

*Ross Fitzgerald imagines an amalgamated Christian superlobby squaring up to the newly-registered Australian Sex Party.*

Here's a thought. Peter Costello resigns his seat of Higgins and links up with his old National Party buddy, John Anderson. Then with the backing of the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) and Pete's brother, the Rev Tim, they form the Queen Mary of religious politics, the Australian Christian Party. Putting aside the obvious battle over the name with the Revd Fred Nile, this scenario may not be so far-fetched as it seems.

Everyone knows we're living in the 'end times' – well, the end times for religion, anyway. Science is quietly leading people towards an understanding of universal intelligence, while prayer is increasingly seen as being unable to stop the tragedies of modern life. More and more, Christianity in Western societies is being hijacked through advances in science like quantum state theory and recent breakthroughs in astronomy, genetics and cosmology. And as the scientific movement into deeper and deeper levels of reality continues, faith-based philosophies on life mean less and less.

Add to this trend one of the most appalling sex scandals of all time, involving thousands of church clergy and possibly hundreds of thousands of child victims around the world, and it's no wonder that the mainstream churches are floundering. They can't find enough new priests and their numbers of committed supporters are in significant decline.

The end of any major era or epoch always shows a last-minute rally on behalf of the old guard. I reckon we're seeing the death of religion through religion's need to infiltrate political parties over the last few decades. And a corporate merger of the major Christian denominations in a desperate last bid to head off the increasingly secular state makes a lot of sense. There are many Christians in Australia who feel a need to counter the evil Sex Party and the slightly less evil Greens.

In fact, the Australian Christian Lobby was formed not long after the sex industry organised its own political lobby group, the Eros Association, in 1992. The timing said it all. So it would be no surprise to see the religious lobby do the same again, hot on the heels of the Australian Electoral Commission's approval of the Sex Party's registration as a political party and during the Secular Party's continuing efforts to win the same status.

There are other indicators of a mounting change in strategy by the religious right. The rhetoric of Christian groups is becoming more aggressive and more focused. Jim Wallace, head of the ACL, recently let fly with an outrageous attack on gays and lesbians. Last month while debating members of the Sex Party, the Greens and the online watchdog the Electronic Frontiers Association, he blamed the infiltration of our churches by homosexuals for the appalling conviction rate of clergy in child sex offences.

At a gathering in the NSW Parliament meeting-room organised by the Forum of the Round Table (FORT), Wallace - a born again Baptist - told a stunned group of church supporters of

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different denominations, and some anti-censorship campaigners, that the Catholic, Anglican and Pentecostal churches and their teachings bore no blame at all for the 500 convicted paedophile priests in Australia. The Church had let its collective guard down by allowing large numbers of gay men to enter the priesthood and ministry, he said. It was those poofs who were to blame, not the Pope or the head of the Anglican synod.

When he was first asked the question on this, Wallace stormed to his feet. Even before he got to the microphone, he was telling the audience about how glad he was that this question had come up. And clearly he had rehearsed his response.

The real question is, who has he been rehearsing with? The ACL are pretty tight-lipped about where their funding and support comes from and who they count as their friends. Not so with our federal politicians. When he was prime minister, John Howard gave the Exclusive Brethren special access to his political office. Peter Costello makes hallelujah videotapes for the Victorian-based Catch the Fire Ministries. And now Kevin Rudd has agreed to be guest speaker at the ACL's Annual General Meeting in November.

For Rudd, this is a major public relations blunder. His weekly worship at the local church is tolerated by most Australians as a folksy, personal tradition. A ringing endorsement of the ACL is a very different matter, which may see his electoral fortunes tied more closely to the death of corporate religion than he would like.

If the super-duper, cross-factional, multi-allegiance Christian party becomes a reality, Rudd's problems in the Senate with Family First's Steve Fielding will pale into insignificance. If the Sex Party manages to win seats as well, the Senate may well be transformed into a religious debating house.

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Source: <http://www.christianspeaksaustralia.com> Jim Wallace. Is that a gun in his pocket?