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ASPECTS OF CONGREGATIONALISM
IN SOUTH-EASTERN AUSTRALIA,
CIRCA 1880 TO 1930

H.R. JACKSON

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the Australian National University
January 1978
This thesis is my own work.

Hyl Andersen Jackson
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The Congregational churches in south-eastern Australia between 1880 and 1930 were institutions under stress. From about 1890 the number of Congregational adherents decreased, largely in consequence of weak denominational attachment and a failure to build new churches in rapidly-growing districts. The doctrinal consensus which had characterized the denomination in the 1870's disintegrated. This change in turn accelerated the slackening of church involvement, which accompanied a revolt against many of the values propagated by the Evangelical Revival. Congregational leaders, responding to these problems, made only minor adjustments. And yet most of the churches survived. By the 1920's it was clear that, although most Congregationalists wanted a very loose relationship with their churches, they were not prepared to do without them altogether.
PREFA CE

Churches as institutions occupy centre-stage of this study. It was not always meant to be this way: my original intention was to select a sample of Australians (Congregationalists seemed a likely choice) and examine their disengagement from organized religion. The sources nudged me away from my original plan, for it soon became apparent that to write a story around the lives of individuals would be difficult and time-consuming. I also found that there was much intrinsic interest in looking at the changing relationships between churches and people from the point of view of the churches. And so my inquiry turned into a study of institutions under stress: how the Congregational churches survived, yet failed to adapt to, social change; how they abandoned many of their fundamental doctrines, yet remained recognizably Christian; how they lost popularity with their adherents, and yet retained a measure of support.

I have not attempted to write a comprehensive denominational history, even within the time limits I set myself. I have dealt only with the Congregational churches in south-eastern Australia— that is New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia. And there are aspects of Congregationalism which I have not attempted to write about at all or only considered as they fall into place around the main theme. Thus, in some respects this study is narrow in scope, dealing as it does with only some parts of the life of churches which never attracted the adherence of more than about three per cent of the Australian people. But there is an important compensation: I have been able to take a relatively long time span. This, I believe, is essential if one is concerned with social change whose main features may require years to
become apparent, and then perhaps only to the historian who is in a position to compare one generation with another.

A final point: I have deliberately avoided using the term 'secularization'. This is not because I think secularization is a word best expunged from the dictionary. If it is precisely defined and used in a purely descriptive sense (i.e. without any assumption that secularization is an inevitable process extending indefinitely into the future), it can be a helpful term. But I am inclined to think that it is not a word which historians of modern times should use - at least not in the present state of their studies. It is a short-hand term to be employed after the investigation is over - if it seems to be appropriate. To use it near the beginning is to risk begging important questions and making unwarranted assumptions.
CHAPTER ONE

FREE AND EVANGELICAL

In the 1880's it was still possible to believe that Congregationalism was the form of Christianity best adapted to Australian conditions. For at least forty years this had been a denominational commonplace, accepted equally by the Colonial Missionary Society, which worked for the extension of Congregationalism in the British colonies, and by Congregationalists living in Australia. This belief in a colonial destiny was reaffirmed at the jubilees of the introduction of Congregationalism to the Australian colonies — Tasmania in 1880, New South Wales in 1883, South Australia in 1887 and Victoria in 1888. The Rev. Dr. Llewelyn Bevan, for example, told a South Australian jubilee gathering that Congregationalism lay 'along the line of the instincts and the traditions' of the Australian colonies.

They are democratic nations; Congregationalism is democratic. They are essentially free nations; Congregational Churches are essentially free Churches. The appeal in these colonies is to the people, almost to the people en masse. It is so with Congregationalism - the essential, necessary, and absolute democracy of the Christian Church. Therefore, if we are true to our principles and to our opportunities in these colonies, the future of our Churches will be a very great and noble future.

The performance of the previous half-century hardly justified this optimism. Even in South Australia, where the denomination was

---

Bevan (1842-1918) had arrived Melbourne earlier in the same year to become pastor of the Independent Church, Collins Street, after successful pastorates at leading churches in London and New York. He became the first principal of Parkin College, Adelaide, in 1910. See L.J. Bevan, The Life and Reminiscences of Lleuelyri David Bevan, L.L.B., D.D., Melbourne, 1920. For earlier expressions of opinions similar to Bevan's, see for example, Nonconformist, 19 May 1845, 17 May 1847; Colonial Missionary, 1853, p. 14; 1857, Appendix, pp. 27-8.
strongest, Congregationalists formed less than five per cent. of
the population. 'I have often wondered', said the Rev. James Jefferis,
and he was not the only one, '... how it is that, in the colonies of
our Empire, our churches have not laid that hold upon the population
which, I think, they are entitled to.' Yet in the 1880's the
Congregational churches seemed to be coming into their own at last.
The number of Congregationalists in New South Wales increased by two
thirds during the decade. In South Australia the increase in
adherents more than kept pace with population growth. Church finances
improved dramatically as a consequence of jubilee fund raising. Over
£90,000 was contributed to the jubilee funds in New South Wales,
Victoria and South Australia. £12,600 was promised in one morning
to the New South Wales fund. James Jefferis, the moving spirit
behind the New South Wales jubilee movement, claimed that following
its success, in the next decade Congregationalists might double their
resources and strength. Another denominational leader in New South
Wales was hopeful that 'before long our churches will be as great a
power for good in the land as are our churches in England'.

Nor were Congregational spokesmen in general anxious about
the unbelief and doubt which were feared by many churchmen of other

---

2 Report of the Intercolonial Conference ... to Celebrate the
Jubilee of the Introduction of Congregationalism to Australia,
Sydney, 1883, p. 90. A.D.B. Rev. O. Copland once remarked
at an opening of a new church that people had often spoken
to him about the surprising failure of Congregational
principles in the young Australian democracies: Observer,
9 Dec. 1882, p. 33.

3 For the changes in census strength see Appendices 1–2.

4 N.S.W.C.Y.B., 1888, pp. 62, 65; Jubilee Volume of
Congregationalism 1888, Melbourne, n.d., p. 44; E.S.Kiek,
Our First Hundred Years, Adelaide, n.d., p. 44.

5 Congregational Record, 12 April 1885, pp. 123–4; La L MSS,
9239, 1/1, Robert W. Hardie to J.J. Hailey, 30 Aug. 1883.
denominations. Congregationalists had their pessimists but the dominant feeling was that the truth in a fair fight was ever strong and that Congregational polity allowed the truth to fight unfettered. The Rev. Alexander Gosman gave a parable in 1883 which exemplified Congregational confidence. Not long before, the missionary ship, the *John Williams*, and the great *Sorata* of the Orient line had both left the Sydney heads as a tremendous storm had blown up. The *Sorata* had pitched and rolled so that those aboard had feared for their lives. The little *John Williams* had risen with every wave, untroubled. In the same way, said Gosman, in the storm to be unleashed by the forces of unbelief, Congregationalism would ride high whilst the cumbersome organizations of the bigger denominations foundered.

Alexander Gosman was a poor prophet. Supposedly best adapted to Australian conditions of all the denominations, Congregationalism fared worst. In a country in which the pattern of religious affiliation has changed very slowly on the whole, thousands of people ceased to be Congregationalists within a few decades; in a country where the population more than doubled in the next sixty years the number of Congregationalists diminished; the denomination which was going to ride the waves of the future largely failed to recruit the young. The institutional decline of Congregationalism was severest in

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7 *Intercolonial Conference, 1883*, pp. 99-100. *A.D.B.*. The images of the storm of unbelief and the ships, like so much else, were probably taken from Congregationalists at home. Rev. J. Baldwin Brown used them in a London address which was reported in *N.S.W.I.*, May 1879. Rev. O. Copland used the same imagery in South Australia some months before Gosman: *Observer*, 9 Dec. 1882, p. 33.
Victoria, the colony in which adherents had been most numerous during the second half of the nineteenth century. Between 1891 and 1933 the number of Congregationalists in Victoria fell by 9,652 or 44 per cent.

A few historians have been puzzled by these developments. The historian of nineteenth century Australian Congregationalism, Dr. Lindsay Lockley, has written that 'In principle' the denomination's fate should have been different. Dr. Geoffrey Serle has called Congregationalism's poor performance in Victoria 'odd'. Congregational leaders were bewildered. To begin with they could hardly believe the census returns - on one occasion in Victoria they sought an inquiry into what they claimed was an official error. They cast about desperately for reasons, blaming first this and then that. Their usual response was to move to adjust the polity in which they had previously placed such faith. Many felt that it had let them down. Others considered that concern with organization was superficial, believing rather with old Singleton in Conrad's The Nigger of the Narcissus that there was nothing wrong with the ship but everything with those who sailed her. Despite much discussion, some recrimination, and many changes, still the denomination's position worsened.

Did Australian Protestants decide from the 1880's that they did not want to worship in Congregational churches and send their children to Congregational Sunday-schools? Or was it rather that the denomination registered with an especial sensitivity a disengagement


9 V.C.Y.B., 1903, pp. 81-2.
of Australians from the Protestant churches? How important was religious doubt in the decline of Australian Congregationalism? How much were the Congregational churches affected by changes in the patterns of living of those associated with them, and what were those changes? To what extent were the forces of change peculiar to Australia and to what extent were they a manifestation of an international movement? How well did the Australian Congregational churches cope with the challenges of falling numbers and upheaval of religious ideas?

Though Australian Congregationalists were a numerically small group these are big questions and it is best not to hurry in answering. All involve in some way a judgement about the character of colonial Congregationalists and how they differed from other religious groups in Australia and overseas. Who were the colonial Congregationalists and what was their attitude to their churches when the long years of adversity began? I will begin with the beliefs of the Congregational churches about 1880 and in the next two chapters discuss the influence of the colonial environment upon the churches, and the circumstances of those who were connected with them.

Congregationalists usually stated their beliefs in two parts, one dealing with theology and the other with church government. The theology was reckoned to be much more important but because the Congregational position was not distinctive, on public occasions it often received less attention.
Until the 1880's the colonial churches individually and collectively often made statements of their doctrinal beliefs. One year after its formation in 1832, the Congregational Union of England and Wales issued a 'Declaration of the Faith, Church Order, and Discipline of the Congregational or Independent Churches'. This was reprinted in Australia at least five times during the nineteenth century and was often adopted as a standard by the colonial churches. Sometimes church minutes were kept in books which had the English Declaration printed at the front. The colonists also drew on English precedents when they sought to define doctrine in legal documents governing property held for Congregational purposes, such as churches and theological colleges. Less formal statements were made at ordination services when candidates for the ministry were asked to describe their beliefs, and at the opening of churches. As all these statements were remarkably similar it is an easy matter to generalize about Congregational doctrine. The teaching was official only in the sense that it was given by representative bodies or persons and had no binding force on any church or adherent. Nevertheless it is worth summarizing. It went virtually unquestioned until the 1880's and provides at the very least a good idea of what Congregationalists were generally supposed to believe.

All the churches professed what was often called 'Evangelical Religion'. At its centre, this was an attempt to express the meaning of Christian conversion. The two key doctrines were those of justification by faith and of the new birth - in the words of John

10 The words were used in the constitutions of the Victorian and South Australian Unions: A.Z.I.Y.B., 1867, p. 29; A.I.Y.B., 1891, p. 168.
Wesley, what God does for us and what God does in us.\textsuperscript{11} The apostle Paul was the dominant influence, though to a considerable extent his teaching was interpreted through the eyes of the sixteenth century reformers and those who led the Evangelical Revival in England two centuries later. Close to this centre were three other beliefs.

Official statements usually began with an assertion of the Reformation faith in Scripture. The schedule to the trust deed of the Victorian Congregational College was typical:

\begin{quote}
The Holy Scriptures of the Old and new [sic] Testament are the Word of God and are of Supreme and absolute authority and sufficiency in all matters of faith and practice.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

The Bible was not declared to be inerrant or literally true in every respect though this may well have been the general belief amongst Congregational church-goers until the 1870's.\textsuperscript{13} A second belief made conversion an urgent necessity. The Bible was understood as teaching 'the fall of man from a sinless state into one of sin and death'.\textsuperscript{14} The wrath of God was to be manifested in the final judgement, at which, it was believed, sinners would have meted out to them eternal punishment.\textsuperscript{15} A third belief, the substitutionary theory of the atonement, promised the only escape from this awful fate. Though the sin of mankind was necessarily the object of the wrath of a righteous


\textsuperscript{12} \textit{A.Z.C.Y.B.}, 1868, p. 104.

\textsuperscript{13} It is hard to explain otherwise the turmoil in the 1890's when Congregational ministers began to discuss publicly the findings of higher criticism. See ch. 7.

\textsuperscript{14} An Act to incorporate the Congregational Union of New South Wales, 46 Victoria (private act), Schedule A.

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{A.Z.C.Y.B.}, 1868, p. 104. The model trust deed adopted by the South Australian Union spoke of 'the everlasting punishment of the wicked': \textit{S.C.Y.B.}, 1878, p. 108.
God, yet God also willed to save sinners. A colonial minister recited the formula at his ordination in 1889: 'I believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the one and only sufficient Saviour for sinful men; Who has made ample satisfaction for human sin, so that God is able to be just, and the Justifier of him that believeth in Jesus'.

Evangelical religion in the 1870's was definite and coherent. It also has the look of permanence because inevitably we view it in comparison with the doctrinal revolution of the next two or three decades. Yet the appearance is deceptive: throughout the nineteenth century there had been change. In the English Congregational churches in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it had been accepted that before all time the many had been chosen for damnation and the few for salvation. A softer tone was evident in the 1833 Declaration of the English Union and in the next half century both in England and in Australia a full-blooded Arminianism - a belief that men and women could choose to reject or receive the Gospel - became acceptable. The doctrinal schedule to the act incorporating the New South Wales Union, passed in 1882, expressly affirmed 'the unlimited nature of the provisions and invitations of the Gospel'. Another, less evident, change concerned the conviction with which evangelical principles were held. During a visit to Australia in 1887 R.W. Dale, the foremost

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18 J.C. Kirby remembered that Robert Ross, an early minister at Pitt Street church, was 'a thorough Calvinist', that his successor, R.W. Cuthbertson, was moderately so, and that the man who followed him, John Graham, was 'a thorough Arminian': N.S.W. Cong., Oct. 1923.
19 The Congregational Union Incorporation Act, Schedule A.
English Congregationalist of his generation, recounted to his co-religionists in Adelaide how a change had come over Congregational preaching about mid-century.

The younger men might have said 'We do not reject the doctrine of human sinfulness, or human peril, or the atonement, or justification by faith, or the new birth;' but the older men, could they have seen clearly how the matter stood, might have replied, 'Perhaps not, but these truths do not hold the same place in your faith that they hold in ours ...'  

Though they could not have known it, some of those who heard Dale on this occasion were to live to see a first class doctrinal conflict in 1909 which had its roots in the changes which had been described to them.

The Congregational doctrine of the church was first clearly articulated during the English Reformation. In the common European struggle to recover the form as well as the spirit of New Testament Christianity, tiny groups in England rejected the basic assumption of the Elizabethan religious settlement. These men and women were called separatists.

Two Elizabethan statutes, the acts of Uniformity and Supremacy, embodied a concept of the church as the nation in its religious aspect. Elizabeth's bishops wanted to purify the church of

20 Observer, 1 Oct. 1887, p. 36. A.D.B.

what they regarded as popish abuses but they and their successors
never gave up the traditional inclusive concept of the church. An
Englishman, because he was an Englishman, was presumed to be a member
of the Church of England. The separatist idea of the church was, by
contrast, exclusive. The separatists strove to ensure that a church
be composed of real Christians. If this meant isolating themselves
ecclesiastically from the vast majority of their countrymen, so be it.
The spiritual welfare of the elect for whom Christ had died would suffer
if they were compelled to have spiritual intercourse with 'evil
livers'. Moreover, how could Christ's light shine on the world if
the saints were lost amidst the mass of the unregenerate? Scripture
demanded that the saints be visible; the saints could only be visible
if there were a pure church.

A little congregation of exiles at Amsterdam stated the
separatist position concisely in 1603 when it claimed

That every true visible Church, is a company
called and separated from the world by the word
of God, and joyned together by voluntarie
profession of the faith of Christ, in the
fellowship of the Gospell. And that therefore
no knowne Atheist, vnbelieuer, Heretique, or
wicked liver, be received or reteined a member
in the Church of Christ, which is his body; God
having in all ages appointed and made a separation
of his people from the world, before the Law, vnder
the Law, and now in the tyme of the Gospell.22

According to these religious radicals, Christians, genuine Christians,
brought a church into being by their voluntary association. As there
were many such associations, there were many churches. There was one
invisible church, that of the saints in all times and places, but there

22 'The Points of Difference' in Walker, ed., Creeds
and Platforms, p. 78.
could only be *visible churches*.  

Three hundred years later, both in their 'official' statements and less formally at denominational gatherings, Congregationalists in Australia espoused this same doctrine of the church. The Rev. Joseph Robertson stated the separatist idea of the church in separatist language:

... a Christian church is made up not of all the inhabitants of a country or of the members of a nation, but of such as believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, who have been *gathered out* of the world and who have united themselves to Christ, and who are being led by the Holy Spirit.

A church should only be composed of 'spiritual persons', said the Rev. E. Griffith, expressing the same idea in the religious language of his own time. When the Rev. J.H. Toms reaffirmed the principles

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23 Although the fundamental Congregational idea of the church was articulated even before Elizabeth's death, it was to be another fifty years in England before a form of polity was developed which later English Congregationalists were to take as standard. There were many English people of various persuasions who were dissatisfied in the early seventeenth century with the existing religious settlement. It is anachronistic to seek to distinguish before the Civil War between Congregationalists, or Independents as they were then called, and Presbyterians. Practical problems of church organization did not have to be faced before the 1640's and so in England reformers were slow to clarify their ideas. In New England the Congregational way was developed faster because freedom from royal interference was gained earlier. See Morgan, *Visible Saints*, pp. 12-4.

24 *Intercolonial Conference*, 1883, p. 84.

Joseph Robertson, M.A., University of Sydney, trained at Camden College. His first pastorate began in 1874. Minister at Stow church, Adelaide, between 1890 and 1903(?), Robertson was probably the first native-born Congregationalist to hold the pastorate of a 'cathedral' church in Sydney, Melbourne or Adelaide.


Edward Griffith (1819-91) was born at Bath, Somersetshire, and arrived Sydney in 1854. He was minister of the Wharf Street church, Brisbane, between 1860 and 1888. He was father of Sir Samuel, politician and Chief Justice of the High Court. (M.H. Griffith), *Memorials of the Rev. Edward Griffith*, Brisbane, 1892.
of Congregational polity in a speech to the Victorian Congregational Union in 1890, he too stressed the distinction between nominal and genuine Christians, defining the latter to be those who had 'a personal, vital, supernatural union' with their Lord.  

The distinction between genuine Christians and others expressed itself in the nomenclature of church members and church adherents or sometimes members of the congregation. Everybody who wished was welcome to attend services and describe himself as a Congregationalist; but he was not thereby a Christian in the strict sense, and of course until he had made a credible profession of faith had no right of church membership.

If the first principle of Congregational polity was that the church should be separate from the world, the second was that those who were called from the world should form themselves into communities. R.W. Dale, who wrote the standard text on this subject, was insistent that any believer's personal union with Christ was incomplete until he had spiritual fellowship with other Christians. Alexander Gosman considered that the 'rivers do not more naturally glide onwards to the ocean' than the Christian sought 'the converse and companionship of

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26 V.I., Nov. 1890.
Toms was born at Exeter, England, in 1845. After an apprenticeship as a draper, he was trained at Spring Hill, Birmingham, and then had a pastorate in a working class district of Aston, Birmingham, migrating in 1884 after his health broke down. Toms held pastorates at Geelong and Brisbane and was for many years ministerial secretary of the New South Wales Congregational Union. He died in 1930.

those who belong to the household of God.'

It was customary for those forming a fellowship to sign a formal document called a covenant, which set out the purposes of church fellowship. These were expressed succinctly in the first church covenant made in South Australia:

for observing all the ordinances of Christ, ... [and] more especially to place ourselves under the comforting and guarding influence of Church Association.29

The 'Letter of Agreement' signed at the formation of the Croydon church, Sydney, was a longer document. These Croydon Christians pledged themselves in 1879

by Divine help, to live and work together in peace and love; to exercise mutual watchfulness, helpfulness and forbearance; to unite in maintaining the ordinances of religion and in efforts to extend the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour; and to be very careful in preserving the purity of our communion.

Then followed an expression of a desire to participate in wider Christian work and fellowship.30 The responsibilities of church members were sometimes elaborated in the rules which churches customarily adopted once the fellowship had been formed. Rule 1 of the Pitt Street church in the 1870's among other things required that members

maintain good works; watch against an unholy temper; train up their children in the nurture


29 Quoted in B.L. Jones, 'History of Stow Memorial Church Flinders Street, Adelaide', p. 2.

and admonition of the Lord; contribute according to their ability for the relief of the poor members, and the general diffusion of the Gospel; cherish a spirit of brotherly love; and conduct themselves in all things as consistent Christians.

Few colonial churches were as specific but this expressed well the common ideal.

Fellowships were spiritual not only because they were communities of spiritual persons; they were spiritual because they had a divine participant. Christ's saying that he was present whenever two or three were gathered together in his name was a favourite text with Congregational theorists. It was especially congenial to them because it fortified their belief that though their churches were unimpressive by worldly standards they were august fellowships of the divine life.

A 'credible profession' of Christian faith was in theory required of any person seeking to belong to a fellowship. At the Petersham church, Sydney, for example, it was required that a candidate first see the minister. If approved by him the person would be nominated at the next church meeting, following which two members would visit him. At the church meeting following this interview, the two members would make their reports in the presence of the candidate. If the majority of the meeting voted in favour he would be accepted.

Rules were also thought to be necessary to ensure high standards of behaviour by church members. Sometimes rules made a

31 The Year Book of the Congregational Church, Pitt Street, Sydney. 1879-80, Sydney, 1880, p. 8.


33 The Year Book of the Congregational Church, Petersham, for the Year 1886 ..., Sydney, 1886, pp. 4-6.
distinction between offences which were public and those which were not. In the case of behaviour not amounting to a public scandal the member involved was to be privately admonished and if there were no amendment the church meeting decided on the proper course of action. In the case of a public offence, again the church meeting acted as it saw fit but this time after an investigation by the minister and deacons. 34

There were also typically rules about church attendance. It was expected that members would worship as regularly as possible at the week-night service. Attendance was expected at the Sunday services and at the Lord's Supper which was celebrated monthly. According to many church rules absence from the Lord's Supper for six months was to be followed by an official admonition. If absence continued, membership was to cease. A check on attendance at communion was often kept by a system of tickets.

According to Congregational polity each church fellowship was a gathering of the spiritually elite. Why should such a system be thought adapted to colonial societies which were democratic in temper? Congregational spokesmen understandably did not dwell on the contradiction. Instead they emphasized how the Congregational churches nurtured free men and women suited to the free air of the colonies. It was this belief which probably had much to do with the inscription

34 Handbook of the Congregational Church in Davey Street, Hobart Town, Hobart, 1862, p. 17; ML MSS, 2093/64/4, Rules of the Pitt Street Congregational Church, 1868-1951.
of a text on the front wall of the Pitt Street church facing the worshippers: 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty'.

Congregationalism was believed to be a free polity partly because it stood for the deliverance of the church from bondage to the state. The separation of church and state was understood to mean the liberation of the church from 'all state connexion, sanction, influence and subordination'.

Church affairs were spiritual and spiritual causes suffered from any contact with the state, even well-meant assistance. During the early years struggling ministers and congregations had on occasions received state aid and an intercolonial conference in 1855 found it necessary to assert that 'Voluntaryism in religion ... is an essential and fundamental principle of Congregational Independency'.

Ought voluntaryism extend to education? This was a difficult question for Congregationalists. Some Congregationalists had been leaders in the fight for the withdrawal of state aid from denominational schools and by 1880 all the colonial Unions accepted the principle of no state support for church schools. However, a thorough-going voluntaryism required that there be no religious teaching at all in

35 The words are those of Rev. Edwin Day in his address from the chair of the Victorian Union in 1881: *V.C.Y.B.*, 1882, p. 43.

36 See for example, Memorial Congregational Church, Hobart Town, *A Copy of the Document Read at the Ceremony of Laying the Memorial Stone ...*, Hobart, 1870, pp. 10-1.

37 J. Gregory, *Church and State*, Melbourne, 1973, p. 19, n. 29 and references referred to there; *A.D.B.* article on Alexander Morison.

38 T.Q. Stow, *Congregationalism in the Colonies: An Address Delivered before the Conference of Congregational Ministers and Delegates ... With the Conference Minutes ...*, Sydney, 1855, p. 26.
state schools. No colonial Union was prepared to go as far as recommending this. Another inconsistency concerned marriages. Congregational ministers acted as agents of the colonial registrars regarding the civil aspect of the wedding ceremony. Their defence was that they were performing a service for society and that they needed the money paid to them by the state.\footnote{Jubilee of Congregationalism in South Australia, pp. 32-3.}

To be true to its nature a church had to be free not only from state control but from that of any ecclesiastical authority. Christ in his plenitude was present to each spiritual fellowship. Any interference with the local community was a trespassing upon Christ.\footnote{Dale, Manual of Congregational Principles, pp. 74-5; Coombe, A Word of History, pp. 2-3.} This insistence on local autonomy distinguished the denomination from the Methodist and Presbyterian churches. In the Wesleyan Methodist church, and less so in the splinter Methodist churches, power was centralized in the annual Conference. In Presbyterian polity a check was exercised over the kirk session by a hierarchy of courts raised above it. Otherwise the organization of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches in Australia was similar to that of the Congregationalists. Like the Congregational churches, Presbyterian and Methodist ones were without bishops and also like them subscribed to the principle of the church gathered from the world, making the same distinction between members and adherents.

The Baptist churches were even closer. They stemmed from the same separatist tradition and practised the same principle of local autonomy. They were distinguished from Congregationalists in doctrinal matters only in respect of baptism. Baptists administered
the sacrament exclusively as a rite of passage symbolizing the
beginning of new life and admission to a church. The Baptist
position was that as infants could not be members of a church they
should not be baptized. Congregational theologians accepted the
premise but not the conclusion. They defended baptism of infants from
Christian families as a scriptural practice.

Theoretically a Congregational church was free to call as its
pastor whomever it liked; pay him what it liked; arrange its worship
as it wished; interpret the Scriptures as it wished; go into debt
when it wished. The only check was that provided by a free enterprise
system. Each church had to find a minister who would accept the
conditions which it wished to lay down; it also had to attract and
retain a congregation which was prepared to pay the expenses.

Though Congregational polity stressed the independence of
each church it did not rule out associations of churches. These
were thought to be desirable and had existed, in one form or another
since the seventeenth century, for fellowship and co-operative work.
But they had to be free associations.

The Unions, one for each colony, were the most important
denominational organizations. These met half-yearly to discuss
matters of general concern. Each Congregational church in the colony
was represented by its minister and a number of lay delegates
calculated according to membership. A chairman was elected annually.
There was also an executive charged with the organization of Union
meetings and, by the 1880's, with the oversight of church extension.

The constitution of each Union was explicit about the
autonomy of the constituent churches. For example, the constitution
of the Victorian Union stated that it was 'the right of every separate
Church to maintain perfect Independence in the Government and Administration of its own affairs and therefore it shall not in any case assume Legislative authority or right of interference'. Congregational apologists argued that only churches free from external control could have genuine union with one another. In this field, as elsewhere, it was thought that freedom was necessary for virtue to flourish. The Rev. J.G. Fraser, who trained ministers at Camden College, Sydney, for three and a half decades, insisted that Independecy did not mean isolation.

The more Christian men are left free from human control to look to Christ as their master, and to draw near to him as their Saviour, the nearer they come to each other as brethren, in a unity not artificial but real, not of name merely (which expressing unity may be only an imposture or a veil cast over strife), nor of artificial bonds which, like the tying together of animals of incompatible nature, may cause more dissension than they can prevent.

Congregational freedom extended to the individual Christian.

It was the right and duty of every Congregationalist to exercise personal judgement in religious matters, including the interpretation of the faith. Nobody was required to subscribe to any statement of Christian doctrine as a condition of church membership. Nor was there any doctrinal test for Congregational ministers.

41 V.C.Y.B., 1867, p. 29.

42 Intercolonial Conference, 1883, p. 62. Fraser, M.A., D.D., was educated at Glasgow University, which awarded him an honorary D.D. in 1894. He was Warden of Camden 1872-78 and 1881-1909. J. Garrett and L.W. Farr, Camden College, Sydney, 1964, ch. 2, discuss Fraser's achievements.

43 Though trust deeds governing Congregational properties sometimes attempted to define acceptable doctrine they never seem to have provided religious tests. See the comment of Rev. F.V. Pratt, N.S.W.C.Y.B., 1907, p. 134.
Congregational leaders were wont to argue that freedom from subscription to creeds ought to be the universal rule in Christendom. For them a creed was not a legitimate measure to protect Christ's flock from ravening wolves but a form of religious persecution. Their argument was that creeds got between Christians and the Scriptures; that creeds were composed by fallible men; that new light could break from God's word and render a creed obsolescent; that anyway creeds did not prevent heresy; and, perhaps most of all, subscribing to creeds discouraged the development of that personal conviction which was more precious than any formal profession. The effort required to gain this personal conviction must not be shirked. God has not intended, one Congregational minister remarked, 'that we should be intellectual cripples, laid down at the doors of the churches, and to be carried by others to heaven'.

Personal conviction also required spiritual freedom. Some might be worried about abuse of this freedom, said the Rev. J.G. Fraser, but Congregationalists were not among them, for 'the eagle is never so safe as when borne aloft upon the yielding air'. The touch of spiritual pride in this image colours many of the statements by Congregationalists about credal subscription.

In theory Congregational church government was theocratic. Christ was the head of each church and every church member was pledged

44 J. Graham, Currents and Counter-currents of the Age; with Remarks on Union, Sacerdotalism, Infidelity, and Religious Revival. An Address Delivered ... to the Congregational Union of New South Wales, October, 1874, Sydney, n.d., p. 13.

to obey his law. This law was not only written in Scripture; it was
to be ascertained at the church meeting when Christ was present with
his own. Ideally therefore the decisions of the church meeting
expressed the will of God.\textsuperscript{46} For this reason the church meeting was
regarded as the controlling body of each congregation.

The most important responsibility of the church meeting was
the call of the minister. The minister was not regarded as belonging
to a higher order of Christians than those who comprised the church
fellowship but he was considered to have a special role. It was not
that of the priestly mediator but of the prophet - the envoy
delivering the word of God to man. As the Rev. Joseph Robertson put
it in a paper he delivered to the Adelaide Congregational Ministers' Fraternal, while all Christians were called to be saints, not all were
called to be ministers.\textsuperscript{47} As a mark of his special function it was
customary for a man to be ordained at the inception of his ministry.
The practice of ordination and the ideal of a learned ministry, which
was traditional amongst Congregationalists, encouraged respect for
the office. But the belief in the priesthood of all believers
remained a lively one. Some churches had lay preachers attached to
them and there were some who claimed that any church member could in
principle administer the sacraments.\textsuperscript{48} In theory, in the government
of a church the vote of the minister counted no more than any church
member's.

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47 SAA SRG 95, Adelaide Congregational Ministers' Fraternal Association, minutes of meeting of 11 July 1893.
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The church meeting also called to the office of deacon. The number of deacons varied according to the size of the church membership; a church with a membership of fifty might have three deacons, a church with a hundred members, five deacons or more. Though Congregationalists were clear that the diaconate had scriptural warrant they were not so certain about the deacon's function. In the Australian colonies it seems to have been the rule, at least in theory, that deacons confined their oversight to temporal affairs, but in England there were some who thought this too restrictive and sought a role for the deacon substantially the same as that of the Presbyterian elder. Like Presbyterian elders Congregational deacons were ordained.

The minister and deacons constituted the executive of the church fellowship and congregation. In theory the church meeting was the sole authority on matters of policy. In the church meeting all members were free to speak and all votes had equal value.

Congregationalists generally claimed that their churches were ordered in conformity with the New Testament and that other systems were not. This was not taken to mean that God's salvation was only to be found in their churches but there was a belief that if adherents of other denominations examined the Scriptures impartially they would see that they were wrong and ought to become Congregationalists. At a public ceremony in Hobart in 1870 a document was read declaring there was 'abundant evidence' to prove

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that the apostolic churches were Congregational in polity. 

During the latter half of the nineteenth century some British scholars began to assimilate from Germany the critical historical approach to the Bible. This development was to be as revolutionary in its implications for Congregational polity as for doctrine for it was to cast doubt on all claims to replicate the apostolic form of church organization. In the 1870's, however, Congregational leaders in England and Australia were still resistant to the historical approach to the Bible. There were a few progressives in England like R.W. Dale who conceded that it might be impossible to prove from Scripture all the features of Congregational polity but even they continued to argue that the Congregational churches were closest to the New Testament both in spirit and in detail. Alexander Gosman followed this line when he lectured on Congregational polity in Melbourne in the late 1870's. He was careful not to claim that the plain words of Scripture required Congregational church order but he thought 'we can make out a remarkably strong case in favour of the position that there is a close and striking resemblance between the churches of the first century and our own churches'. The main justification for Congregational polity, he said, was the connection between Christian faith and church organization: those who had been raised to the glorious liberty of the children of God required a free church life. Free and evangelical, evangelical freedom - the two

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50 Memorial Congregational Church, A Copy of the Document, p. 11.


52 Gosman, History and Principles, pp. 12-5.
ideas consorted naturally in the minds of Congregational apologists about this time. Before the end of the century tension between the two was to be more apparent than harmony.
CHAPTER TWO

THE MAKING OF AUSTRALIAN

CONGREGATIONALISM

The Congregational doctrine of the church remained almost unaltered for two centuries. In the 1870's intellectual leaders of the denomination in England began to make adjustments to the accepted theory, but the ideas of the ordinary minister, not to mention the ordinary informed lay person, were slower to change. About 1880, therefore, the doctrine of the gathered church was all but universally accepted by Congregationalists in England and the Australian colonies - that is by those who took an interest in such things.

Congregational church life, however, did not remain unchanged. From the late eighteenth century in England, and even more so in Australia, powerful forces caused the practice of the Congregational churches to diverge more and more from their ideal. Paradoxically, the Evangelical Revival, which so greatly benefited Congregationalism in other ways, must be counted as one of the chief of these.

The Evangelical Revival is sometimes regarded as beginning in the 1730's with the conversion of George Whitefield and Charles and John Wesley. It was not however until almost the end of the eighteenth century that it began to have a widespread impact and can be said to have deeply affected the Congregational churches. In 1772 there were

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2 A few Congregational churches had been affected much earlier. It is even possible to argue that the Evangelical Revival originated in 1729 in a Congregational church: A. Everitt, The Pattern of Rural Dissent: the Nineteenth Century, Leicester, 1972, p. 16.
about 380 Congregational churches in England; fifty years later there were about 800. A survey of Congregational churches made in 1871 discovered that of the churches which had been founded between 1650 and 1850 more than one half had been established between 1800 and 1850.

Though the impulse of revival added immensely to the number of Congregationalists it tended to undermine the tight corporate life which was part of the Congregational ideal of the church. It would not be true to say that the old ideal of the church was entirely obliterated. The persistence of the old principles is evident in a document headed 'Questions to candidates for communion', which was almost certainly prepared in England in the early nineteenth century and which found its way to Tasmania. Among the questions which were asked of the candidate for church fellowship were the following: Are you prepared to unite with other church members at church meetings, prayer meetings and social assemblies? To promote the edification of the other members? To co-operate with them in Christian work? 'Are you resolved to avoid, as far as may be, the society of ungodly persons, and to form no connexion in marriage, or otherwise, but with those who are partakers of like precious faith with yourself?'. 'Are you willing to recognise the authority of the Pastor of the Church to reprove, rebuke, and exhort you, in accordance with the laws of Christ?'. In some Congregational churches discipline remained strict


5 National Library of Australia, Religious Pamphlets, box 6, bound with Tasmanian religious pamphlets.
until well into the nineteenth century. Regular church attendance was demanded at the Pitt Street church, Sydney, in the late 1850's and the early 1860's. In 1850 the pastor of a South Australian Congregational church reported that one member had been excluded from the fellowship 'for no act of ill-morals, but simply for neglect and practical as well as verbal refusal to recognize Christ any longer as an actual king upon the earth'. In 1868 one member of the Independent church in Collins Street, Melbourne, was removed from the roll for insolvency and two were expelled, one for drunkenness, the other for 'Bad Conduct'.

Nevertheless it is hard to quarrel with R.W. Dale's verdict that as a consequence of the Evangelical Revival the Congregational tradition was in 'a large measure lost'. By emphasizing above all else the need for conversion, the Congregational preachers of the Revival heightened self-consciousness and encouraged a low regard for corporate life. It was only because the new Congregationalists were not fussy about polity that they were able to establish so many church fellowships so quickly. Even more important, the new Congregationalists prided themselves upon being non-sectarian, that is of putting the

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7 Dale, History of English Congregationalism, p. 588.

Gospel, which they shared with all Christians, before their distinctive principles. In its extreme form this attitude resulted in a complete indifference to teaching the young about Congregationalism.

The Australian Congregational churches were influenced by the non-sectarian ethos from their inception. The first recorded Congregational church, established in 1810, was formed by agents of the London Missionary Society, which epitomized the intensely ecumenical spirit characteristic of English Protestantism when the Evangelical Revival was at its height. Founded in 1795 by Congregationalists along with adherents of other religious bodies, one of the L.M.S.'s principles was that questions of church polity ought to be left to the discretion of missionaries in the field. When the missionaries returned to their work in the South Seas the first church was disbanded but this was not the end of L.M.S. influence. The missionary ship, the *John Williams*, used to call at Australian ports with mission workers on board. These men were often looking for a change of occupation and were logical choices for colonial congregations in search of pastors. A denominational year book listed 125 Congregational ministers resident in the Australian colonies in 1870. Ten of these had served with the L.M.S. 9

Non-sectarian Congregationalism was also propagated in Australia by the Colonial Missionary Society. Founded in 1836, the

C.M.S. was active almost from the beginning of the effective establishment of Congregationalism in Australia, as the first continuing church was not founded until 1830. The C.M.S. in fact was instrumental in introducing Congregationalism to Victoria and South Australia. In December 1837 Thomas Quinton Stow, who was sent to South Australia by the C.M.S., formed the first Congregational church fellowship in the colony. In the same year Henry Hopkins, a Hobart Town merchant, had visited the Port Phillip district, sensed its religious as well as economic prospects and sought a minister from the C.M.S. William Waterfield was sent in response to Hopkins' call. He reached Melbourne in May 1838; in the following year the first fellowship was formed in what was later to be known as Victoria. 10

Unlike the L.M.S., the C.M.S. was a denominational organization and its leaders often spoke of the colonial destiny of Congregationalism. But they were not keen to promote distinctively Congregational principles. One of the agents of the C.M.S. wrote to its secretary about his work in Victoria: 'You will understand what I mean when I say that my text for all speeches on our principles, polity, &c., is this - Congregationalism is the absence of sectarianism'. 11 The society's interest in Australia was at its height in the 1850's following the discovery of gold in Victoria. No less than seventeen Congregational ministers came to Victoria between 1854 and 1860 under the auspices of the C.M.S. 12

10 There are A.D.B. articles on Stow, Hopkins and Waterfield. J. Brown, The Colonial Missions of Congregationalism, London, 1908, provides a history of the C.M.S.


12 Lockley, 'Congregationalism in Australia', p. 246.
The Rev. Robert Ross typifies the non-sectarianism of the L.M.S. and the C.M.S. Before he became a pastor of the Pitt Street church in Sydney, Ross had helped to found the C.M.S. and had been a director of both the C.M.S. and the L.M.S. Ross believed that those who were in love with denominational distinctions were usually wayward in preaching the gospel. At a service for the opening of the new church in Pitt Street, Ross told his congregation that it was only natural that they should become attached to their place of worship and order of service, but added 'Let it be your constant aim to show that your attachment ... is of the right kind. Guard against all party and sectarian feelings'.

Ross, a minister of the leading Australian Congregational church, was an important figure in early denominational history. Even more important was the Rev. J.L. Poore, who arrived in Victoria in 1854 with a brief from the C.M.S. to extend Congregationalism as much as he could. Poore played a key role in founding at least twenty churches in Victoria alone. Poore obviously did not dwell on the leading principles of Congregationalism because once, in Maryborough, after he had finished explaining Congregationalism to a town meeting, the chairman, an Anglican, said that it exactly suited the local people. Poore wrote after the formation of another fellowship that Baptists, Presbyterians, Episcopalians and Wesleyans could all unite in a Congregational church because Congregationalism

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13 R. Ross, 'The House of God's Glory'. A sermon preached at the Opening of the Congregational Church, Pitt Street, Sydney, on Thursday, the 1st of January, 1846, Sydney, 1846, pp. 8-9, 17, 13-4. The information about Ross's directorships of the L.M.S. and the C.M.S. is from the article on him in the A.D.B.

14 Corbin, Ever Working, Never Resting, p. 341.
was the destruction of sectarianism: 'It knows nothing of peculiarities except that grand peculiarity of the Gospel, that it is fit and free for all'.

Poore and other Congregational ministers were encouraged to be non-sectarian by the exigencies of bush life. Where churches were few, people welcomed a Protestant minister of any denomination. It was not unknown for Protestants to attend Roman Catholic services and vice versa. As John West, a Congregational minister wrote, 'in scattered settlements of recent formation' distinctions of polity and ritual were 'rather matters of recollection than of practice'.

The McIntyres, who studied Victorian country towns in the 1930's, noted the strength of non-denominationalism then, long after the pioneering days were over. One woman they interviewed explained that people from her church and the Methodists attended one another's fêtes and American teas because otherwise the attendances would have been so poor that the functions would not be worth having. She added 'we're all working for the same thing, really, aren't we?'.

Later Congregational ministers followed in this same non-sectarian tradition whether they ministered in city or country. 'For thirty years to my knowledge', remarked the Rev. J.C. Kirby in 1879, 'leading men among us have boasted that they have never preached on the distinctive principles of independency [sic] during the whole


17 J. West, *The History of Tasmania*, Vol. 1, Launceston, 1852, p. 196. West was another sent to Australia under the auspices of the C.M.S.; A.D.B..

course of their ministry'. Some ministers claimed that denominational teaching was out of place in the pulpit. Some even believed that non-sectarianism was the essence of Congregationalism. 'I am a keen and eager Congregationalist', said the Rev. E. Griffith, 'just because I recognise in Congregationalism one of the best and most effectual barriers against sectarianism'. The Rev. Walter Mathison once said that he was glad that Congregationalism had no distinctive rallying cry because if it had it would be appealing to prejudices which ought not to be aroused. Many Congregational Sunday-schools gave children no denominational teaching. At least one Congregational Sunday-school had a rule prohibiting it.

In the late 1870's and in the early 1880's some became aware of the consequences of this attitude. 'Go into our schools', declared the chairman of the New South Wales Union in 1883, 'or face many of our congregations, and ask them for an explanation of their position, and in many cases you would receive few and imperfect explanations.'

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20 Handbook of the Congregational Church in Davey Street, Hobart Town, Hobart, 1862, p. [3], G. Clarke; J. Johnston, Congregational Nonconformity: Its Historical and Scriptural Basis, Melbourne, 1883, p. 3.
21 (M.H. Griffith), Memorials of the Rev. Edward Griffith, Brisbane, 1892, p. 79.
22 N.S.W.C.Y.B., 1886, p. 57. Walter Mathison, B.A., trained at Camden College. He was the first minister of the Croydon church, Sydney, holding the pastorate from 1879 to 1919, except for 1890-95 when he was minister at Balmain.
23 V.I., Oct., Nov., 1886.
24 C.E. Walch, The Story of the Life of Charles Edward Walch, with a Selection of His Writings, Hobart, 1908, p. lxxxii.
answers'. A group in Victoria, who tried to dispel some of the ignorance by a course of lectures, noted that because of the failure to teach Congregational principles 'the majority of the young persons in our congregations and schools are almost entirely ignorant of them'. These Victorian Congregationalists, worried about the ignorance of denominational history on the part of the native-born, also provided a large dose of history in their lectures. In South Australia and New South Wales some Union leaders expressed the same anxiety about the indifference of the native-born. It was a problem which could only become more difficult to solve. The proportion of the total population of Australia who had been born in the United Kingdom declined from 53.2 per cent in 1861 to 30.7 per cent in 1881. In another twenty years it had fallen to 18.0 per cent.

The calls for denominational instruction in the late 1870's and early 1880's made no discernible difference. Complaints continued to be made year after year concerning the ignorance of Congregationalists about Congregationalism. Sir James Fairfax told a visiting English Congregationalist about 1903 that many children 'did not seem to know what Congregationalism meant'. An anonymous layman in 1893 reported

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27 A. Gosman et al., The Principles and History of Independency, Melbourne, 1879. The above quotation is from p. vi.

Sir James R. Fairfax, son of John Fairfax, was for many years a member of Pitt Street church and later a member and deacon of the Congregational church in Jersey Road, Woollahra. He was a staunch supporter of the New South Wales Congregational Home Mission Board and other denominational funds.
that in the Congregational churches he had known there was an 'almost total absence' of teaching about the distinctive history or principles of Congregationalism. Another layman complained in 1894 that deacons were being elected who knew nothing of Congregationalism. J.J. Halley, the secretary of the Victorian Union, believed that in many churches there were ministers and deacons who did not know that their fellowship had a covenant. In the early 1920's one minister reported visiting a church where nobody seemed to know what a church meeting was. Such comments doubled and redoubled as the census strength of Congregationalism declined and appreciation grew that this failure was connected with the absence of denominational attachment. As early as 1879 the Rev. Joseph King had warned that the survival of the denomination depended upon educating Congregationalists about their heritage.

2

The waning of the Evangelical Revival had as important consequences for Congregational polity as its waxing. Evangelical

31 A.Z.I., May 1893.
32 V.I., Aug. 1894.
33 ibid., Dec. 1892. A.D.B.
34 Rev. J.S. Griffith, V.I., July 1924.

Joseph King was born in 1839 at Downend near Bristol. He served in Samoa with the L.M.S. between 1863 and 1872, resigning because of his wife's ill health. After pastorates in Victoria, in 1891 he became Organizing Agent for the L.M.S. in Australia.
Congregationalists, though they paid scant regard to traditional churchmanship, at least maintained the rule that only a converted Christian was a genuine Christian. Once the Revival lost its force this last safeguard of the traditional polity was removed.

In 1880 the Rev. George Clarke, who had been born in 1823, remembered how once candidates for church membership had been required to describe their religious experiences verbally or in writing. Clarke did not think that the dropping of this rule in the previous half century had been a departure from the principles of Congregational polity. He was wrong. Once church fellowships ceased to require evidence of conversion membership was virtually for the asking.

Some ministers were prepared to protest publicly against the relaxation of standards. J.J. Halley said that Congregationalists ought 'to fight to the last' to ensure the purity of their churches. In 1886, the Rev. J.H. Toms detected 'sinister signs' that in many quarters a move was afoot to lower the Congregational ideal of the church in a striving for worldly success. In the mid-1890's the Rev. George Campbell of Sydney protested against 'the destructive idea of the church that it is a public hotel, which welcomes all comers

36 G. Clarke, Past and Present. An Address to the Congregational Union of Tasmania ..., Hobart, 1880, pp. 6, 10-3. Clarke noted that some disagreed with this opinion. A.D.B.. The same change had occurred in the English Congregational churches: Dale, History of English Congregationalism, pp. 605-6.

37 V.I., Supplement, June 1881.

38 V.I., May 1886. Toms was wrong in thinking this a new development. He had been in Australia less than eighteen months.
and asks no questions'.

Most of the English Congregational churches in the 1880's and 1890's had been established either before or during the Evangelical Revival when evidence of conversion was expected of candidates for membership. This was true of only a handful in Australia. The Revival had begun to lose its force in the 1830's and 1840's, when the first continuing Congregational church fellowships were formed in Australia. In the late 1840's when the Revival was more or less over there were still only a few thousand Congregationalists in Australia. In the next forty years the Congregational population in south-eastern Australia increased by seven hundred per cent (table 2.1). The total population also expanded enormously during

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39 A.Z.I., Feb. 1894. See also N.S.W.I., Aug. 1885; A.I., May 1891; Jubilee Volume of Victorian Congregationalism 1888 ..., Melbourne, n.d., p. 114. Campbell, who died in 1916, was born in Liverpool and baptized an Anglican. Educated in Scotland, he matriculated in 1863. He originally intended to become a Presbyterian minister but withdrew because of that denomination's credal tests. After training at the Congregational Theological Hall, Edinburgh, he held a pastorate in Dundee between 1869 and 1881. He then accepted the pastorate of the Congregational church, Redfern, in Sydney.

40 The change in the character of preaching was one sign of the waning of the Evangelical Revival. R.W. Dale referred to this in the speech to South Australian Congregationalists cited in ch. 1. Another sign was the decline in the rate of recruitment of church members. Before 1850 membership of the English Congregational churches increased at a rate faster than that of the total population; between 1850 and 1880 the ratio of Congregational members to the total population over 15 years of age remained constant; thereafter it declined. The pattern of Methodist and Baptist recruitment was similar. See Gilbert, Religion and Society in Industrial England, pp. 36-9.
Table 2.1: Approximate Numbers of Congregational Adherents in South-eastern Australia, 1851, 1891

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1851</th>
<th>1891</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>24,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>22,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>2,700</td>
<td>11,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Censuses. See n. 41.

this period but this is beside the point: Congregational church life in Australia largely post-dated the Evangelical Revival. 42

Contemporaneously with the waning of the Evangelical Revival another development undermined Congregational polity. This was the rise in social status of many church-goers. It was important because there is a close relationship between the way a church functions and the social composition of those who belong to it.

41 Congregationalists were not counted separately in any of the three colonies in 1851. The estimates for N.S.W. and Victoria were made by assuming that Congregationalists formed the same proportion of 'Other Protestants' in that year as they did in the first census at which they were counted separately. The S.A. estimate was made on the basis of the two tables in Pike, Paradise of Dissent, pp. 358, 387.

42 The so-called Second Evangelical Revival of the late nineteenth century did not have an impact comparable with the first, even in England, as church membership statistics presented in Gilbert, Religion and Society in Industrial England, show. I have seen no evidence that it led to any appreciable quickening of Congregational church life in Australia.
Congregationalists never constituted a sect in the sense in which some sociologists have used the term: they never thought of their churches as constituting all those destined for salvation; nor were millenarian beliefs ever characteristic of them; nor can their origins be traced to a charismatic leader. Yet Congregational polity was sect-like both in its restriction of church membership to the spiritually elite and in its ideal of a holy community which disciplined and sustained the lives of its members. Generally, sect-like behaviour and high social status do not go together. A person with high status is not likely to draw a sharp line between his religious group and the world because the world is friendly to him: it is the source and protector of his wealth and it awards him social recognition. Similarly, such a person is not likely to devote much of his time to the religious group to which he may belong, simply because he is much more likely than a person of low status to have a broad range of interests. This is not to say that a person of high status is likely to be any less religious, if we mean by that having a feeling for the unseen world. It simply means that the person of high status is likely to participate in a religious group in a more formal way. He will make less of an emotional investment.

Analyzing a 1957 survey of U.S. church members, Charles Goode found that on the question 'How much help is church membership to you?'

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43 Max Weber, who originated the important sociological distinction between church and sect, defined sects as 'associations that accept only religiously qualified persons in their midst': From Max Weber, ed. and trans. by H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills, London, 1948, pp. 287-8. I do not find attempts by later sociologists to improve upon Weber's and E. Troeltsch's ideal-typical distinction between church and sect helpful in understanding the Australian Congregational churches. If they must be classified, it is as a denomination. See D. Martin, 'The Denomination', British Journal of Sociology, March 1962, pp. 1-14.
there was a significant negative correlation between social class and the perceived importance of church membership. In his study, also based on a survey of the 1950's, N.J. Demerath concluded that low status people tended to have a sect-like attitude to their church, whereas high status people belonging to the same church did not. The lower a person's status the more likely he was to have a number of close friends in the congregation, to say that religion was a help in dealing with life, and to disapprove of the minister involving himself in community affairs.  

Affluence does not always prevent a sect-like religion style - witness the Quakers and the Brethren - yet it is reasonable to suppose that the higher a person's social status the greater the pressure to adopt a non-sect-like stance. Mrs. Oliphant, the nineteenth century novelist, provided in one of her characters a good example of this pressure at work. Mr. Beecham had once been the young minister of lowly Salem chapel. There existed a social gulf between him and the rector of the parish church and he was as full of grievances against the Church of England as he was of feelings of spiritual superiority. At Salem chapel he gained a young wife, Phoebe, who persuaded him that they ought to go north where they might enjoy 'A different class of society, and better altogether'.

Mr. Beecham rose, like an actor, from a long and successful career in the provinces, to what might be called the Surrey side of congregational eminence.

in London; and from thence attained his final apotheosis in a handsome chapel near Regent's Park, built of the whitest stone, and cushioned with the reddest damask, where a very large congregation sat in great comfort and listened to his sermons with a satisfaction no doubt increased by the fact that the cushions were soft as their own easy chairs, and that carpets and hot-water pipes kept everything snug under foot.

With the change of status there came a change of attitude. We are told of Phoebe that 'social elevation modified her sectarian zeal' and of Mr. Beecham that he even learned to speak of 'our brethren within the pale of the Establishment'.

Many Congregationalists who migrated to Australia in the nineteenth century experienced a similar 'social elevation' to that of the Beechams. There was a shorter social distance to travel anyway because the top strata of English society did not exist. Further, colonial conditions pushed the lower and upper middle classes together. 'The small tradesmen's sons are going into professions', wrote R.E.N. Twopenny, 'and the professional men's sons into trades. You have the same tendency in England, but not nearly to the same extent'. Perhaps the most spectacular instances of upward social mobility occurred amongst those who came to Victoria during the gold rushes. The Rev. Richard Fletcher noted in 1857 that Congregationalists in that colony were 'not a little tempted to gaiety, partly from some having suddenly risen in life, others seeking to compensate for domestic discomforts by pleasure out of doors; and partly because we


46 Quoted in Clarke, Select Documents in Australian History 1851-1900, p. 683.
are all hand-and-glove with the greatest people here'. Fletcher also remarked that the preoccupation with getting on in the world meant that colonial Congregationalists had less time for religious activities. High social mobility continued in Australia until the late 1880's if not longer.

Persecuted men and women had developed the ideal of the gathered church in the England of Elizabeth and James I. During the revolution of the 1640's and 1650's proponents of the gathered church had a respite and even gained a voice in Cromwell's New Model Army which became the effective successor to Charles I. Following the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 persecution recommenced. In 1662 even those Puritans who had remained within the Church of England were ejected if they refused to use the Book of Common Prayer or accept the authority of bishops. All dissenters from the restored church were excluded from public office; their forms of worship were proscribed; the movements of their ministers were restricted. During this period of post-war persecution the Independent churches were disciplined.

47 Colonial Missionary, 1857, Appendix, p. 25.
Richard Fletcher was a Lancashire minister who arrived in Victoria in 1854 along with J.L. Poore. Whereas Poore's mission was to establish churches, Fletcher hoped to found a theological college. He died in December 1961 six months before the opening of the Victorian Congregational College. William Roby Fletcher was his son.

worshipping fellowships approximating closely to the sect-like ideal embodied in their polity.\footnote{49}

As the hatreds engendered by the civil war cooled, the disabilities of dissenters were ameliorated. Yet not until the repeal of the Test Acts in 1828 were they free to hold public offices under the same conditions as anybody else and even then the highest offices were denied them. As late as 1850 the ancient universities were closed to them; if they wished to bury their dead in an Anglican churchyard - and often no other burial ground was available - the service had to be conducted by an Anglican clergyman; chapel records of baptism, marriage and death were not admitted as evidence in courts of law; they had to pay rates for the support of the established church.\footnote{50}

Congregationalists were in fact members of a different culture. Augustine Birrell (1850-1933) remembered that in the 1860's to be born a nonconformist was to be placed on the wrong side of a boundary which was as hard to jump over as Offa's dyke.\footnote{51} William Hale White (1831-1913) described the Bedford of his boyhood as a place where 'we were all formed upon recognized patterns'.\footnote{52} Both White and Birrell were conscious that many of the barriers between Church and Dissent had been removed during their lives. In part legal changes were responsible. Although the Church of England was not formally

\footnote{49} R.T. Jones, Congregationalism in England 1662-1962, London, 1962, p. 82. \\
\footnote{50} The progressive removal of nonconformist disabilities is usefully summarized in W.G. Addison, Religious Equality in Modern England, London, 1944. \\
\footnote{52} Quoted in W. Stone, Religion and Art of William Hale White, New York, 1967, p. 17.
disestablished and although by the Education Act of 1902 it continued
to enjoy an important advantage in education, increasingly it was
expected to compete on equal terms with the nonconformist bodies. A
de facto disestablishment was in progress.\(^53\)

The two cultures of Church and Dissent hardly had time to
form in Australia before they merged. In New South Wales, within a
half century of the first settlement, the Church of England had been
reduced to the status of another denomination for most practical legal
purposes. As early as 1820 the Church of England's monopoly of
government financial support had been broken when two Roman Catholic
priests were paid to minister to the Irish convicts.\(^54\) Sixteen years
later, and only eight years after the repeal of the Test Acts in England,
the Church Act provided for the state support of all denominations in
New South Wales according to the number of their adherents.\(^55\) A
greater social confidence and recognition accompanied the enhanced
legal status of Congregationalists and other dissenters. When he
opened a Congregational church in Adelaide in 1861, the Rev. F.W. Cox
said that it ought to be called a church not a chapel because the
distinction between church people and chapel people did not exist in
the colony. The governor of Victoria opened the Prahran Congregational

The 1902 Education Act helped temporarily to arrest the
*Religion and Voluntary Organisations in Crisis*, London,
1976, p. 346, n. 29.

\(^{54}\) P. O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church in Australia*, Melbourne,
1968, p. 16.


\(^{56}\) R. Walker, 'Congregationalism in South Australia 1837-1900',
*Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia*,
Substantial legal equality achieved, many colonial Congregationalists turned to another cause which was espoused by dissenters at home - the separation of church and state. Here, also, the battle was soon over. State aid to the churches was withdrawn in South Australia in 1851; New South Wales followed in 1862 and Victoria in 1870. State support for denominational education was ended in all three colonies by 1880. In 1887 the Rev. James Jefferis was able to say that there was 'not much more to be done to achieve the absolute separation of Church and State'. Congregational ministers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries occasionally fretted about preferential treatment being accorded to Anglican or Roman Catholic bishops but the one thing which might have given Congregationalists a sense of identity as a minority group - a long crusade - was denied them.

The Rev. A.M. Fairbairn, an English theologian, commented in 1897 that it was harder to be a Congregationalist than at any previous time in English history, noting that 'The very decay of the disabilities from which our fathers suffered has made it harder for us than it was for them to dissent'. It was even harder to be a Congregationalist in the Australian colonies. Ministers were even heard to say that they

57 J.B. Cooper, The History of Prahran from Its First Settlement to a City, Melbourne, 1912, pp. 202-3.
59 ibid., p. 86; R. Ely, Unto God and Caesar, Melbourne, 1976, pp. 117, 125; Observer, 27 April 1901, p. 45.
60 Quoted in Gilbert, Religion and Society in Industrial England, p. 206.
sometimes wished that there was a state church in Victoria.  

Dr. Bevan, when he first arrived in Australia, professed to find the absence of an established church an advantage, but within a decade changed his mind. The Rev. D.J. Hamer claimed that because there was no state church in the Australian colonies and no inequality 'many became careless about the grounds of ecclesiastical faith and polity'. It also made teaching the distinctive principles of Congregationalism that much harder. How could one explain to children that the Congregational churches were a protest against the Church of England when the Church of England in the colonies looked like any other denomination?

The adoption of more democratic methods of self government by the Church of England and the Wesleyan church exacerbated this problem of identity. In 1880 Mr. A. Stow, the son of the founding father of South Australian Congregationalism, noted that it was 'frequently remarked' that other denominations were being permeated with Congregational principles; many expected, he reported, that the end of this process would be the disappearance of Congregationalism.

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61 Eg. V.I., Aug. 1881.

62 Jubilee of South Australian Congregationalism, p. 36; V.I., July 1897.

63 N.S.W.C.Y.B., 1883, p. 56.
D.J. Hamer was one of a group of leading British Congregationalists who were recruited for the pastorate at the Independent church, Collins Street, Melbourne. The present premier of Victoria, Rupert Hamer, is a descendant.

64 S.A.C.Y.B., 1882, p. 25.
The Congregational ideal of the Church was of a community based on supernatural relationships, since membership presupposed the miracle of grace. As a matter of practice in the old world, attachment to the church fellowship was often strong because church ties were woven into a pattern of natural relationships. This was the case even in London. One might have expected city life to tear apart such networks but Clyde Binfield has shown that this did not necessarily happen. Natural ties were of course stronger in the closed provincial world. Alan Everitt, who has made a study of nineteenth century rural Dissent, has commented that 'the life of every dissenting sect was centred in the local chapel. Its enthusiasm was the enthusiasm of a nexus of local dynasties, sometimes closely inbred through generations of intermarriage'.

There were other ways in which English Congregationalism drew its strength from local attachments. There were the places of worship which formed part of the deeply felt world of young children and which in later life wrapped church life in hallowed associations. In early Victorian England some of the Congregationalists at Bedford worshipped in a building called the Bunyan Old Meeting. It had been built in 1707, replacing the barn in which John Bunyan had preached. The Congregationalists who gathered in the village of Morley used a pre-Reformation building which had passed from the Church of England to the Presbyterians and from them to the Independents. In the chapel

67 Stone, Religion and Art of William Hale White, p. 18.
yard were tombstones of ministers who had suffered for conscience's sake. Most English Congregationalists in the nineteenth century worshipped in buildings of much more recent construction but even these were part of the world of childhood.

Migration ripped Congregationalists away from these local attachments. They did not migrate in groups or practise chain migration, so friendship and family ties in a congregation, which strengthened a church, had to be formed almost de novo. Migration had another adverse effect. The Rev. S.C. Kent noted in 1869 how many Congregationalists who had been church members in England were unsettled by the voyage and the new environment and failed to join a fellowship after arrival. This was not a problem peculiar to the Congregational churches - ministers of other denominations constantly discovered the same thing - but in another respect migration probably did have an especially adverse effect. Because of the non-sectarian ethos of many English Congregational churches and the absence of any link such as existed for Anglicans and Presbyterians between denominational affiliation and ethnic identity, a Congregationalist who


69 Rev. Richard Fletcher wrote in 1857 that church incohesion in Victoria arose in part from Congregationalists 'all being strangers to one another': *Colonial Missionary*, 1857, Appendix, p. 25. I have seen no evidence of colonial Congregationalists of different families knowing one another at Home.

70 S.C. Kent, *Christian Life in Australia: Its Dangers, Difficulties, and Duties*, Sydney, 1869, pp. 7-8. Samuel Chambers Kent was at this time pastor of the church at Newtown in Sydney and principal of Camden College. In 1872 he accepted a call to the Victoria Parade church in Melbourne. About 1879 he took Anglican orders.

71 A.C.W., 30 July 1886.
remained a church-goer was more prone to transfer allegiance to a
church of another denomination. Certainly Congregationalists were
fewer in proportion to population in the colonies than at Home. It
is impossible to make a precise comparison because there was never a
census of religious adherence in England during the nineteenth century
but the rough guide provided by statistics of church accommodation shows
a clear difference. In 1872 in 77 large towns of England and Wales the
Congregational churches had 11.9 per cent of Protestant seating.
About this time in south-eastern Australia the Congregational share of
Protestant seating was around 6 per cent. This difference in strength
may also have been caused in part by an under-representation of
Congregationalists amongst the migrants. Under-representation was
frequently alleged by leading Congregationalists attempting to account
for the relative weakness of the denomination in the colonies.

The physical mobility of their adherents exacerbated the
incohesion of new churches. Population mobility was of course
especially pronounced in Victoria during the gold rushes - in 1861
almost a third of the colony's population was living under canvas -
but its effects were felt elsewhere and for a long time afterwards.
37 of the 54 foundation members of the Emerald Hill Congregational
church in Melbourne left the fellowship within the first nine years of

72 See ch. 4 for evidence that this happened after
Congregationalists moved house within Australia.

73 Nonconformist, 8 Jan. 1873, p. 51; colonial Statistical
Registers.

74 Eg. Rev. S. Bryant, V.I., July 1889; Memorials of the
Rev. Edward Griffith, p. 67; R.W. Dale, Impressions

its existence. 185 of 419 persons enrolled as members of the Petersham church, Sydney, between 1864 and 1884 were no longer members in 1884, a loss of 44 per cent. Eight of every ten leaving the fellowship did so as a consequence of removal from the district. At the Balmain church, also in Sydney, 180 persons joined the fellowship between 1858 and 1876, 105 or 58 per cent of whom had ceased to be members by the end of 1876. Again eight out of ten of those who left did so as a consequence of moving house. These figures can offer only the roughest of guides to the fluctuations of congregations in the 1860's and 1870's. On the one hand the turn-over in many fellowships, especially the older ones, may have been much lower. On the other hand, the figures pertain to members only; non-members may have sat even more loosely to their churches. They do, however, go some way to substantiating contemporary claims about the incohesion of colonial Congregational churches. 'We hardly know each other's faces', said one minister. Another claimed that in the Sydney metropolitan area there were many members who had been connected with almost every church in the denomination. The Rev. George Clarke considered the problem serious enough to discuss it in a sermon delivered to the intercolonial conference of 1888. 'A large proportion

77 The Year Book of the Congregational Church, Petersham, for the Year 1885, Sydney, 1885, pp. 18-9.
78 Church roll in 'Church Book. Independent Church Balmain', ML MSS, 1301, 2. See Appendix 3 for analysis of destination of members who removed.
79 J.T.W. Davies, N.S.W.I., April 1879.
are here this year, but with the feeling that they may be gone somewhere else the next. It is very demoralizing, and it is sometimes very disheartening'.\(^{81}\) Naturally with the movement of country people to new towns and the growth of new suburbs in the cities, the churches in England also faced the problem. Yet in the Australian colonies all the churches were new churches and nearly every person belonged to a family which had been uprooted at least once. By contrast, said the Rev. S.C. Kent addressing the New South Wales Union in 1869, 'in many of our home places of worship the child succeeds the parent in the occupancy of the pew and the son the father in the offices of the church and of the school'.\(^{82}\)

This comparison between physical mobility in Australia and England has one thing in common with other comparisons made in this chapter. All the major forces shaping the life of the Congregational churches in Australia - the individualistic and non-sectarian legacies of the Evangelical Revival, the decline in standards of membership, the disestablishment of Anglicanism, social mobility, the weakening of local attachments - all of these worked upon English Congregational church life in the late nineteenth century. Yet because Australia was a country of recent settlement they affected the colonial churches more quickly and more deeply. Australian Congregationalism was a peculiarly modern form of Christianity.

\(^{81}\) Jubilee Volume of Victorian Congregationalism, p. 133.

\(^{82}\) Kent, Christian Life in Australia, p. 8.
CHAPTER THREE  

WHO WERE THE CONGREGATIONALISTS?

There are two main ways of finding out about the social composition of those who attended Congregational churches and sent their children to Congregational Sunday-schools. One is to use the decennial censuses which classified denominational affiliation according to age, sex, geographical location and, sometimes, occupation, education and income. The other is to use church membership rolls and other denominational lists. These lists seldom give information about social composition but they can be combined with business and trade directories and other sources to identify occupations of samples of church members.

While valuable, both the censuses and the lists can only tell us about those who were Congregationalists, either members or non-members. They yield no direct information about those who attended Congregational churches but were affiliated with other denominations. And yet we may not assume that this latter group was numerically insignificant. Some initial comments about it are therefore desirable before turning to the much more satisfactory evidence about those who classified themselves as Congregationalists.

Congregational ministers presented a form of evangelical Christianity which could be found in other Protestant churches; there was thus no unconscious filtering out of Protestants who might have kept away if Congregationalists had paraded their distinctive principles. There is also much evidence of indifference to denominational distinctions among Australian Protestants. The Rev. George Clarke commented ironically in 1890 that Protestants of difference denominations did not know what they said when they told...
one another 'We agree with you in fundamentals'. According to Clarke a person who went the round of the Protestant churches would not be able to tell from the sermon in nineteen out of twenty cases to which denomination the preacher belonged; nor would he be able to tell from the hymns; nor even from the prayers where no fixed form was used. A writer for the *Sydney Morning Herald* asserted in 1902 that it was 'the popularity of the preacher, or the attractiveness of the service, or the social organisation in connection with a church which attracts adherents, and not the doctrinal differences that are supposed to distinguish one sect from another'. This was also the view of Mr. E.T. Hubert of Melbourne who had experience of Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational church life. According to Hubert, leaving aside the clergy, adherents of the Church of England and old people were the most attached to the services of their own churches.

There is also direct evidence of the presence of many non-Congregationalists at Congregational churches. For example the Rev. Samual Bryant noted in the late 1880's that though Congregationalists easily passed over into other denominations it worked the other way as well.

... instead of our churches being composed mainly of historic Congregationalists, in not a few of

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3 V.I., Nov. 1918. Hubert, who changed his name from Huber during the Great War, had a long association with the Victoria Parade, Fitzroy, Congregational church: *ibid.*, Sept. 1917.
them the majority of adherents have paid very little attention to questions of doctrine or polity, but have been drawn in by the convenience of the church, the character and labours of the minister, or the influence of some of its members.4

Almost thirty years later a leading layman of the South Australian Union claimed that it was rarely possible to erect a church and found a fellowship by relying only on those who were Congregationalists pure and simple.5

Such literary evidence is most specific about Baptists. In 1882 the Rev. J.J. Hailey argued that Baptist attendance figures were low in Victoria because so many Baptists attended Congregational churches.6 The Rev. Samuel Savage, after analysing the Victorian census returns of 1891, reached the same conclusion. He thought this was the most plausible explanation of why the number of Baptist adherents grew rapidly while Baptist church attendance figures were so poor.7 The Baptist minister, T.E. Ruth, once claimed that some Baptists from his church attended the Independent church further up Collins Street in Melbourne.8 Halley and Savage were undoubtedly

4 ibid., July 1889.
Bryant was trained at the Victorian Congregational College. He began his ministry in 1876, starting as many ministers did with a country pastorate - that at Kyneton - and was then called to some of the more affluent Australian churches, including those at Brighton, Melbourne, and Woollahra, Sydney.

5 Mr. W.H. Hutley, S.A. Cong., Oct. 1916.

6 V.I., Supplement, June 1882.

7 ibid., April 1892. Revs. J.H. Toms and F.V. Pratt and Mr. J.F. Cullen were among other Congregationalists who commented on the presence in Congregational churches of those who held Baptist views: A.Z.I., July 1906; N.S.W.C.Y.B., 1907, p. 129; ibid., 1883, p. 40.
Savage, who was trained in England, began his ministry in 1861. After pastorates in Queensland he ministered in Melbourne and Sydney. Petersham church, Sydney, expanded during his time there in the 1880's.

8 Argus, 11 March 1916, p. 5.
correct in thinking that many continued to count themselves as Baptists for census purposes even when they regularly attended Congregational churches. But there were probably also some who were betwixt and between. It would be interesting to know how one girl thought of herself. After she was admitted to the membership of the South Melbourne Congregational fellowship in 1883 the pastor made arrangements to have her immersed by the local Baptist minister to oblige her Baptist parents.  

There is also much evidence of Protestants of various denominations attending Congregational churches in the country. Albert Rivett claimed in 1891 that most worshippers in country districts were properly speaking Wesleyans, Presbyterians or Anglicans. This was certainly the case in the Eccleston district in New South Wales a few years later. To take another example, when monthly Congregational services were begun at Burrarorang in the Blue Mountains the only real change was that the Protestants there got twelve extra services a year. As before, when the Anglican clergyman at Picton held services at Burrarorang, Congregationalists and other Protestants attended his church. A similar situation existed at Napoleons near Ballarat. The only Protestant church at Napoleons

9 La L MSS 9239, South Melbourne Church Meeting Minutes 1879-1887, minutes of meetings of 27 June 1883 and 1 Aug. 1883.

10 Argus, 14 Oct. 1892, p. 3.

Rivett was born Norwich, England, on 17 May 1855. After training at Harley College, London, he began his ministry in 1879. His first ministerial work in Australia was at Yarrawonga beginning in 1888(?). Later pastorates were at Beechworth and Whitefield’s church, Devonshire Street, Sydney. He was active in the anti-conscription campaigns of 1916 and 1917 and in the peace movement after the war. He was editor of the Murray Valley Independent, later the Federal Independent. R. Rivett, David Rivett: Fighter for Australian Science, n.p., 1972, has some details on Albert’s early period in Australia. He died 18 Nov. 1934.

11 Watchman (Pitt Street church), Sept. 1897.

12 A.Z.I., May 1902.
about the turn of the century was a Congregational one. A few miles away there was another Protestant church at Scotsman's Hill and, in another direction, one at Cambrian Hill. Methodists and other Protestants often came across from the other two centres to attend the services and anniversaries at Napoleons.\textsuperscript{13}

Sunday school statistics are consistent with this kind of evidence. In 1891 when Congregationalists formed 2.1 per cent of the population of New South Wales, they had 6.3 per cent of the total average attendance of Sunday scholars (table 3.1). In Victoria

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{lcc}
\hline
 & \textbf{Percentage of total average Sunday-school attendance} & \textbf{Percentage of population} \\
\hline
Congregational & 6.3 & 2.1 \\
Presbyterian & 11.0 & 9.7 \\
Methodist & 24.1 & 9.8 \\
Baptist & 1.8 & 1.2 \\
Church of England & 30.3 & 44.8 \\
Roman Catholic & 20.7 & 25.5 \\
N (100\%) & 121,885 & 1,123,954 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Sunday-scholars and Adherents, Selected Denominations, New South Wales, 1891}
\end{table}

Source: \textit{New South Wales Statistical Register, 1891; N.S.W. Census, 1891.}

Congregationalists formed 1.9 per cent of the population at the 1891 census, yet in 1889 they had 5.0 per cent of the enrolled Sunday-scholars.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{13} Interview in Jan. 1976 with Mrs. J. Morgan, born March 1881, whose father was a farmer at Napoleons.

\textsuperscript{14} \textit{Victorian Statistical Register, 1889; figures for 1890-1 unavailable. R.L. Broome, 'Protestantism in New South Wales Society, 1900-1914', pp. 240-1, has figures on the denominations of parents who sent their children to a Methodist Sunday-school in the Sydney suburb of Balmain. About 30\% of total admissions in 1894-1904 were children of non-Methodist parents.}
Plainly, many were children of parents of other denominations.

We can not tell from the available statistics how many non-Congregationalists attended Congregational churches and sent their children to Congregational Sunday schools. Nothing much turns upon the size of this non-Congregational group if we are prepared to suppose that people attending the same church, whatever their denominational affiliation, come from much the same social strata. But we ought to be aware that this is an assumption. We ought also to be aware that the assumption of social homogeneity is certainly not validly applied to non-Congregational parents who sent their children to Congregational Sunday-schools, which were, after all, during the nineteenth century the most popular Congregational organizations. Some poor parents were prepared to send their children to Protestant Sunday-schools though they did not attend church themselves. 15 This happened too, of course, with more affluent parents, but more so with the poor. There was a class barrier to church attendance which was not so high in the case of the Sunday-school.

Much can be learnt about who the Australian Congregationalists were by attending to where they lived. The technique is most productive when applied to place of residence within the capital cities but before doing this it is well to note the presence of a much simpler geographical division - that between city and country.

15 See the comment of the working-class parent quoted in R. Howe, 'Social Composition of the Wesleyan Church in Victoria During the Nineteenth Century', J.R.H., June 1967, p. 212.
Most Australian Congregationalists have been people who lived in big cities and who have therefore enjoyed the wider opportunities and been subject to the more variegated influences of metropolitan life. Even by the standards of a highly urbanized country Congregationalists formed a highly urbanized denomination. The tendency of Congregationalists to gather in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide, evident in the 1840's, only grew more pronounced with time. In 1880 more than half the Congregationalists in south-eastern Australia lived in the three capital cities. A half century later close to seven out of ten Congregationalists in Victoria and New South Wales lived in their respective capital cities. In South Australia about 1930 almost six out of ten Congregationalists lived in Adelaide (table 3.2).

Table 3.2: Distribution of Congregationalists and Total Population in South-eastern Australia, 1881 and 1933 (percentage metropolitan)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Congregationalists</th>
<th>Total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1881</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>28.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>54.0</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>44.0*</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1933</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>69.6</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>58.9</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1 Estimate; see n. 16.

Source: Censuses of N.S.W., Victoria and S.A., 1881; Commonwealth Census, 1933.

16 The number of Congregationalists in the county of Adelaide is available, though not that in Adelaide proper. The ratio of Congregationalists in Adelaide to Congregationalists in the county was assumed to be the same as the ratio of the total population of Adelaide to the total population of the county.
In 1880 there were only eleven Congregational churches in New South Wales outside Sydney and the Newcastle district and nearly all of these were in a band along the coast a hundred miles or so north or south of Sydney. There were six churches in the Newcastle district and twenty-two in Sydney. There were only two churches west of the Blue Mountains - those at Bathurst and Orange. In South Australia, with only a few exceptions, notably Border Town and Port Pirie, the churches were all within one hundred miles of the capital. Victoria had a much more even spread of churches. This was a consequence of efforts by leaders of the Union there to found churches on the goldfields in the 1850's and then in the 1870's in the newly-opened agricultural districts along the Murray river.

Even in New South Wales by 1880 rural church extension had about reached its limit. It is a moot point how big a town had to be before it could support a Congregational church along with those of the bigger Protestant denominations, but perhaps a population of 5,000 was a minimum for continuing viability. In normal circumstances Congregationalists would not exceed five per cent of the population of any country town, which would mean that in a centre of about 5,000 a Congregational church typically depended upon the support of around fifty families. There were only two towns in south-eastern Australia with over 5,000 people in 1881 in which there was no Congregational church - Goulburn in New South Wales and Clunes in Victoria, both of which had nearly 6,000. Over a third of the country churches in each colony were located in towns with less than 3,000

17 J.J. Hailey, the Secretary of the Victorian Union, set the minimum figure at 5,000: Report of the Intercolonial Conference ... to Celebrate the Jubilee of the Introduction of Congregationalism to Australia, Sydney, 1883, p. 229. There were other opinions: ibid., pp. 231-4.
people. Obviously these churches could only remain viable if the bulk of their congregations were composed of those who were not Congregationalists by birth. Obviously, too, their viability was in jeopardy if other denominations set up shop or there was any net loss of population. Congregational leaders sometimes complained that their churches often lost adherents when other denominations entered districts which Congregationalists had pioneered. While this undoubtedly happened, the chief reason why many Congregational country churches continually required assistance from their Unions was that they were located in small towns which got smaller.

Turning now to an analysis of where Congregationalists lived in the capital cities some interesting patterns emerge. Tables 3.3-5 are drawn from the 1891 census and rank the metropolitan local government areas according to two criteria: the percentage of the population in the municipality who were Congregationalists and the average number of rooms per person in each municipality. The tables are in two columns. The column giving the percentage of Congregationalists in each municipality is self-explanatory. The second column seeks to rank the suburbs using an 'objective' measure of status: those suburbs having high ratios of rooms per person are judged as high status. Each column is divided into quartiles so that a strong association between the two variables will be apparent. The 1891 census is used in preference to that of 1881 because of changes in social geography during the 1880's. During that decade developments in public transport produced more widely-spread metropolitan populations with the affluent tending to congregate in the more desirable suburbs.

The attempt to read the social composition of Congregationalists from their places of residence is therefore more likely to be successful when applied to the 1891 census.

In table 3.3 there are a number of suburbs which rank high on both variables, notably Strathfield, Burwood, Petersham and Ashfield. But there are exceptions. Willoughby has a high percentage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quartiles</th>
<th>Percentage of Congregationalists</th>
<th>Rooms per person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Strathfield 13.2</td>
<td>Strathfield 1.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Burwood 10.7</td>
<td>Woollahra 1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kogarah 9.9</td>
<td>Burwood 1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marrickville 9.8</td>
<td>Petersham 1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Petersham 8.0</td>
<td>Ashfield 1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Willoughby 7.2</td>
<td>Manly 1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Manly 7.2</td>
<td>Waverley 1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ashfield 7.1</td>
<td>Paddington 1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Canterbury 6.8</td>
<td>North Sydney 1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Concord 6.6</td>
<td>Marrickville 1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enfield 6.5</td>
<td>Newtown 1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hurstville 6.1</td>
<td>Glebe 1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Woollahra 6.0</td>
<td>Macdonaldtown 1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leichhardt 5.5</td>
<td>Randwick 1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alexandria 5.3</td>
<td>Enfield 1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rockdale 5.1</td>
<td>Kogarah 1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newtown 5.0</td>
<td>Five Dock 1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Waverley 4.5</td>
<td>Drummoyne 1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Waterloo 4.4</td>
<td>Darlington 1.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Paddington 3.9</td>
<td>Concord 1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Five Dock 3.8</td>
<td>Balmain 1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Redfern 3.7</td>
<td>Ryde 1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Balmain 3.6</td>
<td>Redfern 1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North Sydney 3.5</td>
<td>Hurstville 1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Macdonaldtown 3.4</td>
<td>Rockdale 0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Glebe 3.3</td>
<td>Sydney 0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Camperdown 3.2</td>
<td>Canterbury 0.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
of Congregationalists but its socio-economic status is low.

Similarly, Paddington, Randwick and Glebe are in the bottom two quartiles of the first column but are in the top two quartiles of the second. The correlation is higher, however, if we consider only those suburbs in which there were strong Congregational churches in 1890. There were seven suburban churches with one hundred or more members: Petersham, Newtown, Woollahra, Balmain, Redfern, Marrickville and Ashfield. Three of these are to be found in the first quartile of socio-economic status and two others fall just outside the first quartile.

The census data indicate then that there was a strong tendency for Congregationalists to gather in more affluent suburbs, but that they were by no means confined to these. This impression is reinforced by a contemporary description of Sydney's suburbs. The author of How to know Sydney (1895) called Alexandria, Arncliffe (Rockdale) and Annandale (Leichhardt) 'working men's suburbs' yet Congregationalists formed in each over 5 per cent of the population. On the other hand, many of the suburbs this author singled out as fashionable were Congregational strongholds: Darling Point, Doubt Bay, Rushcutters Bay (all three were in Woollahra municipality which had two Congregational
churches) and Strathfield. The position is further complicated when we consider the list of members' residences published by the Pitt Street church in 1892. Over a quarter of the members lived in three working class and industrial suburbs. It is likely that the strength of the Congregationalists in suburbs of low socio-economic status was due in part to a time-lag effect, some Congregationalists being slow to move when the status of their suburb declined. Nevertheless, it does seem that there were in Sydney about 1890 significant numbers of lower class Congregationalists.

Melbourne in 1891 had more people than Sydney and was more spread-out geographically. The distribution of Melbourne's population, therefore, probably offers a better guide to the social composition of the denominations. In Melbourne in 1891 there was a much stronger association between adherence and socio-economic status of suburbs. Five municipalities - Boroondara, Malvern, Hawthorn, Brighton and Caulfield - are in the first quartile of both columns of table 3.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quartiles</th>
<th>Percentage of Congregationalists</th>
<th>Rooms per person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.8 Boroondara</td>
<td>1.46 Brighton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.6 Kew</td>
<td>1.42 Caulfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.1 Malvern</td>
<td>1.41 Boroondara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.7 Hawthorn</td>
<td>1.37 Hawthorn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.1 Brighton</td>
<td>1.37 Malvern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.3 Caulfield</td>
<td>1.36 St. Kilda</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


20 Pitt Street Church Manual, 1882. There were 38 members living in Woolloomooloo (12.8%), 42 in Darlinghurst (14.1%) and 28 in Paddington (9.4%).
Table 3.4 cont'd.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Congregationalists</th>
<th>Rooms per person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Kilda</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamstown</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prahran</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northcote</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Melbourne</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northcote</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coburg</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essendon</td>
<td>1.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prahran</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kew</td>
<td>1.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunswick</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzroy</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essendon</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunswick</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collingwood</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flemington and Kensington</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Williamstown</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzroy</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flemington and Kensington</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heidelberg</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Melbourne</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footscray</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coburg</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preston</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Melbourne</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Melbourne</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collingwood</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Melbourne</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footscray</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heidelberg</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Melbourne</td>
<td>0.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Victorian Census, 1891.

In the bottom two quartiles we find the same strength of association. Of the twelve suburbs in the third and fourth quartiles of socio-economic status, nine are in the third and fourth quartiles of Congregational adherence. Similarly in Adelaide, suburbs with high status - Glenelg, Brighton, Kensington and Norwood - were Congregational strongholds (table 3.5). Port Adelaide is a notable exception, for though 9.6 per cent of its population were Congregationalists it was only a middle status suburb.

Two main points emerge from tables 3.3-5. The first is that Congregationalists were proportionately strongest in the more desirable
Table 3.5: Rankings of Adelaide Municipalities, Percentage of Congregationalists and Rooms per Person, 1891

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Two Halves</th>
<th>Percentage of Congregationalists</th>
<th>Rooms per person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Glenelg 10.6</td>
<td>Glenelg 1.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Port Adelaide 9.6</td>
<td>Brighton 1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brighton 7.8</td>
<td>Kensington and Norwood 1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kensington and Norwood 7.3</td>
<td>St. Peters 1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Semaphore 6.0</td>
<td>Semaphore 0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Hindmarsh 5.5</td>
<td>Port Adelaide 0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St. Peters 5.1</td>
<td>Unley 0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adelaide 4.4</td>
<td>Adelaide 0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unley 3.1</td>
<td>Hindmarsh 0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Thebarton 1.9</td>
<td>Thebarton 0.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: S.A. Census, 1891.

...suburbs. The second is that the social composition of Congregationalists ranged from the well-to-do to some who apparently could only afford to live in working class districts.

Forty years later the pattern was different in one respect and in another was the same. The fall in census strength is everywhere apparent. In Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide in 1891 there had been twenty-nine suburbs in which Congregationalists constituted over five per cent of the population. By 1933 there were two such suburbs. On the other hand the association between the proportion of the population who were Congregationalist and the status of the suburb (this time measured by the proportion of high income earners) remained strong. Table 3.6 ranks Local Government Areas in Adelaide in 1933 on both scales. In table 3.6 four out of five L.G.A.'s in the first quartile of column one are in the first quartile of column two. Seven out of
Table 3.6: Rankings of Adelaide L.G.A.'s, Percentage of Congregationalists and Incomes of Residents, 1933
(male Congregationalists as a percentage of male population, excluding L.G.A.'s having less than ten male Congregationalists; percentage of male breadwinners earning over £260 p.a.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quartiles</th>
<th>Percentage of Congregationalists</th>
<th>Incomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Henley and Grange 8.2</td>
<td>Burnside 26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Walkerville 6.9</td>
<td>Walkerville 24.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Burnside 4.4</td>
<td>Glenelg 20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Woodville 3.6</td>
<td>Henley and Grange 20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Glenelg 3.5</td>
<td>Brighton 20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Payneham 2.9</td>
<td>Mitcham 19.1</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kensington and Norwood 2.7</td>
<td>Unley 17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>St. Peters 2.6</td>
<td>Prospect 14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mitcham 2.5</td>
<td>Paynham 14.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Port Adelaide 2.4</td>
<td>St. Peters 12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Hindmarsh 2.3</td>
<td>Colonel Light Gardens 10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unley 2.2</td>
<td>Torrens West 8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Colonel Light Gardens 2.1</td>
<td>Woodville 8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brighton 1.5</td>
<td>Kensington and Norwood 8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prospect 1.4</td>
<td>Adelaide 8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Thebarton 1.2</td>
<td>Marion 7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yatala South 1.0</td>
<td>Port Adelaide 7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Marion 1.0</td>
<td>Thebarton 7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Torrens West 0.9</td>
<td>Yatala South 7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adelaide 0.8</td>
<td>Campbelltown 6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Campbelltown 0.5</td>
<td>Hindmarsh 4.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Commonwealth Census, 1933.

ten L.G.A.'s in the top two quartiles of column one are in the top two quartiles of column two. Eight out of eleven Adelaide L.G.A.'s in the bottom two quartiles of column one are in the bottom two quartiles of
column two. The association was least strong in Melbourne where the proportion of the population who were Congregationalist was almost uniformly low (table 3.7). Even in Melbourne nine of the

| Table 3.7: Rankings of Melbourne L.G.A.'s, Percentage of Congregationalists and Incomes of Residents, 1933 (male Congregationalists as a percentage of male population, excluding L.G.A.'s having less than ten male Congregationalists; percentage of male breadwinners earning over £260 p.a.) |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Quartiles                      | Percentage of Congregationalists | Incomes                         |
| 1                              | Camberwell 2.5                   | Camberwell 29.7                  |
| Kew                            | 2.0                              | Kew 29.4                         |
| Malvern                        | 1.9                              | Malvern 28.9                      |
| Sandringham                    | 1.4                              | Brighton 28.0                     |
| Hawthorn                       | 1.3                              | Caulfield 25.8                    |
| Caulfield                      | 1.2                              | St. Kilda 24.5                    |
| 2                              | Brighton 1.2                      | Sandringham 23.7                  |
| Oakleigh                       | 1.2                              | Hawthorn 21.3                     |
| Box Hill                       | 1.1                              | Box Hill 18.5                     |
| Chelsea                        | 1.1                              | Essendon 16.3                    |
| Williamstown                   | 1.1                              | Prahran 15.9                      |
| St. Kilda                      | 0.9                              | Coburg 11.5                       |
| 3                              | Richmond 0.7                      | Preston 11.3                      |
| Prahran                        | 0.7                              | Northcote 11.2                   |
| Essendon                       | 0.6                              | South Melbourne 10.6              |
| Northcote                      | 0.6                              | Melbourne 10.2                    |
| Brunswick                      | 0.5                              | Oakleigh 9.9                      |
| Footscray                      | 0.5                              | Williamstown 9.6                  |
| 4                              | South Melbourne 0.5               | Chelsea 9.2                       |
| Preston                        | 0.4                              | Brunswick 8.8                     |
| Fitzroy                        | 0.4                              | Footscray 7.6                     |
| Melbourne                      | 0.4                              | Collingwood 6.1                   |
| Coburg                         | 0.3                              | Fitzroy 6.1                       |
| Collingwood                    | 0.3                              | Richmond 5.7                      |

Source: Commonwealth Census, 1933.
top twelve L.G.A's on the Congregational ranking appeared in the top
two quartiles on the income ranking.

Table 3.8: Rankings of Sydney L.G.A.'s, Percentage of Congregationalists
and Incomes of Residents, 1933
(male Congregationalists as a percentage of male
population, excluding L.G.A.'s having less than ten
male Congregationalists; percentage of male
breadwinners earning over £260 p.a.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quartiles</th>
<th>Percentage of Congregationalists</th>
<th>Incomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaucluse</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Vaucluse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dundas</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Kur-ring-gai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strathfield</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Mosman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kur-ring-gai</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>Woollahra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burwood</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>Strathfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bexley</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>Hurstville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lane Cove</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>Lane Cove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willoughby</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Manly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kogarah</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>Dundas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rockdale</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>Burwood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mosman</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>Willoughby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunters Hill</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>Hunters Hill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concord</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>North Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bankstown</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>Ashfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashfield</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Concord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mascot</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>Waverley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canterbury</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Drummoyne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petersham</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Randwick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lidcombe</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Homebush</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastwood</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>Kogarah</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marrickville</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Ryde</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manly</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>Bexley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enfield</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Eastwood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ermington and Rydalmere</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>Parramatta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woollahra</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>Enfield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Sydney</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>Rockdale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Granville</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>Canterbury</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parramatta</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>Marrickville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hurstville</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>Petersham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryde</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drummoyne</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>Illawara Central</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.8 cont'd.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage of Congregationalists</th>
<th>Incomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Waterloo</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leichhardt</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homebush</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waverley</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newtown</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auburn</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alexandria</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddington</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illawara Central</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Botany</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairfield</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illawara North</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glebe</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Randwick</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Redfern</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Peters</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balmain</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Commonwealth Census, 1933.

The evidence of the distribution of Congregationalists in 1933 is not especially valuable because it does not reveal anything that could not have been guessed either from the location of Congregationalists in 1891 or from other census data on social composition of a more direct kind. This is not so with the 1891 location data. The first direct census information on social composition of denominational adherents of any value is not available until the 1901 census, then only for New South Wales and suffering from an important deficiency. The first such information which is adequate is that of the 1921 census. By then many of those who had been Congregationalists in the 1880's had left the denomination taking their children with them. Without the information about where Congregationalists lived in 1891 and without
the knowledge that the pattern of distribution was much the same as in 1933, there would be a worry that the massive exodus had changed the social composition of the denomination. The similarity of the 1891 and 1933 data does not remove this possibility but it makes it unlikely. It seems we are dealing with a group whose social composition remained stable over half a century though demographically it changed remarkably.

3

The first government information about the occupations of Congregationalists is provided by the New South Wales census of 1901, which classified 'orders' of occupation according to denomination. Unfortunately, this census did not discriminate within each order and sub-order as to the occupational status of the adherents of the various denominations. There is for example no way of knowing how many Congregationalists in the construction industry were employers or how many were labourers. Nevertheless this New South Wales census repays close examination because from some of the orders and sub-orders a good idea can be gained of the occupations of some Congregationalists and such information provides a guide to their income, education and social prestige.

21 Ideally census data should be published so as to allow classification of occupations in at least two ways: according to economic function and according to social status. The 1901 census grouped occupations in such a fashion that it is impossible to recover from it a detailed classification along either of these lines. The British system was followed, on which see the comments of W.A. Armstrong in E.A. Wrigley, ed., Nineteenth Century Society, Cambridge, 1972, pp. 191-2.

In New South Wales in 1901 4.9 per cent of Congregational male breadwinners worked in 'finance and property', a higher percentage than for any other principal denomination. By contrast Congregationalists were especially under-represented in rural occupations (table 3.9). If we group together all the mercantile orders we find that nearly a quarter of Congregational male breadwinners had such occupations, again much the highest proportion of any of the principal denominations. This over-representation in the mercantile orders is still evident if account is taken only of city dwellers to overcome the bias introduced by the highly urban character of New South Wales Congregationalism (table 3.10).

In the sub-orders of occupations listed in the New South Wales census, Congregationalists were especially strong in literature, insurance and valuation, land and household property, paper and stationery, textile fabrics, dress, metals other than gold and silver (table 3.11). The data are in too crude a form to show which denominations approximated most closely to the Congregational churches in the occupational status of their adherents. One distinction is, however, apparent: that between Congregationalists and the other main Protestant groups on the one hand and Roman Catholics on the other. It seems that any differences that did exist within Protestantism were relatively unimportant compared with this predominance of Protestant over Roman Catholic in skilled occupations.

The deficiencies of the New South Wales occupational census were fully overcome in the Commonwealth census of 1947. This was the first occupational census in Australia to classify religious adherents by the status of their occupations; it therefore allows sketches to be made of the various denominational occupational profiles. At the
Table 3.9: Distribution of Male Breadwinners of Selected Denominations by Occupational 'Orders', New South Wales, 1901 (percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Order Description</th>
<th>Church of England</th>
<th>Roman Catholic</th>
<th>Presbyterian</th>
<th>Methodist</th>
<th>Baptist</th>
<th>Congregational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Government, defence, law, protection</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Religion, charity, health, education</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Board, lodging, domestic service</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Finance, property</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Art, mechanic production</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Sale etc. of textile fabrics, dress, fibrous materials</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Sale of food, drinks, narcotics, stimulants</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Sale etc. of animals, animal and vegetable substances</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Sale etc. of fuel, light</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Dealers in minerals other than for fuel and light</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. General dealers, mercantile pursuits n.e.i.</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Gambling</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Storage</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Transport, communications</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>Congregational</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Manufacture of art, mechanic productions</td>
<td>6.0</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Manufacture etc. of fabrics, dress, fibrous materials</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Manufacture etc. of food, drinks, narcotics, stimulants</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Manufacture etc. of animal and vegetable substances</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Manufacture etc. of metals or mineral matters</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Manufacture etc. of fuel and light</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21.</td>
<td>Construction, repair of buildings, roads, railways etc.</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Disposal of dead</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Imperfectly defined industrial</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Cultivation of land and related pursuits</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>39.4</td>
<td>42.5</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Independent means</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (100%)</td>
<td>203,582</td>
<td>109,735</td>
<td>45,193</td>
<td>41,866</td>
<td>5,054</td>
<td>7,577</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: N.S.W. Census, 1901.
Table 3.10: Distribution of Male Breadwinners Engaged in Non-agricultural and Pastoral Occupations of Selected Denominations by Selected Occupational 'Orders', New South Wales, 1901 (percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Church of England</th>
<th>Roman Catholic</th>
<th>Presbyterian</th>
<th>Methodist</th>
<th>Baptist</th>
<th>Congregational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religion, charity, health, education</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance, property</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sale etc. of textile fabrics, dress,</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fibrous materials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General dealers and mercantile</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pursuits n.e.i.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacture of art and mechanic</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>12.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>productions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N (100%)</td>
<td>149,272</td>
<td>76,244</td>
<td>31,642</td>
<td>30,976</td>
<td>4,144</td>
<td>6,883</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: N.S.W. Census, 1901.
Table 3.11: Distribution of Male Breadwinners of Selected Denominations by Selected Occupational 'Sub-orders', New South Wales, 1901 (percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Church of England</th>
<th>Roman Catholic</th>
<th>Methodist</th>
<th>Presbyterian</th>
<th>Baptist</th>
<th>Congregational</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Health</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Literature</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Education</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Civil and mechanical engineering, architecture, surveying</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Banking and finance</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Insurance and valuation</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Land and household property</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Sale etc. of textile fabrics</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Dealers in metals other than gold and silver</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N (100%) | 203,582 | 109,735 | 41,866 | 45,193 | 5,054 | 7,377

Source: N.S.W. Census, 1901.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Professional and semi-professional</th>
<th>Administrative</th>
<th>Commercial and clerical</th>
<th>Domestic and protective service</th>
<th>Craftsmen</th>
<th>Operatives</th>
<th>Labourers</th>
<th>N (100%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congregational</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>25.8</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>16,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>8.7</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>184,753</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>22.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>210,548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>29,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>25.9</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>787,269</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of Christ</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>25.3</td>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>18,255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>9,469</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>29.9</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>8,087</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>31.5</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>163,339</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Commonwealth Census, 1947.
1947 census the Congregational churches among all the principal denominations had the highest proportion of adherents holding professional positions. At the other end of the scale they had the smallest proportion of labourers (table 3.12).

The differences between the occupational profile of Congregationalists and that of other denominations can be measured by the index of dissimilarity. This allows a precise statement of how much either of two populations will have to change in the distribution of a selected variable in order to have the same distribution of that variable. By this test the Presbyterians were closest to the Congregationalists in their occupational profile, followed by the Baptists and then the Methodists (table 3.13). As might be expected from the 1901 New South Wales census, these differences were small compared with that between Congregationalists and Roman Catholics.

Table 3.13: Indices of Dissimilarity with Congregationalists in the Distribution of Male Breadwinners by Occupational 'Orders', Selected Denominations, Australia, 1947

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Index of Dissimilarity Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Table 3.12

23 The Salvation Army is excluded as a special case because full-time army officers were presumably counted as professional people.
The distinctiveness of the Congregational occupational profile in 1947 was mainly in the proportion of adherents in the top three occupational groups of table 3.12. On the other hand almost half the male Congregationalists in the workforce in 1947 were in the bottom three of the seven occupational groups. This high proportion of Congregationalists who were manual workers emerged in an exaggerated form amongst those who enlisted in the First A.I.F.. A third of these Congregational soldiers, to judge from a random sample, were manual workers and nearly a tenth were labourers. 24

On the basis of the occupational data I have considered so far a sociologist might confidently predict that there were disproportionate numbers of Congregationalists in high income groups and among those receiving higher education. Such a sociologist would not be disappointed.

In 1933 Congregationalists were exceptionally high income earners. The proportion of Congregational male breadwinners earning over £260 per annum was higher than that of any other principal denomination (table 3.14). Indeed only the Jews and the Christian

24 I derived these figures from a 0.5 per cent sample of soldiers' attestation papers made by Dr. L.L. Robson. There were 2,291 soldiers in Dr. Robson's sample, of whom I found 33 to be Congregationalist. The occupations of the Congregationalist soldiers were as follows: shop assistants, 1; mechanics, 1; clerks, 8; coach trimmers, 1; station- hands, 1; labourers, 3; miners, 1; warehousemen, 1; iron moulders, 1; carpenters, 4; fishermen, 1; railway porters, 1; farmers, 1; watchmakers, 1; farriers, 1; wheelwrights, 1; real estate brokers, 1; salesmen, 1; medical students, 1; bootmakers, 1; n.a., 1. For details about the sample as a whole, see L.L. Robson, 'The Origin and Character of the First A.I.F., 1914-18: Some Statistical Evidence', H.S., October 1973, pp. 737-49. I am grateful to Dr. Robson for allowing me to use his sample. The occupations of Congregationalist, Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist soldiers are compared in Appendix 4. It must be remembered that the occupations of the soldiers were skewed from the normal distribution; labourers especially were over-represented.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>No income</th>
<th>Under £52</th>
<th>£52-103</th>
<th>£104-155</th>
<th>£156-207</th>
<th>£208-259</th>
<th>£260+</th>
<th>N (100%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congregational</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>21,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>15.8</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>18.8</td>
<td>250,442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>224,781</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>16.3</td>
<td>11.4</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>318,235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>10.6</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>14.5</td>
<td>34,194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>11.6</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td>893,522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of Christ</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>11.2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>19,278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>12.7</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>22,669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>18.7</td>
<td>12.0</td>
<td>10.8</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>8,962</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Commonwealth Census, 1933.

Scientists had a higher percentage of their males in this category of all the Australian religious and anti-religious groups with over a thousand adherents. Over a third of Congregational men in the workforce in 1933 belonged to the top two income brackets counted in the census, compared with less than a quarter of Anglicans. Table 3.14 also shows the same spread of Congregationalists into the lower status groups as we observed with occupations at the 1947 census. 43 per cent of Congregational male breadwinners were either earning less than £103 per annum or were unemployed. Applying the index of dissimilarity test...
we find, as we did with occupations, that the income spread of the Presbyterians was closest to that of the Congregationalists, followed by the Methodists and Baptists close together (table 3.15).

Table 3.15: Indices of Dissimilarity with Congregationalists in the Distribution of Incomes of Male Breadwinners, Selected Denominations, Australia, 1933

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Index of Dissimilarity Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>8.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of Christ</td>
<td>11.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army</td>
<td>20.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Table 3.14.

The remunerative occupations of many Congregationalists were reflected in the relatively high proportion of their children educated in private schools. About one in ten Congregational children attended private schools compared with one in twelve Anglicans (table 3.16). A disproportionately large number of Congregationalists also attended university in 1933 - a higher percentage than for any of the major denominations. As might be expected, next below them were the Presbyterians. There are no comparable data on education for the nineteenth century but there is enough evidence provided by the 1891 New South Wales census to suggest that even then Congregationalists were the best educated of the principal denominations. Of all the denominations represented in New South Wales in 1891 Congregationalists had the highest percentage of females able to read and write (table 3.17).
Table 3.16: Education of Adherents of Selected Denominations, Australia, 1933
(percentage distribution according to type of education)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Government school</th>
<th>Private school</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>N (100%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congregational</td>
<td>85.8</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>10,812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>123,822</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>126,037</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>92.2</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>18,941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>87.8</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>453,034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>34.7</td>
<td>62.2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>215,661</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of Christ</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>11,601</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>87.6</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>9,429</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation Army</td>
<td>95.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>6,128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Commonwealth Census, 1933.

Table 3.17: Percentages of Females of Selected Denominations Able to Read and Write, New South Wales, 1891

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congregational</td>
<td>79.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>75.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>73.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>76.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>72.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>71.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of Christ</td>
<td>74.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: N.S.W. Census, 1891.
Is it possible to make any social distinctions within the body of Congregational adherents according to whether adherents were more or less involved in church life? The membership lists of the churches provide a simple means of attacking this question, if we are prepared to assume that church membership is a measure of church involvement, for the occupations of members can be compared with the occupations of all adherents as revealed in the census data. Can the assumption be made? There was always a proportion of members who were apathetic about involvement in church life and from the 1880's this proportion grew. Also from the 1880's there was apparently a growing tendency for Congregationalists, especially young Congregationalists, not to become members and some of these may have been as much involved as members. Nevertheless the effect of these complications can be minimized by confining analysis to the 1880's, when a little less than one in every three adherents over fifteen years were members. The comparison for this decade between the occupations of members and all adherents will only provide a rough test but if there was a substantial difference we may expect it to become apparent.

Table 3.18 sets out the occupations of 96 church members in South Australia in the early 1880's. Slightly over half of them had professional, semi-professional or managerial occupations (including merchants in the group of managers). This was much above the proportion for all adherents. Table 3.19 shows that the same was equally true of a sample of members of the Pitt Street church again in the early 1880's. Neither set of figures can be regarded as

---

26 Nominal membership and failure to take out membership are discussed in ch. 5.

27 This estimate is based upon the numbers of Congregational adherents over fifteen at the 1881 censuses and the membership statistics provided in Intercolonial Conference, 1883, p. 251.
Table 3.18: Occupational Distribution of Delegates to Assemblies of the South Australian Congregational Union, 1883-85 (percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper professional (including gentlemen)</td>
<td>26.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graziers and farmers</td>
<td>17.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower professional</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed shop proprietors</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical and related workers</td>
<td>10.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of armed services and police forces</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsmen and foremen</td>
<td>13.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop assistants</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process workers</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N (100%) 96


Table 3.19: Occupational Distribution of Members of the Pitt Street Congregational Church, Sydney, 1881-84 (percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper professional</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower professional</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed shop proprietors</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical and related workers</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsmen and foremen</td>
<td>15.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operatives and process workers</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal, domestic and other service workers</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N (100%) 64

Source: Pitt Street Church Year Books; business directories.

conclusive because neither constitute a representative sample.

The South Australian members were all delegates to the half-yearly assemblies of their Union and as prominent men in their churches possibly had occupations of a somewhat higher status than most of the members who elected them. Again the occupations of the Pitt Street
members were identified by using a business directory so that those in humbler circumstances are probably under-represented in the table.

The Pitt Street church, moreover, attracted a more fashionable congregation than most of the suburban churches. An analysis of the membership of the Petersham church, Sydney, (table 3.20) shows a lower proportion of members in the professional, semi-professional and

Table 3.20: Occupational Distribution of Members of the Petersham Congregational Church, Sydney, 1884 (percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupational Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper professional</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower professional</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed shop proprietors</td>
<td>19.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical and related workers</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsmen and foremen</td>
<td>36.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operatives and process workers</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal, domestic and other service workers</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N (100%) 41

Source: The Year Book of the Congregational Church, Petersham, for the Year 1885, Sydney, 1885; business directories.

managerial groups; on the other hand the percentage is still much above that for all adherents in 1947 and presumably throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It seems, therefore, that those who were more active in church life tended to be of higher social status than those who were on the periphery. If so, this would be consistent with findings about other religious groups in other countries.28

The difference between the social composition of the Pitt Street and Petersham churches suggests another question: How widely did the

constituencies of the churches vary? The analysis already made of the geographical location of Congregationalists suggests they varied a lot but this census material pertains only to the gross category of all adherents. Did the churches vary much in the social composition of their members?

In 1887 all land-owners in South Australia were required to make returns of the improved value of their land. I used these returns to make some precise distinctions between the South Australian Congregational churches. The improved value of land owned by the delegates of the churches was calculated and then the average taken for each church. While the value of land held by delegates was not necessarily representative of the wealth of their churches, any substantial differences between churches ought to emerge. Table 3.21 sets out the results of this analysis.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>£</th>
<th>(n =)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gawler</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medindie</td>
<td>571</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kensington</td>
<td>897</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindmarsh</td>
<td>1,562</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindmarsh Square</td>
<td>1,851</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College Park</td>
<td>2,033</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Adelaide</td>
<td>2,357</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Port Adelaide</td>
<td>3,199</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truro and Dutton</td>
<td>4,981</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glenelg</td>
<td>6,063</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stow Memorial</td>
<td>8,894</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The average value of the improved value of the land owned by the delegates was £2,766.

Source: See table 3.18.
There seems no doubt that further work on the Congregational churches in New South Wales and Victoria would uncover similar contrasts between churches. The differences between the places of worship they erected testify on this point in wood and stone. Probably the situation was much the same in the other main Protestant denominations. Renate Howe, in some pioneering work, has demonstrated large social differences between Wesleyan Methodist churches in Victoria.\textsuperscript{29}

A final point about the value of land owned by delegates to the South Australian Union: the figures suggest wide wealth differences within the churches. At Stow church, for example, four delegates owned no land in South Australia at all in 1887, one owned property worth £35, another property worth £120, whereas Mr. A. Adamson owned property worth nearly £14,000 and Mr. R. Stuckey property worth over £33,000. The improved land of one member of the Glenelg church was worth but £396 and that of another £505, yet at the other end of the scale, two members owned improved land worth nearly £11,000 and one property worth nearly £14,000. At the Hindmarsh church four members held no real property at all but the average of the others was almost £2,700. To be sure, these figures take no account of personal property so that some of those who had no land at all might have been wealthy men. Nevertheless, land-holding in the nineteenth century was a good rough test of wealth (as indeed it still is today) so that we have here almost conclusive evidence of very wide variations of wealth-holding within the South Australian Congregational churches. This variation was certainly a barrier to realizing the ideal of church

\textsuperscript{29} R. Howe, 'Social Composition of the Wesleyan Church in Victoria During the Nineteenth Century', \textit{J.R.H.}, June 1967, pp. 204-17.
fellowship. It is no wonder that one Congregational minister complained that 'coteries and circles' within churches were sometimes 'dominated by social status'.

Taking this information about wealth of church members together with all the other evidence about social composition, what can we conclude? The main conclusion is surely that people connected with the Congregational churches did not form a distinct and homogeneous body. There are at least three grounds for being confident about this. Firstly, some of those who attended Congregational churches were not Congregationalists. Secondly, Congregationalists tended to have much the same jobs as city-dwelling Presbyterians, Methodists and Baptists. There was a distinct denominational profile but the differences in the spread of the occupations of Congregationalists were trivial. Thirdly, even if we confine our attention to Congregational adherents, their social composition varied according to whether they were at the periphery or closer to the centre of church life and the variations between the Congregational churches in the social composition of their constituents were as important as their similarities. Thus to examine the social composition of the Congregational churches' constituents is not to engage in a narrowly denominational study. It is like taking soundings from the sea-bed of Australian Protestantism.

30 W.H. Lewis; Congregational Union and Home Mission of South Australia, Annual Meetings Reports of Proceedings, Reports of Organisations, Adelaide, 1900, p. 44.
In the late nineteenth century the census strength of Australian Congregationalism began to decline sharply. There were variations between states, with Victoria being the worst hit, but census after census revealed throughout Australia a shrinking proportion of the population affiliated with the denomination (figures 4.1 and 4.2). In 1933 there were seven and a half thousand fewer Australian

Source: Colonial and Commonwealth Censuses.

Figure 4.1: Congregational, Presbyterian, Methodist and Baptist Adherence in Australia, 1871-1971
Congregationalists than in 1891. Moreover, those who left tended to be those whom the Congregational churches could least afford to lose: males between adolescence and late middle age. In the 1870's and 1880's there was a rough balance of the sexes in Congregationalism and about the same proportion of those aged over fourteen as there were in the population at large.\(^1\) The 1921 census, the first to provide a

\(^1\) During the late nineteenth century males were consistently under-represented in Congregationalism relative to their representation in the total population of the Colonies. This difference probably reflected the over-representation of males of all religions in country districts.
detailed picture of the age and sex structure of the denominations, revealed a substantial change. In 1921 in all three states the denominational age pyramid was top-heavy compared with that of the total population, with males being under-represented in virtually every cohort between fifteen and sixty (figure 4.3). This haemorrhage was unprecedented in Australian religious history. How is it to be explained?

Dr K.S. Inglis has written that 'It is likely that transfer of adherence at marriage accounts for certain slight long-term changes in denominational affiliation within [Australian] Protestantism, and especially for the declining adherence to Congregationalism'. By the early twentieth century a much higher proportion of Congregationalists was marrying outside the denomination than had been the case in the 1870's and 1880's. If we are prepared to assume that a high rate of in-marriage indicates a low rate of transfer upon marriage and vice versa, then this trend towards out-marriage is evidence of marriage as an increasing source of leakage. But marriage can hardly be the main explanation for the declining adherence to Congregationalism. How can it account for the markedly different rate of the decline in the census strength of Congregationalism in Victoria compared with that of the other two states? And can we account in this way for the under-representation of Congregational males by the 1920's? It seems unlikely that Congregational men were so much more prone to transfer allegiance upon marriage. The male rate of out-marriage was not substantially different from that of Congregational females.

3 The evidence for this is presented in ch. 6.
Figure 4.3: Percentage Distribution of Congregationalists and Total Population by Age and Sex. South-eastern Australia, 1921

Source: Commonwealth Census, 1921.
During the nineteenth century in England there were many Congregationalists by upbringing who joined the established church because it had higher social status. How important was the quest for prestige as a source of leakage in Australia? There were particular Anglican churches whose congregations were sufficiently fashionable to attract ambitious Congregationalists who wished to set a social seal upon material success. But the leakage caused by these churches must have been small because they were relatively few and the difference between them and the most prosperous Congregational churches was small. For example, in the Melbourne suburb of Brighton those who attended the Wesleyan church and St. Andrew's Church of England were from different social groups but the Congregational church had some men attached to it who were almost as prominent outside Brighton as those belonging to fashionable St. Andrew's.

When prominent Congregationalists joined the Church of England they attracted attention. Thus many commented about the defection of the descendents of David Jones and John Fairfax, the two men who were so influential in the early history of New South Wales Congregationalism. But it is important to retain perspective. There were also Congregationalists who were socially prominent and who remained within the denomination — men such as Sir Frederick Sargood and Sir William McPherson in Victoria, Sir Edwin Smith in South Australia, and Sir Arthur Renwick in New South Wales. Even amongst the Joneses and Fairfaxes, Sir Philip Jones and Sir James Fairfax, who stayed, deserve to be noted.


just as much as those who left. 6 Also, we have to remember that only a small proportion of Congregationalists were sufficiently successful materially to feel attracted to the extra social prestige of Anglicanism. Those who left for this reason were the exceptions; as one Congregational minister noted:

... fashion here, though imperious[,] has not the sway as in older lands, though there are instances even in Australia where moneyed men and men of position with no convictions have left our churches and fawned on bishops, and made for heaven through Anglican doors. 7

The massive transfer of denominational allegiance could not have been caused in this way. Apart from the relatively few who were affected, there is the problem of the timing of the exodus from Congregationalism.

The highest rate of departure occurred in the 1890's and the 1900's but there is no evidence to suggest that upward social mobility was greatest then - rather the opposite.

Union leaders often argued that Congregational children who attended schools run by other denominations tended to transfer their allegiance. Mr. Arthur Johnson, for example, used to say that Congregationalists would not prosper in Victoria until they had their own school. 8 There were a number of efforts to found a denominational school but none survived unless a joint venture with the Baptists in

6 The A.D.B. has articles on Sargood, Renwick and Philip Jones. McPherson, Smith and Sir James Fairfax all made the Who's Who.


8 Information from Miss G. Swinburne of Hawthorn, Melbourne. Johnson was a Melbourne solicitor who led an attempt to revive Victorian Congregationalism in the 1920's. Others to comment on the need for a denominational school included Rev. T. Roseby (N.S.W.C.Y.B., 1890, pp. 59-60) and those who inquired into the condition of the denomination in Victoria during the early 1920's (La L MSS, 9239, 7/3, "Report of "The Commission on the State of the Denomination" ... October 16th, 1923").
Adelaide is counted. Some Congregationalists were lost in consequence of this failure, but we do not know the number. It is possible to make only rough estimates of the number of Congregational children attending the schools of other churches, yet the figures are good enough to indicate that leakage from this source can only have been a small part of the whole. Taking New South Wales as a test case, total enrolments in Protestant schools increased only marginally between 1890 and 1910 (table 4.1). Though adherence to Congregationalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church of England</th>
<th>Presbyterian</th>
<th>Methodist</th>
<th>Congregational</th>
<th>Lutheran</th>
<th>Seventh Day Adventist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>3,607</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>288</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


was declining, increasing leakage from this source is therefore unlikely. Even more important, only a small proportion of Congregational children attended schools of other denominations. In 1933 the number was a little over one in ten.  

This examination of the causes of transfer could be extended

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9 Milton Grammar School, Sydney, was the most important of the purely Congregational efforts. It opened in 1928 and was shut as a consequence of financial difficulties in 1934. The joint effort with the Baptists was Kings College, opened in 1924. Milton and Kings were boys' schools.

10 See table 3.16.
almost indefinitely. But there is only one factor which promises to hold the key to the problem. Only some Congregationalists married outside the denomination; only some of them attended an Anglican or Presbyterian or Methodist school; only some were upwardly socially mobile. Nearly all of them, on the other hand, at one time or other in their lives, moved house.

Joseph Hackett's mother and father and maternal grandfather had been leading figures of the Congregational church in Oxford Street, Collingwood, when that part of Melbourne was a fashionable residential area. As a youth Joseph attended a Baptist church and played an active role in the life of the congregation. About 1889 he began attending a Congregational church again, this time the one in Rathdowne Street.

I have not thought it worthwhile to discuss whether the leakage from Congregationalism could have been caused by Congregationalists becoming free thinkers and those of no religion. The period of greatest leakage was between 1891 and 1911 but the number of those who declared themselves at the censuses to be agnostics, freethinkers, atheists and the like decreased during this period. The impact of immigration is a somewhat more complex matter, but this also does not seem to merit detailed consideration. There were tens of thousands of British migrants to N.S.W and Victoria during the 1880's. If under-representation of Congregationalists among migrants had been an important cause of declining adherence between 1881 and 1933 then during the 1880's there ought to have been a decline in the proportion of Congregationalists in both colonies. There was in Victoria but in N.S.W. in 1881-91 the proportion of Congregationalists increased from 1.9% to 2.2%.

I do not wish to suggest that geographical mobility always acted independently of these other factors, only that it was generally the most powerful. A. Dougan found that amongst church-goers in Bathurst, when transfer of allegiance occurred, usually more than one factor was at work: 'Social Factors in Denominationalism An Investigation into some of these Factors in the City of Bathurst, New South Wales', M.A., Univ. Sydney, 1960, p. 155.
Carlton. Within a few years he was a Sunday-school teacher, the church secretary and a deacon. At this time he was working in his father's coachbuilding business in Fitzroy. In 1892 the firm went bankrupt and Joseph began a spell of wandering. He went to Wyeproof but finding the climate too hot stayed only briefly. From there he found his way to Newhaven, Phillip Island, where he resided approximately two years. After that he went to Bairnsdale where he stayed more than twenty years. At Wyeproof he had probably ceased to think of himself as a Congregationalist. There was no Congregational church in the town. He decided to join the local Methodist church because, he later told his family, they were 'the liveliest crew'. When he moved to Bairnsdale he maintained his Methodist affiliation and gave long and faithful service as a local preacher, a trustee and a Sunday-school superintendent.  

Mrs. H. Bickart as a girl belonged to another family closely associated with a Congregational church - that in Dawson Street, Ballarat. Her father, Charles William Harrison, had a large tailoring business in the town. When she married a Ballarat boy just after the First World War the ceremony was performed in the Dawson Street church. A few years later the couple moved to a suburb of Melbourne. There was no Congregational church in the vicinity but there was a Methodist church near. As the Methodist minister called they decided to go along. In an interview she said 'I don't think we even thought about going to a Congregational church'.

13 Information from Miss Doris Hackett of Oakleigh, Melbourne, and family papers in her possession.

14 Interview with Mrs. Bickart of East Hawthorn, Melbourne, in January 1975.
Oliver Curtis, who was born in England in 1877, arrived in Australia in 1902. Before migrating he had wanted to become a Congregational minister but he became engaged to marry and found himself unprepared to postpone his marriage for four years of theological training. Between 1902 and 1922 he worked on the Bendigo Mail, in time becoming its business manager. During all this period he was active in the local Congregational church. From Bendigo he went to Mildura and later to Ouyen as editor of the Ouyen Mail. Unable to attend a Congregational church in either place he regretfully joined a Presbyterian church and his family was lost to Congregationalism.  

These three cases — and they could easily be multiplied — suggest a marketing analogy. The Congregational churches in Australia did not attempt to differentiate their product from those of other denominations. The denomination, moreover, had many fewer outlets than its main competitors. In the 1880's, before Congregationalism fell steadily behind in its rate of growth, it had less than a third of the ministers employed by the Presbyterians and Methodists and less than a fifth of the buildings used for worship. The contrast in size with the Church of England was even sharper. These two things in combination — the lack of product differentiation and paucity of outlets — disadvantaged the Congregational churches when there was much geographical mobility.

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15 Information from his daughter, Mrs. D. Hall of Highton, Melbourne.

16 P.L. Berger, The Sacred Canopy, New York, 1969, p. 138, describes the pluralistic situation of denominational competition as 'above all, a market situation'. I am grateful to Dr. I. Manning of the A.N.U. for suggesting that Congregationalists suffered the handicap of a small-scale retailer with low product differentiation.

17 Colonial Statistical Registers for 1890. The South Australian Statistical Register did not publish figures on ministers.
A Congregationalist who moved house lacked incentive to seek out the denominational product because it was not distinctive and he had not been taught to value it. Equally important, because the denominational coverage was small, often a Congregationalist moved to a district where there was no denominational outlet. For this reason Oliver Curtis ceased to be a practising Congregationalist despite his loyalty to Congregational principles. Joseph Hackett and Mrs. Bickart, who were less attached, would probably have been at risk even if they had moved to a district where there was a Congregational church.

Geographical mobility has reduced Congregational affiliation from very early in the history of the denomination in Australia. During the gold rushes in Victoria the percentage of the colony's population which was Congregational decreased from 3.31 per cent in 1854 to 2.56 per cent in 1861. This decline was almost certainly caused in part by the movement of Congregationalists onto goldfields where there were no Congregational churches and who therefore joined churches of other denominations. The average level of affiliation for Victorian centres which had Congregational churches was 4.16 per cent in 1857; for centres without Congregational churches the average was 2.26 per cent. A decade later the Rev. S.C. Kent noticed the same thing happening in New South Wales. During trips to the country he had found ex-Congregationalists in almost every place he had visited, some of whom had drifted out of church life altogether and some of whom had joined the Church of England, the Presbyterians, the Wesleyans and the

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18 Victorian Census, 1857. There were four places on the Victorian goldfields in 1857 that possessed Congregational churches and had 1,000 or more persons at the census. The proportions of the population who were Congregationalists in these places were 6.46%, 3.71%, 3.30%, and 3.18%. There were 33 such places without Congregational churches, with a standard deviation of ±0.25% about the mean of 2.26%. All cases of both groups are known so a statistical test of significance is inappropriate: R. Floud, An Introduction to Quantitative Methods for Historians, London, 1974, pp. 173-4.
Primitive Methodists. 19

Kent did not comment about whether Congregationalists had a preferred denomination when they left their own. It may be that in the country they were happy to take whatever was available. But in the city where denominational differences meant more probably there was a tendency to favour the Presbyterians. Certainly this was true of the members of the Collins Street Independent church, Melbourne, which, being a city church, was not a typical fellowship. All told there were 232 transfers to specified churches given by the Collins Street fellowship between 1882 and 1908, 202 of which were to Congregational churches. Of the remaining thirty transfers, twenty-four were to Presbyterian churches, three to the Baptists, two to the Anglicans, and one to a Welsh church. 20

There was a stream of denominational comment about the problem of removals during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, a committee inquiring into the condition of the denomination in Victoria in the early 1920's noted that there were 'whole provinces' without a Congregational church.

... in nine cases out of ten when families move to the country they are lost to us. When they return to Melbourne or elsewhere they have joined some other Church and their children have been bred up in it. The loss is constant and very great.21

To take only one specific instance, in the mid-1920's the minister at Kogarah, Sydney, lamented how during his pastorate the fellowship had


20 Independent church transfer books.

transferred to churches of other denominations 'a considerable number of members'.

Some of the most useful of our young people after graduating from the Teachers' College are sent into country towns. Their fine services are lost to us, for the same old reason. We have now a beautiful young lady, a B.A. of Sydney University, and another of equal worth, a B.Sc. of the same University, teaching in high schools in country towns where there is not a Congregational church. Both of them were teachers in our S.S. up to the time of their appointments.22

Though the loss was greatest when Congregationalists moved into districts where there were no Congregational churches, leakage also occurred where the denomination happened to be represented. A leader in the Victorian Independent in the late 1890's noted that there were many convinced Congregationalists in the Victorian churches but said that 'the bulk' of those who attended

have but a slight knowledge of our essential principles, and very little of that affection for their denomination, as such, which characterises so many of our Methodist friends. They pass easily, and without much regret, into other churches when by the exercise of a little trouble and self-denial they might still remain connected with our own. An extra half-mile of distance is sufficient to divert their support from Congregationalism to some other - they are seldom very particular as to which - religious body; or, what is worse, to lead them to abandonment of church attendance altogether.23

While such comments demonstrate that moving house often caused transfer of allegiance, to adequately explain Congregational loss of census strength we need to go a stage further. Is it possible to show that the increasing rate of transfer out of the denomination was caused primarily by an increase in the geographical mobility of Congregationalists? The best hope of doing this lies in the decennial

22 W. Touchell, N.S.W. Cong., June 1925.
23 May 1898.
censuses. Only they can provide a precise idea of how many Congregationalists moved house and when. And only the censuses provide an opportunity of correlating this geographical mobility with changes in the numbers of adherents.

A full examination of the censuses for changes in city and country in the three states would be a tedious and prolonged affair. I will therefore examine the link between geographical mobility and loss of adherents in only one city and for twenty years - Melbourne between 1881 and 1901. It cannot be assumed that what is true for Melbourne holds good for the rest of Victoria, much less for New South Wales and South Australia. But an examination of what happened in Melbourne proves to be highly suggestive.

During the 1880's the population of Melbourne increased from less than 300,000 to 500,000. Most of this increase took place in the older suburbs: the municipalities of Melbourne, Collingwood, Fitzroy, North Melbourne, Richmond, South Melbourne and Prahran housed just over 70 per cent of the metropolitan population in 1881; in 1891 the proportion had fallen only to a little under 60 per cent. Nevertheless there was a spectacular movement of people to the newer suburbs, as residence further from the city's centre was rendered practicable by many new miles of railway and tram tracks. The growth of Sydney's population during the 1880's almost equalled that of Melbourne, but in Sydney urban development was much more compact. Even though Sydney's

population in 1891 was 20 per cent less than that of Melbourne, people were more crowded in suburbs ringing the city centre. In Melbourne, perhaps more than in any other city in the world', Graeme Davison has written, 'large and rapid population growth was handled without a dramatic alteration in population densities'.

At the 1881 census six municipalities - Melbourne, Collingwood, Fitzroy, South Melbourne, Richmond and Prahran - contained 65.4 per cent of Congregationalists who lived in Melbourne and its suburbs. The proportion of the total population living in the same six municipalities was almost exactly the same (64.6 per cent). Between 1881 and 1891 the population of these six municipalities increased by 41.9 per cent. In the same period the number of Congregationalists decreased by 4.9 per cent (table 4.2). If the proportion of Congregationalists in

| Table 4.2: Distribution of Congregationalists in Selected Inner Municipalities of Melbourne, 1881-1901 |
|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Numbers | Per cent of population | Numbers | Per cent of population | Numbers | Per cent of population |
| Collingwood | 697 | 2.9 | 673 | 1.9 | 435 | 1.3 |
| Fitzroy | 785 | 3.4 | 753 | 2.3 | 411 | 1.3 |
| Melbourne | 1,864 | 2.8 | 1,476 | 2.1 | 874 | 1.3 |
| Prahran | 1,186 | 5.6 | 1,464 | 3.9 | 901 | 2.2 |
| Richmond | 1,339 | 5.7 | 1,304 | 3.4 | 1,132 | 3.0 |
| South Melbourne | 1,148 | 4.5 | 1,005 | 2.4 | 709 | 1.7 |
| Total selected | 7,019 | 3.8 | 6,675 | 2.6 | 4,462 | 1.8 |

Source: Victorian Censuses, 1881, 1891, 1901.


1891 had been what it was a decade before there would have been almost 10,000 adherents in the six municipalities. The actual number was 3,000 less. The Congregational loss of ground is the more striking when compared with the increases in the numbers of Presbyterians and Wesleyan Methodists (tables 4.3-4).

Table 4.3: Distribution of Presbyterians in Selected Inner Municipalities of Melbourne, 1881-1901

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>Per cent of population</td>
<td>Numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collingwood</td>
<td>2,297</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>3,026</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzroy</td>
<td>2,216</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>3,073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>8,072</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>8,184</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prahran</td>
<td>2,767</td>
<td>13.1</td>
<td>5,313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>2,322</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>4,116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Melbourne</td>
<td>4,491</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>6,157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total selected</td>
<td>22,165</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>29,869</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Victorian Censuses, 1881, 1891, 1901.

The suburbs into which Congregationalists moved may be classified into two kinds: those in which there was a Congregational church by the end of the decade and those in which there was not. If it can be shown that there was in all likelihood a leakage amongst those who moved into suburbs with Congregational churches then a fortiori it is even more probable that there was leakage amongst those who moved to suburbs where there were no Congregational churches. Table 4.5 compares the census strength of Congregationalists in 1881 and 1891 in nine outer suburbs in which the denomination was represented by at least one church. The number of Congregationalists in this group
Table 4.4: Distribution of Wesleyan Methodists in Selected Inner Municipalities of Melbourne, 1881-1901

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>Per cent of population</td>
<td>Numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collingwood</td>
<td>2,131</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>3,426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitzroy</td>
<td>2,557</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>3,436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>4,219</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>4,448</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prahran</td>
<td>1,598</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>3,627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richmond</td>
<td>1,701</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>3,336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Melbourne</td>
<td>2,124</td>
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<tr>
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<td>14,330</td>
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<td>22,497</td>
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</table>

Source: Victorian Censuses, 1881, 1891, 1901.

Table 4.5: Distribution of Congregationalists in Selected Outer Municipalities of Melbourne, 1881-1901

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1881</th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1901</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Numbers</td>
<td>Per cent of population</td>
<td>Numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brighton</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawthorn</td>
<td>622</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>1,289</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kew</td>
<td>395</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>614</td>
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<td>Essendon</td>
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<td>1.7</td>
<td>304</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brunswick</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>452</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boroondara</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malvern</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>559</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nunawading</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>2.4</td>
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<td>Oakleigh</td>
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<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Victorian Censuses, 1881, 1891, 1901.
increased by 151.0 per cent whereas the total population of these suburbs increased by 186.7 per cent. Given the decrease of Congregationalists in the inner suburbs we might have expected the denomination to be over-represented in these outer suburbs. Instead the reverse is true.

The same picture emerges even when particular attention is given to those suburbs south and east of the Yarra favoured by the rich - Brighton, Hawthorn, Kew, Boroondara and Malvern. Between the censuses of 1881 and 1891 the total population of these five municipalities increased by 183.3 per cent yet Congregationalists increased only by 140.7 per cent. On the other hand the Presbyterians increased by 209.7 per cent and Wesleyan Methodists by 271.7 per cent. Thus it seems likely that whereas Presbyterian and Wesleyan Methodist church-goers retained their denominational affiliation when they moved from the inner suburbs during the 1880's, Congregationalists did not. The differences in distribution of adherents in the inner suburbs in 1891 may also be easily explained. The exodus of Presbyterian and Wesleyan Methodist church-goers was hidden from the census takers by the movement into the inner suburbs by large numbers of poorer nominal adherents. There were relatively few such Congregationalists.

This interpretation is rendered more plausible when we examine what happened to the Baptists. The Baptists had a distinctive rite in believer's baptism and thus their denominational attachment was stronger than that of Congregationalists. But like the Congregationalists, the Baptists had many fewer churches than the Methodists and the Presbyterians. Consequently the Baptist churches also experienced leakage when their adherents moved house. The increase in Baptist adherents in the five desirable outer suburbs was only a little faster than that of the
Congregationalists, 154.5 per cent compared with 140.7 per cent.

Leakage similar to this in Melbourne during the 1880's had occurred before and was to occur again and again. 27

Between 1881 and 1891 there was no such net loss of Congregational adherents as occurred in the next two decades (table 4.6). It might therefore seem that I have shown an exaggerated concern with this decade. The justification for the detailed analysis so far is that it has revealed the main features of the leakage which was to take place in greater volume from about 1890. If it were not possible to show that there was considerable leakage during the boom of the 1880's the greater leakage still to come might be interpreted simplistically as a consequence of depression. It might have been argued for example that the health of the denomination was peculiarly dependent on the financial support of business and professional people and that when this was not forthcoming the morale of the churches was affected and many Congregationalists transferred their allegiance.

Table 4.6: Melbourne Congregationalists 1871-1911

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Per cent of population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>8,564</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>10,725</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>13,651</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>10,555</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>10,321</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Victorian and Commonwealth Censuses

The depression which continued into the new century was very important for its effect on Congregational adherence but it was primarily an indirect cause of leakage through the internal migration which it induced. No detailed study of internal migration in Victoria during this depression has been published, yet it is obvious that it reached enormous proportions. Unemployment statistics offer some guide. Over twenty-eight per cent of the labour force was unemployed in 1893 according to the estimate of one scholar. By 1900 the proportion of the unemployed had fallen to under six per cent.\(^2\)

Clearly, in the process of losing and finding jobs thousands of men (and their families with them) changed their residence. Further evidence is provided by the annual estimates of the population of Melbourne municipalities, which indicate the net annual gain or loss of population for each municipality.\(^3\) These figures, of course, do not allow calculation of the number of people who changed their residence within the metropolitan area in any one year. For example if 4,000 persons moved into Malvern and 2,000 moved out in one year, the estimates could reveal only a third of the total movement. Still these net figures are suggestive of much geographical mobility. In 1892-94 South Melbourne had a net loss of 9,928 persons; in 1894-1901 it had a net gain of 7,030. In 1891-94 Fitzroy had a net loss of 4,890; in 1894-1901 a net gain of 4,124. In 1891-94 Richmond had a net loss of 7,251; in 1894-1901 a net gain of 6,278. The population of the municipality of Melbourne fluctuated throughout the decade with an overall


\(^3\) *Victorian Statistical Register*, 1891-1901.
Sydney and Adelaide were also affected by the depression of the 1890's, but it does not seem likely that depression-induced internal migration was nearly as great in these two cities as in Melbourne. Just as the boom had been most spectacular in Melbourne, so was the bust. The more substantial denominational losses in Melbourne in the 1890's can therefore be explained in the same way as the different fate of the denomination in the three cities in the 1880's. In Melbourne a higher proportion of Congregationalists moved house.

There were decreases in the number of Congregationalists in the same group of Melbourne municipalities in which the denomination had fared so badly in 1881-1891, but in 1891-1901 the losses were far greater (table 4.2). The disaster area also spread further from the city centre. Prahran which gained 278 adherents in 1881-91 lost 563 in the following decade. St. Kilda and Williamstown likewise experienced decreases after gaining adherents in 1881-91. In nine municipalities bordering or close to the city centre the number of Congregationalists decreased by close to 3,000.31 As had happened between 1881 and 1891

30 During a three year period ending in 1904 Congregationalists of the East Melbourne church made regular visits to 1,700-odd houses in a district comprising parts of East Melbourne, Collingwood, Abbotsford and Richmond. It was ascertained in the case of each house where the family's place of worship was, and if the family did not go to church, an attempt was made to link the family either with a church of their denomination or the East Melbourne Congregational church. When there was a change of residence the new occupants of the house were visited. One finding of this survey was that there were '600 or 700' houses, over one in three, which experienced a change of occupant every year. It was also noted that many of those visited had once been church-goers but drifted away: V.I., Dec. 1904.

31 The municipalities were Melbourne, Collingwood, Fitzroy, Prahran, Richmond, South Melbourne, North Melbourne, Williamstown, St. Kilda.
the census strength of Methodists and Presbyterians was maintained in these municipalities during the 1890's.

Naturally the Congregational churches were more successful in attracting adherents in the more desirable suburbs to the south and east of the Yarra. But here too the proportion of Congregationalists declined over all. In two of these blue ribbon municipalities - Malvern and Hawthorn - there was even a net loss of adherents (table 4.5).

Taking Melbourne as a whole, Congregationalism lost one in five of its adherents during the 1890's. In no other city in Australia, perhaps in the world, did the denomination lose so much ground so quickly.

Summing up, the census strength of Melbourne Congregationalism declined at an accelerating rate between 1880 and 1900. It does not seem likely that this decline was caused by such things as out-marriage or social mobility. On the other hand internal migration in Melbourne during the 1880's and 1890's was very high and much higher than it had been in the 1870's. There is much contemporary evidence that when Congregationalists moved house they were often lost to the denomination. It therefore seems likely that increased geographical mobility was the primary cause of the increasing transfer of denominational allegiance by Melbourne Congregationalists. It also seems likely that similar losses occurred in Sydney and Adelaide and as country Congregationalists found their way more and more to the three capital cities.

Finally, internal migration not only explains much better than the other factors the timing and volume of the loss of adherents; it also explains in a way they do not the over-representation of older Congregationalists in the 1920's. People in late adolescence and in their twenties and thirties move much more often than those who are
older. Younger Congregationalists were therefore most likely to pass from the denomination. Probably, also, more Congregational men were on the move than Congregational women, either in search of jobs or because they were keener to leave the family home.

Leakage as a consequence of internal migration was inevitable; loss of census strength was not. If there had been an effective programme of church extension in the newly settled districts in city and country, then not only might some Congregationalists moving into the catchment areas have been retained, but many adherents might have been picked up from other denominations. Other denominations suffered leakage - one Wesleyan Methodist estimate in 1879 was that about a third of members who moved was lost - yet they maintained the adherence of a fairly constant proportion of the population.

Some Union leaders realized that if the denomination was to hold its ground many new churches had to be built. For this reason they both criticized existing efforts and worked to establish various funds to be used in part for church extension. Many Congregational women, for their part, worked hard to raise money for the Home Mission departments which supervised church extension. Yet the effort to keep...
pace with the growth and movement of the population largely failed. Between 1800 and 1908 the population of Adelaide increased by 61,000; in the same period only one Congregational church and two preaching stations were established in Adelaide. In Victoria between 1915 and 1928 only two churches were begun, one of which was discontinued after five years. In New South Wales there were more new churches established from about 1880 and they were begun at more regular intervals, but the ratio of Congregational churches to population in that state was almost as bad as in Victoria in 1930 (table 4.7). In both states in 1930 there

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.7: Congregational Churches and Preaching Stations in South-eastern Australia, 1883–1930</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Numbers of Churches and Preaching Stations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: See n. 36.

were little more than half as many churches per 100,000 persons than there had been a half-century before. After 1900 the ratio of churches to population actually improved in South Australia, but there many of the new churches and preaching stations were located in country districts rather than in Adelaide where most South Australians lived.


Why did Congregationalists fail to build churches in sufficient numbers? Part of the answer is provided by the general diminution of support for the Congregational churches which was evident by about the turn of the century. Probably Congregationalists in the early twentieth century were more reluctant to give money for church building than those of two or three decades earlier. It may also be that by about 1910 it was harder to find suitable men to become pastors of new churches. If so, this was an important constraint upon inaugurating causes. Though in theory the church fellowship called a minister to be its pastor, in practice it took an energetic minister to gather a congregation about him in a new district. It also required a dedicated people to build a church and pay for it as well as support a minister and his family. There was probably a diminishing supply of this dedication. The experienced Superintendent of the New South Wales Home Mission Board wrote in 1920 that 'One of the most serious obstacles to Congregational Church extension is the weakness of religious conviction, and of that Christian experience on which alone it is safe to rest responsibility during the earlier years of a church's history'.

When the English Congregationalist, J.D. Jones, reported on the condition of the denomination in Australia in 1914, he claimed that its decentralized polity had handicapped church extension. It is difficult to judge this assertion. Certainly, in the late nineteenth century the formal machinery for directing church extension was deficient, yet...

37 Rev. W.L. Patison; Congregational Union of New South Wales, Home Mission Board. Annual Report and Balance Sheet, Sydney, 1920, p. 5. Lay reduction in support for the churches is discussed in chs. 5 and 6; the possible fall in recruitment of ministers in ch. 9.

38 ML MSS 3145, 1, 'Notes on Visitation of the Churches of Australasia by Rev J.D. Jones ...', handwritten, in packet of documents labelled 'Documents relating to the Visit of Dr J.D. Jones etc 1914', esp. p. 27.
critics of 'Isolated Independency', like Jones, judged only by past rhetoric and failed to see that leadership had been exercised informally. The problem occasionally had been not too little direction but too much. Power which had not been formally recognized could not be formally checked.  

'An old-fashioned Congregationalist' wrote in 1886 to the *Australian Christian World* protesting against the way officers of the churches were passing their responsibilities to the Union. The drift, the writer believed, was towards 'Connexionalism in its worst form', 'an extraneous self-constituted oligarchy without the responsibility of recognised authority, acting by tacit toleration as managers and directors'.  

Perceptive as this comment was 'An old-fashioned Congregationalist' was incorrect in implying that a concentration of power was new; at least as early as the 1850's there had been complaints about an oligarchy in New South Wales.

Even if we attend only to formal machinery, we find that the organization of Congregational church extension was centralized in all three states by about 1910. Though the stronger Congregational churches resisted attempts to restrict their own independence, they did not object to substantial Union control of nascent causes. The Home Superintendents became in fact, though not in name, bishops of

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39 P.M. Harrison, *Authority and Power in the Free Church Tradition*, Princeton, 1959, examines the informal power of the executive of a major American Baptist denomination. Though the American Baptist Convention has a Congregational polity and the executive has no authority recognized throughout the denomination (at least it did not have such authority at the time of Harrison's study), in fact there is much central direction, often greater than that exercised by an Episcopalian bishop. See especially, pp. 84, 92.

40 *A.C.W.*, Nov. 1886.

41 T.A. Gordon, *Congregational Independency in New South Wales, and Presbyterianism compared ...*, Sydney, 1858, p. 11.
all churches and preaching stations which were in receipt of Union aid.  

Who had the power, formally or informally, may not have mattered all that much. The Baptists had the same congregational system but their fortunes varied according to colony. In South Australia and Victoria where denominational strength diminished from the turn of the century, some Baptist leaders believed that polity was partly responsible. But Baptist machinery did not prevent Baptist adherents increasing in Sydney between 1891 and 1933 almost as fast as the total population of the city and suburbs. Further, Congregationalists in London, to take only one English city, for a time responded successfully to the challenge of suburban expansion greater in magnitude than that in Sydney, Melbourne or Adelaide. In the third quarter of the nineteenth century London Congregationalists built churches faster than before or since. Two out of three churches listed in Andrew Mearns's Guide to the London Congregational Churches, published in 1882, had been founded in the previous 30 years, and about 80 churches had been established in the new suburbs which had grown up during this period.  

The centralization of denominational organizations is discussed in ch. 10.


Baptists were 1.41% of the Sydney population in 1891, 1.34% in 1933. Congregationalists were 4.23% in 1891 and 1.14% in 1933.

church extension in London began to lose its vigour about the time the same thing was happening in a much smaller way in the Australian cities. Whereas 80 Congregational churches were built in the new London suburbs between 1851 and 1880, in the next 34 years only about 33 were built in the new suburbs. The minutes of the London Congregational Union spoke from time to time of missed opportunities in securing sites and apathy in fund-raising for church extension. In particular districts where zeal was maintained it continued to get results.

By the end of the century the size of the denomination was a more important restriction upon church extension than any deficiencies of organization. While church extension had been primarily carried out by local initiative - a church forming branches which in time became self-sufficient - denominational size had not been so important. But by about 1900 in many Protestant bodies, in England as well as Australia, church extension passed increasingly under the authority of central organizations. This happened also in Australian Congregationalism but without increase in denominational funds commensurate with the new responsibility. To build a church suitable for a suburban congregation cost upwards of £2,500 in the 1880's and 1890's if the purchase of the land was included. A substantial edifice such as a congregation in an affluent neighbourhood might expect cost around £5,000. About 1900

46 ibid., p. 33.
47 ibid., p. 33.
48 The church at Hindmarsh, Adelaide, described in ch. 8 cost £3,515, including land: Observer, 9 Dec. 1882, p. 33. This did not have a spire, but was otherwise typical of many suburban churches built in the 1870's and 1880's. The Hindmarsh church had 630 sittings. The church at Glenelg in Adelaide, opened about the same time, had 640 sittings and cost between £5,000 and £6,000: ibid., 1 May 1880, p. 734; 25 Sept. 1880, p. 546.
the pastor of a newly formed suburban congregation would expect a stipend of around £150 per annum.\textsuperscript{49} The brunt of this burden of establishing and maintaining a church was borne by the local people but they increasingly looked to their Union for assistance. But Union funds were chronically short. The difference that generous finance could make is evident in South Australia. From 1889 monies from a fund established by William Parkin, a wealthy merchant, became available to pay for Congregational mission work in the sparsely settled districts of South Australia.\textsuperscript{50} Tens of churches and mission stations were established which would otherwise have never existed. In the late 1940's over a third of the causes in South Australia were receiving assistance from the Parkin Mission.\textsuperscript{51} Parkin's money was the main reason why the ratio of Congregational churches to population was so much better in South Australia than the other two states.

Lack of denominational loyalty was even more important than lack of funds in crippling church extension. When Congregational church-goers moved into a district where there was no denominational cause they were frequently reluctant to begin one. They had not been taught to value Congregational principles; very often they had belonged to another denomination before becoming attached to a Congregational church; very often, also, there might be only a handful of Congregational families in a district and these unknown to one another. ‘... whoever gave you to understand that we had a golden opportunity at Eastwood [a

\textsuperscript{49} Stipends are discussed in ch. 9.

\textsuperscript{50} A.D.B. article on Parkin; A.I.Y.B., 1891, pp. 175-7.

\textsuperscript{51} E.S. Kiek, Our First Hundred Years, Adelaide, n.d., p. 115. In 1969 the governors of the mission declared the value of the trust property (i.e. the interest bearing corpus) to be $905,000: S.A.C.Y.B., 1969, p. 12.
Sydney suburb] and lost it, knows nothing of the difficulty of unearthing the Cong'sts. who made their home there', wrote W.L. Patison to a man who had criticized the Home Mission Board.52

Lack of will to win in the denominational stakes, or rather lack of interest in the game, also affected the Congregational Unions. A leader in the *Victorian Independent* spoke truly of denominational home mission work when it said 'We have no desire to propagate an *ism*'.53 Such was the dominance of the non-sectarian tradition that Union officials generally preferred not to compete with other denominations. Very often the bigger denominations moved quickly into new districts, so that unwillingness to compete meant non-representation. Congregational passivity increased when Church Union seemed likely during the first twenty-five years or so of this century. During this period some regarded the promotion of denominational interests as disloyal to the ecumenical ideal. On occasions there was a reluctance to compete even for the affections of Congregationalists. W.L. Patison defended the Home Mission Board's inactivity at Eastwood by saying that if Congregational church members chose 'to go to districts where there is no Cong. church, and enter heartily into the work of some other church, we give them credit for knowing their own mind, & we should regard it as none of our business to try to unsettle them'.54

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53 Jan. 1909.

54 See n. 52 above.
For at least twenty years before the Great War the Congregational churches struggled with the problem of apathy. Apathy had existed before then - ministers and laymen had complained about it loudly and often.¹ The severity of the problem by 1914 can also easily be exaggerated - if it had been as bad as some alleged it is difficult to see how the churches remained open. But there can be no doubt that the problem got worse. The relationship between people and churches became increasingly superficial, many church fellowships became moribund and members almost everywhere became increasingly indifferent to both their privileges and responsibilities. In Congregational parlance there was a decline of 'spiritual life'.

The change may have occurred without any drop in Sunday church attendance relative to the (diminishing) number of adherents. It is hard to tell. The South Australian government never collected church attendance statistics; in Victoria there was no return by Congregationalists after 1893; in New South Wales the last figures available are for 1904. The New South Wales statistics do not reveal any decline in church-going (table 5.1) but they are probably better ignored altogether. They were drawn from returns made by the local Congregational churches which were notoriously unreliable about collecting statistics. It also seems that though the estimates were of 'regular' or 'habitual' attendants no precise definition of either was made. It

¹ Eg. C.G. Howden and T.J. Pepper, Our Need of Ministers and The Unemployed Power in Our Churches, Sydney, [1872], passim, and the comment of J.J. Halley on those who had cried wolf for many years, reported in V.I., Supplement, June 1882.
Table 5.1: Average Sunday Church Attendance of Selected Denominations, New South Wales, 1893 and 1904
(Sunday attendants, excluding those under 14, as a percentage of adherents 15 and over)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>1893</th>
<th>1904</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congregational</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>71.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>49.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>96.1</td>
<td>104.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>58.4</td>
<td>69.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churches of Christ</td>
<td>43.7</td>
<td>54.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *N.S.W. Statistical Register*, 1893, 1904; *N.S.W. Censuses*, 1891, 1901, 1911. See n. 2.

is possible that a person who changed from attending weekly to fortnightly continued to be counted as 'regular'. Furthermore the category of regular attendant was too gross to reveal a possible increase in the proportion of 'oncers', those who attended only one Sunday service. 3

Whatever the position regarding Sunday attendance, the increasing disengagement from church life was clearly evident in declining support for the church meeting. In 1894 the Rev. James

2 It is impossible to make a worthwhile comparison between 1904 and any year earlier than 1893 because until 1893 the attendance figures of Congregational churches may have included children: *N.S.W. Statistical Register*, 1893, p. 656.

3 J.J. Halley, one of the best informed Congregationalists, doubted the reliability of the figures published by the Registrar General: *A.C.W.*, 11 Sept. 1903. Note the sometimes wild fluctuations of these figures. In 1890 church attendants in Victoria formed 65.7% of the population 15 years and over; ten years later they formed 73.7%. In New South Wales attendants at Presbyterian churches were 29.7% of all Presbyterian adherents in 1890 and in 1900 20.5%; W. Phillips, 'Religious Profession and Practice in New South Wales, 1850-1901', *H.S.*, Oct. 1972, pp. 390, 392.
Rickard of the Melbourne suburb of Brighton sent a questionnaire on the subject to Victorian ministers with pastoral charges. Nearly all replied so that Rickard was able to present a detailed picture of the rate of attendance, or at least what Congregational ministers believed or wished to believe was the rate of attendance. According to Rickard's survey about a fifth of all church members in Victoria were inactive, that is, they had infrequent or no contact with their churches. Of the active members about a quarter were present at the average monthly church meeting. Unfortunately no comparable survey of attendance was made in the next twenty years. But contemporary opinion leaves little doubt that the position worsened. In his chairman's address to the Australasian Union in 1904, the Rev. Dr. John Fordyce said that one had to be a hero to defend the church meeting to an audience of Congregationalists. 'I suppose no institution today is really less popular amongst us'. Nor did he seek to play the hero himself; rather he asked whether the gathering at the Lord's table was not the true church meeting - a cunning move because communion attendance was invariably much greater. Between 1913 and 1916 a confidential survey was made of Congregational ministers in Australia and New Zealand, asking them for suggestions about denominational reform. Among the things which emerged was general and deep dissatisfaction with the church meeting. One minister wrote that only ten per cent of members

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4 V.I., Aug. 1894.

5 Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, Volumes of Proceedings, 1904, p. 15. Rickard found in 1894 that nearly three times as many members attended the communion as attended the church meeting: V.I., Aug. 1894.

John Fordyce, M.A., D.D., was educated at Edinburgh University and the Edinburgh Congregational Theological Hall. After a ministry in Northern Ireland he was called to the pastorate of the Jersey Road, Woollahra, church in 1887(?) and remained there for about twenty years. A liberal, he was author of Aspects of Modern Scepticism, London, 1883.
believed in the church meeting and even they would not grieve to give it up. A.E. Gifford said that he was still on the way to solving the problem of the church meeting. W.J. Grant said that he had solved it; he had not held a church meeting for seven years. One minister was laconic: 'The Church Mtg is a failure, try postal voting'.

By the time this survey was made discussions about the condition of church life had taken on a desperate edge. The Rev. W.L. Patison, Superintendent of Home Missions in New South Wales, considered the denomination to be characterized by 'paralysing apathy towards spiritual matters'. He wrote candidly to an Englishman whom he was trying to recruit for the Australian ministry that church work was 'infinitely harder today than it was even ten years ago and none but those who have really been laid hold of by the Spirit of God can stand the discouragements that ministers have now to face, especially in Congregationalism'. The Rev. G.J. Williams of Victoria, obviously drawing on his Congregational experience, complained that the Christian churches were staggering under the dead weight of members who were

6 ML MSS, 3145, 1, typed paper headed 'Australasian Congregational Union. Sixth Triennial Assembly ... Brisbane 1916'; ML MSS, 3145, 2, A.J. Griffith's exercise book titled on front cover 'Abstract of Ministers' Answers to Questions. January 1916'.

7 N.S.W. Cong., May 1912.

8 ML MSS, 1301, 12, Home Mission Superintendent's letter book 1912-14, W.L. Patison to F.W. Callow, 19 March 1912(?); see also ibid., W.L. Patison to Mr. Palmer, 24 Nov. 1914. The 'grave-eyed' William Lyle Patison was a man of much ability and integrity. Superintendent of Home Missions in New South Wales for over a quarter of a century, he took up that post in 1903 after training at Camden College and a pastorate at Leichhardt.
without any sense of their spiritual obligations. A South Australian minister claimed that church offices were going 'abegging'.

Dr. Bevan reported that city churches had been badly affected by 'the modern decay of the sense of responsibility'. 'Instead of being a pillar and constant attendant the average member of the city congregation just dropped in occasionally to see how the old Church was getting on'.

Such comments as these can not be dismissed as usual 'ministers' talk'. In 1912 negotiations were well advanced for a union of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational churches of Australia. A plebiscite was held amongst the Congregational churches in Victoria. A majority of denominational leaders there strongly supported union and took care that every church member either received or had access to a copy of the proposed basis of union and a statement of the desirability of some form of union. 34 out of 55 churches failed to vote on this issue which so vitally affected their futures.

The problem of nominal membership was especially acute in New South Wales and Victoria. A conference was held in New South Wales in 1910 to consider how to get men more involved in church life.

In Victoria the Home Mission committee and the Union Executive committee

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9 Argus, 31 May 1911, p. 15. Williams was organizing secretary of the L.M.S..


12 La L MSS, 9239, 10/2, typed paper headed 'Minutes of Meeting of Standing Committee on Church Union ... 21st October 1912'. Two-thirds of the country churches did not vote.

decided in 1912 to arrange special services in the churches to make members more aware of their obligations.\textsuperscript{14} A Victorian conference of ministers and deacons in 1914 insisted on the need for a greater dedication and a higher spirituality.\textsuperscript{15} In addition to the denominational conferences some churches made their own attempts to rally support amongst their membership. For example, at the Independent church in Collins Street, Melbourne, in April 1913 there was a conference aimed at getting men to do their share of the work. A tactful letter was sent to church members and seat-holders to ascertain what branch of church work they were already doing and what other form of work they would be willing to do.\textsuperscript{16} The problem was also taken up nationally. The 1916 triennial assembly of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand gave the matter earnest consideration following a report of the survey of ministers mentioned earlier. Unfortunately much of the discussion was informal and went unreported but it is clear that those present were of the opinion that church life was in a crisis and that radical measures were required to restore it to health. The assembly resolved there was 'great need of a deeper spiritual life in our churches and the cultivation of a higher ideal of the privileges and responsibilities of church membership'.\textsuperscript{17}

The Australasian Union had already done something to achieve this end. At the invitation of the Union, the Rev. J.D. Jones, a

\begin{itemize}
  \item[14] La L MSS, 9239, Executive Committee Minute Book, 1901-1913, meeting 30 July 1912.
  \item[15] La L MSS, 9239, 7/2, Union Committee attendance book and memoranda, printed circular headed 'Conference Suggestions'. The circular is undated but it is pasted on a page of memoranda for June 1914 and the same book notes a conference of ministers and deacons as being held on 2 March 1914.
  \item[16] Church Notes, May, June 1913.
  \item[17] La L MSS, 9239, Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand Minutes, minutes of sixth triennial assembly, 23 May 1916.
\end{itemize}
leading English Congregationalist, visited the Australian churches in 1914. He had a direct, forceful manner which appealed to the Australians and, though distracted by events at home, had a successful tour. Like Dr. Dale a generation before him, his mission was to preach Congregationalism to Congregationalists, yet in his addresses he also spoke about the indispensability of the church. The difference in tone between the addresses of Dale and Jones is a measure of the changed situation. Dale, who came in 1887, pleaded for a spiritual fellowship, taking for granted a willingness to support a church of some kind. Jones could make no such assumption. 'Believe in your church and don't apologise for it', he told a meeting of Congregational men.

On another occasion, in an address on 'The Indispensability of the Church for the Redemption of the World', he was concerned to speak especially to the younger members of his audience, who, he said were aware of a widespread disparagement of the church. Jones defended the church firstly because Christ had believed in it, secondly because there could not be Christian lives without the help of the church, and thirdly because only the church had power to make a new and better world. He concluded 'I implore you to put your trust in that church, put your love in it, your strength in it, join it, and help it from "within instead of criticising it from without"['].


19 Argus, 17 Sept. 1914, p. 7.

20 Ibid., 17 Sept. 1914, p. 12. See also J.D. Jones, Congregational High Churchmanship, [Sydney], [1915], pp. 18-48; La L MSS, 9239, 7/2, Union Committee attendance book and memoranda, Visit of Rev. J.D. Jones ... Programme of Engagements and Addresses 1st-25th September.
There were in fact by this time many Congregationalists who preferred to remain outside the church fellowship. Commenting on this attitude in 1898 the Rev. W. Cunliffe Jones noted that it was specially prevalent amongst the young. He might have added that it was also especially prevalent amongst men. In 1893 there were three women for every two men who were admitted to the membership of the Congregational churches in New South Wales. There are no comparable figures available for earlier or later but it is certain that the ratio of male to female members declined steadily for thirty or forty years before the Great War. In part this was a consequence of the faster rate at which Congregational men left the denomination. But it also reflected a slackening of involvement by men in church life. Thus men were already much under-represented in the membership of the Independent church in Melbourne well before the exodus to the suburbs began (table 5.2).

Table 5.2: Membership of the Independent Church, Collins Street, Melbourne, 1868-1926

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Males per 100 females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>88.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>72.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>61.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>52.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>52.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>36.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Church roll books.

21 A.Z.I., July 1898. This was not an attitude peculiar to Australian Congregationalists. See the comment of the Wesleyan, W. Bradfield, quoted in A.D. Gilbert, Religion and Society in Industrial England, London, 1976, pp. 198-9.

The attendance at monthly communion services of the Independent church shows a similar feminization of church involvement (table 5.3).

Table 5.3: Sex Ratios of Communicants at Average Monthly Communions, Independent Church, Collins Street, Melbourne, 1868-1926

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Males per 100 females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>101.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>75.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>57.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>54.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>58.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>29.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Church roll books.

It is noticeable how much male rates of attendance declined during the 1870's. It may be that the Independent church was atypical in this respect. At the Ocean Street, Woollahra, Congregational church, men were as under-represented amongst communicants in 1870 as they were thirty years later.23

Table 5.4 shows a decline in the frequency of communion attendance by both male and female members of the Melbourne church. To some extent this change can be attributed to the movement of members to homes at a distance from the church, but, as with the change in sex ratios, a trend had developed before the 1880's. Unfortunately, comparisons with these figures over a similar period are impossible as apparently only the Independent church maintained and preserved such detailed records.

23 In Oct. 1870 34 males and 61 females took communion; in Oct. 1899 13 males and 19 females: ML MSS, 1301, 8, Ocean Street, church communion register books.
Table 5.4: Infrequent Communicants at Average Monthly Communions by Sex, Independent Church, Collins Street, Melbourne, 1868-1926

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1868</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>34.4</td>
<td>36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>43.6</td>
<td>38.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>60.5</td>
<td>55.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>67.9</td>
<td>65.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>64.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Church roll books.

The increasing over-representation of women in church life was also evident in the Sunday-school. About 1880 male teachers were just as common as female. Between 1876 and 1880 there were on average 99.4 male teachers to every 100 female teachers in New South Wales Congregational Sunday-schools. In Victoria the average sex ratio between 1873 and 1877 was 105.9. In 1884 in South Australia there was absolute equality. Exactly comparable figures for this period do not exist. The statistics are even patchier later but sufficient information is available to put a decline beyond question. In 1900 the sex ratio of teachers in New South Wales was 66.0. In South Australia in 1920-21 it was 49.9. The Victorian average for 1910-14 was 88.0 - hardly believable in view of the figures for the other two states. Even if 88.0 is accepted as reliable it still represents a substantial decline from the position about 1880. 24

The disengagement of men from church life was much remarked upon by denominational leaders. By the 1900's the apathy of male church...
members was causing acute concern. The conference held in Sydney in 1910 was not about the spiritual responsibilities of church members in general but of men in particular. Three years before, Mr. A.E. Norman had raised the problem of Sunday-school teachers: the shortage was such that ministers would have to do some straight-talking to men.\textsuperscript{25} At the 1916 mid-year assembly of the Congregational Union of Victoria, the Rev. Ernest Davies read a paper on the disloyalty of men.\textsuperscript{26} These are but a few examples.

Reflecting on fifty years in the Congregational ministry, the Rev. J.J. Hailey in 1908 lamented a decline in the number of 'men of position and affairs' in the Council of the Victorian Union.\textsuperscript{27} In 1908 and indeed for many years to come there were still Congregationalists leading the community; the problem was that they were ceasing to lead the churches.\textsuperscript{28}

There had been many men of 'position and affairs' involved in the denominational life of the late nineteenth century. To consider only the most prominent, in South Australia there had been the two Chief Justices Hanson and Way and John Howard Angas, a leading pastoralist and philanthropist; in Victoria Sir Frederick Sargood, William Bates and W.M.K. Vale had been prominent politicians and staunch

\textsuperscript{25} S.A. Cong., Oct. 1907.
\textsuperscript{26} V.I., May, July 1916. Davies, an ex-carpenter, had known hard times during the depression of the 1890's. After an extra-mural theological course and a pastorate in W.A. he was called to Augustine church, Hawthorn, a Melbourne suburb, the streets of which he had once tramped in search of a job. He died in 1957, aged 88.
\textsuperscript{27} V.C.Y.B., 1909, p. 46.
\textsuperscript{28} V.I., Dec. 1916.
Congregationalists; in New South Wales there were the family of John Fairfax, proprietor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the Joneses, leaders of Sydney's mercantile and professional life, and men such as Josiah Mullens, who had been a founder of the Sydney Stock Exchange. A few such were still serving their Unions on the eve of the First World War but more often than not they were old men.

The change in Congregational leadership was not solely a matter of the supersession of big men by small. There was also a subtle change in the quality of involvement in church life; the laity increasingly had less time to give and felt less of a sense of duty. S.P. Simmonds, though not as prominent as those mentioned above, exemplified the older type of member who gave dedicated service to church and community as well as running his own business. Simmonds served the Melbourne suburb of Brighton in many ways: he was secretary to the cemetery, city valuer—he owned a respected real estate agency, Deputy Returning Officer, supporter of the public library and a host of other causes. He served the Brighton Congregational church with devotion throughout his adult life. He was appointed secretary to the Sunday-school when it was established in 1858; he became Superintendent in 1862 and, apart from a six month break, remained so until his death. A church member from 1859, he became a deacon when the diaconate was formed in 1868. He was an active lay preacher and was instrumental in beginning a Union chapel in East Brighton, which for many years was under the care of the Brighton church. Simmonds died in 1907 aged 68.29

As Simmonds' generation passed away church funds were reduced. Mr. W.H. Phillips alleged in 1901 that theological change had weakened

the sense of stewardship so that, although congregations were richer, church finances had deteriorated. In 1904 a circular letter was sent to the Victorian churches, seeking support for home missions. The letter implied that younger Congregationalists who were prospering were not as generous as the older generation who were being taken from the denomination by death or removal. Ministers appear to have been unwilling to challenge laymen directly about finance but their silence ought not to be interpreted as evidence that the problem was not a serious and growing one.

It is instructive to examine giving to the special denominational funds which were organized from time to time. In New South Wales £39,000 was given to the Jubilee Fund of 1883, £14,000 to the Twentieth Century Fund of 1903 and £13,000 to the Centenary Fund of the early 1930's. During this time the number of adherents in New South Wales remained about the same. In South Australia, where the population of Congregationalists was also stable, there was the same decline: £16,000 to the Jubilee Fund of 1887, a depression year in South Australia, £11,000 to the Twentieth Century Fund and £5,000 to the Congregational Advance Campaign of the mid-1920's.

It is impossible to make an adequate comparison of contributions to the local churches because the fortunes of particular churches fluctuated and because the finance records of so many are unavailable. Probably the stipends paid to ministers declined in value -


31 La L MSS, 9239, 2/6, printed circular headed 'Home Missions - Special Letter to the Churches'.

a sign that church finances were getting tighter. A comparison between churches in suburbs favoured by the rich supports this. Petersham church and that at Emerald Hill in Melbourne were both well established churches about 1880. The average amount contributed annually by each member of the Petersham fellowship at this time was about £9/10/-; at Emerald Hill it was about £13. The church at Brighton in Melbourne provides a fair comparison in the first decade of this century. Its fellowship was about the same size and it too was located in a desirable suburb. In 1907 Brighton church members gave on average about £3/10/- each. In the late 1920's Canterbury church in Melbourne was supported about as well if inflation is taken into account. There the annual average contribution per member was close to £6. During this period of declining support for the local churches contributions to the London Missionary Society do not appear to have been adversely affected, at least not in Victoria. The L.M.S. was 'so well organised' in Victoria, wrote a disgruntled Union official, 'that it is obtaining more money from the Denomination than is raised by the Home Mission, the Union and the College together'. The churches in Victoria gave £2,966 to the L.M.S. in 1922. The Independent church in Collins Street gave £402, the one at Hawthorn £356, that at Kew £390. Little wonder there were complaints about the 'sanctified rapacity' of the L.M.S.

By the early twentieth century much of the fund-raising was done by women. Home mission finance in New South Wales provides a good

33 Petersham and Emerald Hill church yearbooks; Brighton, Church News; Canterbury church records, Annual Report, 1928.
35 V.I., Aug. 1923.
36 Argus, 31 May 1911, p. 15.
example of the change. The Ladies Auxiliary to the New South Wales Home Mission Board was formed in 1891 because men were failing to give the same large sums for the work as before. The total income of the Home Mission Board between 1903 and 1928 was £42,000. Of this amount £17,000 was raised by the Ladies Auxiliary.

The increasing prominence of women was one of the chief developments in church life in the half century after 1880. In the official photo of the delegates to the New South Wales jubilee conference of 1883 there is one woman's face to be seen but one has to look hard. In a photo of delegates to the 1929 triennial assembly of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand there is one woman for every two men. Women are even in the front row - at the edges.

At least one Congregational woman actively sought an enhanced role in church life for her sex. Ruth Mumford pleaded with her sisters to speak up at church meetings.

Why must the women always be silent? We can talk fast enough generally, but here, we think, we must never say a word aloud, because Paul told those poor ignorant women of his day to be silent and learn at home. Oh, shame upon us! After eighteen centuries of Christ's liberty and freedom for women, is 'learning' all we have to do? Have we not something to tell out? Our religious and social education alone should be enough to cure our false shame into utterance.

Here we see the Congregational churches being affected by the wider social

37 A.I., May 1890; A.I.Y.B., 1892, pp. 152-3, 182.


39 ML MSS, 1301, 30, items 3 and 5.

40 A.Z.I., Aug. 1891.
movement to give women greater social and political recognition. This movement undoubtedly helped to make women more prominent in church life but there was a more powerful force at work. The situation was analogous to war-time; increasingly there was nobody else to do the work. A writer for the New South Wales denominational paper noted in 1911 that whereas once it had been easy to get male delegates from the churches to Union meetings, now it was hard.41

As the Congregational churches increasingly relied on women, the doctrines which had stressed the judgement of God were melting away. By 1914 the emphasis of many ministers appears to have been almost wholly upon the divine love and acceptance. The doctrine of the eternal punishment of the wicked had by then been almost universally rejected or forgotten. How was theology related to sex ratios? Can both developments be seen as different aspects of the feminization of Christianity? As far as I know, no contemporary Australian Congregationalist made the connection. It would be facile to claim that either caused the other but it may be that the two developments interacted and promoted one another.

Until about 1900 children and adolescents were regarded as of little consequence in Congregational church life. Hardly a sermon a year was addressed to them though they numbered up to a quarter and more

41 N.S.W. Cong., March 1911.
of the average congregation. One Sunday-school superintendent complained in the early 1880's that while it was conventional to speak of the Sunday-school as the nursery of the church this was 'clap-trap'; in reality it was an 'attached outside institution'. A survey of Australian Sunday-schools in 1901 found that church members visited their school only in 16 out of 45 cases; in only one school were these visits regular. In 1902 the Rev. George Campbell of New South Wales hinted that sometimes there was hostility between church and Sunday-school. Referring to the school's anniversary, he said that in general the church's interest was confined to 'an annual flareup of mild enthusiasm with a dash of charitable tolerance'.

There were three strands to the change in attitude towards the Sunday-school. The first, reform of teaching methods, is not directly relevant to this discussion but deserves to be mentioned because the three strands were so interwoven that they can only be notionally pulled apart. A Congregational Sunday-school before about 1905 had typically consisted of groups of children all learning the same lesson. By 1914 some of the metropolitan schools and a few in the country had been 'graded', that is the pupils differentiated according to age and the lessons fitted to the child both in subject and method. To introduce the reforms conferences of teachers had been held in all three

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43 Mr. David Robin, S.A.C.Y.B., 1884, p. 41.

44 Congregational Union and Home Mission of South Australia, Annual Meetings Reports of Proceedings, Reports of Organisations, 1901, pp. 36-8.

45 N.S.W.C.Y.B., 1903, p. 91.
states. Simultaneously physical conditions of schools were improved; classes were placed in separate rooms or divided by partitions.

There was nothing original in these reforms. Some American Protestants had begun pressing for a new approach in the early 1890's and by the early 1900's were proving very influential. The new ideas were also taken up in Britain. In 1908 International graded Sunday-school lessons were produced for the first time. By 1910, when Australian Congregationalists were beginning to make changes to their schools, Sunday-school reform was fashionable throughout most of the English-speaking Protestant world. 46

A second strand in the preoccupation with the Sunday-school was the shift towards internal recruitment. The Sunday-school had long been a source of recruitment but while the Congregational churches were winning a growing number of adult adherents it did not attract much notice. The new interest in the Sunday-school is important partly because it signals a contraction of the constituencies of the churches. As the churches found they were failing with adults they turned to an easier catch.

There are some interesting statistics relating to the Brighton church, Melbourne, which show the increasing importance of the Sunday-school as a recruiting centre (table 5.5). The proportion of pupils of the school who became members of the church jumped from 6.2 per cent of those enrolled in 1878-1888 to 12.3 per cent of those enrolled in the succeeding decade. There were 117 members of the Brighton fellowship in December 1897 who had joined in the previous ten years. During that

Table 5.5: Recruitment of Church Members from the Sunday-school, Brighton Congregational Church, Melbourne, 1858-1898

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Scholars enrolled</th>
<th>Scholars who joined the church fellowship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1858-1868</td>
<td>436</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1868-1878</td>
<td>409</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878-1888</td>
<td>535</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888-1898</td>
<td>570</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Church News, July 1898.

period 70 scholars became church members. Presumably some of these ex-scholars had ceased to be members by the end of 1897 but their number would have been exceeded by church members who had come up through the Sunday-school at an earlier time. Thus by the end of the century well over 60 per cent of the membership of this church was being recruited from its own Sunday-school.

The Rev. J.C. Kirby was one of the few Congregationalists who spoke publicly about the need for internal recruitment in the new situation. Speaking to the annual assembly of the South Australian Union in 1906 he said:

Let us supersede the absurd system of having the majority of the people on our hands for years in the Sunday school, and allowing them by our crass stupidity to slip through our fingers, and then trying to get hold of a few adult sinners by revival missions.47

Another comment of Kirby's put the matter in a nutshell: 'We must study and develop the Sunday-school or perish'.48

The cultivation of the Sunday-school was most assiduous in South Australia. Beginning in 1903 a 'Decision Day' was held in most Congregational Sunday-schools, a 'decision' being regarded as a prelude.47, 48
to church membership. By the end of September 1905, 852 scholars had signed decision cards. J.C. Kirby was important in promoting this movement in South Australia. It may be that it did not have the same success in New South Wales and Victoria because in the Unions of those two states there was nobody of comparable influence who was as enthusiastic about it as Kirby. But the failure of the Decision Day movement in Victoria and New South Wales was a minor variation. There also the churches began to admit to membership at an earlier age. In all three colonies the number of church members per hundred adherents (the membership adherence ratio) rose from the 1880's (table 5.6).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>New South Wales</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>South Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>15.9</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>24.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>23.7</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>32.1</td>
<td>29.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Denominational year books; Colonial and Commonwealth Censuses.

49 S.A. Cong., Nov. 1905.
This was not a case of membership standards being relaxed for adults - membership was virtually for the asking in the early 1880's. Rather the rising membership adherence ratios indicated that widespread and (ostensibly) successful efforts were being made by the churches to recruit amongst their young.

A third strand in the preoccupation with the Sunday-school was concern with leakage. Mr. David Robin, the experienced Superintendent of Stow church Sunday-school, Adelaide, argued in 1883 that the schools had to be modified or improved so as to retain the interest of the senior scholars, especially young men. He said this was the critical age because on beginning work a young man was exposed to many anti-Christian influences. 'If action is delayed, acknowledged evils will grow more powerful, and lead to results the most disastrous'.

Four years later James Jefferis of Pitt Street church, Sydney, said that the complaint was 'everywhere rising' that the Sunday-school was not retaining its older scholars.

Despite the opposite impression left by denominational comment, leakage from the Sunday-school was not unknown before the 1880's. Leakage had always occurred and indeed was inevitable so long as Congregational Sunday-schools had many pupils from non-Congregational homes. In 1872 the Rev. W.R. Fletcher had complained that ten years before there were 3,000 children in Victorian Congregational Sunday-schools but that it was common knowledge that they had disappeared from denominational life. What is true is that a new kind of leakage

50 S.A.C.Y.B., 1884, pp. 39-44.
occurred increasingly from the early 1880's: adolescents, especially males, from Congregational homes were rebelling against incorporation in church life.

Sunday-school reform was only one means employed to staunch the outflow. An experiment was made in the mid-1880's with guilds which had allegedly been successful in the English Congregational churches. Designed to provide centres for the social life of young people, they never caught on in Australia. An anonymous correspondent of the *Australasian Independent* explained why.

> With our young people the church or denomination is by no means the primary influence that manufactures their cliques and circumscribes their sets. They do not find in their church the only or the chief circle of their social life; their attendance at their church is generally a matter of circumstance, while their interests are elsewhere and abroad.53

In the early 1890's some Congregational ministers made extravagant claims for the Christian Endeavour movement, one going so far as to say that Christian Endeavour was the key to the revival of the Christian churches.54 Founded by an American Congregationalist in 1881, the Young People's Societies of Christian Endeavour spread rapidly and were introduced to Australia in the late 1880's. A supradenominational movement, Christian Endeavour yet sought to put young people at the service of their local church. Much of its appeal probably derived from the measure of autonomy it gave to the adolescent. The numbers of enrolled members in the Congregational societies increased quickly during the 1890's. By 1900 enrolments in some branches were

53 Aug. 1892.

falling. By 1910 optimism had evaporated.\textsuperscript{55}

Christian Endeavour had little attraction for the more robust lad.\textsuperscript{56} The same defect also characterized the Young Christian Unions which flourished for a time in some of the South Australian churches.\textsuperscript{57} The Bible Class Union was yet another institution tried and found wanting. One such was begun in Melbourne in 1910, partly as a result of the efforts of the Rev. R.A. Betts who believed that about 250 boys between fifteen and sixteen were lost to the church fellowships every year in Victoria. Much effort was spent canvassing support; Bible classes were visited and a rally held to launch the Union. Over 350 scholars indicated their willingness to join but the Union was defunct within four years.\textsuperscript{58}

A generation of effort to retain lads within the churches had patently failed. The complaints about leakage had continued for thirty years. By 1914 they showed no sign of slackening.

\textsuperscript{55} In Victoria total enrolments in 1898 were less than in the previous year: \textit{V.I.}, Oct. 1898. The total enrolments in N.S.W. in 1911 were 70 less than they had been in 1903 though 10 new branches had been opened: \textit{A.Z.I.}, Dec. 1903; \textit{N.S.W. Cong.}, Dec. 1911. See also \textit{A.Z.I.}, July 1907.

\textsuperscript{56} See eg. the comment of Rev. F.H. Browne, \textit{V.I.}, June 1900.

\textsuperscript{57} \textit{S.A.C.Y.B.}, 1884, p. 44.

\textsuperscript{58} La L MSS, 9239, 10/3, manuscript minutes Sunday-school Committee and Bible Class Union, 18 Oct. 1909 - 7 March 1910; \textit{V.C.Y.B.}, 1914, pp. 34-5, 57. Betts trained at Hackney College, England. In 1912-13 he was principal of the Victorian Congregational College, following a pastorate at the Kew church, Melbourne.
Some scholars are inclined to believe that the decade of the First World War is a dividing range in the history of Australian Protestantism. Appealing mostly to Sunday attendance statistics they claim that until about 1910 the churches held their own. The Congregational churches present a difficult case for this incipient orthodoxy.

It is true that some of their difficulties were particular in origin. The decline in Congregational adherence was caused mostly by internal migration which did not affect the bigger denominations nearly as much. Again some of the difficulties experienced in the 1890's and 1900's may have been caused by the departure of some who were not so much slackening their church involvement as giving up hope for Congregationalism. But the evidence for this happening is slight. And neither loss of hope nor internal migration can more than partly explain the apathy of male church members, the leakage of young people between Sunday-school and church or the decline in financial support.

One observer wrote in 1917 that although the War had intensified anxiety about the position of the churches, 'The feeling that religion in any definite form was losing its hold on the people, and that the churches were tending to drift into the by-ways outside the main current of popular desires and popular interests, is one that


60 I have come across only a couple of references to this: *V.I.*, Aug. 1895, Dec. 1899; *A.Z.I.*, May 1896.
haunted many earnest and thoughtful minds for years before the war'. R.L. Broome in a recent study of the Protestant churches in New South Wales has argued that such concern before the War was misguided because the government statistics showed little decline in church-going. But Broome himself documents developments in the bigger Protestant denominations which point the other way: leakage between church and Sunday-school, lower membership standards, over-representation of females amongst Sunday-school teachers, difficulties in appealing to young men. It is at least possible that the Congregational churches were registering in an especially sensitive way a diminishing support for institutional religion over a wide front. It was a denominational truism that, because of its loose organization, Congregationalism went down fastest of all the Protestant churches when people became 'unspiritual'. It may be that the divide of the War will come to be regarded as spurious, akin to attempts to make social history keep time to the reigns of monarchs.

As usual assertions about what happened should wait upon research. But one thing ought to be clear from this review of Congregationalism: research can not be limited to church-going. The Sunday-attendance figures published annually by the colonial governments are an invaluable source, yet the usefulness of these statistics ought not to blind us to their limitations as a measure of support for institutional religion, especially as they do not distinguish between sexes and age-groups. The Congregational churches provide a vivid

61 Argus, 2 June 1917, p. 5.
63 Eg. Jubilee of Congregationalism in South Australia, p. 37 (Dr. L.D. Bevan); J.A. Packer, ed., First Australasian Baptist Congress ..., Sydney, 1908, p. 25 (Rev. W. Cunliffe Jones); Jones, Congregational High Churchmanship, pp. 16-17.
demonstration that attendance figures may fail to reveal the subtleties of the relationships between people and churches, fail to tell us whether men and women felt comfortable or uncomfortable in the institutions they inherited or whether they felt the urge to reduce their investments in church life of time, emotion or money.
About one in every four adult Australian Congregational males served over-seas during the Great War. The effect on church attendances may not have been as dramatic as this figure suggests; among the young men whom the army wanted most there were many intermittent worshippers. But in some churches particular organizations were much affected. One minister reported in 1915 how in his church

The C[hristian]. E[ndeavour]. has lost all save one of its active male members, and it will, I fear, have to go into recess. The Institute includes a number of older men and women. We may be able to keep it going. We feel there the loss of the young men. The cricket, and indeed all the sports clubs, have been badly hit, and I am afraid cannot survive their loss.

Another wrote:

We have lost a superintendent of the Sunday-school, a Sunday-school teacher, an almost invaluable worker in connection with our paper, and the mainstay of our Street Boy's club through enlistment for active service. It is the men who gave themselves to active service in the church who have responded to the call to serve their country - and the church's loss is of course considerable.

These two ministers were quoted by the Rev. Frank Dowling in his address from the chair of the New South Wales Union in October 1915. Dowling, knowing that he was going to speak on the influence of the War on church life, had taken the trouble to submit a questionnaire to every Congregational minister in New South Wales who held a pastoral charge.

1 Denominational leaders cited figures from time to time but these were usually little more than guesses. A.G. Butler, *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services, 1914-1918*, Vol. 3, p. 890, gives the numbers embarked of adherents of the main denominations, but not of Congregationalists. My estimate of one in four assumes that the proportion of Congregational males who embarked was about the same as the proportion of Presbyterians, the denomination which Congregationalism most resembled in social composition.

2 *N.S.W.C.Y.B.*, 1916, pp. 151-2. The ministers and their churches were unidentified.
It seems that the original responses have been destroyed but it is evident from Dowling's address alone that not all the Congregational churches in New South Wales were seriously affected. Dowling cited one church in which only three men had enlisted, the pastor explaining that the young men in the town preferred to stay home and earn war-inflated wages.³

Few of Dowling's respondents detected any increase in church attendances or spiritual fervour and most Congregational ministers in Victoria and South Australia seem to have been of the same opinion.⁴ Some ministers were bitterly disappointed because they had been inclined initially to see the War as God's way of bringing people to their spiritual senses. The Rev. Alfred Depledge Sykes had half hoped for a catastrophe, believing that until 'Australia has been baptised in some dire disaster, until blood has flowed, she will not, so it would seem, realise herself as a people, nor come into her deepest, that is, her spiritual own'.⁵

The War, far from revivifying faith, sorely tried it, for, as the slaughter proceeded, many prayers went unanswered. A chairman of the Victorian Union in 1918 commented that the War had destroyed the

³ ibid., p. 151.
F.V. Dowling, M.A., from 1909 to 1922(?) was pastor of the North Sydney church, with a break for service as a chaplain during the War. Trained at Camden College, he was one of the College's Livingstone Lecturers, taking as his subject 'Evolutionary Science and Christian Religion'.


⁵ Stow Church Magazine, Oct. 1910. It was common for Protestant ministers in Australia initially to see the War as a spiritual opportunity and then become gloomy about its lack of redemptive effect. See M. McKernan, 'The Australian Churches in the Great War: Attitudes and Activities of the Major Churches', Ph. D., A.N.U., 1975.
ideas of many about divine providence. Some of the ministers whose views Dowling had solicited in 1915 wrote of bitterness at the loss of loved ones. One minister replied that the problem of unanswered prayer was 'weighing some whose piety I dare not question down to the ground'.

Their sons have fallen in spite of their prayers. What message has the Church for them now?

Here, as so often, the Congregational churches were probably representative of what was happening elsewhere in Australian Protestantism. The Federal Methodist Conference of 1917 resolved that the widespread suffering during the War did not undermine the credibility of the Christian doctrine of God's providence nor was the Christian teaching as to the efficacy of prayer disproved.

War also posed problems of belief for those who were at the front. In a book published after the War, K.T. Henderson portrayed a young subaltern saying to his padre '... at home I used to go to church and all that, but this bally war seems to have knocked it all out of me'. The subaltern, who, Henderson said, was typical of many soldiers, could not reconcile the horrors of war with belief in a loving God. According to Henderson, the problem was intensified for many men because they thought that they had to believe that God caused the War, not making the distinction that Henderson himself made so easily between what God permitted and what God desired. We can only speculate about how many Congregationalists returned with their religious beliefs.

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8 Minutes of the 5th General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia..., Melbourne, 1917, p. 104.
9 K.T. Henderson, Kahki and Cassock, Melbourne, 1919, pp. 121, 149, 150.
attenuated as a consequence of what they had seen. Some Congregational soldiers were not church-goers before they left Australia; some who were may have had their faith strengthened; but there may have been many others whose church attachment was the less when they came home. One Congregational minister said in 1916 that he had talked with many soldiers who had become incapable of thinking in spiritual terms. Another Congregational minister, still a lad when the war ended, has reported meeting many men who had turned away from belief as a result of their experiences at the front.

There was one notable exception to the general rule that church life failed to quicken during the War. This was the Port Adelaide Congregational church under the ministry of Lionel Bale Fletcher. Here during 1914 and early 1915 services were regularly packed with men as well as women. But Fletcher's success probably had little to do with the War because it had begun a few years before. Fletcher had succeeded the inimitable J.C. Kirby in 1909 and for the first few years exercised a fairly conventional ministry. Then one Sunday evening in 1912 he called for 'decisions'. There were nineteen converts that night, which Fletcher later reckoned as the beginning of his career as an evangelist. On the night of his last service as Minister at the Port over two hundred people from the congregation came forward to shake his hand in acknowledgement that they had been converted through him. When he left, the church had 450 members, more than any other Congregational church in Australia. During the second half of 1915 Fletcher conducted a 'United Christians Campaign', throughout South Australia, frequently attracting, according to his biographer, congregations

10 H. Gainford, V.I., Nov. 1916.
of over a thousand. In 1916 Fletcher went to a run-down church in
Cardiff, Wales. After a spectacularly successful pastorate there,
he became an internationally known evangelist.\(^\text{12}\)

The impact of the War on Congregational church finances is
difficult to assess. The executive committee of the Victorian Union
reported in early 1916 that money was being diverted from the churches
to the patriotic funds. This is as might have been expected but it is
the only such comment I have seen from a Congregational source.\(^\text{13}\)

Almost without exception Congregational spokesmen enthusiastically
supported the Australian war effort. During the second half of 1915, when
a massive recruiting campaign was being conducted in Victoria, one woman
protested that there was not a Congregational church where one could be
sure that the 'gospel of war' would not be preached Sunday after Sunday.\(^\text{14}\)
This was an exaggeration as the Congregational Ministers' Fraternal
Association said it was,\(^\text{15}\) but the claim was substantially true.

One sermon at the beginning of the Victorian recruiting drive
demonstrates just how far some Congregational ministers went. C.H. Nash
told the young men in his Prahran congregation one Sunday evening in

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\(^\text{12}\) Fletcher (1877-1954) had a Methodist upbringing. This may
help to account for his willingness to use revivalistic
methods, which was unusual in a Congregational minister.
C.W. Malcolm, *Twelve Hours in the Day*, London, 1956, is a
'celebrating' biography. Probably Fletcher was influenced
by the Chapman-Alexander mission of 1912.

\(^\text{13}\) La L MSS, 9239, 7/2, Union Committee Progress Report for the
half year ending 31 March 1916. M. McKernan, *The Australian
Churches in the Great War*, p. 142, has argued that despite
the many calls made on people's pockets by the patriotic funds,
'church finances did not suffer'. On the patriotic funds, see


\(^\text{15}\) *ibid.*, Sept. 1915.
June 1915 that they ought to enlist so as to fulfil the Father's promise long ago that he would give Christ a youthful and willing people 'in the day of thy mustering for war'. Nash did not stop short of implying that it was God's will that they should sacrifice their lives. They ought to say

'O Christ, take the dew of my young manhood'.
He will settle the question of the Dardanelles for the young man who will say that. He will tell the secret of His own will as to service for the State to those who will follow Him.\(^16\)

In 1914 and 1915 ministers who identified themselves with the war effort did not threaten church unity, as they were only at one with their people. One minister reported that he found 'very little patience' amongst Congregationalists with anything that failed to chime with 'a self-righteous Nationalism'.\(^17\) As virtually no Congregational minister was prepared publicly to question the nationalistic spirit, there was harmony. But after two years of war the situation changed.

In late 1916 the Australian cabinet decided to seek a mandate from the people to introduce conscription. The denomination's newspapers were in favour like those of most other Protestant churches. The Victorian and New South Wales Unions both passed resolutions urging a 'yes' vote. There were leading Congregationalists who were strongly pro-conscription. On the other hand a motion to support conscription was lost at an assembly of the South Australian Union. There were also

16 ibid., July 1915.
individual ministers and laymen who were strongly anti-conscriptionist.\(^{18}\)

Did this division of opinion disrupt Congregational church life? And is there any evidence from within Congregationalism to support L.C. Jauncey's claim that 'The attitude of the Protestant Church during the conscription campaigns was the means of divorcing many people from the church'?\(^{19}\)

Anti-conscriptionists may have been proportionately more numerous in Congregationalism than in the other Protestant churches.

The Defence Act, passed in 1909 and slightly modified in 1911 and 1912, empowered the government of the Commonwealth to compulsorily train young men for military service. When the government began to exercise this power in 1911 there was a strong campaign to protect 'the rights of conscience', and the Congregational churches were more closely identified with this movement than any of the major denominations. The Australasian Congregational Union passed a resolution against compulsory military training, something which the Australian Methodist Conference and the Presbyterian General Assembly did not.\(^{20}\) Probably the most influential figure in the campaign to amend the Defence Act was Leyton Richards, a Congregational minister.\(^{21}\) Six of the twelve members of the Melbourne

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\(^{20}\) La L MSS, 9239, Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand Assembly Minutes, 1891-1933, p. 165.

ministerial committee of the Australian Freedom League, the most important organization in the fight against the Defence Act, were Congregational ministers. 22

In view of this recent past it would not be surprising if some Congregationalists had resented the resolutions by the Victorian and New South Wales Unions in support of conscription. A deacon of the Collins Street Independent church, Melbourne, said that some church-goers objected to ministers campaigning for conscription and that in no denomination was this more so than in Congregationalism. In a letter to the Victorian Independent he alleged that lay dissatisfaction in many cases resulted in a weakening of church attachment and sometimes severance. 23 When the Victorian Union voted to support conscription one Congregationalist wrote to the same paper that he and his family were so disgusted that they were leaving the denomination with which he had been associated all his life. 24 But there is little evidence of churches being split. Many of the ministers who had come out against compulsory military training were either converted to conscription in 1916 or refused to take a stand either way. And further, there were Congregationalists who campaigned very actively against conscription who yet remained within the denomination. Amongst the ministers these included E. Hope Hume, T.B. Roseby and Albert Rivett, and amongst lay people J.R. Firth. Jauncey's claim therefore must be regarded as a gross

22 Jauncey, The Story of Conscription in Australia, p. 80, n. 1, for a list of the members of the committee. The Congregationalists were C.B. Barnett, E. Davies, A.R. Stephenson, A.B. Rofe, F.V. Pratt, L. Richards.


The outlook for the Congregational churches on the eve of the Great War had been bleak. Apathy was rife. The churches were failing to recruit from other Protestant denominations at a rate sufficient to compensate for those adherents who were leaving Congregationalism. There was also a severe problem about recruitment in the internal constituencies - the children of Congregational parents. In these three main areas of concern, there was no relief after the War, only an intensification of difficulties.

There were fewer complaints after the War about the indifference of church members to their privileges and responsibilities. But this relative absence of adverse comment ought not to be interpreted as evidence of revivification. If there had been an improvement the sanguine would have noted it and they did not. It seems that during the 1920's and 1930's Congregational church leaders learned to accept as normal conditions which had previously shocked them.

Though the statistical evidence is far from satisfactory, it is almost certain that members and non-members alike became more apathetic about church attendance. During the Second World War the New South Wales Congregational Union appointed a committee to inquire into the problems of the denomination. As part of its work this committee

25 Hume and Rivett were two of the nine Protestant ministers who signed the anti-conscription manifesto, 'Conscription and Christianity', on the eve of the 1916 plebiscite: Jauncey, The Story of Conscription in Australia, p. 207, n. 1. On Firth, see ibid., p. 69. n. 1.
collected statistics on church attendance, probably the first such attempt in the history of Australian Congregationalism. 82 out of 115 churches and preaching stations made returns and these were summarized in a confidential report made in 1944. In two thirds of the churches making returns there were 50 persons at either morning or evening Sunday services. In almost one third of the churches there were less than 25 worshippers at either the morning or evening service. There were only three churches which reported over 100 attendants at the morning service and only 6 churches had 100 or more attendants in the evening. These statistics compare badly with the findings of two censuses of church-attendance in Melbourne and Adelaide in the late 1880's. According to the Christian Weekly and Methodist Journal census made one Sunday in 1888, an average of 155 persons attended the evening services of the eleven Congregational churches within three miles of the Adelaide G.P.O. A year earlier the Melbourne Daily Telegraph counted attendances on a single Sunday at both morning and evening services. The average attendances at the Melbourne Congregational churches (city and suburban) was 253.4 in the morning and 224.7 in the evening. Whereas two thirds of the New South Wales churches in the early 1940's had less than 50 attendants, over two thirds of the Melbourne churches in the late 1880's had more than 100 attendants.

The New South Wales figures are not strictly comparable with those of Melbourne and Adelaide for two main reasons. Firstly, attendances

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26 Congregational Union of New South Wales, Report and Recommendations of Forward Movement Commission, Sydney, 1944, p. 17. The report is marked 'Strictly Confidential'. There is a copy in ML MSS, 1301, 16. The actual returns appear to have been destroyed.

27 24 Aug. 1888.

in New South Wales during the Second World War may have been below those of peace time. And secondly, the New South Wales figures include country churches whose attendances were generally lower than those of metropolitan churches. Nevertheless the difference between the two sets of figures is too big to be accounted for solely in these terms. Congregationalists in the 1940's were going to church less than their grandparents had done.  

How much of the decline from the level of the 1880's occurred after 1914? Unless a census made in the 1900's comes to light there is no way of knowing. It is possible that the decline in church attendances gathered pace after 1914. But if so we cannot assume that the War was primarily responsible; the slide might have occurred anyway. Certainly we cannot assume that the rot began with the Great War.

In one Congregational church a careful record of attendances was kept between 1895 and 1907. The Congregational church in Black Street, Brighton, was in a desirable residential district unaffected by any exodus of Congregationalists such as was occurring at the time from some inner suburbs. The minister, James Rickard, was energetic and popular. Thus these statistics offer a guide to what was happening in many churches where support was very strong. Between 1895 and 1907 there was a change in the pattern of attendances at the Brighton church. In 1895 the average attendance at the Sunday morning service was 220; in 1907 it was 156. In 1895 the average attendance at the Sunday evening

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29 This was almost certainly true of Australian Protestants generally: H. Mol, Religion in Australia, Melbourne, 1971, pp. 36, 38.
The failure to recruit from outside the denomination evident by 1914 became more pronounced. Between 1911 and 1933 there was a net loss of nearly 6,000 adherents in south-eastern Australia, a decrease of 11.3 per cent, compared with a decrease of 9.7 per cent between 1891 and 1911. Clearly, during both periods there was a negligible number of recruits from other denominations. It was a remarkable contrast with the 1870's and 1880's when adherents were growing at a rate faster than could have been achieved by natural increase of the Congregational population.

The churches showed another demographic characteristic of institutions in decline - their adherents were ageing. In all three states between 1911 and 1933 there was an increase in the proportion of the Congregational population aged over fifteen. The proportion of the total population aged fifteen and over also increased during this period but at a slower rate. The skew from normal in 1933 was most pronounced in Victoria. There 74.1 per cent of the total population was fifteen and over compared with 81.3 per cent of the Congregationalists.

It has been found elsewhere that when churches are growing there is a high membership turnover - that is, recruits are made in large numbers and simultaneously there are many losses. On the other hand when churches are less buoyant the rates of recruitment and loss both decline. The Congregational churches provide a severe test for


this generalization because there was such a considerable net loss of adherents. But probably the Australian Congregationalists exemplify rather than contradict this rule about membership. The membership roll of the Stow church Adelaide is highly suggestive, though a lot more research would be necessary to clinch the point. Between 1890 and 1928 the membership of Stow was cut by almost half but the average length of membership almost doubled (table 6.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Number of members</th>
<th>Average length of membership in years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31 Dec. 1890</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Dec. 1909</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 Dec. 1928</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>21.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Abstract of Stow church roll made by Mr. B.L. Jones.

The Independent church in Collins Street, Melbourne, was for a time an exception to the general rule of inward-turned churches and declining attendances. Under the boyish J.E. 'Jimmie' James, Collins Street recovered the popularity it had enjoyed during the 1870's and 1880's. James arrived in 1917 when the church was in bad shape. He built up attendances until people were being turned away on Sunday evenings from this church which can seat 1,250. They came to hear James' preaching; most were not Congregationalists. When James resigned in 1927 the house-full signs went down.

The pressure to cultivate the Congregational young, evident before the War, continued in the 1920's and youth work became even more

32 Argus, 25 Jan. 1924, p. 16.
J.E. James, B.D., was minister at Manthorpe Memorial church, Adelaide, from 1911 before he came to Collins Street. He left Melbourne to accept a pastorate in England.
fashionable. Young People's Departments were established in all three states. The one in New South Wales had a full-time director between 1923 and 1927.33

The attempt to hold the young led, after the War as before, to measures which contradicted the principle of the gathered church which was the foundation of Congregational polity. At Chatswood church, Sydney, the Rev. L.C. Parkin introduced junior church membership. Parkin did not like the institution of a junior church which was being tried elsewhere because it excluded young people from the church fellowship. Instead, at Chatswood Sunday-scholars as young as fourteen were encouraged to join the fellowship.34 The Rev. Louis W. Farr, wanted to go even further than this. Worried by leakage just as much as Sunday-school reformers twenty years before, Farr had lost faith in the graded school as the answer. Believing that the grading principle had not been carried far enough, he proposed the 'Graded Church', beginning with a cradle roll, moving through the various levels of the Sunday-school until adolescence when the transition to full status would be achieved. Under Farr's scheme the young person was still to be given an opportunity of declaring belief in Christ, but this was to be in effect a confirmation in the Anglican sense. The classical nonconformist understanding of the church was abandoned: 'all the


34 Ibid., May 1920. It was reported that after a few evenings of instruction most joined. These young people were given a specific responsibility with an adult to guide them. Parkin, B.A., B.D., was born 4 Feb. 1886, the son of a deacon and Sunday-school superintendent of the Camberwell church, Melbourne, who owned the business of A.C. Parkin & Co., general manufacturers. He studied at the Victorian College and Melbourne University and then spent two years in England, during which he met R.J. Campbell, whose books had already influenced him. Parkin was much involved in the Oxford Group movement at one time.
child's inclinations should be to remain within the Church and the process of what we might term "recognition of membership" one that is perfect[ly] natural, and ordinary'.

The various reforms and strategems had no visible effect. Some ministers in the 1920's talked of an 80 per cent leakage between Sunday-school and church. This could have been only a very rough estimate as adequate statistics were non-existent. Probably these ministers were simply taking over the figure quoted by denominational leaders in England. The Rev. Absalom Deans, secretary of the Australasian Union, believed that leakage was even more severe in Australia than in England.

Sunday-school enrolments also troubled Congregational leaders. The all-important issue for the survival of the Congregational churches was leakage and a decline in the total number of enrolments was only marginally relevant to this. But the decline in Congregational Sunday-school numbers does need to be noted for another reason. We may guess that the difficulties of the Congregational Sunday-schools in the 1920's were by no means unique in Australian Protestantism. If Protestant Sunday-school enrolments were failing to keep pace with the growth in population then a diminishing proportion of Australian children were within the ambience of the churches. And as David Martin has written, 'without some youthful socialization into religious norms and practices church-going is not likely at any point in the adult life-cycle'.

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35 ibid., Dec. 1926.


37 N.S.W. Cong., March 1922.

It is impossible to be precise about the extent to which Congregational Sunday-schools lost popularity early this century. According to the published statistics the total enrolment in southeastern Australia was 20,919 in 1902 and 19,999 in 1930. These statistics are incomplete and probably many of the returns on which they were based were inaccurate. All that is certain is that by the 1920's there was a completely new situation to that which had obtained a half-century before. 'We can remember our old schools', one minister told a meeting organized by the New South Wales Y.P.D.:

They were crowded. The standing problem was to get enough room and enough teachers for the classes. Today, the problem is to get enough scholars ... Our statistics are bad enough, but I venture to say that, if really accurate figures of the actual attendances of 1910-1920 were compared with the years 1870-1880 we should be left gasping.

By the mid-1920's the continuing decline in numbers had caused some to lose faith in Sunday-school reform. Whereas in the 1900's the cry had been to lay hold of the children, in 1926 the Rev. A.E. Gifford told a Victorian Y.P.D. conference 'Unless we can get the parents we shall probably lose the children'. According to Gifford the only way to stop the leakage between Sunday-school and church was 'to get the habit of attending public Church worship well established among the children before they are in their 'teens'. A few years before, an ex-Superintendent had half-facetiously remarked in an article on the Sunday-school that it was not the weakness of the Sunday-school that was the peril of Protestantism, but its success, because those who went to


40 Jeffrey Brown, N.S.W. Cong., April 1922.

41 V.I., Oct. 1926.
Sunday-school tended not to go to church. Neither Gifford nor the ex-Superintendent had any ideas to offer on how to increase the numbers of children who had the church-going habit. Nor apparently had anyone else.

It has often been noted that where formal participation in church life is high the church tends to be the centre of a cohesive socio-religious community. Thus it is generally the case that members of sects attend services more regularly than the average church-goer and have fewer social interests outside their religious group. By the 1920's Congregationalists went to church less than they had a half-century before. Was this change accompanied by a slackening of involvement in the social side of church life?

From 1891 in New South Wales and 1911 in Victoria and South Australia the published census data included tables on the religions of spouses. In 1891, for example, it is possible to calculate how many Methodist males in New South Wales were married to Baptist women, how many to Roman Catholics, how many to co-religionists. This information about endogamy is worth scrutinizing for what it might yield about the salience of the Congregational churches as social centres. Denominational attachment was weak amongst Congregationalists. It seems reasonable to

42 'The Pilgrim', V.I., Dec. 1924. See also the replies to this article in the succeeding six months.

43 This is best documented for Australian Protestantism by A. Dougan, 'Social Factors in Denominationalism An Investigation into some of these Factors in the City of Bathurst, New South Wales', M.A., Univ. Sydney, 1960.
assume therefore that most Congregational in-marriers met their partners through their church. We ought to be able to tell whether social involvement slackened by whether the rate of Congregational in-marriage declined.

Unfortunately a clear-cut test is impossible. We want to know whether there was a higher proportion of out-marriers amongst Congregationalists who married between 1921 and 1933 than amongst Congregationalists who married between 1891 and 1901. But we can only know how many in- and out-marriers there were at any particular census. The other problem concerns transfer of denominational allegiance after marriage. In-marriers were just as likely to transfer upon moving house or in consequence of social mobility. But out-marriers were specially at risk because of their marriage - they were under pressure to adopt the denomination of their spouses. Thus the census tables of in- and out-marriages may hide many out-marriers who between their marriage and the census switched to the denomination of their partner. Let us suppose that between 1891 and 1933 transfer after marriage became more frequent. The proportion of all marriages involving Congregationalists which were in-marriages might well have declined but the published figures would not reveal the change.

Both problems can be overcome to some extent. We can gain a rough idea of marriage patterns between censuses by examining net increases in the numbers of in-marriers and out-marriers. If census out-marriers increased at a rate faster than census in-marriers, then it may be assumed that out-marriages were becoming more frequent. What about the problem of transfer of denominational allegiance by out-marriers? Even if we assume the most difficult situation - that the rate of transfer of allegiance upon out-marriage was increasing - it might still be possible to draw a conclusion. If census out-marriers increased at a
rate faster than census in-marriers then it would seem legitimate to conclude that the Congregational churches were becoming less important as centres of social life; the effect of transfer upon marriage, could, after all, only work to deflate the out-marriage rate. But suppose that the total of census in-marriers increased at a rate faster than the total of census out-marriers. In this case there are two possible interpretations. Either the churches maintained or increased their importance as social centres; or the increase in transfers upon marriage hid an increasing proportion of out-marriers.

In 1891 in New South Wales 74.9 per cent of married Congregationalists had Congregational spouses. Twenty years later the figure was 66.0 per cent. Between 1891 and 1911 the number of Congregational census in-marriers decreased by 666, a reduction of 11.3 per cent. In the same period the number of Congregational census out-marriers increased by 716, a gain of 36.1 per cent. These figures allow an important conclusion. Whereas in 1891 most married Congregationalists were in-marriers, most Congregationalists who married between 1891 and 1911 were out-marriers. Thus the Congregational churches in New South Wales appear to have become less important as social centres - at least for those in search of marriage partners.

A comparison between the figures for 1911 and 1933 presents a different picture. Between 1911 and 1933 in New South Wales there was a net increase of 288 or 5.5 per cent in the number of Congregational census in-marriers. In the same period there was a net decrease of 453 or 16.8 per cent in the number of out-marriers. Whereas 34.0 per cent of married Congregationalists were out-marriers in 1911, the proportion had declined to 29.0 per cent in 1933. The proportion of Congregational in-marriages also rose in Victoria and South Australia during this period.
(table 6.2). Clearly, there was either a reversal of the trend of the

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Table 6.2: Congregational Census In-marriers as a Proportion of All Married Congregationalists, South-eastern Australia, 1891-1911 (percentages)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Source: New South Wales Census, 1891; Commonwealth Census, 1911, 1933.

previous twenty years or an increase in transfer of allegiance upon marriage. The second alternative seems more likely.

In 1907 the Vatican promulgated the Ne Temere decree. It declared invalid in the eyes of the Roman Catholic church marriages solemnized between Catholics and Protestants. Henceforth a Congregationalist who desired to marry a practising Roman Catholic had to become a convert. There is no way of calculating whether this change accounts for the decrease in the Congregational out-marriage figures. But probably it was the main factor. Table 6.3 shows that the marriage

<table>
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<th>Table 6.3: Census In-marriers as a Proportion of All-Married Adherents, Selected Denominations, New South Wales, 1891-1933 (percentages)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congregational</td>
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<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of England</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: New South Wales Census, 1891; Commonwealth Census, 1911, 1933.

patterns of other denominations in New South Wales underwent a similar change about 1911.

The contrasts between Congregational marriage patterns and those of Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists and Anglicans are as instructive as the similarities. In 1891 Congregationalists were second to the Methodists in the percentage of in-marriers. By 1933 Congregationalists ranked last of the five denominations. The difference between the 1891 and 1933 figures is especially remarkable when we compare Congregationalists and Baptists. Both were small denominations and thus their adherents were more likely than not to be out-marriers if marriage partners had been selected without reference to religion. Yet between 1891 and 1933 the percentage of Baptist census in-marriers increased while the percentage of Congregational in-marriers decreased.

New South Wales Baptists have shown a tendency towards sect-like behaviour. For example, by early this century the New South Wales churches had declared themselves against open membership - the practice whereby a person who had not experienced believer's baptism could be admitted to the membership of a Baptist church. In the Congregational churches of New South Wales (and the other two states) members of other Protestant churches were freely admitted to Congregational fellowships. Another contrast is that the Baptist churches in New South Wales have shown themselves much less accommodating to new religious ideas than the Congregational churches. There was far more resistance in Baptist circles to higher criticism, for example. Likewise the Baptist churches were as inimical to the ecumenical movement as the Congregational churches were receptive. 45

Early this century Baptist churches in South Australia and, to

a lesser extent, in Victoria were closer to Congregationalists on these
matters than to their fellow Baptists in New South Wales. Whereas the
New South Wales churches practised closed membership, nearly all the
South Australian churches practised open membership. In 1931 the South
Australian Baptist Union fell foul of the New South Wales Union for
wanting the denomination to participate in ecumenical discussions.46
Was there the same association between these attitudes and increasing
out-marriage as occurred in Congregationalism?

Baptists were distributed as follows at the 1911 census.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>20,679</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>31,244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>21,863</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It may be assumed that amongst those who were Baptists in 1911 there
were roughly the same rates of marriage in the three states in the next
twenty years. In other words we may suppose that there were approximately
the same number of new marriages in the Baptist population in South
Australia as in New South Wales and about a third as many again in
Victoria. Subtracting the total numbers of married Baptists in each state
in 1911 from the totals in 1933 we find the following net increases in
the numbers of Baptist census in-marriers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>3,774</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>1,922</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures are even more dramatic when we remember that early this
century the New South Wales Baptists were much fewer in proportion to
total state population than those in Victoria and South Australia.47

46 Bollen, Australian Baptists, pp. 40-1; A.C. Prior, Some Fell
on Good Ground, Sydney, 1966, pp. 139-40.

47 The proportion of adherents to population in 1933 was as
follows: N.S.W. 1.15%; Victoria 1.73%
S.A. 3.28%.
Thus, if the selection of married partners had been on a purely random basis, there was less chance of a Baptist marrying another Baptist in New South Wales than in South Australia. Amongst New South Wales Baptists, then, there was a much higher proportion of in-marriages between 1911 and 1933. Both Congregational and Baptist church involvement, therefore, seem to be related to religious ideas and attitudes to the world.
On Sunday evening 25 October 1896 Melbourne's best known Congregational minister occupied the pulpit of Sydney's best known Congregational church. Dr. Llewelyn Bevan's text in Pitt Street church was a familiar one: 1 Corinthians 13.13, 'And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three'. The preacher's application of the text, however, was not so conventional. He contended that faith, hope and charity abided in the sense that they remained after doubt had done its worst, and by doubt he meant not so much the onslaughts of unbelievers as uncertainty in the hearts of his hearers. Bevan imagined himself doubting as perhaps his hearers had. First he rejected the infallibility of the Bible (no effort of imagination was required here, he had done so himself). Then he gave up belief in the infallible Christ because Jesus may have been a simple Galilean who never performed a miracle and never claimed to be the Son of God. The resurrection, too, was included in this hypothetical jettisoning of superfluous religious luggage: either Jesus never came back to life or he was only apparently killed on Good Friday. Dr. Bevan told the congregation that even when these beliefs had been abandoned, faith, hope and love by abiding somehow - he wasn't clear on this point - guaranteed the existence of God. The implication of the sermon that evening was that essential Christianity was trust in God and love in one's heart; it was not necessary to believe in Christ as Saviour.¹

¹ Watchman (Pitt Street church), Dec. 1896; Daily Telegraph, 26 Oct. 1896, p. 5; 27 Oct. 1896, p. 6. The text in the Watchman is the one Bevan had prepared for the sermon which he delivered without notes. I have assumed that it provides a good guide to what he actually said in those parts of the sermon not covered in the Daily Telegraph account.
Congregationalists had travelled a long way in a short time. Less than twenty years before, an audience of English Congregationalists had been told that 'no people in the world preach the Gospel in greater purity than our ministers in Victoria'. Less than ten years before, Bevan himself had claimed that the deity of Christ 'was never held by our churches with a more emphatic testimony than now'.

There is little evidence that Australian Congregationalists were troubled about questions of religious belief until the 1870's. There is no mystery about this: until about 1870 there was almost no public questioning of religious orthodoxy by any group of Australian colonists. The Origin of Species, for example, had little impact initially. Though this was first published in 1859, according to Ann Mozley, as late as 1876 'scientists, clergy, and the general public in Australia remained almost entirely unconverted' to evolutionary theory. One Congregational minister remarked anxiously in 1866 how 'the charming blasphemies' of Renan were 'sold all over

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2 T. Jones, An Address Delivered at the Colonial Missionary Society Meeting ... 14 May 1880, Melbourne, n.d., p. 3.


the country at eighteen pence, but there is little evidence that the new historical approach to the Bible had much influence upon church people at this time. Sir Richard Hanson, the Congregationalist Chief Justice of South Australia, was exceptional among Australian colonists for the warm response he gave to The Origin of Species, for his interest in Biblical criticism and for his abandonment of religious orthodoxy.

In the mid-1870's Rev. John Legge warned that though the ark of the Church had been sailing on smooth waters a 'protracted storm' was looming. Legge, an intelligent, well-read man, was chairman of the Victorian Congregational Union in 1874-5. As chairman, it was his duty to deliver two addresses to the Union on matters of contemporary religious concern. Both of Legge's addresses were in defence of Christian doctrine, one on Biblical criticism and one on science. The address on Biblical criticism was an attempt to refute the book Supernatural Religion which had recently been published in a colonial edition. Plainly, some Congregationalists had read the book and been worried by its argument that the four

6 W.R. Fletcher, V.C.Y.B., 1867, p. 41.
9 J. Legge, Attitude of Modern Science to the Theology of the Bible, Melbourne, 1874; Curious Results of Applying Sceptical Criticism to Itself as Seen in 'Supernatural Religion', Melbourne, 1875.
Gospels were worthless historical evidence because they post-dated
the death of Jesus by a century and a half. At the end of the decade
a chairman of the South Australian Congregational Union also gave one
of his addresses on Biblical criticism and the other on Religion and
Science. When he published these addresses under one cover in 1879,
Rev. W.R. Fletcher said that his intention was 'to be helpful to the
numerous bewildered enquirers who are to be found in all Christian
Churches'.

Christianity in Australia went on the defensive as never before
in the late 1870's and the 1880's. As the Roman Catholic Archbishop
of Sydney wrote in a pastoral letter in 1881, though religious
thought in Australia was 'behind the age', it was becoming less so and
was being carried along by the same wave which was disturbing Europe.

A contributor to the *Victorian Review* in the same year wrote that his
was a time

when no one of even average intelligence, whose
reading is extended to a daily paper, can fail
to be aware that many things he has been taught
to take for granted, and has held as certainties,
are at any rate so far uncertain that many who
have made them their special study ... are denying
their truth, or even turning them to ridicule ...

Leading colonists, especially in Melbourne, called on the Christian
churches to adjust their thinking to modern thought; organizations
were formed of people frankly hostile to the churches; the
Presbyterian body in Victoria was rent by controversy surrounding the

11 W.R. Fletcher, *God in Science and God in Christ*,
Adelaide, 1879, p. [3].

12 P. O'Farrell, ed., *Documents in Australian Catholic

13 J.A. Newth, 'On Change of Creed', *Victorian Review*,
Rev. Charles Strong, the minister of Scots church, Melbourne, and a liberal theologian. 14

The Congregational churches remained comparatively quiet. Nevertheless the 1870's and 1880's were important as a seed-time. Congregationalists who outwardly conformed during these years were exposed to new ideas and it is likely that some of them developed inner reservations which they were to voice later or transmit to children who broke more openly with the old ways. Two developments in the late 1870's stand out. One was the controversy amongst English Congregationalists in 1877 and 1878 about whether religious communion ought to be based on religious feeling rather than a common doctrine. The proponents of religious feeling in effect denied the principle of authority in religion and if their view were generally accepted then the demise of evangelical religion as a coherent system of doctrine would be inevitable. In 1878 the New South Wales Independent devoted almost an entire issue to a report of the May meetings of the English Union which were dominated by the controversy. The conservatives won the day but it was to prove only a temporary set-back for the ill-defined but powerful liberal movement. 15

A second development affected the Protestant churches generally. Until the late 1870's in England, except in advanced churches, there was an outward acceptance of the doctrine of the everlasting punishment of the wicked. Then, remarkably quickly, it

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passed out of fashion. A Londoner, who in 1886 heard a sermon advocating the doctrine, remarked that 'surely one may look for something different to this from our modern English clergy'.

One year later the Rev. Edward White, who had been excluded from nonconformist pulpits in the 1840's for rejecting the doctrine, was elected chairman of the English Congregational Union. The change was almost as fast amongst Australian Congregationalists. In 1878 a debate about the subject was conducted through correspondence and articles in the *New South Wales Independent*; in 1888 Dr. Bevan remarked that the doctrine was generally no longer held. The importance of the change for evangelical religion can hardly be exaggerated. Fear of hell lost much of its potency as a means of controlling the behaviour of adherents; the sharp distinction between church and world lost plausibility when the church was no longer seen as the body of those headed for heaven and the world as the body of those headed for hell; the apparent need for a Saviour diminished.

From about 1890 controversy regarding the Bible made Congregational pews uncomfortable. There was something like a

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19 See ch. 8.
revolution in the attitudes of many church-goers.

Reviewing developments in religious thought at the South Australian denominational jubilee in 1887, the Rev. George Clarke of Hobart remarked that a major change had been in the attitude to Scripture; Congregationalists, he said, no longer regarded the Bible as inerrant and all parts as of equal value. As a statement about the views of ministers this was substantially correct. As early as 1857 Samuel Davidson had almost managed to hold his post at the Lancashire Independent College, though he had denied that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch and had wanted to restrict the divine inspiration of the Scriptures to matters of religion and morals. A decade later a chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales did not raise an outcry when he said publicly that there were 'errors and mistakes' in the Bible. By the late 1880's some Congregational ministers in England and Australia were beginning to understand that the Bible was a collection of documents which could be critically studied in the same way as other ancient manuscripts were studied - asking questions about authorship, dating, provenance and so on. This new approach to the Bible was then called 'higher criticism' to distinguish it from the attempt to recover the original texts of Scripture ('lower criticism'). A Melbourne minister, Thomas Laver, defended higher criticism in 1880, declaring that only a person who lacked faith could fear that the Bible would not bear 'the simplest  


22 Glover, *Evangelical Nonconformists and Higher Criticism*, pp. 82-3.
'scrutiny'. God revealed himself in language, argued Laver, and the past language of the Bible could only be understood historically. Other Congregational ministers, notably W.R. Fletcher, who had studied in Germany, welcomed an historical approach as placing faith on a firmer basis. It did not matter, they said, that the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture had been overthrown, because Jesus, not the Bible, was the ultimate authority in matters of religion, and higher criticism allowed the Christian to know Jesus as never before.

Yet when Clarke spoke in 1887 the big change had scarcely begun. As yet only a few ministers had accepted higher criticism in principle and even they were not ready to apply it. There is little evidence that they had begun to ask detailed historical questions about the writings of the Old Testament, much less the New, and no evidence that they were willing to come to conclusions that conflicted with their theological presuppositions. And equally important, ordinary church-goers had not been substantially affected. The chairman of the Tasmanian Congregational Union in 1889, the Rev. William Law, noted that the credibility of miracles was being much debated outside the church but continued: 'The controversy I think but little affects our church life or preaching, as we still believe


The reception of higher criticism by Congregationalists in England and Australia makes an interesting comparison. Amongst Congregationalists in both countries, higher criticism established itself as a permissible approach in the early 1890's. In England the debate initially was about the Old Testament in general or the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch in particular. When Australian Congregationalists did become seriously interested in higher criticism, and this was not until about 1890, they did so in relation to the more sensitive area of the New Testament.

A pamphlet published in Hobart in 1889 illustrates the difficulties which had to be faced as the work of the Biblical critics became more widely known. In that year, Rev. George Clarke gave a lecture on Mrs. Humphrey Ward's famous novel, Robert Elsmere. The story tells how an Anglican clergyman resigned his orders after coming to doubt the evidence for the New Testament miracles. In his lecture Clarke claimed that the evidence of the New Testament was credible, despite Mrs. Ward's assertions to the contrary. Clarke's lecture drew an anonymous reply. It is important to note that this pamphlet would certainly have been read by Congregationalists, since Clarke was the leading Congregationalist minister of Hobart. It is also important that the author did not claim to be an expert, but just such a person

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26 A.I., June 1889.
Law, born 1827 at Rawmarsh near Rotherham, Lancashire, had been a roll-turner in an iron-works before studying at Rotherham College and becoming an L.M.S. missionary. He served in Samoa in 1852-4, resigning because of his wife's health. He had a long career as a Congregational minister in Tasmania.

of education and culture whom Clarke had tried to persuade in his lecture.

This defender of Robert Elsmere did not take as his premise the impossibility of the New Testament miracles. Instead he wanted to know why they should be regarded as true, while those outside the Bible were not. Saint Ambrose's story about the butcher of Milan, who received his sight after he touched the bodies of two dead martyrs, was better attested than anything in the New Testament. Clarke considered the apocryphal miracles were 'grotesque and absurd' but how did they differ from the Gospel stories of the cursing of the fig-tree or the Gadarene swine? Clarke appealed to Paul's testimony that Jesus had worked miracles but he was challenged to cite a single passage from Paul to support his claim. Paul, indeed, provided evidence to the contrary. If Paul believed Jesus to have been a miracle worker, why had he not told the Jews about it? Instead, although the Jews had sought miracles, Paul had told them about Christ crucified. And why did Jesus refuse to work a miracle when the Jews had sought one? Perhaps it was because he did not know how. And if Paul knew of the Virgin birth, why did he not mention it and why had he affirmed that Jesus was 'born of a woman', the very phrase which Jesus is recorded to have used of John the Baptist, who presumably had not been born of a virgin? Why, when rehearsing the tradition which he had received of Christ's resurrection, had Paul not said anything of the appearance to Mary Magdalene or the rolling away of the stone? Why did Paul speak of the resurrection body as a spiritual body, when, in another place in the New Testament it was narrated that the risen Christ walked along

28 Robert Elsmere, a reply to the Rev. George Clarke's lecture, Hobart, 1889.
the Emmaus road and that he ate bread and fish? And what about the discrepancy between the Paul of Paul's own letters and the portrait of him in the *Acts of the Apostles*? And if the early Christians had misrepresented Paul, why could they not have misrepresented Jesus, whom they understood even less? Clarke had said that the issue was simple: either Jesus was what he said he was - divine - or he was not deserving great respect as a religious teacher. Yet, the anonymous author said, this begged the question of what Jesus in fact claimed to be. The answer could be arrived at only through a 'sifting of documents'.

In the 1890's some of these questions disturbed many Congregationalists who had been loyal supporters of their churches. Even if the ministers had wanted to sweep the problems under the carpet as they had done so far, it was no longer possible. When the Rev. John Fordyce lectured to Sunday-school teachers on higher criticism in 1893, he gave as his reason that some of the teachers had already been exposed to higher criticism and become half-believers as a result.\(^\text{29}\)

In the same year the Rev. W.R. Fletcher commented that many Congregationalists had been deeply disturbed by higher criticism and singled out young men, the old, women and Sunday-school teachers as especially affected.\(^\text{30}\)

The problems created by higher criticism were not quickly faced and quickly overcome. The reverence for the Bible in the Protestant tradition went too deep for that. New ideas about the dating and authorship of documents progressed fastest amongst ministers,

\(\text{29} \quad \text{A.Z.I., August 1893.}\)

\(\text{30} \quad \text{ibid., June 1893.}\)
yet even here there was considerable resistance. Dr. Bevan, no reactionary, as late as 1892 defended the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Amongst the laity the unease seems to have grown steadily as more people became acquainted with the new approach. In 1907 a leader in the South Australian Congregationalist lamented that though many of the Biblical critics were Christian believers 'the doubts they have suggested and the negative beliefs they have proclaimed have entered as an armed force into a multitude of hearts, destroying their peace and producing confusion and dismay'. Speaking as chairman of the Victorian Union three years later, Dr. Bevan said that the consequences of higher criticism for church life had to be recognized:

Our congregations listen with inquiring mind and doubting heart. Many old standards are deposed; the very conditions of belief have changed. A spirit of often fierce antagonism is abroad. Men grow impatient with ideas, and demand facts. The scientific spirit paralyses our faith. No man believes because of the fathers.

Dr. Bevan was not the only Congregational minister in the 1890's and 1900's to say things which suggested that nothing was certain any more. The Rev. G.S. Brett, pastor of the Brighton church, Melbourne, told the members of his congregation one Sunday that just because they had been converted they were not thereby eternally saved

31 La L MSS, 9239, 24, Congregational Ministers' Association minutes 1890-4, 5 Sept. 1892.
32 S.A. Cong., August 1907. See also ibid., Dec. 1906.
33 V.I., July 1910.
and that conversion was only the beginning of a long conflict. Alexander Gosman, a professor of the Victorian Congregational College, told an assembly of his Union that no person should be excluded from a church fellowship because he did not believe in the Virgin birth or the resurrection of Christ. Alfred Depledge Sykes, the minister at Stow church, Adelaide, spoke of the duty of Congregationalists to take the lead in 'a new religious synthesis, expressed in a church which will dare to stand or fall by its acceptance of truth from whatever quarter it may come'. Congregationalists must not shrink from the task, he said, though the way was 'through certain storm, tumult, and confusion'. According to Sykes, the process of adjusting Christianity to modern thought had to go further than expressing traditional doctrines in new ways. Christians had to abandon their traditional division between the natural and the supernatural (God did not break into the natural course of events to work miracles), the idea of a fall at the beginning of history, the traditional understanding of the atonement, belief in punishment or bliss after death. They also had to realize that other religions had their contribution to make to the new synthesis.

Such ministers exacerbated unsettlement. Yet in a large measure their pulpits only responded to uncertainty in the pews. In 1896 J.H. Palmer of the Sydney suburb of Burwood published in the

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34 *Church News* (Brighton), Nov. 1908. For biographical information about Brett, see below.

35 *V.I.*, Nov. 1904; for comment on Gosman's views, *ibid.*, Jan.-March 1905.

Australasian Independent a poem called 'Perplexing Questions'. Palmer asked whether he was only 'an evanescent spark'

Struck from the void - to scintillate and die -
To be extinguished in th'eternal dark?
A question merely, with no sure reply?

and concluded that he had to grope his way 'In silence and in darkness'. 37 A year later the Rev. Joseph Robertson of Adelaide's Stow church preached a sermon on the death of T.H. Huxley and spoke in respectful terms of the great agnostic. Robertson told his congregation that he knew there were some of them troubled by doubt. 38

Young men were especially unsettled. A pastor put the matter simply at a meeting of the Melbourne Congregational Ministers' Association; one of the reasons why young men were not committing their lives to Christ was their uncertainty whether the Christian faith was true. 39 Mr. Joseph Vardon explained the leakage of Congregational young people between Sunday-school and church in terms of this same unsettlement. A boy, he said, could not help being affected by the ideas of those with whom he worked upon leaving school; too often these workmates were unbelievers and critical of what they alleged were the inconsistencies between the theory and practice of the Christian faith.

37 A.Z.I., June 1896.
38 ibid., Sept. 1895.
39 La L MSS, 9239, 24, Congregational Ministers' Association minutes 1901-1907, 3 March 1902; Rev. J. Barton.
40 Congregational Union of South Australia, Annual Meetings Reports of Proceedings, Reports of Organisations, Adelaide, 1898, p. 15.

Joseph Vardon (1843-1913), printer and politician, was one of the few laymen to be chairman of the South Australian Congregational Union. Chairman in 1891-2, he was probably the first native-born person to be elected to the position: A.Z.I.Y.B., 1893, p. 327. For biographical details, see J. Rydon, A Biographical Register of the Commonwealth Parliament 1901-1972, Canberra, 1975.
The reports of unsettlement are thickest in the years immediately before the Great War. It would be wrong to assume that all or even most of the Congregational churches were deeply affected at this time - many ministers were conservatives who sought to shield their people and we may guess that many church-goers had no taste for theological speculation - yet it is impossible to doubt the existence of an unprecedented unrest. Congregationalists who assembled in conference during these years frequently told one another the same thing: 'There is in our hearts much doubt, and in the Churches great anxiety', 'there is much anxious inquiry as to what is most surely believed amongst us', 'a faith that is hardly to be called faith - it is so hesitant and faltering'.”

A revolution in the religious opinions of church-goers was in progress. Perhaps the most important change was that regarding the Bible, but there were others hardly less vital. In April 1902 the Victorian Independent carried an article quoting a student who said he felt estranged from Christianity, although he still attended the Congregational church with which so many happy memories were associated. His reading and thinking had led him to doubt the divinity of Christ. When the denominational paper in New South Wales reprinted this article a comment was added that there were many like this student in the Congregational churches. In 1913 the New South Wales Union held a symposium on 'The Divinity of Christ' in an attempt to answer people's doubts. From the three papers which were delivered, it is clear that many Congregationalists were coming to think of Jesus


42 *A.Z.I.*, April 1902.
as a great and good man, a God-inspired man, but a man nevertheless, not a divine being in human dress.  

A related change in the doctrine of the atonement touched evangelical religion at its heart. The substitutionary theory did not disappear overnight but within a few decades many ministers and church-goers ceased to give it even their formal allegiance.  

The first signs of a new approach to the atonement in Australian Congregationalism were seen in the early 1880's. One of the first to sound the alarm was the Rev. W. Jones, who told the annual assembly of the South Australian Union in 1885 that those who preached a new understanding of the atonement were giving out an uncertain sound and would not be able to rally Christians in the old way. The leaders of the colonial Unions were sensitive on this issue so when the denominational jubilees were held in 1887 and 1888 there was earnest discussion about theological change. The Victorian conference of 1888 was held not long after the 'Down-grade' controversy in England, occasioned by the charges of the famous Baptist preacher, Charles Spurgeon, that evangelicalism was being betrayed. Spurgeon himself was especially concerned about threats to the substitutionary doctrine of the atonement. This recent English controversy, of which all the delegates to the Victorian conference would have been aware, probably explains the many assurances that all was well. Mr. Alexander Hannay,  


44 Congregational Record, 10 May 1885, pp. 166-72, esp. p. 172. Jones was trained at Western College, Plymouth, began his ministry in 1875, and was pastor at Gawler, South Australia, during the 1880's and 1890's.  

an English delegate, said that he would be able to tell Congregationalists at home that the faith of the Australian brethren was as sound as their own and that the only changes being made were in the way the faith was expressed. 46

The truth was, however, that evangelical religion was fast losing its hold. In October 1889 a pseudonymous correspondent of a denominational paper asked whether the time had not already come for the abandonment of the substitutionary doctrine. This Congregationalist believed that 'very few of the members of our churches understand the real meaning of the word "vicarious"' and that many ministers as well as lay people gave lip service to the doctrine only because convention required. 47

A new generation of ministers spoke out forcefully regarding the atonement in the 1900's. They did not like the picture of a wrathful God; if God was wrathful, said one of them, then he was weak. 48 They did not like the idea of appeasing him; a loving God did not have to be appeased. They did not like the idea of substitution; it emptied the crucifixion of its power because it did not allow the Christian to be affected personally. For them Christ's sacrifice on the cross was continued in the daily obedience of the believer. His obedience ought not to be considered a substitute for that of his followers. To do so involved 'moral jugglery'. 'Substitutionary sacrifice and substitutionary punishment', said the Rev. Alfred Depledge

46 Jubilee of Victorian Congregationalism, p. 190.
47 'Independent', A.I., Oct. 1889.
48 Rev. G.S. Brett, Church News (Brighton), Nov., Dec., 1908, Jan. 1909.
Sykes, 'can only issue in a substitutionary salvation which is no salvation at all'.

None of this was original. Most if it indeed can be traced to one source - the movement associated with R.J. Campbell, Congregational minister of the City Temple, London. This movement was by no means a recent development despite its name, 'the New Theology', but it excited much public interest about 1907. Campbell's book, *The New Theology*, published in that year, was the *Honest to God* of its day. Some of the younger Congregational ministers in Australia followed the new English wave in the time-honoured fashion yet somewhat less behind than in the previous generation: '... what purports to be the last word of the great European expert often reaches us a month later in Australia' wrote the Roman Catholic archbishop and bishops of Melbourne in 1907. There was also a personal connection with the English 'New Theology'. Alfred Depledge Sykes knew R.J. Campbell and on a trip to England in 1906 and 1907 had spent some time at the City Temple.

While the liberals believed that the hope of the churches lay in adopting the New Theology or a new theology there were many who thought the opposite. '... the foundation of our faith', the Rev. W. Jones had remarked in 1885, 'can not be dug up without peril to its life'. A minister who addressed the South Australian Union in 1910

49 *Stow Church Magazine*, Nov. 1909. 'Moral jugglery' is also a quotation from Sykes; *ibid.*

50 O'Farrell, ed., *Documents in Australian Catholic History*, Vol. 2, p. 120.

51 *Observer*, 30 March 1907, p. 44.

52 *Congregational Record*, 10 May 1885, p. 172.
on 'The Old Evangel and the New Time' said that though the word 'substitution' might be unfashionable he clung to it because it expressed what had to be expressed, namely that 'The Son of God loved me and gave himself for me'.

Perhaps the most eloquent statement of the conservative position on the atonement was made in 1907, when the Rev. J.C. Kirby delivered an address from the chair of the South Australian Union on 'The Theology of the Glorious Blood'. Seldom can a Protestant minister in Australia have spoken so powerfully about the theology of sin and salvation. Kirby was an original - a man who wore black mittens in church, an enthusiast for eugenics, a prohibitionist, a shrewd business-head, an intensely religious man. His address on the Glorious Blood was an idiosyncratic blend of daring speculation and the core of the Protestant tradition, of Teilhard de Chardin and Martin Luther. In the first part he spoke about the double movement in the universe, of the Creator downwards and of the creation upwards, meeting in the glorious body of Jesus. Then, in an indirect attack on the New Theology, he considered how that body's blood redeemed from sin. Kirby had once been a follower of the American Congregationalist, Horace Bushnell, who taught that the crucifixion was primarily a moral example, and Kirby spoke as one who had tasted of the fruits of liberal theology and found them as ashes in his mouth. Kirby was convinced that the New Theology did not meet the desperate plight of ruined mankind.

I have visited a man dying of rottenness in his bones because God made him to possess the sins of his youth, and every time a few minutes were spent with him, you had worse than sea sickness, and yet he wanted to be saved, and nothing but the Blood of Jesus was any good to that suffering soul in that suffering body.

No, God was not a grandmother; he punished with a terrible power and his forgiveness was more than a few sugar plums. From generation to generation Christians had known the power of God to save by the blood once and for all offered on the cross. The effect of the New Theology, where it was adopted, was to cut people off from 'these deep and sanctifying experiences'.

The theological liberals naturally wanted to perpetuate the traditional refusal of the Congregational churches to impose a credal test. The conservatives were not so happy. From their point of view the liberals were subverting the Gospel - something which evangelical freedom had never previously allowed.

By the time the theological revolution was well advanced many churches were aided by the state Unions. Using this financial lever moderates and conservatives were able to discipline at least one minister. In 1912 the Rev. T.B. Roseby, who was pastor of the aided church at Orange, expressed views about the divinity of Christ, which some leading men in the New South Wales Union found unacceptable. Roseby resigned. Roseby and the Home Mission Superintendent, William Patison, subsequently disputed whether this resignation was forced or voluntary, but this was a technicality. Orthodoxy had been upheld by official pressure.

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54 S.A. Cong., April, May 1907.
55 ML MSS, 1301, 12, Home Mission Superintendent's letter book, 1912-4, W.L. Patison to T.B. Roseby, 26 April 1912; N.S.W. Cong., May 1912. In 1914 Roseby found employment as pastor of the Calvin Street, Bendigo, church. In 1917 he was back as pastor of the church at Orange.
For conservatives the problem was much more difficult in the case of an established church. Under the traditional polity there was indeed nothing that could be done about a minister so long as he had the support of most of his church members. The case of the Rev. G.S. Brett was a spectacular demonstration of this.

The Brighton church, Melbourne, called Brett as its pastor in 1908. Brett, an extreme liberal, had arrived only recently from the United States and his theological views were unknown. Once the conservatives in the congregation understood Brett's position they tried to remove him. A statement they prepared declared that Brett substituted 'theories' for the teaching of the New Testament 'on the BIRTH, LIFE, DEATH, and RESURRECTION of Jesus Christ' and reflected upon 'the authenticity or accuracy of the New Testament records which conflict with those theories'. Moving that Brett's pastorate be terminated, one of the deacons, Mr. S. Creaton, said that the objections to the minister were solely theological. Brett's supporters were in the majority and the conservatives found themselves forced out. The dissident conservatives then held their own services in a hall within a short walk of the church, helped by sympathetic Congregational ministers. The executive of the Congregational Union was powerless to act. The Brighton church was only re-united when Brett departed in July 1911. 56

From the conservative point of view the only solution was to change the rules. This was attempted once, in South Australia in 1909, when the theological unrest was greatest in all three states. Why only in South Australia? Part of the answer is that South Australia had been relatively untouched by the challenge to the churches which

had been so marked in the 1880's in Victoria and to a lesser extent New South Wales. Theological conservatives in South Australia, therefore, had been less exposed to liberal thought. It is probably also important that men with liberal views led the New South Wales and Victorian Unions - men such as Llewelyn Bevan, Alexander Gosman, John Fordyce and Thomas Roseby. In contrast, in South Australia in the 1900's there was a fissible combination of a strong conservative tradition and a group of young ministers such as Depledge Sykes and A.E. Gifford, who were influenced by the New Theology.

Attempts were made to prevent open conflict but to no avail. At the October meetings of the Union in 1909 J.C. Kirby placed on the agenda a motion 'That Congregationalists have and ought to have a common creed'. When debate commenced Kirby amended this to read that 'Congregationalists have, and should have, common articles and principles of belief, and there be a general agreement and understanding as to what is taught in our churches'. He changed the wording, he said, because many ministers 'had an abomination of the word creed', but his purpose remained unaltered - to secure a common doctrine. According to Kirby the denomination must perish if all points of doctrine remained open questions.

Kirby rested his argument on what he called Congregationalism's fundamental principle - that the local church was the trustee of the Christian faith. From this it followed that the church, not its minister, was responsible for the content of preaching; only after

58 Advertiser, 15 Oct. 1909, p. 8. The following account relies mostly on this source. The debate at the annual meeting of the Union in 1909 is also treated in E.S. Kiek, An Apostle in Australia, London, 1926, pp. 183-7.
grave consideration ought any church to sanction a departure from the traditional beliefs of Congregationalists. Mr. A.E. Norman, seconding Kirby's motion, argued that it must be passed if Congregationalists were to show that their faith was still sound.

One of the liberal ministers, A.E. Gifford, countered by moving that 'Congregationalists have a common faith', which was a way of saying that no attempt should be made to define what that faith was. Gifford and his supporters took their stand upon liberty of conscience; the ageing Dr. Jefferis put their case in a nutshell when he said that Congregationalism was a repudiation of all human authority in matters of religion. Possibly because he sensed the meeting was turning against him Kirby accepted the amendment, saying that he had got seventy-five per cent of what he wanted. The debate thus ended quietly despite the excitement which had been generated.

Nevertheless it was a long time in South Australia before the bitterness subsided. When the visiting English Congregationalist, J.D. Jones, reported on the position of the denomination in 1914, he commented on the damage which had been done by the theological conflict.  

The historian of the South Australian Union wrote that it would have been 'a disaster' if Kirby's motion had been passed. Certainly the Union would have been split. On the other hand the failure to pass it showed that Congregationalists as a body were no longer committed

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59 ML MSS, 3145, 1, 'Notes on Visitation of the Churches of Australasia by Rev. J.D. Jones ...', handwritten, in packet of documents labelled 'Documents relating to the Visit of Dr J.D. Jones etc 1914', p. 31.

60 E.S. Kiek, Our First Hundred Years, Adelaide, n.d., p. 60. He was repeating his earlier verdict in An Apostle in Australia, pp. 186-7.
to the principles of the Evangelical Revival. Mr. F.G. Scammett, speaking against Kirby during the debate, said that the only creed to which he could subscribe 'would have to be as wide as the heavens'.

By the 1920's many Congregationalists were hostile to dogma in any shape or form. 'Every preacher knows', said one Congregational minister in 1925, 'that doctrinal preaching is at a discount'. Another commented that people would not give serious thought to sermons in 'an age of intellectual tit-bits' and that they came to church 'in about the same frame of mind as they attend a popular lecture'. Laziness was not the only cause of impatience with dogma. People liked to be independent or, to say the same thing from a conservative point of view, to nibble at the tasty pieces and ignore the rest. Speaking about the problems of the preacher in 1926, the Rev. J.E. James remarked that the demand was 'for shorter sermons, for services without sermons, for ceremonies which we may interpret as we like, rather than sermons with their doctrines and decisions'.

How typical was this development of Australian Protestantism in the early twentieth century? Future research will doubtless draw distinctions between and within denominations yet the general picture seems to be clear. Australian Protestants were in revolt against dogma.

63 Church Notes (Collins Street Independent church), Dec. 1926.
In *Khaki and Cassock* the Rev. K.T. Henderson gave some valuable evidence about this because, as one of the A.I.F. chaplains in the Great War, he was thrown closer to ordinary Australian men than ministers had ever been before. In his book Henderson depicted a scene which he said typified many conversations he had with soldiers. A soldier with an educated voice comments to the padre 'But don't you think men are thinking for themselves these days?' The padre replies that army life numbs thinking to some extent but agrees 'there's an awful lot' to the soldier's question:

There's an all-round hankering for intellectual adventure, for originality, and men have got the idea that they're tied to certain things in the Church, and have got to go outside it to be free.  

Well before the War a similar attitude had been observed by an Anglican rector at Port Lincoln. 'Each individual to-day claims to pick and choose his Christian doctrine, irrespective of higher authority than his own intellect and reason'. The existence of credal tests in Anglicanism and other denominations does not seem to have disciplined ordinary church-goers though they may well have slowed the acceptance of 'unorthodox' ideas by ministers.

What did people believe in this post-doctrinal age? This was a time before surveys which probe private beliefs so we are without benefit of any systematic information about adherents of any of the denominations. The Congregational press never explored the subject so we are almost completely reliant upon the published and unpublished memoirs of Congregationalists, and, of those I have seen, none provides any worthwhile information. Given the similarity of Congregationalists

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to Presbyterians in social composition, Brian Lewis' *Sunday at Kooyong Road* provides some indirect evidence since it gives a vivid picture of the religious opinions of a family of educated and intelligent Presbyterians about the time of the Great War. The Lewises and their group within the church at Auburn, Melbourne, accepted the golden rule as the pattern for a good life and the laws of their country. But they did not know what to make of Jesus. They were not sure how Christ's death saved mankind and while they liked to think his resurrection was an authentic case of survival after death they were not sure of that either. They were tempted to believe that Jesus was a divine being who had an advantage in his dealings with mankind but they also believed that his pre-eminence, which they did not question, may have been reached by his own striving and they respected him all the more for that reason.66 (Interestingly, the Lewis family does not seem to have been troubled by the religious questions which were so agitating some of the Congregational churches about 1910. Maybe the intellectually elite group to which the Lewises belonged had made the transition from the old certainties somewhat earlier.) Henderson reported similar uncertainty in the trenches. In one of the scenes in *Khaki and Cassock* a soldier declares

> It's hard now to know what to believe in exactly. Aren't there plenty of people who believe that Christ was divine and came from God and is living now, who don't believe in miracles? It's the clergy who are leaving us laymen behind these days, and we don't know where we are.67

Congregational preaching in the 1920's reflected this disintegration of dogma. To be sure ministers who preached a clear

67 p. 129.
gospel could still be very successful; the case of Lionel Fletcher at Port Adelaide church, discussed in chapter six, is a good illustration. Probably the religious individualism of the day, while important, did not run as deep in the Congregational churches as the tradition that there was a gospel and that it ought to be the paramount concern of ministers and church-goers. For the time being, however, this tradition was largely submerged. Many Congregational ministers preferred to offer what one critic called 'topical talks'. Edward Kiek, the principal of Parkin College, was very concerned about this kind of preaching. In 1929 he told the annual assembly of the South Australian Union that it was not good enough for ministers to offer their people 'essays on Biblical criticism, discussions of moral virtues and counsel on social problems'. Kiek advocated that ministers put the atonement back at the centre of their preaching yet this was difficult if the preacher did not possess a credible theology of the atonement. As Kiek himself pointed out, the traditional soteriology was difficult to preach and modern theories were generally unsatisfactory.

About 1930 the theology of Karl Barth was beginning to be known in Australia. For some Barth pointed the way to 'positive' preaching. Addressing a Camden College gathering in 1930 the Rev. W.J. Ashford criticized the current 'theological anaemia' and advocated the 'new Calvinism' of Barth. After a quarter of a century of preaching, Ashford was totally dissatisfied with the purely immanent God of liberal theology. The need, he claimed, was for theological

68 N.S.W. Cong., June 1929 (Rev. W.T. Kench?)
reconstruction which did not burke metaphysical questions, not even the question of the person of Christ.

I have found personally more or less humanitarian or semi-pantheistic interpretations of the Person of our Lord unsatisfying to myself, and, as a Gospel for preaching to the multitude, quite hopeless.71

For Ashford the wheel had turned almost full circle, but we must not assume that Congregationalists generally at this time were disenchanted with liberal theology. Some of the laity may scarcely have made its acquaintance. Although denominational newspapers and year books for two or three decades had carried items about doctrinal upheaval there is no way of knowing how many Congregationalists had revised their views or how drastically. The non-articulate may have been far more conservative and much less interested in such matters.72 Yet even when the bias of the sources is taken into account there can be no doubt that the theological foundations of church life had been shaken. In 1880 a doctrinal consensus existed; in 1930 there was none.

71 N.S.W. Cong., Jan. 1931.

A Congregational layman, in an address from the chair of the South Australian Union in 1901, claimed that 'broad' theological teaching and a decline in the authority of the Bible were emptying the churches. The new teaching, he said, was 'hazy, indefinite, speculative, and so lacking in authority' that it led to religious indifference.¹

This contention was true - at least in part. As Mr. Phillips pointed out, the new theological teaching left no room for 'future rewards and punishments', yet - and this he did not point out - the fear of eternal punishment had encouraged regular church attendance. The nineteenth century evangelicals, both within and without the Church of England, took their stand on justification by faith. But they allowed the value of good works, including support of the churches, as evidence of salvation. In 1862 the pastor of a Melbourne Congregational church sent the members of his fellowship a reminder of the need to meet their 'Church duties and obligations'. The appeal was introduced by a question that the members were requested to put to themselves: 'What reason have I to believe that I am a Christian - a true, a real Christian[?]'. Implicitly they were being told that church attendance was an aid to their salvation.² When a person believed that failure to provide evidence of salvation risked eternal

¹ Congregational Union of South Australia, Annual Meetings Reports of Proceedings Reports of Organisations, 1901, pp. 8-9.
punishment then the motivation to attend church could be very powerful indeed. 'It was the eternal, never-ending pain, the hopelessness of any limit to the pain even after thousands and millions of millions of years, that affected my mind the most', wrote Henry Bournes Higgins, the son of a Methodist minister. Another son of the manse, the novelist Simpson Newland, in later life recalled that when his father preached 'his thunder and lightning sermons', congregations listened 'spellbound with blanched faces'.

The authority traditionally ascribed to the Bible in evangelical nonconformist churches had also encouraged church involvement. The Reformation had increased the power of the individual to define his own religion, for when a Protestant read his Bible there was a possibility that he might arrive at an heterodox interpretation. Nevertheless, powerful traditions of how to read the Bible had developed and, whether he knew it or not, a Protestant was influenced by the approach taken in his church. Thus few evangelicals seemed to have asked themselves whether the Bible in fact commanded Christians to go to church on a Sunday.

This belief in the authority of the Bible and that in eternal rewards and punishments worked together to support the authority of the preacher. In 1834, after a year's ministry to a congregation of


4 S. Newland, Old-time Memories: a Band of Pioneers, Adelaide, 1895, p. 4. His father was the Rev. Ridgway William Newland (1790-1864), a Congregational minister and one of the pioneers of the Encounter Bay area in South Australia. A.D.B.

Independents in Sydney, the Rev. William Jarrett took as his text Isaiah 53.1 'Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?'. Jarrett summarized his report during the previous year, understanding it to be nothing less than the word of God.

Let me admonish you then that your future happiness or misery depends solely upon your conduct in respect of this report: by receiving it you will be made wise to salvation: by rejecting it you will ensure your endless ruin.  

This kind of confidence was impossible for a minister who preached to people who were uncertain about the after-life and who knew something, however superficial, of higher criticism.

Undoubtedly, as some Congregationalists became more self-directing and less fearful, they reduced their church involvement. The Rev. Percival Watson, himself a progressive, once instanced what he claimed was a frequent spectacle. A minister of a church, hitherto a conservative, changed his theological approach. This had a liberating effect on one member of the congregation, although it upset others, sometimes wealthy and influential, who might leave the church. The man whom the minister helped was also often lost.

He fears no mechanical hell fire now; the Bible is no longer the infallible authority; worship and Sabbath observance become a matter of choice; rid of external commands and comparatively destitute of inner religious spirit, there is no authority left for him except his own sweet will.

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6 W. Jarrett, Address to the Members of the Church and Congregation assembling in the Independent Chapel, Pitt Street ... December 28, 1834, Sydney, n.d., p. 4.

7 Glover, Evangelical Nonconformists and Higher Criticism, pp. 226-9.

8 S.A.C.Y.B., 1913, p. 45.

Percival Watson, M.A., held pastorates in S.A. before going to the City Church, Brisbane, where he was minister for 21 years. He was one of the group of young liberal ministers who prompted J.C. Kirby to move in 1909 that Congregationalists ought to have a common creed.
But how is it that a minister came to teach ideas which he had previously rejected? Why did the new ideas gain such a hold upon Congregationalists? Some were swayed by evidence and the force of logic. Sir Richard Hanson is a notable example. As a consequence of his study of the New Testament he came to disbelieve in the divinity of Christ, so risking the disapprobation of those whose company he valued. It is implausible to say of such people that in adopting the new religious ideas they were simply adopting arguments to support conclusions they had reached on other grounds. People do not rationalize with ideas that may make them unpopular or otherwise occasion discomfort. Yet how many were there in this category? We must not forget that we are dealing with a popular movement. It seems unlikely that thousands of people carefully weighed arguments for and against the new approaches to the Bible and to theology. As Hugh McLeod has pointed out, the implausibility of supposing this is evident in the popular acceptance of evolution. Whereas Darwin seems to have been impressed by the random way natural selection worked, the public understood evolution to be a purposeful movement of onward and upward. Something similar seems to have happened regarding biblical criticism. Many people passed from uncritical belief in the authority of the Bible to uncritical unbelief. Others, without any first-hand knowledge of the work of the higher critics, appear to have concluded that Jesus had preached a simple religion of the love of God and the love of man. In fact the biblical critics spoke with many voices and the recovery of


the original message of Jesus was later seen to be an apparently unending quest. There is another reason for not attributing the eclipse of the old religious teaching to the obvious superiority of the new. In strictly theological matters at least, the new ideas were not superior at all; the old substitutionary theory of the atonement was at least as cogent and well supported in Scripture as those to which it gave way.

Why then did the old religious ideas become implausible?

Congregational ministers in the 1870's were men who professed not to love the 'world'. They often used the word as an antonym for the church. The world stood for the natural and evil; the church for the supernatural and good. A South Australian Congregational lay-preacher exemplified this attitude in one of his sermon notes:

Almost every ray of Divine Light that falls on this dark benighted world is through the agency of the church and if the church neglects or refuses to shed forth the light the world must remain in spiritual night.  

In 1908 J.J. Halley, remembering his fifty years in the Congregational ministry, singled out disdain for the world as a major characteristic of the churches in his youth; the world, then, he said, was regarded as 'but a vale of tears, a wilderness, a desert land, helpless, fit only as rubbish for the fire'.  

It was not an atypical attitude among Congregational church records, Victor Harbour. The notes were deposited by a grand-daughter of the lay-preacher who apparently conducted services in the district in the 1870's.

Protestant ministers in the third quarter of the nineteenth century. At the end of the 1870's an Anglican clergyman, speaking of ministers in general, said that they 'usually' understood the church and the world to be opposed to one another and however much they called the world the creation and kingdom of God, they 'practically assumed it to be under the dominion of the Evil One'.

The world, in the minds of these evangelical ministers and many of their people, encompassed amusements of various kinds. One of their enemies wrote of them:

These godly people would forbid the ball,
The races, theatres, and briefly all
That's cheer'd existence since the Human Fall.

They tended to be against pleasuring the senses in any way. The chairman of the Victorian Congregational Union in 1880 warned against 'the lust of the eye, the desire to show and display, for splendours which lie in the material and in what the material can give' and unfavourably contrasted these things with 'chaste severity of taste, and a high tone of moderation in life'.

The doctrine of the Congregational churches in the 1860's and 1870's was consistent with this attitude. Conversion from the world was the central religious experience in their tradition. Their theologians taught that a church was a body of those who were gathered from the world. The Bible was regarded by the same theologians as the only authority in religious matters because the wisdom of the world led

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15 Rev. Thomas James, _V.C.Y.B_. , 1881, p. 41.
men and women astray. The substitutionary theory of the atonement was a powerful symbol of the wrath of God upon the world.

Yet at this time, and increasingly since about mid-century, Congregationalists were returning the world's smile. In part the change was caused by the waning of the Evangelical Revival, whose champions had so vigorously promoted a distinction between vital Christianity and the world. In part, too, the change was caused by the new social standing of Congregationalists. In England they were less and less second-class citizens and members of an inferior culture. In Australia by the 1880's they enjoyed civil and social equality with Anglicans. The world, then, was smiling on Congregationalists as it had failed to do since the restoration of the monarchy.

Congregational places of worship testified in brick and stone to both the waning of the Evangelical Revival and the rise in social status. In the early nineteenth century Congregationalists in England had built little boxes off back streets. In the 1870's and 1880's wealthy suburban congregations built neo-Gothic churches which were simultaneously exercises in worldly show, silent acts of acceptance of a pre-Reformation past and claims to participate in the dominant culture. In the colonies also the new style of architecture came into fashion. The first place of worship erected by the Independents in Melbourne in 1841 had been in a main street but was plainly a dissenting chapel in its severe lines. The building constructed for the use of the same congregation less than thirty years later had a

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Venetian bell-tower, was dressed in two-coloured brick, and inside was modelled upon, of all things, a theatre. This building was a special case as it was the 'cathedral' church of the denomination in Victoria but elsewhere, in a lesser way, Congregationalists lavished attention upon their churches. The Congregational church opened in 1882 in the Adelaide suburb of Hindmarsh illustrates the concern with status.

The Church is designed in plain and simple Gothic [sic], with walls of Dry Creek stone and dressings in cement. A little coloured brick is introduced in places, which gives a light and cheerful effect to the structure. In front is a spacious porch, from one end of which rises the stair to the gallery, and in the inner wall of which are two doorways entering the auditorium .... This is lit by lancet-headed windows at the sides, enriched with stained embossed margins, which add greatly to the appearance of the interior .... The front portion of the Church is spanned by a large gallery, the front of which is filled in with ornamental ironwork, bronzed and gilded, and placed in a framework of light pine .... The ceiling ... is divided into square panels by longitudinal and transverse moulded pine ribs, stained and varnished, and the plaster panels are enriched with stencil-work in pale blue. Special attention has been devoted to the subject of ventilation, and arrangements have been made for the admission of pure air all through the body of the Church (where it is most required), the speciality being that the regulation of the supply to each individual seat is entirely under the control of the occupants of the same, who may increase, diminish, or shut it off at pleasure .... The Church, as designed and carried out, presents a finished appearance in every respect; but it has been so arranged that at any future time a portion of the front porch may be carried up and terminated with a spire.

The lust of the eye was reasserting itself.

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The celebrations of the Victorian denominational jubilee in 1888 demonstrated how far colonial Congregationalists had departed from earlier customs. The organ at the front of the Independent church, Collins Street, was covered with drapes and the rostrum along its length was hung with plush embellished with gilded palm leaves. In front of the organ was a trophy of seven silk flags, representing the Congregational Unions of the colonies of Australasia. The galleries, which ran from the front of the church in a horseshoe, were filled with flags and shields and banners; from the galleries fell circular folds of drapery; above them under the main ceiling ran Latin texts with their implicit message that here dwelt a cultured people. At other places greater use was made of foliage, so much so in one church that the pulpit disappeared from view. The Congregationalists at Kew painted the windows of their church for the occasion. At the front of the Fitzroy church there were an imitation rockery, lakes and waterfalls.  

The decorations for Jubilee Sunday were not extraordinary by contemporary standards; the churches of other denominations were decked for special occasions and the extravagance of the display in 1888 can be attributed to the year being the height of Victoria's boom. Nevertheless it is just this accommodation to the spirit of the time which is significant. At one of the jubilee gatherings in 1888 J.J. Halley, the secretary of the Victorian Union, asked 'Are we keeping to our old idea of church fellowship, which means a separate people - a people absolutely devoted to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ?'. He plainly expected the answer 'no'.

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21 *ibid.*, p. 125.
The dance provided another sign of the softening attitude to the world. William Hale White guessed that about 1840 there were not more than twenty Congregational families in the whole of Great Britain who would have allowed dancing. But in the mid-1880's a minister in Victoria reported that 'The game, the theatre, and the dance are occupying a growing place in the interests and affections of our young people'. In 1920 a New South Wales denominational official was asked to give his approval for a church dance. After consulting with other ministers he refused but added 'we have been too ready to taboo certain amusements in the past, & we may have to revise our views & attitude towards some of them before very long'. Attitudes did in fact become more liberal. By 1930, according to Mr. J.A. Kennedy, dancing was a 'very much debated question' in the Congregational churches. In a paper delivered before an assembly of the Victorian Union, Kennedy argued that the churches ought to allow dances on their premises because it was their duty to provide ideal conditions for the recreation of their young people.

Kennedy took it for granted that if the churches did not provide these conditions then their young people would go elsewhere. It was a significant assumption. One observer, who said that he had been associated with Congregational churches for more than forty years,

22 'Mark Rutherford', *The Revolution in Tanner's Lane*, ch. XVIII.


gave as one cause of the leakage of young people from the churches the disappearance of a 'sense of authority both in the home and church', combined with opportunities for amusement which had been 'absolutely unknown' even twenty years before. He added that 'even many who have been brought under the best spiritual influence seem to find too strong to resist the incoming tide of pleasure-seeking'.

Protestant church-goers generally, both in England and the Australian colonies, felt the same pull of the world. As the English Wesleyan Conference noted in 1890 'a great reaction from Puritanism' was in progress. In Australia, as in England, this reaction included an increasing aversion to decorous and scrupulous observance of the Sabbath.

Thanks to Brian Lewis we can now add an Australian anecdote to the folklore about the Puritan Sunday, the day set apart from the work-a-day world to pay homage to the things of God. At some time, probably in the 1890's, three of Lewis' elder brothers, aged between three and five, were watching, through a hole in a fence, a neighbour cutting his lawn. The man noticed them and stopped. 'Mr. Man, do you know what my brother Ralph is doing?', asked the eldest. 'He is watching for you to drop dead for cutting your lawn on Sunday'.

The offender may well have been a church-goer himself. A speaker at the Presbyterian General Assembly of New South Wales in 1896 commented that 'A change has come over the religious spirit of the age, and the views of early Christian people have altered considerably

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27 Quoted in Inglis, Churches and the Working Classes, p. 74.
28 B. Lewis, Sunday at Kooyong Road, Melbourne, 1976, p. 147.
on this question'. The previous year the chairman of the Congregational Union of South Australia claimed that non-observance was on the increase and that cricket matches, tennis parties, pleasure parties and even dances were becoming common on a Sunday. The fanatical zeal with which evangelical Protestants defended the Sabbath in Melbourne in the 1880's and afterwards is inexplicable unless we assume that they were threatened by defections within their own ranks.

Though the Puritan Sunday lingered in Australia, especially in Victoria and South Australia where Presbyterians and Methodists were strong, a notable change occurred between 1880 and 1930. A.P. Campbell, a leading New South Wales Congregational minister, remarked in 1930 that 'whereas some fifty years ago physical recreation [on a Sunday] was regarded as an intrusion, if not a sin, it is now quite generally regarded as both desirable and permissible'. In an article on 'Church Membership - Its Problems and Responsibilities', published in 1924, an old Congregationalist lamented that Sunday was no longer the Sunday of his youth.

Gardening and tennis and golf are not considered incorrect by some, but do they give spiritual tone or make the participator in these recreations more anxious and more prepared for the services in

29 Quoted in R.B. Walker, 'Presbyterian Church and People in the Colony of New South Wales in the Late Nineteenth Century', J.R.H., June 1962, p. 60.


32 N.S.W. Cong., Dec. 1930.
A.P. Campbell (died 1963), son of the Rev. George Campbell, held pastorates at Killara (1911-38) and Burwood (1938-44), both in N.S.W. In 1944 he was appointed to the joint office of Moderator and Ministerial Secretary of the N.S.W. Union. He held a 'unique position' in Sydney Rotary.
the Courts of the Lord [?]. Many find it agreeable if not necessary to keep pace with the daily trend of the money market, the social and sports events and the local and international outlook by the perusal of the Sunday paper.33

As the old Congregationalist noted, Sunday sport and recreation threatened church attendance. Walter Phillips has studied the increase in counter-attractions to worship in Sydney during the last third of the nineteenth century - Sunday concerts and more trains, trams and harbour excursions - and concluded that they adversely affected evening church attendance.34 The new means of transport which became available in the second half of the nineteenth century were especially important in eroding Sabbath observance. One minister's wife wrote of the church trains which ran in Melbourne on a Sunday morning about the turn of the century that they deserved to be called picnic trains 'so crowded were they with families bound for the beaches'.35 Discussing declining Sunday-school enrolments in 1906 the Rev. William Allen attributed them partly to the habit of cycling and all-day Sunday picnics.36 Twenty years later the Congregational Young People's Department in South Australia blamed 'the Sunday motor' as a cause of the continuing fall in the number of Sunday scholars.37 The improvements in transport also made possible the weekend away. One Congregational minister in 1919 announced that the practice of 'week-ending' had come to stay and said that it sometimes affected the size of congregations. He asked whether

33 Robert A. Dallen, N.S.W. Cong., Sept. 1924.
37 S.A.C.Y.B., 1925-6, p. 38.
provision could be made for worship by week-enders at the seaside and in the hills.  

The reaction against Puritanism by church-goers reached deep into the intimacies of personal relations. The world, among other things, had stood for sexual enjoyment. Until the very end of the nineteenth century the Protestant clergy in Australia had taught, more implicitly than explicitly, that the only purpose of sexual intercourse was procreation. Ministers almost universally regarded contraception as immoral and abortion as quasi-murder. But in Australia about the turn of the century, and indeed in other parts of the Western world, for the first time couples 'began effectively to please themselves about the results of their sexual behaviour'. Australian women who finished their childbearing in 1891 had on average slightly over seven children; those who began their childbearing in 1911 had slightly under four children. Obviously, many church-goers were loosening the tie between sex and procreation. The scope and significance of this new attitude to the flesh is hard to assess but it was surely profound and ought to be seen as part of a general re-evaluation of the world. The decline in the birth rate was seen by the New South Wales Royal Commission inquiring into the matter as tending 'to undermine the morality of the people, to loosen the bonds of religion, and to obliterate the influence of those higher sentiments and sanctions for


40 *ibid.*, p. 269.

conduct with which the development of high national character has ever been associated. Defenders of the Puritan Sabbath used much the same language.

Congregationalists may have been in the vanguard of church people who were reappraising the world. It is true they had their 'wowsers' - the epithet bestowed by their enemies upon those who fought to maintain the old standards. James Mirams, a Victorian Congregationalist, is supposed to have been the original model for cartoonists who drew the wowser. But generally speaking, and putting aside the Church of England as a special case, wowserism in the early twentieth century does not seem to have been as strong in Congregationalism as in other Protestant denominations. The various Congregational Unions had their social questions committees which ritually expressed anxiety about drink, gambling, the Sabbath and prostitution, but I suspect this concern was relatively muted. A young Congregationalist, discussing the problem of denominational identity in 1892, said that though being a Congregationalist did not mean much to young people yet they were thankful that Congregationalists were allowed more amusements than Baptists and were not as straight-laced as Presbyterians. It is also interesting that taking Australia as a whole, Congregationalists cut the size of their families fastest of all the denominations and


43 Eg. Rev. Dr. L. Rentoul, quoted in Serle, Rush to Be Rich, p. 156. McLeod, Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City, pp. 242-6 discusses religious change and contraception in the English setting.

44 Dunstan, Wowsers, pp. 1-2.

45 A.Z.I., Aug. 1892.
and that in 1911 in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia their families were on average the smallest. If Congregationalists were more deeply touched by the new attitude to the world it would not be surprising. There were no Congregational walls behind which the garden of evangelical Protestantism could be preserved. Congregationalists as a group were better educated than the adherents of other denominations and relatively well equipped to take a critical stance towards the values of the past; many of them were also affluent and thus able to amuse themselves with pleasures earlier evangelicals had spurned as well as some they had never dreamed of; there was no official statement of Congregational beliefs to act as a brake upon those seeking change; the churches collectively lacked a sense of identity.

Whether or not Congregationalists were in the vanguard of the movement to reassess the world in Australian Protestantism, it is easy to see the appeal to them of the new religious ideas. Ever since the late 1870's a gap had been widening between the low view of the world in evangelical doctrine and the attitudes of many Congregationalists. The new religious ideas on the other hand were congruent with the new ethos. The Rev. Alfred Depledge Sykes, to cite an extreme case, wanted the Christian 'to face the truth in his own soul and formulate his own creed' without any reliance upon 'propositional theology, standardized, controlling faith, backed by the authority of the church'.

46 In S.A. the percentage decrease in the size of Congregational families was not as great as that of Anglican, Methodist or Baptist families. In S.A., however, the size of Congregational families in 1891 was considerably smaller than the Australian average for the denomination. The Congregational percentage decrease in S.A. was therefore not as great as elsewhere. See Appendix 5.

47 Observer, 20 July 1907, p. 55.
the kind of thing which Congregationalists wishing to throw off various restraints upon their lives increasingly wanted to hear. They also wanted to hear that the world was a good place and not a vale of tears, without benefit of God's light. And this was one of the leading principles of the new generation of ministers. Again to take an extreme case to bring out the salient characteristic, the Rev. G.S. Brett, the minister who had a difficult time at Brighton, told his congregation one Sunday that the old way of seeing the relationship between church and world was 'foolish nonsense'.

The old plan of salvation invented by proud churchmen is an insult to God and to man. The plan of salvation which unfolds itself in the consciousness of every truth-seeking man is as clear as the noon-day sun.48 Note the denial of the distinction between church and world. Here was a theology to justify a revolt against evangelical religion.

But why should such a revolt have occurred at all? And why should it have occurred in the late nineteenth century?

One possible approach is to ask why evangelical religion gained a hold in the first place and to inquire whether the earlier conditions passed away in the late nineteenth century. Historians have made some interesting guesses about these matters. It has been argued that those who converted to evangelical religion tended to be more than ordinarily anxious people and that their anxiety was conceivably related to the social dislocation in England during the period of the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars and the beginnings of industrialization. Although evangelical preachers were active from the mid-eighteenth century, it was not for almost another fifty years that evangelicalism began to make headway within the middle and upper

48 Church News (Brighton), Jan. 1909.
classes attached to the established church. It also appears that the character cultivated by evangelicals within and without the Church of England was well adapted to the needs of a society beginning to harness the machine. Evangelical religion fostered sobriety, seriousness, high endeavour, punctuality, honesty. Therefore, it may be surmised, those who were making the new England welcomed evangelical religion even when they may not have been inclined to accept it in their hearts. The decline of evangelical religion can be explained along the same lines. As England regained social stability in the 1850's there was less anxiety and accordingly the appeal of vital religion diminished. Moreover, it might be argued, once English people had adjusted themselves to the routines of the factory system and new controls had been established, there was less need for the sanctions of evangelicalism.

This explanation may be broadly correct. Nevertheless a lot more research remains to be done, especially of a comparative kind, and further work may leave this hypothesis looking far less plausible. Other western countries experienced revivals at about the same time as England. Can these revivals be so conveniently linked with the application of machine power to production and the flooding of people from the country into the cities? And if they cannot, what happens to the theory in relation to England?

There is another way of looking at the diminishing hold of

49 The above is largely a summary of the argument developed by Bradley, The Call to Seriousness, esp. pp. 32-3, 52-6. A.D. Gilbert, Religion and Society in Industrial England, London, 1976, has also linked the rise and fall of evangelicalism with the onset and maturing of the industrial revolution.

50 McLeod, Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City, pp. 284-5.
evangelicalism upon the middle and upper classes. It is advantageous to take a much longer time perspective than is usual in discussing the decline of the churches. It is common to contrast the incidence of church attendance today with the much higher rates of the nineteenth century. Unless we look further back it is easy to fall into the trap of asking the wrong question. If our eyes are fixed on the mid-nineteenth century we will naturally ask for an explanation of the weakness of the churches today. But in the long view the real problem may well be the popularity of the churches in mid-Victorian Britain. Late eighteenth century English religious statistics are defective but it appears that in many places fewer than fifteen per cent of the population were regular attendants or communicants of the Church of England; by the 1960's thirteen or fourteen per cent were attending Anglican churches. If increases in the membership of the Nonconformist and Catholic churches are taken into account there appears to be no significant difference. It is possible then that the decline of the churches in the last one hundred years or so ought to be regarded as no more than a fluctuation - a return to normal levels after the boom of the Evangelical Revival. The evangelicals succeeded for a time in getting their countrymen to conform to their code. But the world will have its way, eventually.


Prima facie nothing seems more obvious than that Congregationalists became less religious - or more 'secularized' - as they slackened their church involvement, substituted a doctrinal chaos for the consensus of the 1870's and increasingly smiled on the world. But there is need for caution. It is easy to fall into misconceptions.

As much as nineteenth century nonconformists, some twentieth century historians and sociologists have assumed that it is proper to drive a wedge between the church and the world. Yet if we begin with the presupposition that there is no point of contact between the church and the world, then by definition an accommodating attitude to the world is irreligious. Yet whether one is a believer or not it is possible to see the church as an extension of the world. Whereas from one point of view the church is the alternative to the world, from the other it is an attempt to baptize it. It can thus be argued that what one English Congregationalist called 'The Secularisation of the Church' ought to be regarded as nothing of the sort; rather the movement was towards a redefinition of the relationship between church and world. The old simple understanding certainly seemed increasingly inadequate. In 1909 the Rev. Walter Mathison told the New South Wales Union that the problem was 'to get a true and adequate conception of what the world is'. Congregationalists had learned, he said,

the futility of drawing a line and determining that all on the one side of it is worldly and all on the other spiritual ... [and] have seen that worldliness is a spirit, which overpasses

53 The address, by G.S. Barrett, from the chair of the English Congregational Union in 1894, is referred to by Inglis, Churches and Working Classes, p. 75.
all boundaries, which may invade the very
sanctuary, which may dwell at Clapham as well as
in Mayfair.54

An even more dangerous misconception is to assume that the
religion of the churches is religion tout court.55 Once this assumption
is made the institutional decline of the Congregational churches - an
indubitable historical fact - becomes conclusive evidence of religious
decline amongst Congregationalists. But this identification of
religion with the churches is a grievous mistake. A distinction between
personal religion and church religion may help to make this plain.

Personal religion covers the sense of the transcendent and
the way in which this informs daily living. It is meant to include
those ecstatic or out of the ordinary experiences which are given a
religious interpretation. It is also meant to include vaguer feelings
about the existence of a transcendent order. At the very least it
implies belief in the supernatural. The ethical element in personal
religion may be expected to vary from individual to individual but it
is most unlikely to be absent in the personal religion of anyone who
has grown up in contact with the Judaeo-Christian tradition.

Church religion is a term referring to the religion of
individuals in so far as they are participants in the life of a
religious group. Typically the group is the small one of the local
church but it may be the much larger one of the denomination. In the
ideal case, speaking now from the point of view of the churches, there
is a high degree of overlap between personal and church religion.
Thus church leaders often hope that the individual will have a sense

54  A.C.W., 4 June 1909.

55  For a trenchant criticism of this error, see
T. Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion*, New York,
1967, ch. 1.
of the transcendent as he or she participates in the worship of the
group. Needless to say this can not be assumed to happen all of the
time with every individual or indeed any of the time with others.

Plainly after about 1880 the personal religion of Australian
Congregationalists became more weakly associated with church religion.
There was a decrease in church involvement both in the numbers of
Congregationalists in regular contact with their churches and in the
frequency and quality of that contact. Church discipline of the
individual, already very weak in the 1870's, virtually disappeared.
The doctrinal consensus of earlier times almost completely broke down.
But these developments are not reliable evidence of the waning of
personal religion of Australian Congregationalists.

It is quite illegitimate, though some scholars have done so,
to count the breakdown of doctrinal conformity as evidence of the
waning of personal religion. The critics of church dogmas were
sometimes religiously motivated. Mr. Justice Higinbotham, in a famous
lecture delivered in Melbourne in 1883, urged his fellow colonists to
reject the ancient creeds of their churches, yet he wanted them to
embrace not atheism, but a more personal faith in God. 56 The anonymous
author who disputed with the Rev. George Clarke about Robert Elsmere
was also a deeply religious person despite the severity of his attack
on the New Testament miracles. Clarke's critic argued that it was
demeaning the nature of God to think of him as acting spontaneously,
except in the realm of people's inner lives. The main argument against

56 G. Higinbotham, Science and Religion or the Relations of
Modern Science with the Christian Churches. A Lecture,
Melbourne, 1883. G.M. Dow, George Higinbotham: Church
and State, Melbourne, 1964, p. 7, notes that he was a
religious man to the end of his life and was apparently
never attracted to agnosticism.
miracles, for this person, proceeded not from any spirit of agnosticism but 'from the deep heart of religious faith itself'. A contributor to the Victorian Review in 1880 wrote in a similar vein that the critics of the churches continued to be interested in the 'great problems of existence' and that it was 'both superficial and false to suppose that abstention from religious services' indicated 'increasing irreligiousness'.

Are we to say then that despite the institutional decline of the Congregational churches the personal religion of Congregationalists was unaffected? Hardly; we may not assume that the Congregational pool of religiosity remained at a constant level any more than we may assume that it was inevitably and progressively drained. We need to inquire whether personal religion can flourish unless a firm institutional line is drawn between the believer and the world and unless personal religion is supported by a strong church religion. Maybe research in this area will present insuperable difficulties; after all, even when attention is restricted to such a small religious group as the Congregationalists, we are dealing with thousands of persons, very few of whom have left records of their inner lives. But not to ask the right questions or to assume that we know the answers will prove even less profitable.


No one was more identified with the success or failure of a Congregational church than its minister. There were nearly always others who had a longer association, in some cases reaching back to parents or grandparents who had sung and prayed and listened to other ministers, perhaps half a century before. But if church income declined other members did not face financial disaster as did the minister. And the minister had a special responsibility as spiritual leader and paid servant of the church. Its condition, therefore, tended to be regarded as a measure of his worth.

Ministers whose churches were in difficulties generally did not talk publicly about their feelings. But occasionally there were glimpses. Christian ministers, said the Rev. Ernest Davies in 1913, were full of care.

... middle age [is] threatened by fading hopes and starved ideals; old age by the heartbreak of a ministry more or less tolerated, and the dread of living too long ... So nigh to dust is our grandeur, an unkind word hurts us, a slight destroys our peace, and a thin attendance at church drives slumber from our eyelids. We count our ministry by its losses, and the family that leaves us haunts us.¹

Davies, himself, found church meetings a special hardship. Often he returned from them near tears.² Other ministers found that criticism of them was often ventilated then. Percival Watson claimed that he had known fellow ministers for whom the church meeting was 'a perpetual nightmare of horror and apprehension'.

¹ Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, Volumes of Proceedings, 1913, p. 93.
² M. Davies, autobiographical reminiscences, p. 126.
I have known a minister miserable for days before his Church meeting, ill on the day of its occurrence, and prostrate afterwards. (This is no exaggeration, I could give the name.) And why? Simply because the meeting was under the domination of one or two men or women of ungovernable self-assertion, men who say and do mean, sneaking, cruel things in the name of what they call their 'principles' that even a man without any principles ought to be ashamed of. Every minister and every member who loves the Church knows and has suffered at the hands of this type of person.3

The Rev. E. Tremayne Dunstan, a man disposed to self-dramatization, was unusual in being prepared to speak about some of his anxieties in the church paper. He was minister at Pitt Street between 1895 and 1902, a period when the church was struggling with the consequences of the drift of families to the new suburbs. In the Watchman the pastor referred from time to time to the stress he felt. On one occasion he wrote that he had taken a holiday in the Blue Mountains just in time—otherwise he would have had a breakdown.4

It is likely that Congregational ministers in the 1890's and 1900's experienced increasing anxiety about their performance. As church members became increasingly reluctant to discharge their responsibilities, the minister probably had to shoulder more of the blame for failures. A leader in the Victorian Independent in 1894 spoke of widespread dissatisfaction with the present relations between churches and ministers. The writer did not elaborate on the nature of the dissatisfaction, except to say that there had been 'disappointments'

3 S.A.C.Y.B., 1913, p. 42.
4 Watchman, 21 Dec. 1895.
concerning the performance of individual ministers.\(^5\) Such disappointments may lie behind a report in the *Australasian Independent* in 1900 that there had been a spate of ministerial breakdowns\(^6\) and such disappointments may have become more common. But the sources allow only conjecture.

We are on much firmer ground when we examine another source of anxiety - money. There can be little doubt that from the late 1880's the real value of what Congregationalists paid their ministers was reduced. As stipends were already meagre, life in the manse became very hard.

It is impossible to be precise about the extent of the decline. So far as I am aware no Union official ever made a detailed survey of stipends, and large gaps in the extant records make this impossible today. Nevertheless some comparisons are possible.

Until the depression of the 1890's a handful of Congregational ministers were handsomely paid. D.J. Hamer and Llewelyn Bevan at Collins Street Melbourne, for example, received £1,450 per annum, plus an £800 allowance to cover the expenses of the trip from England.\(^7\) But most stipends were slender even at the height of the boom. In 1889 about a third of Melbourne ministers received over £300 per annum,\(^8\) which,

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5 July 1894. See K.C. Dempsey, 'Minister-Lay Relationships in a Methodist Country Community', *St. Mark's Review*, Aug. 1971, pp. 14, 17. Dempsey notes how in the 'Barool' church in N.S.W. the laity have withdrawn increasingly from leadership in church life and how the burden upon the minister has become more pronounced. He reports that by the 1950's the 'notion that "as we pay the minister we should be able to tell him what to do" was ... quite widespread'.

6 April 1900.


8 Deduced from information in unsigned article, 'Pastoral Stipends in the Melbourne Churches', *V.I.*, Feb. 1896.
according to some Congregational spokesmen, was the minimum desirable stipend.⁹ As country ministers in all three colonies got less than city ones, in the 1880's the proportion of all ministers earning over £300 must have been somewhat lower than a third.

In all three colonies, but especially in Victoria, the depression of the 1890's reduced the income of church-goers and ministers were expected to share in this general misfortune. The cuts in stipends in Melbourne were savage. In 1896 the average stipend of ten of the better-paid ministers was nearly 40 per cent less than it had been at the height of the boom. Four Melbourne ministers, with full-time pastoral charges, received less that £150.¹⁰ A leading article in the Victorian Independent, probably written by the Union secretary, J.J. Halley, conceded that some reductions in stipends had been inevitable, yet denied that the extent of the cuts could in every case be justified. The writer claimed that there were churches where the stipend had been reduced while the congregations had actually increased. "Not a few ministers" were suffering 'great hardships'. He was worried as much about the future as the present condition of stipends. He pointed to the delicacy of the question and to the unwillingness of ministers to agitate for an increase. Initiative had therefore to come from church people, yet they might prove negligent about raising stipends when good times returned. 'It is easy to reduce stipends but often terribly hard to raise them again'.¹¹ It appears that, as the writer feared, the stipends of Melbourne ministers did fail to regain their old levels with the gradual return of prosperity.

The Rev. A.R. Stephenson complained in 1902 that in only eight out of

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⁹ V.I., May 1888; N.S.W.C.Y.B., 1888, p. 79.
¹⁰ V.I., Feb. 1896.
¹¹ ibid.
twenty-six of the city's Congregational churches were ministers receiving sufficient to support a family. Ministers had not spoken in this way before the depression. Stephenson's courageous comment is therefore an indication of a deterioration in their financial situation.

The cuts in stipends, consequent upon the depression, were probably less severe in Sydney and Adelaide, and in the provincial centres of all three colonies. Nevertheless, the general level of stipends was very low in the early years of this century. In 1914 a labourer in the New South Wales public service was paid £156 per annum, a carpenter £190, clerks £130-300. In 1911 nearly half the Congregational ministers in New South Wales were receiving less than £185 per annum. In Victoria at this time the bulk of ministers were paid less than £175. Presumably the situation in South Australia was much the same, because in 1913 the Union there decided that the minimum stipend ought to be £200 in Adelaide and £170 in the country. As a general rule churches did not provide a manse.

Inflation made matters much worse. The purchasing power of the pound declined only slightly between 1901 and 1907; but in the next thirteen years, it was reduced by more than half. Churches were slow to raise stipends and in some cases more than a decade of high

12 V.I., Jan. 1902.
A.R. Stephenson, M.A., was educated at Melbourne and London Universities. For nearly twenty years from 1899 he was pastor at the East St. Kilda church, Melbourne.


inflation went by without there being any adjustment in salary. The pastor of the Milton church in New South Wales received £170 per annum until pressure from the Home Mission Board secured an increase in 1920. He was reputedly the worst-paid minister in New South Wales, but in the other two states, where the Home Mission boards were less effective in raising stipends, there were others worse off. In 1921 the Rev. Jesse Mayo of the East Melbourne church received £105 including a grant from Home Mission funds. Small wonder that a young Congregational minister commented that the Church was in no position to help reform society until it had put its own house in order:

> How can a Church that sweats its own ministers, that pays starvation salaries, that looks with equanimity on Lazarus in the Church Manse - how can such a Church protest in the name of justice against that which she herself is guilty of ... an address from the Church on the need of social reform to those who know [about stipends], is about as effective as an address from the Devil on the beauty of personal morality.

Even when the stipend was relatively large life in the manse was sometimes very hard. The Davies family, for example, after they had paid the rent, had less than £6 a week left from a stipend of £350. Their landlord was helpful, but the house was too small, the facilities primitive - there was no ice chest - and Ernest Davies could not afford a maid to help his wife. Mrs. Davies was always tired.

> ... all those 14 long difficult years in Hawthorn Lou nursed, cooked, mended and sewed for a family

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17 La L MSS, 9239, 55/5, Answer by East Melbourne Church to Union Questionnaire, 1921.

There was not enough money to clothe the children properly. Maynard, one of the boys, remembered that his mother wept for shame when a wealthy church family took him to town and bought him a new suit at Buckley and Nunn's. Nor was there enough for food. The only occasions when Maynard had a whole egg for breakfast were the two mornings when he sat for a secondary school entrance scholarship, during his last year at the state primary school. Normally the father had an egg for breakfast; the children, by turns, had the top.20

The Augustine people were not totally unfeeling in their treatment of their minister. They insured his life for £5,000 when he began his pastorate, met the instalments while he was there and presented him with the policy when he left to go to the Homebush church in Sydney. Only a few Congregational churches then provided for their minister's old age.21 In 1914 the Augustine church also paid for Davies to travel to England as an Australian delegate to the International Congregational Council.22 But the fellowship refrained from raising the stipend, the only way of alleviating the suffering in the manse. Yet it was not for want of money. During Ernest Davies' last year at Augustine, Sir William McPherson offered to donate £850, on condition that the other members of the congregation would between them give the same to clear the church debt. The offering on Sunday 25 June 1922 was £1,786/15/4.23

19 E. Davies, typescript autobiographical reminiscences, p. 11.
20 M. Davies, autobiographical reminiscences, pp. 34-5.
22 M. Davies, reminiscences, pp. 23-4.
It is obvious that many ministers could not support their families solely from their stipends. Doubtless some supplemented their incomes by taking part-time jobs, although I have not seen any records of a local church which frankly declared this to have been happening. Other additional sources of income were baptism, wedding and burial fees. Of these three the wedding fee was probably the most important.

In the late nineteenth century the governments of the Australian colonies set no limits to the number of weddings which could be celebrated by a licensed minister. A Congregational minister was also free of control in this regard by any central religious authority. The only limits to how many times he was paid the marriage fee were the availability of customers and what his conscience, or that of his church, could stand.

In South Australia Congregational ministers consistently celebrated over 5 per cent of all weddings, although the number of Congregational adherents was always less than 4 per cent and had fallen to 2.4 per cent by 1933. In New South Wales and Victoria Congregational ministers also earned wedding fees from non-Congregationalists. But in these two colonies the number of such weddings fluctuated greatly.

Matrimonial agencies were set up in New South Wales and Victoria in the mid-1890's. These gained some of their business by introducing couples to one another but probably their main appeal lay elsewhere: by hiring clergymen the agencies were able to offer a religious wedding, yet their rates were much lower than the ordinary

24 South Australian Statistical Registers.
church wedding. Under the impact of the matrimonial agencies, the proportion of New South Wales weddings celebrated by Congregational ministers was cut by more than half. In Victoria the decline was not so sharp, and within a decade the number of 'Congregational' marriages reached new heights. Between 1904 and 1908 the average was 11.2 per cent of total marriages, and in 1909 there was the highest ever, 14.4 per cent - this when Congregational adherents were less than 1.5 per cent of the Victorian population. Yet Congregational ministers as a whole never won back business from the matrimonial agencies; these figures in Victoria resulted, it seems, solely from the employment by agencies of one or two Congregational ministers.

The matrimonial agencies were closed in New South Wales in 1907 and in Victoria in 1909 - following government action against them. Some of the ministers who took over, where the agencies had been forced to leave off, were Congregationalists. This was so especially in New South Wales. Between 18 June 1910 and 17 September 1910 the Rev. F.B. Cowling of the Ocean Street, Woollahra, church in Sydney celebrated 92 weddings. In the previous eight months he had celebrated seven. Between 1907 and 1910 an average of 610 marriages annually were performed at the Whitefield's Congregational chapel. A leading figure here was the Rev. E. Tremayne Dunstan who, in 1902, had fled Sydney after committing various frauds when he was minister at Pitt Street,

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25 W.J. Evans reported that the agencies charged 7/6, as against two or three guineas by the clergy; *Parl. Debates* (Vic.) 1908, Vol. 119, p. 323. This point is apparently overlooked by P.F. McDonald; see his *Marriage in Australia*, Canberra, 1974, p. 149.

26 *Victorian Year Book*, 1909-10, p. 300. The figures on 'Congregational' marriages are from the statistics published in the government year books, supplemented by *New South Wales Vital Statistics*, 1911.


28 ML MSS, 1301, 12, Marriage Register books of Ocean Street church.
including theft from the church funds. Albert Rivett was another who 'ministered' at Whitefield's. Rivett resigned his charge at Albury in 1908, came to Sydney and, working mainly at the Protestant Hall - he does not seem to have joined Whitefield's for some months at least - celebrated 1,010 marriages in eighteen months.

The number of 'Congregational' weddings in New South Wales was brought back to the pre-1907 level by 1914. It is possible that the Registrar-General used the same discretionary power employed to close the matrimonial agencies, by either admonishing those who were celebrating inordinate numbers of weddings, or actually revoking licences. In Victoria the Registrar-General did not have this discretionary power, nor was it given him by the Marriage Act of 1909 which closed the agencies. The act only prohibited weddings being celebrated by ministers not exercising the normal duties of a clergyman. Consequently, some Congregational ministers (and others) were able to celebrate large numbers of weddings with impunity. The Roman Catholic archbishop of Melbourne in 1911 complained about the numbers of weddings celebrated by some Protestant ministers. But, as the Registrar-General's department reported, the Marriage Act was not actually breached. The number of 'Congregational' marriages in Victoria did not decline substantially until the late 1920's.

There is a distinction to be drawn between the period of exceptional activity in the period before the First World War and the

29 N.S.W.C.Y.B., 1903, p. 54; ML MSS, 2093/2, Pitt Street Deacons' Meeting Minutes, meetings of 21, 28 July 1902.

30 La L MSS, 9239, 28, Scrapbook 1910-11, newspaper cutting, unidentified.

31 Age, 17 April 1911, cutting in La L MSS, 9239, 28, Scrapbook 1910-11.
general high level of 'Congregational' marriages. For over half a century, in South Australia and Victoria, the proportion of Congregational marriages was double what might have been expected from the numerical strength of the denomination. Plainly, this level was maintained for so long not by broken men employed by matrimonial agencies or black sheep like Dunstan, but by the great majority of Congregational ministers. They celebrated the weddings of non-Congregationalists for money, but did so in tens rather than hundreds.

When I began to study possible changes in the Congregational ministry from the 1880's, I assumed that there must have been a decrease in the length of pastorates. My reasons were simple. Firstly, there was the testimony of contemporaries. Alexander Gosman as an old man in 1909 contrasted the pastorates of that day with an earlier time when 'the subtle and tender sympathy' between pastor and people had a chance to develop. According to E.S. Kiek, the newly appointed principal of Parkin College, South Australian Congregationalists in 1922 were changing their ministers more often than Methodists - that is, less than every three years. There were many others who made similar comments. A

32 V.I., Feb. 1909.
33 S.A. Cong., March 1922.
34 Eg. Mr. H. Sheffield, V.I., Aug. 1881; G. Clarke, Behind and Before. A Jubilee Sermon preached before the Congregational Union of Tasmania in Christ Church, Launceston, June, 1890, Launceston, n.d., pp. 7-8; S.H. Cox, Seventy Years 1855-1925 Being an Outline of the History of the Bourke Street Congregational Church Sydney ..., Sydney, n.d., p. 33.
second reason for expecting pastorates to have shortened was a priori likelihood that ministers and churches might seek to end the pastoral relationship more quickly when there was mutual dissatisfaction. On the one hand, churches were probably increasingly disappointed in the performance of ministers; on the other, ministers had increased incentive to look elsewhere for better stipends.

The reality is more complex. From the late nineteenth century there developed a strong movement to facilitate the exchange of ministers between churches. If it had achieved its object, it would inevitably have led to shorter pastorates. But, despite the best of intentions on the part of the Unions, nothing happened.

The South Australian Congregational Union seems to have been the first in Australia to establish a body to facilitate pastoral transfers. This was the three member Ministers' Board of Advice set up in 1880. An Advisory Committee was established in New South Wales in 1896, with the object of giving confidential advice to churches with vacant pastorates, or in relation to any disputes. The Victorian Union was even slower to move; the first meeting of its Advisory Board was not held until November 1916. By then a more radical measure was being considered. The 1916 assembly of the Australasian Union approved in principle the desirability of appointing a Commissioner, one of whose main functions would be to facilitate pastoral exchanges. Nothing came of this idea, but that such a serious departure from the

36 N.S.W.C.Y.B., 1897, pp. 48-9, 56.
37 La L MSS, 9239, 7/1, Advisory Board minute book.
traditional polity could even be considered indicates the extent of unrest about the length of pastorates.

Much of the pressure came from the ministers themselves. The discussions about a Commissioner in 1916, for example, followed a survey of ministers which suggested that many wanted to move but could not. But churches also had reason to favour a faster circulation. Churches could, and did, force their ministers out either by asking for their resignation or, more subtly, by reducing collections. But probably these were in a minority. Many churches bore with their ministers out of charity. And sometimes they had much to endure. 'There are men in our ministry', commented a South Australian Congregationalist, 'who would be out of it tomorrow if they knew how to get any sort of living; and there are men who would be better out of it, who are a drag upon it, and who will never be anything else'.

The continuing concern with the problem of pastoral transfers suggests that pastorates were not shortening to the extent alleged by Principal Kiek. This impression is confirmed in a striking manner by figures derived from an examination of the lists of ministers and churches published in the denominational year books. Table 9.1 shows the average length of pastorates, at selected times, between 1880 and 1939. Perhaps the only pattern discernible is that pastorates were usually longer in South Australia. The dominant impression is of random fluctuations, which, incidentally, explain why some observers were misled. Certainly the figures provide no support for the supposition

39 ML MSS, 3145, 2, Rev. A.J. Griffith's 'Abstract of Ministers' Answers to Questions, January 1916'.

40 Federal Independent, 1 Sept. 1922; Rev. A. Rivett.

41 'Congregationalism from Within', S.A. Cong., April 1915.
Table 9.1: Average Length of Pastorates of Ordained Congregational Ministers in South-eastern Australia, 1880-1938

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<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>9.0</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: 1. The average length of current pastorates in specified years was calculated and then doubled. The assumption of the table, therefore, is that on average ministers were half-way through their pastorates.

2. The South Australian figures for 1880 and 1890 slightly underestimate the averages in those years. The available information was incomplete.

Source: Denominational year books.

...that pastorates were continually shortening. There is almost no difference between the position in 1880 and that a half-century later.

Did Congregational ministers respond to worsening conditions by resigning in increasing numbers? The Unions did not publish annual statistics on resignations from the Congregational ministry (or recruitment from other denominations). But it is possible to gain a reasonably accurate impression of what happened by examining the annual ministerial lists with an eye to those who disappeared. This procedure has its limitations; it is possible that any particular minister missing from Australian lists had returned home to England, transferred to a pastorate in New Zealand, or died. Nevertheless, among men who had not been long in the ministry in Australia, say less than fifteen years, there would be only a small proportion whose resignations were more apparent than real.

Among men who began their ministry in Australia between 1899 and 1903 (including both those who were ordained in Australia during these years and those who were ordained elsewhere, possibly before 1899),
63.7 per cent were no longer exercising a pastoral ministry in Australia in 1916 (table 9.2). After making allowance for death and transfer to Congregational churches outside Australia, it would still seem that at least half had resigned from the Congregational ministry.

This very high rate of resignation was not a response to the inflation that eroded the value of stipends early this century; resignations were as frequent before the period of very high inflation. This high 'wastage' of ministers, whatever economic conditions prevailed, suggests that resignations were primarily the consequence of Congregational polity. The Unions were unable to guarantee employment; and it is probable that many men were forced out of the Congregational ministry because they could not find a suitable position.

How many of those leaving the Congregational ministry took up secular pursuits and how many became ministers of other denominations?

Table 9.2: 'Wastage' of Congregational Ministers in South-eastern Australia, 1868-1938
(proportion of ministers not exercising pastoral duties in Australia in connection with the denomination fifteen years after the beginning of their ministry)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period in which ministry began</th>
<th>Per cent wastage after fifteen years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1868-72</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886-90</td>
<td>58.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899-1903</td>
<td>63.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910-14</td>
<td>50.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-25</td>
<td>48.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Denominational year books.

Ministerial lists were examined 15 years from the mid-point of the 5 year recruitment period.
The only contemporary investigation of which I know was conducted in South Australia and published in 1890. An analysis was made of resignations among all those who had exercised a ministry within the denomination since the foundation of the colony. There are a number of reservations that need to be placed on the figures derived from this analysis: they are not necessarily accurate; they may not be representative of what happened in New South Wales and Victoria (resignations appear to have been more frequent in these two colonies); and the situation after 1890 may have been substantially different. Yet they are of value as purporting to be derived from an exhaustive examination. Of the 106 men who were ministers in South Australia between 1837 and 1890, four had withdrawn from the ministry altogether by the end of this period, two had gone to the Church of England as clergymen, three to the Presbyterians and two to the Baptists. Thus over half those who left the denomination continued as ministers. 43

The report on the South Australian survey gave no information on those who passed from the ministry altogether. Probably journalism and school-teaching were among the most favoured occupations. It would be interesting to know whether there were many for whom the Congregational ministry turned out to be a stepping stone to a better-paid, more prestigious position.

It is noteworthy that not one of these South Australian ministers joined any of the Methodist bodies. In this respect these figures are probably typical of what happened later and in the other colonies. Between 1888 and 1938 the New South Wales denominational year books reveal on eleven occasions the denomination which a

43 A.I.Y.B., 1891, pp. 210-1. The report does not say explicitly that those joining other denominations did so as ministers but this is implied.
Congregational minister joined. Of these eleven ministers nine went to the Presbyterians and two to the Church of England. On the other hand, Congregational churches recruited from the Methodists. In the same half-century, of the four cases cited of transfer from other denominations two were ex-Methodists and two were ex-Baptists. At least three Congregational ministers to achieve denominational prominence in Victoria were ex-Methodists - J. Rickard, D. Gunson and A.E. Gifford.

Statistics on recruitment show more variation than those on resignations. Men were recruited at a slower rate early this century than they had been in the 1880's (table 9.3). This change tends to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1868-72</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886-90</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899-1903</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910-14</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921-25</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Denominational year books.

support those Union leaders who claimed that the shortage of ministers was retarding church extension. But the extent of the decline can easily be exaggerated. Recruitment, in fact, held up very well, all things considered. Firstly, the total number of ministers increased between 1890 and 1930, though the number of adherents decreased (table 9.4). Secondly, the supply of British ministers dried up during

44 W.L. Patison was a notable exponent of this view. See Congregational Union of New South Wales, Home Mission Board. Annual Report and Balance Sheet, 1904-1930, passim.
Table 9.4: Number of Ordained Congregational Ministers in South-eastern Australia, 1890, 1930

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1930</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Denominational year books.

This period. And thirdly, the average length of ministry (the period since ordination) does not seem to have been any higher in 1930 than fifty years earlier. Whereas between 1874 and 1903 this increased substantially in New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, in the next three decades, in South Australia at least, there was a decrease (table 9.5). If the average length of ministry offers a guide to the ages of ministers, it could be concluded that probably some time after 1900 the Congregational ministry received many younger men.

Table 9.5: Average Length of Ministries in South-eastern Australia, 1874, 1903, 1929

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1874</th>
<th>1903</th>
<th>1929</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Australia</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Denominational year books.

45 ibid., 1911, pp. 5-6.

46 I have seen no evidence that men became ministers any later or earlier in their lives between 1870 and 1939.
But did the Congregational ministry cease to attract the better class of man? There were complaints in the 1910's and 1920's about a decline in the quality of ministers. Yet it would be unwise to accept this evidence at face value. There were always complaints. In 1883 the secretary of the New South Wales Union wrote to his Victorian counterpart:

Without meaning any disrespect to the body, I do say that many men occupying our pulpits are incompetent & never likely to succeed & will never inspire our young men with any liking for our churches or respect for religion.

There are other grounds for caution. J.D. Jones, the English Congregationalist who visited Australia in 1914, formed 'a very high opinion' of Australian Congregational ministers. Further, the educational qualifications of ministers do not seem to have declined. Among those recruited to the ministry in South Australia between 1919 and 1929, a higher proportion had received a college or university training than fifty years earlier and about the same proportion university degrees (table 9.6).

Veiled references were occasionally made to a deterioration in the quality of the Congregational ministry in consequence of the admission


48 La L MSS, 9239, 1/1, Inwards Correspondence 1842-85, Robert W. Hardie to J.J. Halley, 30 Aug. 1883.

49 ML MSS, 3145, 1, 'Notes on Visitation of the Churches of Australasia by Rev J.D. Jones ...' handwritten in packet of documents labelled 'Documents relating to the Visit of Dr J.D. Jones etc 1914'.
Table 9.6: Training and Educational Status of Persons Recruited to the Congregational Ministry in Australia, 1868-1929

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period in which ministry began</th>
<th>Those with theological college or university training per cent</th>
<th>Those with university degrees per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1868-72</td>
<td>40.9</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886-90</td>
<td>50.0</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1899-1903</td>
<td>42.4</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919-29 (S.A. only)</td>
<td>56.5</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Denominational year books.

of ex-Methodists. This claim is also falsified when heads are counted. I have discovered only five ministers serving in Congregational churches in south-eastern Australia in 1929 whose names appeared on lists of Methodist ministers in the preceding decade and a half.

Taking together the evidence regarding length of pastorates, resignations and recruitment, the striking feature is how much remained the same. The changes in the Congregational ministry were too small, it would seem, to be regarded as more than minor causes of the decline of the Congregational churches. And if the slackening of church involvement was bound to change the character of the Congregational ministry in the long run, there was a considerable time lag.

By the early twentieth century, there were many features of Congregational church life to trouble a thoughtful minister. Congregationalists, as evangelical Protestants, had drawn their spiritual

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50 The draft report of the Victorian commission cited in n. 47 above provides an example.
sustenance from the Bible. But by the end of the nineteenth century many within the denomination were unable to read the Bible in the old way. If the Bible was not in all parts the infallible word of God, in which parts was it literally true, in which not, and in what sense did it constitute an authority in matters of religion and morals? This question of the Bible was vital not least because children had to be instructed in Christian belief. To pretend that nothing had happened risked the total rejection of the Bible as a religious authority by many young people susceptible to the spirit of the age. Even nearer the heart of evangelical religion, the need was just as great. Those Congregationalists who had grown up in the 1860's and 1870's had been taught that salvation by the blood of Christ was the essence of the Gospel; yet by the 1890's some Congregationalists were denying that this was so. If the substitutionary doctrine of the atonement was to be dispensed with, what was the Gospel?

Elsewhere, too, there were other questions, not so momentous, but still worrying. By the early twentieth century many church members were only nominal and had proved themselves deaf to appeals for greater 'spirituality'. What was to be done about them? And did not the largeness of their numbers - maybe over a third of all members - raise the even more awkward question of whether the ideal of the gathered church ought to be abandoned? And did declining attendances mean that congregations wanted new kinds of services and fewer services? If so, was it right to try to meet the popular demand? The slackening of church involvement also raised the question of the function of the ministry. Judging by their attendances at services and participation in church organizations, Congregationalists were feeling less need for church religion. They were certainly increasingly reluctant to pay for its support.
Did this mean that there was a need to experiment with new kinds of ministry? In particular, ought the denominational colleges continue to train men for full-time work?

Llewelyn Bevan was a minister with the position, intellect and courage to give his brethren a lead in facing these questions. He also had the stimulus. While he was pastor of the Independent church in Collins Street, Melbourne, between 1886 and 1909, the church's fortunes slumped as it was hit by economic depression and the movement of families to the suburbs. When Bevan came to Collins Street he saw from his pulpit a sea of faces, including some of Melbourne's most affluent citizens. In his last years the church was almost empty.  

Although he had been optimistic about the Church's future in the late 1880's, some twenty years later he was not. He believed there had been a sweeping change in the relationship between people and churches, nothing less than 'a New Reformation, far greater and wider in its range' than the first. 'The perception of the universal working of the saving grace of Jesus Christ', he told an assembly of the Victorian Union in 1909, is turning men from the Church so long regarded as the sole custodian and example of the life of Jesus realised in the life of men. And the sooner that we, as churchmen, recognise this modification which modern thought is producing, the sooner shall we both conserve our churches and take our proper place in the advancement of the kingdom.  

Five years later, in an address from the chair of the Congregational Union of Australasia, he sharpened the distinction between the life of


52 Observer, 24 Sept. 1887, p. 5.

53 L.D. Bevan, Modernism and Christianity Changed and Unchanging, Melbourne, 1909, p. 25.
the churches and the life of Christ within the soul. The latter cause, he believed, 'never had so open, so wide a field'. Yet he argued that the prospects for institutional religion in the old form were bleak; it was even 'possible that what has passed for Christianity in the long centuries' was 'a failing, a dying thing'.

Though Bevan believed that radical changes were required, he failed to be specific, much less campaign for reform. He did experiment a little in his own ministry. He made it a practice to speak at the Yarra Bank, Melbourne's Hyde Park; and he introduced a discussion-time at Collins Street after the Sunday evening service when any member of the congregation might freely speak for five minutes on any religious topic. But the guidance he offered the churches was small. The genial doctor dissipated his energy and squandered his talents on diverse meetings and committees.

Alfred Depledge Sykes was another Congregational minister who believed that the churches were being shaken to their very foundations. In two addresses to the South Australian Union - 'Organised Christianity and Modern Man' and 'The Church: Its Inner Mission' - Sykes sought to define the role of the Church in a world which he believed to be increasingly indifferent to religious concerns. The Church, he said, ought to withdraw from the field of social welfare and specialize in the development of the spiritual life. In line with this emphasis he experimented with the worship at Stow Memorial church, when he was minister there, removing the pulpit from centre-front, replacing it by

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a communion table on an open dais and building a new pulpit near the western transept. Other innovations were dressing the choir in surplices and using Dr. John Hunter's book of devotional services.  

It is difficult to gauge the influence of Sykes' ideas. He was well known in South Australia for his conflict with J.C. Kirby about the desirability of a credal test in the Congregational churches. But he was not a popular preacher, and presumably many Congregationalists refused to listen out of hostility to his 'popish' liturgical innovations.

If his career had not been cut short in 1923 by premature death, Frank Pulsford might have developed a critique of institutional religion and specific proposals for reform. Pulsford's background and approach were different. He had been a businessman before he entered Camden College in 1912 with the aim of equipping himself to serve as a layman. Instead of the traditional arts course he did a diploma in economics and commerce. It was only after experience as a Red Cross 'searcher' for missing men during the War that Pulsford decided to seek ordination. For a time he was an Australian army chaplain. After the war, as pastor of the Croydon church in Sydney, Pulsford began to experiment with services, relying less on the sermon and supplementing it with tutorial groups. He was publicly critical of other ministers, his fellow Congregationalists included, who, he claimed, had failed to learn the lessons of the War. The criticisms levelled by soldiers against the churches were true 'up to the hilt'.

57 B.L. Jones, 'History of Stow Memorial Church, Flinders St., Adelaide', p. 13; Kiek, Our First Hundred Years, p. 64; F.W. Cox and L. Robjohns, Three Quarters of a Century, Adelaide, 1912, p. 36.

58 Sykes, later in his career, was an Anglican clergyman for a time, then rejoined the Congregational ministry.
... the Church is up in the air, and out of touch with reality; she does not command the respect of intellectual men ... class distinctions are rife amongst us, and we show no sympathy with social reform.

Pulsford wrote a letter to the editor of the New South Wales Congregationalist before he died in which he called for 'fundamental and revolutionary alterations of the message and methods' of organized Christianity. 59

Other Congregational ministers were less distinctive or interesting. Two young ministers, A.C. Stevans and Paul Joseph, addressed the South Australian Union in 1914 on the need for a wider vision of the churches' role. Plainly influenced by Walter Rausenbush's Christianity and the Social Crisis, they advocated the 'social gospel', while taking care to add that the individual had also to be redeemed. But Stevans and Joseph were unusual; Congregational ministers almost always confined themselves to speaking about the moral reform of society - less liquor, prostitution and gambling (none if possible) and more Sabbath observance (total if possible). 60

There were a couple of attempts to imitate innovations in English Congregationalism. In the 1890's the Rev. William Morley held Pleasant Sunday Afternoons at his Prahran church in Melbourne but with no lasting success. 61 The Rev. A.B. Rofe, in Melbourne, and the Rev. Henry Gainford, in Adelaide, experimented with the 'Institutional

59 July 1923. The earlier quotation is taken from this letter. Most of the other details about Pulsford are from the obituary in ibid. by G.W. Thatcher, the warden of Camden College. See also Federal Independent, 1 Feb. 1923, 1 March 1923.

60 J.D. Bollen, Protestantism and Social Reform in New South Wales 1880-1910, Melbourne, 1972, deals with the ideas of some Congregational ministers, notably Thomas Roseby.

Church' - an attempt to provide a centre for all forms of recreation for people in the neighbourhood.\textsuperscript{62} There were also a few mission churches of various kinds which concentrated upon providing amenities, and sometimes food, for the poor.

The Rev. William Dawson in 1928 took over the pastorate of a Congregational church in the Melbourne industrial suburb of Collingwood. Initially there was optimism about the success of his 'modern methods'.\textsuperscript{63} In 1929 the pastorate was vacant.\textsuperscript{63} There were other cases like his as Congregational ministers tried to win back congregations to declining inner suburban churches.

One such experimenting minister (he lasted longer than most) was S.H. Cox. According to his own account, he was born in England, left school at eleven or twelve, and, after a time in Australia, received his ministerial training in the U.S.A.. On his return to Australia, Cox achieved some brief notoriety and temporary large attendances at the once fashionable Bourke Street Sydney church. Perhaps his biggest 'success' was a service featuring the film 'Boy of Mine' with a sermon on 'Fathers and Sons'. According to Cox, 900 persons attended this particular service. Cox had fantasies, probably influenced by his American experience, of what an Australian church of the future might be like.

What we need [at Bourke Street] is a set of modern club-rooms, with gymnasia, baths, game-rooms, library, lodge, and lecture-rooms, etc., and a staff of workers, some paid, including Nurse, Bible-teacher, Scout-master, Girl Guide Mistress, Free Music-teacher, trained and paid Bible School Pastor,

\textsuperscript{62} ibid., p. 430; Cox, \textit{Three Quarters of a Century}, p. 130.

\textsuperscript{63} \textit{V.C.Y.B.}, 1929, pp. 31-2; \textit{N.S.W.C.Y.B.}, 1930, p. 84.
trained, and paid Music-Pastor, in addition to a chief Minister, capable of a sound business administration and of preaching a good sermon. 64

Taken together, Australian Congregational ministers failed even more miserably than they did individually to respond to the difficulties facing their churches. There was no attempt to find common agreement on children's biblical instruction. There was no lead given on the church meeting, though by 1914 almost all ministers were dissatisfied with it. There was almost no discussion at all of the problems facing a preacher now that neither he, nor his congregation, could take the authority of the Bible for granted. There was not even a revolt over stipends.

In their deliberations together, the ministers spoke of spiritual revival as the answer to their problems. No doubt they were correct. But hoping for a revival, even working for one, did not constitute a practical policy - revivals are infrequent events.

In pursuit of revival the ministers organized denominational missions, notably in Victorian in 1898 and in New South Wales in 1905. 65 They also supported the interdenominational missions which began to be held on a new scale at the turn of the century - the Simultaneous Mission in 1901, organized wholly by Australian churchmen, and the missions led by American evangelists in 1902, 1909 and 1912. 66 By the close of the 1912 American mission, if not before, it was evident that

64 Cox, Seventy Years, p. 41. For Cox's background, see ibid., pp. 34-6; on the film, ibid., p. 37.
65 V.I., Nov. 1897; July-Nov. 1898; A.Z.I., July 1905.
66 Howe, 'The Response of the Protestant Churches', ch. 5; R.L. Broome, 'Protestantism in New South Wales Society, 1900-1914', Ph.D., Univ. Sydney, 1974, ch. 3.
missions were failing to revive the Congregational churches and enthusiasm for them waned. The Gipsy Smith campaign of 1926 flopped, not least among the Congregational churches.67

The only institutional reforms of any magnitude entertained by Congregational ministers as a group were the 'closer organisation' of the denomination and church union. Their interest in these two developments was occasioned in part by the decline of Congregationalism.68 But neither innovation had any chance of arresting this decline. The changes proposed were in denominational and interdenominational organization; the problem at bottom was to revivify the local church.

Why, then, were Congregational ministers so blind or so timid? Part of the explanation was that the churches' problems were largely recent ones. A middle-aged minister in 1900 could remember when the churches were as well supported as at any time in Australian history. An intelligent man might therefore be forgiven for believing that the setbacks to formal religion were temporary only, or for being cautious about experimenting with remedies.

Individuals who might otherwise have perceived the churches' plight were blinded by a narrow evangelicalism. To discuss the failure of the churches would have involved probing the failure of the ministry and this failure could only be understood in personal terms. Evangelicals tended to have little understanding of the social forces which drew people from the churches. They were tempted to believe that the Gospel inevitably triumphed when it was sincerely preached. Failure, therefore, reflected on a minister's faith.

68 See ch. 10.
Ministers, individually, failed to speak out above all because they were powerless. A minister was at the mercy of his church for his livelihood, unprotected by any trade union, and without appeal to presbytery, conference or bishop. In theory, a minister could only be removed by vote of church meeting. In fact, many churches were controlled by a handful of members, sometimes by a single person, who might easily be offended. One Monday in 1920 thedeacons of the Vaucluse church in Sydney called for the minister's immediate resignation. He replied on the Tuesday that he wanted to talk the matter over and that he intended to conduct the services as usual the following Sunday. The deacons prevailed. The minister commented, with some justification, that he had been condemned without fair trial. 'Such an action would not have been done anywhere but in a church'.69 In another church the signal of the minister's dismissal was the absence of flowers in church on Sunday morning.70 In addition to power of dismissal subtle moral pressures could be applied. Often one or two members made special contributions towards the stipend or occasionally helped ministers to educate their children.71

To conclude: although the circumstances of the Congregational churches early this century offered a stage worthy of a prophet, the circumstances of Congregational ministers did not cast them in that role.

The conditions in which ministers worked had changed substantially; the ministry itself had changed little.

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69 Vaucluse church, miscellaneous papers in the possession of Mr. B. Pratt, correspondence between the minister, E. Lewis Jones, and the church secretary, Mr. A. Garrett, 5, 6, 8 July 1920.

70 Rev. J.R. Digance on Semaphore church, Adelaide; interview, Nov. 1975.

71 E. Davies, autobiographical reminiscences, p. 12.
In the 1890's the reorganization of Congregationalism became a fashionable cause in denominational circles. Leaders of opinion condemned 'isolated Independency' and spoke of the need of a 'more organised Congregationalism', 'closer organisation', 'effective Congregationalism' and 'organic Union'. Some even began to speak of the Congregational church instead of the Congregational churches.\(^1\)

Many who used the new catchwords continued to profess their loyalty to the traditional polity. But they were seeking the impossible - to have Congregationalists act as members of a united church without sacrificing local autonomy.\(^2\)

The reformers stressed their differences with their fathers but the continuity with the past was greater than they allowed. The formation of the English Union in 1832 was as radical as any later innovation because it was the first step along the road to becoming a denomination. It was opposed for precisely this reason by some Congregationalists.\(^3\) In the thirty or more years from the formation of the colonial Unions the trend towards centralization had been continued. The home mission societies, originally separate institutions, had been amalgamated with the Unions.\(^4\) Another important development had been

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2. See, eg., the terms of reference given to a committee on reorganization by the Council of the S.A. Union in 1910: S.A.C.Y.B., 1911, pp. 12-3; 1912, pp. 48-9.


the incorporation of the New South Wales Union in 1882 because this sealed by act of parliament the separate identity of the Union and empowered it to act as trustee of the properties of the local churches and to purchase sites for new churches. During the 1880’s full-time Union secretaries had been appointed in New South Wales and Victoria.

South Australia was the first colony to adopt a completely revised constitution. When James Jefferis had advocated a more centralized denomination from the chair of the South Australian Union in the mid-1860’s he had gained almost no support. When he repeated his call at the annual meetings in 1897, a committee was appointed to consider possible reforms. The new constitution adopted in 1899, following the committee’s report, authorized the executive of the Union to purchase sites for new churches. It further widened the role of the Union by making it obligatory for churches in receipt of aid to refer any 'difficulties' to a Union committee.

Jefferis was supported in 1897 by Mr. S.B. Hunt who criticized the lack of Congregational church extension. According to Hunt, the isolation of the churches contributed to this failure. The same dissatisfaction had much to do with the remaking of the constitution of the New South Wales Union in 1902 and 1903. Dr. Bevan of Victoria

5 An Act to incorporate the Congregational Union of New South Wales, 46 Victoria (private act).

6 N.S.W.C.Y.B., 1885, p. 48; Jubilee Volume of Victorian Congregationalism, p. 245.

7 E.S. Kiek, Our First Hundred Years, Adelaide, n.d., p. 19.


9 ibid., p. 26; Advertiser, 22 Oct. 1897, p. 7.
remarked at the time that the denomination in New South Wales was in 'a terribly depressed condition'.\textsuperscript{10} The new constitution in New South Wales increased the authority of the Union.\textsuperscript{11} Aided churches were henceforth obliged to have the approval of the Union executive before they issued a call. As one minister pointed out when opposing a similar proposal five years earlier, this was a contravention of the principle of local autonomy.\textsuperscript{12} Another such departure from the traditional polity was the rule that the Union executive sanction any mortgage on a property of which it was a trustee. The aim of this clause was to prevent churches mortgaging their properties for foolish ends, such as paying a larger stipend than their resources warranted to a fly-by-night 'minister' 'with a glib tongue and a good eye for the main chance'.\textsuperscript{13} If the executive refused to allow a mortgage, the church had a right of appeal to the assembly of the Union, but this saving clause was itself a radical innovation: by the 1902 constitution the Union became what it had previously been expressly declared not to be - a court of appeal. The reorganization of denominational institutions was completed in 1903 when the Union assembly amended a by-law so that the home mission work of the Union could be transferred to the newly-created Home Mission Board.\textsuperscript{14} The board was composed of representatives of the Union, of district associations of the churches and of the Women's Home Mission Auxiliary. The board elected an executive, the key figure of which was

\begin{flushright}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{10} *Jubilee of Queensland Congregationalism*, p. 63. See *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22-5 Oct. 1902, for reports of proceedings at the New South Wales Union's annual assembly. These support Bevan's judgement.

\textsuperscript{11} *N.S.W.C.Y.B.*, 1903, pp. 35-8.


\textsuperscript{13} Rev. F.V. Pratt, *N.S.W.C.Y.B.*, 1907, p. 139.

\textsuperscript{14} *ibid.*, 1905, pp. 65, 72.
\end{flushright}
the Superintendent, a full-time official. In 1914 a visiting English Congregationalist commented favourably upon denominational home mission work in New South Wales. He found more central control in that state than elsewhere and had no doubt that Congregationalism in New South Wales had benefited thereby.  

In Victoria during the 1890's there had been the same criticism of home mission work which had been a prelude to constitutional reform in the other two colonies. The Victorian reformers were successful to the extent of relieving the Union Secretary, J.J. Halley, of his home mission duties and giving responsibility for this side of his work to a special committee; but the conservatives, led by Dr. Bevan, blocked major constitutional change. During the 1900's concern about home mission work increased. In 1909 A.J. Griffith was appointed full-time Home Mission Superintendent.  

In Victoria the census of 1921 precipitated the remaking of the Union's constitution which had occurred so much earlier in the other two states. Following the publication of a census bulletin in 1922, which showed a net loss of 600 adherents in a decade, the Union assembly appointed a commission into the condition of the denomination. The commission made the most thorough investigation until then into the causes of denominational decline. In a working paper for the

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15 ML MSS, 3145, 1, 'Notes on Visitation of the Churches of Australasia by Rev J.D. Jones ...', handwritten, in packet of documents labelled 'Documents relating to the Visit of Dr J.D. Jones etc 1914'.

16 V.I., April, Aug. 1894; V.C.Y.B., 1899, p. 83; 1900, pp. 56, 62, 69; 1902, pp. 29-35.

17 V.C.Y.B., 1910, p. 86.

18 La L MSS, 9239, 7/3, Commission on State of Denomination Minute Book, minutes of meeting 12 Dec. 1922.

19 A cyclostyled copy of its report is in La L MSS, 9239, 7/3.
commission, one of its members, the Rev. Walter Albiston, criticized the lack of integration in denominational institutions.

Such strange legislation, which prohibits a man from acting on the Union Committee and the Home Mission Committee together, but permits him to sit on one, may mean a distribution of responsibility, but in some cases a condition of bankruptcy in the matter of effective workmanship.  

Reporting to the annual assembly of the Union in October 1923, the commission called for 'a scheme for the closer association of our Churches'.  

In October 1926 a new constitution was adopted which delegated nearly all denominational business to a Council of eight committees.  

Albiston was appointed to the joint office of Home Mission Superintendent and Union Secretary.

To a large extent these changes in the organization of the Unions had little effect upon local church life. This was not so with the groupings of churches, for these involved churches sharing a pastor. The most radical of these groupings was the United Congregational church of Newcastle. Formed in 1901, this had seven constituent congregations, presided over by a pastor who had several lay and ordained assistants.  

In the previous decade there had been an exodus from the old area of Newcastle to the new coal-mining areas to the west, and the number of Congregationalists in the city and suburbs had been cut by a quarter.  

Shortage of funds and falling congregations forced

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20 La L MSS, 9239, 7/3, Commission on the State of the Denomination, Papers and Reports, paper on organization. For identification of Albiston as author, see the Commission's Minute Book, meeting of 14 Sept. 1923.

21 ibid., 'Report ... October 16th., 1923'.

22 V.C.Y.B., 1927, p. 40; Congregational Union of Victoria, Constitution and By-laws, Melbourne, n.d..


24 The Official Year Book of New South Wales, 1916, p. 484; New South Wales Census, 1891, 1901.
many other, smaller-scale groupings. In 1885 26 churches in southeastern Australia shared a pastor; in 1930 there were more than four times as many. 25 59 of the 94 Congregational churches in New South Wales in 1944 operated under the grouping system. 26

In all three states the centralization of the denomination fell far short of what some Congregationalists desired. James Jefferis in 1897 had envisaged revolutionary changes in South Australia—nothing less than a form of organic union. The most important recommendations of his sub-committee on constitutional reform were ignored, including one which proposed that the Union undertake the work of church extension. 27 The annual assembly of the New South Wales Union unanimously resolved to appoint an organizing secretary who would have quasi-episcopal powers over all the Congregational churches in the state. This plan was subsequently modified to restrict the arrangement to those churches under the supervision of the Home Mission Board. 28

In Victoria about 1910 another revolutionary plan was discussed. To judge from the official reports of Union business in the denominational year books, its advocates never promoted it at the yearly and half-yearly
assemblies, presumably because it became obvious that it stood no chance of gaining general acceptance. Details of the plan are among the records of the Victorian Union and these reveal that at least one meeting of its supporters was held. There were to be eleven provincial churches and one metropolitan. The 'United Congregational Church of Melbourne' was to have a central board of managers and a board of ministers; there was to be a common roll of members; the United Church was to make all calls to pastorates within the metropolitan area and control all funds of the separate congregations; a minimum stipend of £250 per annum plus manse was to be guaranteed.29

A.J. Griffith, Home Mission Superintendent at the time, was much involved in this plan to reorganize Victorian Congregationalism. Simultaneously, as secretary of the Australasian Union, he was working to centralize the denomination federally. One of his proposals was that a national fund be formed so that 'The resources of the whole, under wise & necessary regulations' might 'become available for the aid of the feeblest & farthest-off member of the one denominational body'.30

It remained a pious hope.

The assemblies of the Australasian Union in 1913 and 1916 were prime examples of reforming zeal out-running the politically possible. The delegates assembled in 1913 were disturbed by the knowledge that there had been a decline in the proportion of Congregational adherents


30 ML MSS, 3145, 1, lying loose, paper read to the half-yearly assembly of the Victorian Union in 1915 and the annual assembly of the New South Wales Union in 1915; dated 21 April 1915.
between the censuses of 1901 and 1911. At an early session of the conference they were presented with further statistics of denominational decline. The assembly then made two potentially important resolutions, one seeking a measure of central control of pastoral settlements and the other the formation of a federal retiring fund for ministers. Both came to nothing in the face of state Union and local church resistance. In 1916 the mood of delegates was even more radical. Younger ministers were especially vocal about their frustrations. Small informal groups of ministers and lay people discussed the need for urgent action. From the formal and informal meetings there emerged a plan to appoint a commissioner to all the churches, whose main duties would be to provide a focus of denominational unity, to foster church extension and to solve the problem of pastoral settlements. It was resolved that the scheme be put to the state Unions as a matter of urgency. The name of the commissioner was even agreed upon. The scheme was judged impracticable by all but one of the state Unions.

In part the reformers were moved not by local exigencies, but by the fashion for collectivism which took a multiplicity of forms in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They sometimes linked their efforts with these wider movements, especially that towards

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31 ML MSS, 3145, 1, paper by A.J. Griffith headed 'Australasian Congregational Union. Adelaide Assembly, 1913 ...


33 On the provident fund, see ibid., 1925, pp. 19-20; 1927, pp. 14-15; 1929, p. 10.

34 V.I., July 1916; Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, Volumes of Proceedings, 1916, pp. 45, 47; 1919, pp. 13-4. There was a subsequent dispute whether the motion about a commissioner had in fact been passed: La L MSS, 9239, Congregational Union of Australia Minutes, 1891-1933, minutes of meeting 25 May 1916, pencilled note in margin.
some form of interdenominational union. W.S. Buzacott, a leading New South Wales layman, drew a connection between denominational reorganization in his state and the formation of the Australian Commonwealth, noting also that the new constitution of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, adopted in 1904, was 'a striking illustration of how men engaged in the conduct of affairs at the centre of Church enterprises ... have been led by experience to similar conclusions'.

Two other men prominent in the New South Wales Union speculated, about the same time, that 'a deeper unity of spirit in our own family of churches may be the necessary prelude to the wider movement towards Union with those who, bearing other names, are our kindred in Christ Jesus'.

Local Congregationalists were not so susceptible to the tendency towards combination if they believed that their churches were strong enough to stand alone.

There were also differences of interest between the laity and the more extreme reformers, who were nearly all ministers. Some ministers wanted central control of pastoral settlements because this would allow them greater access to better-paid pastorates. The existing system, on the other hand, worked in favour of a church which could afford to pay a good stipend; it could attract better ministers, retain the right to replace them when it seemed desirable to do so and ensure that it did not have imposed upon it an unwanted man. Similarly, ministers, taking a wide view by inclination, training and out of concern for their futures, were disturbed by statistics of denominational

35 W.S. Buzacott, The New Conception of Union and the Need of District Associations, Sydney, 1905, pp. 6-9, 14-5.

decline. But the laity generally had a narrower concern. 'It does not really concern us whether C. church floats or sinks', a critic imagined the leading men of another church saying to themselves; 'we have our hands full keeping our own afloat'. From the point of view of many ministers and also of those lay people who were active in denominational affairs, this attitude was sinful. Yet the local church was the prime contact which most Congregationalists had with organized Christianity. They identified with their church and organic union was an abstraction, if they ever heard of it.

Unfortunately for the reformers, the strong churches carried most weight in the affairs of the Unions. And even if the reformers swayed denominational assemblies, financially independent churches could ignore any resolution that they found distasteful.

The main facts concerning Australian Congregationalists and church union early this century are straightforward. Congregational representatives were present in Melbourne in 1913 at the Congress of churches, which had as its goal a federation of Protestant denominations. Congregational representatives were also present at the discussions initiated by the Australian Anglican bishops following the Lambeth conference of 1920. Both the Congress and the discussions of the


early 1920's were impressive testimonies to the strength and scope of the ecumenical movement in Australia during this period, but from the Congregational point of view they were sideshows to the attempt to form a United Church of Australia by an amalgamation of Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational churches. Strictly, there were two separate attempts, one between 1902 and 1912 and the second between 1916 and 1924. Both series of negotiations produced schemes of union which included statements of doctrine as a test of orthodoxy, thus involving Congregationalists in a departure from their traditional attitude to creeds. And both schemes, if implemented, would have centralized the Congregational churches far more effectively than the movement to reorganize the denomination, for they envisaged a hierarchy of courts raised above the local church.  

The first scheme was strongly resisted by many Congregationalists. After the Congregational Union of Victoria voted to accept it, a circular letter was distributed by a group of dissidents and a stormy public meeting held, at which it was moved that the proposed union was 'in spirit and method destructive of our denominational witness and existence'. In April 1912 the New South Wales Union rejected the proposed polity of the United Church. But there was much less opposition to the second scheme of union. In a poll of Congregational church members in September 1920, 84 per cent of those voting were in

39 Congregational Union of New South Wales, Report of Committee on Federation of Churches. Proposed Basis of Doctrine and Scheme of Polity, Sydney, 1911; Proposed Basis of Union for the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational Churches of Australia. Doctrine and Polity. As Finally Revised by the Joint Committee of the Three Churches, September 21st-23rd, 1921, Melbourne, n.d..

40 V.C.Y.B., 1912, pp. 61-2; V.I., Jan. 1912; La L MSS, 9239, 10/2, cutting, Age, 6 Dec. 1911.

41 Congregational Union of New South Wales, Report of Committee on Federation of Churches; N.S.W. Cong., May, June, 1912.
favour of union. In the denominational representative assemblies opinion was also overwhelmingly unionist. If the Presbyterian General Assembly had not withdrawn from the proposed union in 1924 nearly all the Congregational churches in Australia would have been absorbed into the United Church.

So much is plain. But the interpretation of these facts is not so simple. It turns upon the motives of thousands of individual Congregational men and women about whom only fragmentary evidence is available. And the existing evidence can be variously interpreted.

An apparently plausible interpretation has been vigorously propounded in relation to ecumenical movements elsewhere. Robert Currie and Bryan Wilson, to name only two scholars, have noted that the rise of church union movements has coincided with a decline of the churches as institutions. Iconoclasts, Currie and Wilson have concluded that organizational adversity is the root of ecumenism - not a rediscovery of the will of Christ. Applying this hypothesis to Australian Congregationalism, at first glance it would seem to fit the facts very well. As the difficulties of the Congregational churches deepened, so the union movement gained support. Further, contemporaries can be quoted in support of a causal connection. 'Theta' writing in the

42 Minutes of the Seventh General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia ..., Adelaide, 1923, p. 186; Minutes of the Sixth General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia ..., Sydney, 1920, p. 95.

Australasian Independent in 1903 said that while there were Congregationalists in New South Wales who saw church union as 'the realization of a noble ideal they have held for years', there were 'a few' who thought that Congregationalism was nearly dead and that 'our only hope of doing good work is by union with some larger denomination, and they fear that if we delay this step, we shall be swallowed up nolens volens'. It was reported on the eve of the First World War that there were Congregationalists in Victoria who advocated union on the ground that this was the only way to decently wind up the affairs of the denomination. After the War a writer in the Western Congregationalist claimed that the denomination was 'drifting hopelessly and despairingly' into union. One South Australian opponent of union felt it desirable to reassure his fellow Congregationalists:

We have no need to clutch at union as the proverbial man grasps a straw. There is no need to take what others are pleased to offer us. Our position is not as desperate as that.

Contemporaries can even be quoted in support of a 'Wilson-Currie' interpretation of the general church union movement in Australia at this time. Albert Rivett doubted that the Presbyterians, Methodists and Congregationalists were reopening negotiations in 1916 'because of an overmastering passion for each other'.

May it not rather be a proposal born of expediency, if not, exigency? Every minister knows there are marriages of necessity ... Things were bad before the war, they promise to be much worse after.

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44 Sept., 1903.
45 V.I., July 1914.
46 Quoted in ibid, July 1919.
An Anglican clergyman, writing after the War, believed that the denominations were being pushed into co-operative work by 'the decline in the prestige and authority of institutional religion'.

A leading Congregational layman remarked that one of the factors which made church union desirable was the weakness of the churches, of which 'the most ominous symptom' was the lessening of their hold upon the young.

Nevertheless, there are two considerable difficulties in explaining Congregational interest in church union solely in terms of institutional decline. Firstly, how is one to explain the delay between the onset of institutional decline and the development of Congregational enthusiasm for church union? As late as 1912, after more than twenty years of adversity, the New South Wales Union rejected the proposed scheme of polity for the United Church. Secondly, the decision to enter the United Church was ultimately made by thousands of individual Congregationalists voting in September 1920. Many, probably most, of them did not take a denominational point of view. However much Congregational leaders may have been responding to denominational decline, it is hard to believe that this was the primary consideration with the rank and file.

The religious historian, John Kent, has offered a rival interpretation to that of his fellow countrymen, Currie and Wilson. According to Kent, urban churches

were beginning to approximate to one another in social composition and ethos in the late Victorian

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period, and it is this process which explains the movement towards institutional unity ... 51

There is no gainsaying that the denominations converged in the late nineteenth century, in Australia as much as in England, both in organization and in ethos. 52 It is also true that when they began negotiations in 1902 the Australian Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational churches were very similar in social composition. 53

But when applied to Australian Congregationalism, Kent's thesis is just as unsatisfactory as that of Wilson and Currie - less crude and unsubtle, but equally one-sided.

In the 1870's and 1880's Australian Congregationalists were unattached to their distinctive institutions. They were also in these decades already remarkably similar to other Protestants in their social composition - often, indeed, had originally been members of other denominations. They ought then, according to Kent, to have been ripe for union. But in the 1870's and 1880's representative Congregationalists were indifferent, tepid or hostile towards interdenominational union.

In 1874 the Rev. John Graham, minister at Pitt Street, although describing church union as 'a felt necessity and tendency of our times',


53 See ch. 3.
criticized those who understood unity in terms of uniformity of creed and church government. The Rev. George Clarke in 1888 likewise distinguished between unity of organization and unity of spirit. According to Clarke, the key ecumenical text, Christ's prayer that all his disciples be one, was misunderstood if interpreted as an unsuccessful appeal for a single organization. James Jefferis rejected this distinction between spirit and organization and even looked forward to the time when one Protestant evangelical church would be formed. In 1872 at the opening of Union College, Adelaide, Jefferis prophesied that the participating denominations would soon be united without sacrifice of any principle worthy of preservation. But fifteen years later he was not so sanguine, declaring that divisions between Christian groups were perhaps the inevitable price of Christian liberty. 54

How then is the shift in Congregational opinion about church union to be explained? Or, more properly, since there are really two separate questions, why did the general Congregational antipathy towards church union end about 1900, and why was there a new enthusiasm for union from about 1916?

The enthusiasm from about 1916 is easily explained. There was a widespread feeling in Britain and throughout the Empire that the War had somehow rendered denominational differences less defensible. The encyclical letter issued by the Anglican bishops meeting in Lambeth in

John Graham was minister of Craven chapel, London, when he accepted the pastorate of the Pitt Street church in 1864. He held the position until 1877 when he returned to England.
that the war and its horrors, waged as it was between so-called Christian nations, drove home the truth [of the sin of disunion] with the shock of a sudden awakening. Men in all Communions begin to think of the reunion of Christendom not as a laudable ambition or as a beautiful dream, but as an imperative necessity.55

Australian Congregationalists were no exception. One minister reported in early 1915 on the feeling in his church:

There seems to have been growing a kind of idea that our denominational separateness is an artificial thing, and that the churches are more completely a unity than has been heretofore admitted.56

The opinion of many Congregational leaders was no different. Addressing the Congregational Fraternal of New South Wales on church union late in the War, W.L. Patison commented that 'Most of us have found it necessary to revise our views on many things since August, 1914'.57

The question of lessening antipathy towards union before the War is more complicated. The difficulties of the Congregational churches from the late nineteenth century predisposed their leaders to look more kindly on union, and it may be that this factor ought to be judged the most important of all. But for a complete answer one must take account of changes in inter-church relations overseas.

The ecumenical climate in England had remained bleak until the last decade of the nineteenth century. To be sure, the Evangelical Alliance, founded in 1846, had fostered interdenominational co-operation which cut across even the line between Church and Dissent, but as the years passed the Alliance had shown itself indifferent to the cause of unity.


57 W.L. Patison, Church Union ... A Paper Read at the New South Wales Congregational Fraternal ..., Sydney, n.d., p. 15.
organic union. It remained what it had been at its inception, a voluntary organization of individual Christians of evangelical persuasion. Before the 1880's there was virtually no discussion of organic union in Congregational circles with any other nonconformist body. Even a federation seemed impossible. R.W. Dale pointed to one small summer seaside resort in which Baptists, Presbyterians, Wesleyans and Congregationalists competed with one another.

No use saying that such a policy is hateful. I could swear when I think of it. It exists ... far too strong to be suppressed. Even different Methodist communities cannot combine. How can we dream of a more general confederation?

By the mid 1890's a thaw had begun. A remarkable Methodist, Dr. Henry Lunn, organized a series of conferences at Grindewald, Switzerland, at which representative Christians of all persuasions discussed the feasibility of English church reunion. Lunn, a journalist among other things, was able to secure much publicity for these gatherings. He also helped to change the climate of opinion by founding in 1891 *The Review of the Churches*, the first English interdenominational periodical.

Other important developments were the first Free Church Congress in 1892 and the formation of the National Free Church Council in 1896. In the mid 1890's the Baptist leader, John Clifford, was able to write that the important thing about the Free Churches in England was not so

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much that they were 'one in fact, but know and feel that we are one'.

The change in England had parallels elsewhere, of which a few examples must suffice. Canada was the scene of a union movement which approximated most to developments in Australia. Canadian negotiations involved the same three denominations as in Australia, began in the same year and likewise reached their climax in the early 1920's. The only difference was that in Canada the United Church was actually formed. In the United States there were no comparable moves towards organic union at this time but in 1908 there was an important development of a different sort - the formation of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, which aimed at fostering co-operation between the many Protestant bodies represented on it. In the same year there was a union of Presbyterians and Congregationalists in South India. A year later, in a celebration to honour John Calvin, Calvinists and Lutherans from all over Europe joined in a common communion service, and within a year after that the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh inaugurated a movement pledged to the cause of a universal church. At Edinburgh, wrote the historian of the Conference

\[\text{It was as if all seemed to be feeling, and all to be confessing, the need of a One Body to give outward and visible expression to the inward and spiritual grace of the One Spirit.}\]

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62 Quoted in ibid., p. 194.
63 J.W. Grant, George Pidgeon, Toronto, 1962, chs. 6-8.
64 For the origins of the Federal Council, See Rouse, A History of the Ecumenical Movement, pp. 256-8.
65 ibid., p. 392.
Why was there this kindling of interest in church union about the turn of the century? This is not the place to tackle this wider question - whole books could be written about it - but it is worth noting that here also there is a need to resist the one-sided explanation: certainly institutional decline was pushing the churches together, but there were probably other powerful forces at work, such as improved communications and increasing urbanization.

Whatever its causes, the international movement substantially affected ecumenical relations in Australia. The interdenominational Simultaneous Missions in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide in 1902 were attempts to replicate the English Simultaneous Mission of 1901, organized by the National Free Church Council. To take another example, one of the leading Australian exponents of church union was the Melbourne Congregationalist Mr. H.E. Wootton, who had participated in the Edinburgh Conference of 1910. Again, when in 1916 the General Assembly of the Australian Presbyterian church gave its reasons for re-opening negotiations, it mentioned along with the War, the recent decision to form the United Church of Canada.

Many Congregational ministers were sensitive to international ecumenical developments about the turn of the century. They studied reports of them, discussed them in their fraternals, engaged in discussions about union with other Protestant ministers, and generally

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69 Wootton was secretary of the 1913 Melbourne Congress on the union of churches and also secretary of the Church Union League. He was author of *A Plea for the Federal Union of Australian Churches*, Melbourne, n.d., and editor of *The Realization of Christian Unity*, London, 1912. I have not seen the latter which is referred to by Grant, *Free Churchmanship in England*, p. 413.

tried to promote co-operation between denominations. But how aware were ordinary Congregationalists of the international church union movement? The evidence allows only conjecture. It may be that many knew of the drift of international opinion through the secular press. There was presumably no quick impact, but it may be supposed that Congregationalists who read these reports were generally receptive. The tradition of their churches was non-sectarian so they were not being asked to move from entrenched positions. Furthermore, as a group they were better educated than most Australians and therefore probably more welcoming of new ideas.

But this question is relatively unimportant. The essential point is that the ministers were affected and deeply. Whereas church union in the 1870's had been a remote prospect, as a result of the overseas lead it became a fashionable cause. And here the development of Congregational attitudes to church union ran parallel to the movement to reorganize the denomination. Both were imitative of overseas thinking as well as responses to local institutional decline.

When Congregationalists debated church union on one occasion in 1903, a young minister named Martin Luther Johnson made a passionate defence of the Congregational ideal of the church. It was of the essence of the Congregational position, he said, that the local church enjoyed 'the presence and fellowship of Jesus Christ'.

If we have that presence and fellowship with us in the work of the local Church then the intrusion of any external authority, however constituted, is an impertinence and a profanation.
At the end of his speech Johnson added a caveat. I have gone on the assumption that our churches are true churches of Christ. I know how precarious that assumption may be. Mixed societies of those who have personal faith in Christ and those who are Christian by habit and education only are not fit organs of Christ's will. If we have been so lax that our churches have become largely of that kind, and if it is our deliberate judgement that our Church conception cannot be revived in them, and the churches fashioned thereto, then this proposed union may be permissible and right. But I have tried hitherto to live above this counsel of despair.

Commenting on Johnson's speech, Alexander Gosman, by then an old man, said that he found Johnson's understanding of how Congregational churches actually functioned quite unrealistic. Gosman accepted the counsel of despair.  

The Congregational theory of the church divided the church from the world, the sphere of grace from the sphere of nature. By the second half of the nineteenth century the plausibility of that division had been called in question by the large number of church members who were not ostensibly different in behaviour from those in the world. By the early twentieth century the division seemed not worth maintaining. The conception of a church fellowship was also archaic in early twentieth century Australia; most Congregationalists did not want to belong to a tight-knit community and were not prepared for that high degree of church involvement which the ideal presupposed.

The Congregational ideal of the church, therefore, offered no alternative to the ideal of church union. For this reason it is difficult not to sympathize with those denominational leaders who worked so hard to take the Congregational churches into union. Yet by doing so they left their denomination without a raison d'être. The Presbyterian General

71 Jubilee of Queensland Congregationalism, pp. 120-9, 132-3.
Assembly in 1924 resolved to break off negotiations in the face of substantial opposition to union from within the Presbyterian churches, especially in Victoria. From the Presbyterian point of view this was prudent: the decision of the Presbyterian General Assembly of Canada to press on in similar circumstances unleashed a conflict in which Presbyterians treated one another as enemies. But the Presbyterian attitude in Australia left Congregationalists all dressed up for union with nowhere to go. There had been co-operation in the training of ministers, in work amongst young people, in home mission; bargains had been struck in church extension.\(^{72}\) It is little wonder that the executive committee of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand reported in early 1925 that there were many depressed spirits within the denomination.\(^{73}\)

\[^{72}\] Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, *Church Union. Report Presented by the Committee to the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, May, 1922*, n.p., n.d..

This has been a story without a dénouement. This is curious because in the first decade of this century the Congregational churches were facing difficulties so severe as seemingly to demand some dramatic resolution. For many years there had been a net loss of adherents to churches of other denominations and, as this leakage was caused in part by the movement of population to the new suburbs growing on the fringes of the capital cities, so long as these cities continued to grow the problem of leakage would remain. The only way of ensuring that the denomination did not continue to lose ground was to pursue a policy of vigorous church extension, yet for this to be possible under the existing system of church organization, a high degree of initiative had to be exercised by local Congregationalists. But this seemed increasingly unlikely as those who remained within the denomination slackened their church involvement. Simultaneously, a severe thinning of the evangelical doctrinal tradition was being effected: there had been revolt against the substitutionary doctrine of the atonement; the Bible had lost much of its authority in matters of faith and morals; there were widespread doubts about the historicity of episodes in the New Testament as well as the Old; the dogma of the divine Christ was increasingly being rejected or ignored. No new orthodoxy was being formed. There was thus a question whether young Congregationalists who had no attachment to the old principles and who had been given nothing as a substitute would maintain any connection with organized religion.

One of three alternatives might have seemed inevitable to an observer of the Congregational churches about 1910: either the churches would be incorporated in some form of union with the Presbyterians and
Methodists; or the organization of the churches would be so changed as to give ultimate control to a denominational body; or there would be a spiritual revival in the churches which would render viable again the decentralized polity of Congregationalism. Salvation came in none of these forms. Twice schemes of union with Presbyterians and Methodists collapsed. Measures of denominational centralization were proposed but were either rejected or frustrated because financial power remained largely with the well-established local churches who jealously guarded their autonomy. Nor was there any spiritual revival during the Great War, or in the twenties, or thereafter.

In the meantime there was no alleviation of the basic problems facing the denomination. The number of Congregationalists in Australia in 1971 was 68,159, 143,585 fewer than there would have been if the proportion of adherents to total population had remained what it had been at the 1911 census. No popular substitute was found for the evangelical doctrines to which most church-going Congregationalists conformed until the 1880's. Increasingly from the 1930's the theological colleges came under the influence of the so-called neo-orthodox movement which sought to return to the principles of the Reformation, but this movement did not create a new consensus amongst ministers, nor, more importantly, in the pews. The 1944 report of the New South Wales Forward Movement Commission showed that in that state there had been no resurgence of support for the local churches during two World Wars and an economic depression.¹ There is no reason for believing that the situation was any better in Victoria or South Australia.

And yet most of the churches survived. When the Uniting Church

of Australia was inaugurated in 1977 it was a union of Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational churches. In 1910 there were 243 Congregational churches in south-eastern Australia; in 1960, about the time when the formation of joint parishes with the Methodists and Presbyterians began, there were 224. Hence their story has an unresolved character. About 1910 it seemed that things could not possibly continue in the old way, and yet for a half-century they did. The story has been one of continuing loss of adherents but also of continuing recruitment; of the slackening of church involvement, not its cessation; of the diminishing social significance of doctrine, not the abandonment of belief. This absence of a dénouement is dramatically unsatisfying but it has some interesting implications.

Firstly, the persistence of the Congregational churches testifies to a wide-spread and continuing attachment to church religion within Australian society. Consider the circumstances in which the site and buildings of Congregational churches have been purchased, the debts and interest paid, ministers and their families supported, and services of worship conducted in season and out of season. During almost the entire history of the Congregational churches in Australia they have been without government financial assistance. Some Congregational churches were helped by their Unions but because Union funds were chronically low this assistance never amounted to much. There was little denominational loyalty to draw Congregationalists to a local church of their own order, and anyway Congregationalists by birth were too few in most districts to provide adequate support by themselves. Churches depended for their existence on those who happened to be living

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near at any particular time. Thus the survival of the Congregational churches was only made possible by a general support for organized religion.

This support included the assistance of infrequent church-goers and even some of those who never went to church. It is easy to overlook these groups, yet they were indispensable to the Congregational churches' continuing existence and a measure of the deep penetration of Australian culture by institutional Christianity.

The committee which made a confidential report on the condition of New South Wales Congregationalism in 1944 said there were 'not a few' associated with the Congregational churches who participated in various church activities and who supported them financially who were yet seldom if ever seen at the Sunday service. Denominational newspapers and church records have little to say about such people but it is certain they were both numerous and important. When the women went to church they took a little of their husbands' money with them. Probably the attitude of many Congregational men was reflected in this comment reported by the McIntyres.

I don't go to church much, although I send along my contributions, you know. The wife and youngsters go, but it's the only day I've got free, and I must say I like to be out in the open air.

It is facile to treat this attitude as indicative of the failure of the churches. We need to ask: what is it about church religion which has lead many Australians to maintain a modicum of support?

The McIntyres, as a result of their sociological investigation in the early 1940's, formed the impression that in the country towns the

3 ibid., pp. 17-8.

majority considered the church to be 'part of the established order of things' and the thought of it not being there frightened them.\(^5\) They very frequently encountered the feeling expressed by the man who said it was just as well others were better at supporting the church than he was because 'if we had no church we'd have no morals' and 'be just like wild beasts'.\(^6\) Kenneth Dempsey's findings from his study of one rural community in New South Wales are very similar. Dempsey interviewed 109 Methodists in 1966 and found that they understood the role of the church 'in fundamentally moralistic terms'. Less than a dozen ascribed the church a theological role. The bulk of them thought of it as a useful agency for teaching the young 'the importance of such things as kindness, courtesy, frugality, and honesty, and the virtues of participation in family life'.\(^7\)

This moral emphasis might be interpreted as valuing the churches almost solely for their social utility. While this motive is certainly present, the attachment to the churches goes much deeper. During the 'Religion in Australia' survey in the mid-1960's respondents were presented with six statements about the Church, one of which they were asked to choose as most nearly expressing their own attitude. Not surprisingly only a minority of Protestant respondents, both regular and irregular attenders, chose the description of the Church as the home and refuge of all mankind. A more interesting finding was that the most popular description of the Church amongst Protestant respondents was not the one which implied the social utility of religion but that which spoke of the Church as standing for the best in human life. Over 40 per

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\(^5\) ibid., p. 178.

\(^6\) ibid., p. 178.

cent of Protestants who attended church irregularly or not at all preferred this description.  

Plainly the churches are still today an integral part of Australian culture, just as they were an integral part of the culture of the British middle and upper classes when the colonization of Australia began. It has often been argued that the industrial revolution and the growth of large cities inexorably weakened institutional Christianity. This may be so. The resilience of the churches in Australia is nevertheless impressive. Despite Australia being a country of recent settlement in which the social environment was shaped from the beginning by the industrial revolution, and despite most of its population being clustered in the capital cities for almost half the period of white settlement, the tradition of support for the churches has been maintained. The hold of the churches here has not been peculiarly weak, but remarkably strong.

8 H. Mol, Religion in Australia, Melbourne, 1971, pp. 23, 322. This evidence conflicts with Mol's own view about how Australians have looked on religion: *ibid.*, p. 47.

9 This view is opposed to that of Professor Patrick O'Farrell, who has written of 'the substantial failure of religion to take root in this culture, and the concomitant failure of that culture to open its mind and heart to religion'. In O'Farrell's view it has been a case of bad seedfalling on bad ground: few 'truly religious' people came here, and, because settlement proceeded while the industrial revolution was in progress, the environment was inhospitable from the beginning to the churches. See P. O'Farrell, 'Writing the General History of Australian Religion', *J.R.H.*, June 1976, pp. 65-73, esp. 70, 73. The churches certainly have failed to substantially influence the Australian people on specific political issues and class affiliation has been a much more important determinant. But is it realistic to expect otherwise and has the situation been different in other countries? The churches' influence is to be looked for mainly in a diffuse colouring of a whole culture. That Australian culture is not significantly different from the British proves nothing about the churches' failure. Rather it suggests that the churches have continued to exercise the same influence here. It is true that Australia has never had an Evangelical Revival or a Great Awakening but has any other Western country during the period of large-scale free settlement in this country - say from the 1830's?
A second implication of the persistence of Australian Congregationalism concerns the relative unimportance of doctrine for ordinary church-goers. As with my earlier argument about the persistence of attachment to the Congregational churches, a claim about the unimportance of doctrine may seem paradoxical. Has not evidence been marshalled in an attempt to show that new religious ideas helped to cause the slackening of church involvement? Without gainsaying this influence I want now to look briefly at the same facts in a different way.

The breakdown of the consensus about evangelical doctrine increased opportunities for self-direction in forming beliefs. A young Congregationalist in the 1920's was much less likely than one a half century before to be under pressure from minister or family to accept, for example, a particular theory of the atonement. The other side of the coin was pointed to by the Rev. W.J. Ashford in an address he gave in 1930 at a Camden College commemoration day. Contemporary church-goers, he said, unlike earlier generations, had no familiarity with the Bible or Christian doctrine, and had, in the main, 'only a widely diffused but vague Christian sentiment'. This presented the preacher with 'an immense task, fraught with most stupendous difficulties', of giving people de novo a 'vital conception of Christianity as a whole'. Faced with such things as 'occasional church attendance, a dislike for deep thinking, and a craving for entertainment rather than worship' Ashford said that he had frequently 'almost despaired'. There can be little doubt that most Congregational ministers failed. The surveys made in the 1950's and 1960's showed that most Australian protestant church-goers then had remarkably little knowledge of the Bible and incoherent doctrinal ideas.

10 N.S.W. Cong., Jan. 1931.
Without any creed to guide them, Congregationalists were worse off than most.

And yet the Congregational churches were not abandoned. Conservatives and freethinkers were both wrong about the issue of the religious questioning of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Alike they tended to assume that the citadel would fall once Christians relinquished belief in certain doctrines. In 1909 a visiting preacher told a Melbourne Congregational church that 'the whole edifice of our Christian Church will come crumbling down into ruin and decay' if people abandoned the traditional understanding of the atonement. \(^\text{12}\) In the same year the freethinker 'Cleon', in a debate with the Anglican archbishop of Melbourne, remarked that the reason why fewer people were going to church was because dogmas such as the atonement were increasingly being rejected. \(^\text{13}\) By 1930 nearly all the dogmas to which Cleon took exception had been dropped by most Congregationalists, yet they still went to church.

Ordinary Congregationalists, therefore, never considered evangelical doctrines as important as once they were 'officially' defined to be. The church stood for much more (and much less) than many suspected. Though the doctrines failed to win a continuing allegiance, the churches succeeded. As Durkheim taught, we misunderstand the significance of ritual if we attend only to official beliefs.

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\(^{13}\) *Why are the Churches Neglected?* Correspondence between His Grace Archbishop Clarke, John Urquhart, and 'Cleon', Melbourne, n.d., pp. 1, 4.
### APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Numbers of Congregational Adherents, Australian States, 1881-1971

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>New South Wales</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>South Australia</th>
<th>Queensland</th>
<th>Western Australia</th>
<th>Tasmania</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>14,328</td>
<td>19,878</td>
<td>9,908</td>
<td>4,764</td>
<td>1,262</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>24,112</td>
<td>22,110</td>
<td>11,882</td>
<td>8,571</td>
<td>1,573</td>
<td>4,501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>24,834</td>
<td>17,141</td>
<td>13,338</td>
<td>8,300</td>
<td>4,404</td>
<td>5,544</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>22,655</td>
<td>16,484</td>
<td>13,357</td>
<td>10,445</td>
<td>6,203</td>
<td>4,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>22,235</td>
<td>15,893</td>
<td>15,289</td>
<td>9,976</td>
<td>6,557</td>
<td>4,543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>20,274</td>
<td>12,458</td>
<td>13,836</td>
<td>8,669</td>
<td>5,961</td>
<td>3,963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>19,331</td>
<td>11,374</td>
<td>13,916</td>
<td>8,546</td>
<td>5,950</td>
<td>4,007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>21,280</td>
<td>11,922</td>
<td>15,650</td>
<td>9,086</td>
<td>6,844</td>
<td>4,425</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>21,743</td>
<td>12,104</td>
<td>17,867</td>
<td>9,166</td>
<td>8,026</td>
<td>4,193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>23,017</td>
<td>11,820</td>
<td>12,288</td>
<td>9,949</td>
<td>8,375</td>
<td>4,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>20,902</td>
<td>9,252</td>
<td>15,238</td>
<td>9,627</td>
<td>8,258</td>
<td>4,134</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Colonial and Commonwealth Censuses.
## Appendix 2: Congregational Adherents as a Proportion of Total Population, Australian States, 1881-1971 (percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>New South Wales</th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>South Australia</th>
<th>Queensland</th>
<th>Western Australia</th>
<th>Tasmania</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.2</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Colonial and Commonwealth Censuses.*
### Appendix 3: Destination of Congregational Church Members Who Removed from the Balmain District, 1858-1876

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Destination</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Percentage Distribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sydney metropolitan</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>56.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country, N.S.W.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Australian colony or N.Z.</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>84</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Membership Roll in 'Church Book. Independent Church Balmain', ML MSS, 1301, 2.*
## Appendix 4: Distribution of First A.I.F. Soldiers of Selected Denominations by Occupational Groups (percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Congregational</th>
<th>Presbyterian</th>
<th>Methodist</th>
<th>Baptist</th>
<th>Total male workforce 1911</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper professional</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graziers and farmers</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>11.7</td>
<td>15.2</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>15.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower professional</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managerial</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed shop owners</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerical and related workers</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of armed services and police force</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craftsmen and foremen</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>20.1</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop assistants</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operatives and process workers</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drivers</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal, domestic and other service workers</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miners</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>5.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm and rural workers</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>12.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labourers</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>20.5</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequately defined</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>N (100%)</strong></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1,490,632</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Sample of A.I.F. attestation papers made by Dr. L.L. Robson; L. Broom, F.L. Jones and J. Zubrzycki, *Opportunity and Attainment in Australia*, Stanford, California, 1977, Appendix 1.
Appendix 5: Completed Family Size by Religious Denomination, Australia, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, 1891, 1911

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Denomination</th>
<th>1891a</th>
<th>1911b</th>
<th>Percentage decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>5.15</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>7.04</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>7.38</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>7.10</td>
<td>5.10</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregational</td>
<td>6.68</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>7.17</td>
<td>6.31</td>
<td>12.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>6.96</td>
<td>5.57</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All religions</td>
<td>7.03</td>
<td>5.25</td>
<td>25.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New South Wales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>7.33</td>
<td>5.33</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>7.37</td>
<td>5.16</td>
<td>30.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>7.49</td>
<td>5.65</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>7.23</td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>27.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregational</td>
<td>6.96</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>35.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>5.79</td>
<td>4.94</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>7.26</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All religions</td>
<td>7.28</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>26.1</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Appendix 5 cont'd.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Victoria</th>
<th>South Australia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1891</td>
<td>1911</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>4.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>6.99</td>
<td>4.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>7.40</td>
<td>5.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregational</td>
<td>6.55</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>7.72</td>
<td>5.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>6.59</td>
<td>5.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All religions</td>
<td>6.79</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1891</th>
<th>1911</th>
<th>Percentage decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church of England</td>
<td>6.89</td>
<td>4.99</td>
<td>27.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>4.91</td>
<td>23.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>7.50</td>
<td>5.52</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
<td>7.74</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Congregational</td>
<td>5.97</td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>24.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>7.72</td>
<td>6.19</td>
<td>19.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>6.67</td>
<td>5.54</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All religions</td>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>25.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Women aged 65-69 in 1911  
b Women aged 45-49 in 1911

Source: N. Hicks, 'Evidence and Contemporary Opinion about the Peopling of Australia, 1890-1911', Ph.D., A.N.U., 1971, Table 38.
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*Victorian Year Book*, 1880/1-1930/1.

*Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 1901/7-1930.


2. Unprinted Contemporary Sources

Note: except where otherwise stated, church records are currently held at the church.

Camden College records. At *United Theological College*, Enfield, Sydney. Uncatalogued.

Canterbury church, Melbourne, records.

Davies, Ernest, autobiographical reminiscences, typescript. Copy held by Mr. Maynard Davies, Beecroft, Sydney.
Davies, Maynard, autobiographical reminiscences, typescript. Copy held by author.

Gosman Papers (La L).

Independent church, Melbourne, records.


Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand records (ML MSS, 3145). 2 uncatalogued boxes. The original minutes of the assemblies of this Union are held at the La Trobe Library.

Congregational Union of New South Wales records. Currently located in two places (a) Mitchell Library (ML MSS, 1301). 30 boxes plus sundry items such as photos and registers. Uncatalogued. Includes records of many local churches.

(b) 139 Castlereagh Street, Sydney. Various valuable letter books, minute books, plus a complete set of the Union's year books and the N.S.W. denominational papers.


Pratt, Rev. F.V., Papers. In possession of Mr. Bruce Pratt, 106 Hopetoun Ave., Vaucluse, Sydney.

Congregational Union of South Australia records, 1850 onwards (SAA SRG 95). Uncatalogued. Includes records of various local churches.

Stow Memorial church, Adelaide, records.

Sutton Grange church, Victoria, records.

Vaucluse/Watson's Bay churches, Sydney, various papers in the possession of Mr. B. Pratt.


Land Tax Assessment Returns 1885 (SAA, G.R.G. 21/1).

3. Newspapers

Religious


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*South Australian Congregationalist*, 1905-19, 1922-30.

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**Secular**


4. Denominational and Interdenominational Publications

**Congregational**

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Congregationalism in the Colonies: An Address delivered before the Conference of Congregational Ministers and Delegates assembled from ... New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania ... by its Chairman, The Rev. T.Q. Stow ... With the Conference Minutes ..., Sydney, 1855.

*Congregational College of Victoria. Information Regarding the Conditions of Entrance and Specimen Examination Questions*, Melbourne, n.d.
The Congregational Record of South Australia, Adelaide, 1884-86.


Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, Church Union. Report Presented by the Committee to the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, May, 1922, n.p., n.d..


Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, Volumes of Proceedings (triennial conferences), 1904-37. The first assembly of the Union was reported in Australasian Independent, Australasian Union Special, April 1892. The Union was revived at the Queensland jubilee conference of 1903 and the second assembly held in 1904.


Congregational Union of New South Wales, Reports and Recommendations of Forward Movement Commission, n.p., 1944.


Congregational Union of Victoria Young People's Department, Catechism & Handbook of Congregational Principles & Belief, Melbourne, n.d..


Congregational Union of Victoria, Constitution and By-Laws Amended and Adopted, October, 1926, Melbourne, n.d..


Jubilee Volume of Victorian Congregationalism 1888 ..., Melbourne, n.d..

Minutes of Proceedings at the Conference of Delegates, etc., from the Congregational Churches of Australia, Held in Adelaide ... November, 1859, Adelaide, 1860.
New South Wales Congregational Year Book, 1876, 1882-1939. Between 1889 and 1895 the title varied; titles included Australian Independent Year Book and Australasian Independent Year Book.

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Victorian Congregational Year Book, 1880-1939.

Year Books and Manuals of local churches:
- Bathurst, 1888
- Davey Street, Hobart, 1862
- Kew, Melbourne, 1888
- Independent church, Collins Street, Melbourne, 1881-1930
- Petersham, Sydney, 1880's
- Pitt Street, Sydney, 1880's and early 1890's

Other


Minutes of the General Conferences of the Methodist Church of Australasia (triennial), 1904-29.


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Anon., 'Robert Elsemere.' a reply to the Rev. George Clarke's lecture, Hobart, 1889.


Barker, J.N., 'A Layman's Views on Church Union'..., Melbourne 1919.

Bevan, L.D., Christianity and Modern Conditions, Adelaide, 1913.

Bevan, L.D., Modernism and Christianity Changed and Unchanging, Melbourne, 1909.


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Carruthers, J.E., Suburban Methodism, Sydney, 1901.

Clarke, G., Behind and Before. A Jubilee Sermon preached before the Congregational Union of Tasmania in Christ Church, Launceston, June, 1880, Launceston, n.d..

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Copland, O., Christianity and the World, Adelaide, 1882.


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Jarrett, W., Address to the Members of the Church and Congregation assembling in the Independent Chapel, Pitt Street, Sydney, delivered Sunday Evening, December 28, 1834, Sydney, n.d.


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Johnson, M.L., Mathison, W., and Jones, W.C., 'The Deity of Christ' Papers Read before the Congregational Union of New South Wales October 1913 ..., Sydney, 1913.

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King, J., 'A Short History of Congregationalism in Australia' (La L 9239, 30/2).

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Note

As part of my research I interviewed over twenty people who had been connected with Congregational churches in their youth. I have not thought it desirable to list them in this bibliography. Most are old and frail (a few have already died since I interviewed them) and I also wish to respect their privacy.