

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN NEW ZEALAND

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
in
Religious Studies
at Massey University, Palmerston North
New Zealand

Glenice Byrl Saunders

2001

ABSTRACT

A new conception of religious freedom in New Zealand, a result of both external and internal influences, has largely replaced the old, though signs of transition are still apparent. The old conception, in keeping with its Christian history, was founded on an unwritten understanding by which the state endorsed no particular religion, and stood apart from sectarian rivalry. This has now fallen away with increasing secularization, social change, pluralism and the development of human rights discourse. Public perceptions of religion are broadening to include other faiths apart from Christianity, such as indigenous belief; it can be acknowledged that Maori also experienced colonization, especially the loss of land, as an assault on their religious freedom.

Each of the last three decades saw an adjustment in state policy which reflected these changes and involved the state in a more active role regarding religion, so altering the nature of religious freedom. These were, in order, the integrating of most religious schools into the state education system, the embracing of biculturalism, and the passing of new constitutional legislation (the Bill of Rights Act and the Human Rights Act). Examining what has been written (mainly by lawyers) on freedom of religion since the last of these revealed a range of reactions, in part determined by the authors' personal attitudes to religion which were able to be uncovered by using a Religious Studies perspective. Little has been written from within the discipline of Religious Studies on the implications of the above changes for religion.

Because the new conception of religious freedom is based on individual autonomy, it is displacing the authoritarian model of parenting and teaching; this is difficult for those who wish to retain the old model for religious reasons. Since religious freedom is now based on respect for the beliefs of others, whether 'religious' or not, rather than on the absence of state interference in religion, the way is open for the teaching in schools of courses about religion and belief to prepare children better for life and for living in a pluralist society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my supervisor, Bronwyn Elsmore, for her patience and encouragement. Others who have been helpful are acknowledged in the appropriate places.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
CHAPTER ONE Issues	1
Conceptions of Religious Freedom	2
Approach	8
Methodology	13
Resources	14
CHAPTER TWO Opinions	17
Paul Rishworth and Wayne Thompson	17
Rex Ahdar	32
<u>God and Government: The New Zealand Experience</u>	36
Peddie and Walker	38
Matsis and <u>Diversity and Injustice</u>	40
Summary	42
CHAPTER THREE Maori	47
The Treaty of Waitangi and Religious Freedom	47
Christianity and Colonisation	50
Religious Rights Restored	55
Implications for Religious Freedom	59
CHAPTER FOUR Pakeha	65
European Settlement	65
Change of Consciousness	68
Human Rights and Religion	71
Assessment of the Present	74
CHAPTER FIVE Children	80
Convention on the Rights of the Child	81
Obligations of Parents and Educators	85
Children Whose Religious Freedom is Compromised	91
A Closer Look at Education and Religious Rights	94
Summary	98
BIBLIOGRAPHY	101