, E1/341/1, BBC Written Archives Centre, London.
- xvi Helen Macallan, *Communism on the Air*, (Sydney: New South Wales Institute of Technology, 1982), 4.
- xvii *WW*, 27 February 1931, 14; 6 March 1931, 3; 27 March 1931, 7; 29 May 1931, 9.
- xviii *Radio Program*, 15 November 1932, 8.
- xix *WW*, 27 March 1931, 7; *Australian Radio News*, 1 June 1934, 1.
- xx Sir Frederick Stewart Papers, Series 4, Folders 14-16, MS 7732, National Library of Australia [NLA].
- xxi 2SM annual reports and correspondence, 1930-1950, Box O135, Sydney Archdiocesan Archives [SAA].
- xxii *Radio Pictorial of Australia [RPA]*, 1 August 1937, 7.
- xxiii Brian Maher, "John Christopher Thompson", *Australian Dictionary of Biography [ADB]* 16 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002), 383; Edmund Campion, "Leslie Audoen Rumble", *ADB* 16 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002), 150-1; *Catholic Weekly*, 12 June 1958, 23; 26 February 1968, 14; Dr Rumble, *Radio Replies* (Sydney: Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, 1934), ix-xv.
- xxiv Leslie J. Gomm, *Wings of the Morning* (New Lambton, N.S.W.: H. M. Hutton, c. 1938); W. Cumming Thom, *Presbyterianism on the Air* (Sydney: Epworth Printing & Publishing House, 1940).
- xxv *Brother Bill's Monthly*, 6 September 1934, 3-4; 6 November 1934, 3, 40; 5 December 1934, 4; 1 May 1936, 9-10; 1 April 1943, 3; *Melbourne Observer*, 8 June 2005, 15.
- xxvi Roe, 371-3; *Broadcasting Business [BB]*, 5 December 1935, 10. See also Item 2GB Main File, Series MP 522/1, NAA/Vic.

^{xxvii} Brian Dickey and Elaine Martin, *Building Community: A History of the Port Adelaide Central Mission*, (Adelaide: Port Adelaide Wesley Centre, 1999), 108-9.

^{xxviii} Suzanne Edgar, "Jimmy James (Mitamirri)", *ADB* 14 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996), 553.

^{xxix} *WW*, 13 November 1936, xviii-xix; 9 December 1938, 17; *RPA*, 1 September 1939, 27, 64. See also Kent, 198.

^{xxx} Memos from Meany to Norman Gilroy, 3 and 5 September 1939, 16 December 1940, File: J. A. Meany, also File 2SM, Box O135, SAA. See also Meany's introduction to Rumble, *Radio Replies*.

^{xxxi} *Sydney Morning Herald* [*SMH*], 15 July 1940, 11; Don Wright, *Alan Walker: Conscience of the Nation*, (Adelaide: Openbook Publishers, 1997), 48. Details of Rayward's talk have not survived.

^{xxxii} The following discussion is based on Peter Strawhan, "The closure of Radio 5KA, January 1941", *Historical Studies* 21 (October 1985): 550-64; Ivor Bailey, *Mission Story: The Story of the Adelaide Central Mission*, (Adelaide: Adelaide Central Mission, 1988), 76-83; *BB*, 16 January 1941, 3; 13 February 1941, 2. See also Item 53, Series CP12/4, National Archives of Australia, ACT (NAA/ACT).

^{xxxiii} B. G. Cole, *The Australian Broadcasting Control Board and the Regulation of Commercial Radio in Australia since 1948*, PhD thesis, Northwestern University, 1966, 316-17.

^{xxxiv} *BB*, 13 February 1941, 2.

^{xxxv} *BB*, 13 October 1938, 15.

^{xxxvi} Item 2/5/1, Series A11672, NAA/ACT.

^{xxxvii} Davis McCaughey, "Stephen Edwin Yarnold", *ADB* 16 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2002), 602. It is not known which station banned the 1944 broadcast.

^{xxxviii} Wright, 39-40, 56-7.

^{xxxix} Renate Howe and Shurlee Swain, *The Challenge of the City: The Centenary History of Wesley Central Mission 1893-1993*, (Melbourne: Hyland House, 1993), 97-8, 111-18; Healey, "A critical alliance", 17. See also Item PA79, Series A11663, NAA/ACT.

^{xl} Cole, 317; Peter Horsfield, "Issues in religious broadcasting in Australia", *Australian Journal of Communication* 14 (November 1988): 53. For the remark by the president of the Australian Council of Churches on broadcasting's role in creating a "new order", see *SMH*, 11 March 1943, 4.

^{xli} Cole, 317.

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- ^{xlii} Horsfield, 53; *First Report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Broadcasting [PSCB]*, 2 February 1943, 7-8, 27-31.
- ^{xliii} Cole, 318.
- ^{xliv} Bailey, 83.
- ^{xlv} Bailey, 83-84; Arnold D. Hunt, *This Side of Heaven: A History of Methodism in South Australia*, (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1985), 354-356.
- ^{xlvi} Hunt, 85.
- ^{xlvii} *SMH*, 18 May 1938, 11; 13 September 1944, 3; 6 January 1945; *Australian Broadcasting Control Board [ABCB] Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 1971*, 54. Note that it has not always been possible to cite page numbers for newspaper clippings that were found in scrapbooks, clipping files, etc.
- ^{xlviii} *First Report of the PSCB*, 2 February 1943, 27-31.
- ^{xlix} Frank Grose Papers, Box 1, Minutes of meeting of 2GB Community Chest, 17 June 1947, MSS 3261, Mitchell Library, Sydney [ML].
- ¹ *Listener In*, 14 April 1947; Norman Banks Papers, Box 10, Scrapbook 1946-1949, 64, PA02/07, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.
- ^{li} Healey, "A critical alliance", 19.
- ^{lii} Janet West, *Innings of Grace—A Life of Bishop W. G. Hilliard*, (Sydney: Trinity Grammar School, 1987), 130-132.
- ^{liii} *ABCB Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 1949*, 6.
- ^{liv} *SMH*, 2 December 1948, 2; Cole, 318-319.
- ^{lv} *ABCB Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 1950*, 17.
- ^{lvi} Wright, 74.
- ^{lvii} Howe and Swain, 117.
- ^{lviii} Rev. Victor James Papers, Boxes 11-16, Acc. 81/143, University of Melbourne Archives.
- ^{lix} Liberal Party Federal Secretariat Papers, Series 8, Box 287, File: Broadcasting 1952-1972, letter from George A. Judkins to B. Saunders, 1 August 1952; "Station 3AK History and Relevant Facts", MS 5000, NLA.

^{lx} Adrian Jose Papers, Series 5, Folder 5, Station Inspections 1952, 4LG, MS 7702, NLA. Letter from Phyllis Ryner to J. O’Kelly, 28 August 1952, Item BF/3/1 PART 1, Series MP1170/3, NAA/Vic. Cole, 337, MS 7702, NLA.

^{lxi} Turner, 7-8, 12-14, 19-20; Kent, 201; *SMH*, 6 November 1954, 5.

^{lxii} Turner, 26-29, 73; *SMH*, 6 November 1954, 5; 7 March 1960, 9; 2 May 1975; *Sun*, 16 November 1966.

^{lxiii} *SMH*, 16 December 1967; Warren Nelson, *T. C. Hammond: Irish Christian*, (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 117-118.

^{lxiv} David Hilliard, “Popular religion in Australia in the 1950s: A study of Adelaide and Brisbane”, *Journal of Religious History* 16 (December 1988): 224.

^{lxv} “Broadcasting”, agenda item for meeting of Hierarchy of New South Wales, 8 April 1953, Box F1311, SAA.

^{lxvi} The following discussion is based on 2SM annual reports and correspondence, 1953-1956, Box O1315, SAA. See also *Catholic Weekly*, 25 June 1953, 1-2; *SMH*, 4 July 1953, 4; 8 July 1953, 5.

^{lxvii} Aliprandi, 24-5. NSW Council of Churches Records, Box 2, File: Broadcasting Committee, letter from Judd to Broadcasting Committee, 28 February 1972, IRN 412494, ML.

^{lxviii} Adrian Jose Papers, Series 5, Folder 9, Policy Decisions of the ABCB, 13, MS 7702, NLA.

^{lxix} Elaine Fletcher, “Public evangelism” in *Seventh-day Adventists in the South Pacific, 1885-1985*, ed. Noel Clapham, (Warburton, Vic: Signs Publishing Company, Warburton, c 1985), 52; *Voice of Prophecy News*, 5 June 1950, 8.

^{lxx} <http://www.adventistmedia.com.au/history>, accessed 31 August 2005.

^{lxxi} Wright, 94-6, 107-8; *Canberra Times*, 9 October 1953; Cole, 326.

^{lxxii} Breward, 148, 176-7; Ross Saunders, “The Word on the wireless” in *The Shape of Belief*, eds Dorothy Harris et. al. (Sydney: Lancer Books, 1982), 185.

^{lxxiii} Buchner, 255-256, 295.

^{lxxiv} Stuart Piggin, “Billy Graham in Australia, 1959—was it revival?”, *Lucas: An Evangelical History Review* (October 1989): 11-12; Breward, 148; Buchner, 262-263.

^{lxxv} Buchner, 152, 340-341. See also NSW Council of Churches Records, Box 2, File: Broadcasting Committee 1959-1990, Program Convenor’s Special Report, n.d. (c. 1965), IRN 412494, ML.

^{lxxvi} Buchner, 305-6, 340-341.

^{lxxvii} *Commonwealth Parliamentary Debates*, Senate 22, 13 November 1962, 1361.

^{lxxviii} Turner, 32.

^{lxxix} ABCB, *Religion and the Broadcast Media: A Report by the Advisory Committee on Religious Programmes* (1970), 1.

^{lxxx} ALP NSW Papers, Box 36, Item 74, Correspondence 1960 M-N, letters from Storey to Reverend Robert R. Smith, 4 and 15 November 1960, MSS 2083, ML.

^{lxxxii} Letters from S. R. I. Clark to 2GB board, 2 September 1960 and 20 April 1961, Box 200.27/1, John Fairfax Archives, Sydney [JFA].

^{lxxxiii} *ABCB Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 1966*, 26.

^{lxxxiv} *ABCB Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 1966*, 25-6. See also NSW Council of Churches Records, Box 2, File: Broadcasting Committee 1959-1990, Ross Saunders, "The Churches and the Mass Media", c. late 1975, IRN 412494, ML.

^{lxxxv} Cole, 334-6.

^{lxxxvi} *ABCB Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 1966*, 25-6.

^{lxxxvii} *ABCB Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 1966*, 26. NSW Council of Churches Records, Box 2, File: Broadcasting Committee 1959-1990, "The Churches and the Mass Media" by Ross Saunders, c. 1976, IRN 412494, ML.

^{lxxxviii} S. R. I. Clark's report, February 1966, Box 200.27/2, JFA. Neil Adcock's chapter, "Media Years", from his unpublished autobiography.

^{lxxxix} *Catholic Weekly*, 26 December 1968, 15.

^{lxxxix} Howe and Swain, 150, 161.

^{xc} Healey, "A critical alliance", 20.