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CHURCH, STATE AND PEOPLE IN EASTERN AUSTRALIA,
1835-1850

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PREFACE

When this work was begun, the writer had an ill-informed interest in Australian Church history, not a shrewd suspicion that anything in particular was true of that history. What follows, therefore, is the result of looking at several interesting aspects of Church-life in Australia, rather than of steadily searching for evidence in support of one proposition. The period 1835-50 was not arbitrarily chosen (though the writer did not fully appreciate its significance when it was suggested to him); for this was the watershed between the era of the penal colonies proper and the expansion of Australia following the gold rushes and responsible government. It is very much to be stressed that the development and sophistication of society between 1835 and 1850 made the later developments possible and helped to determine their form. Three aspects are examined in some detail: the religious provision, the education debate and the content and consequence of the clergymen's preaching. The choice of these subjects was not arbitrary, either, but was dictated by the historical material and the historical situation, for these seemed to be the obviously large issues and to raise the vital questions.

Minor themes are developed in the sections dealing with each of these. One is that by 1850 most Australians were fairly well supplied with churches and clergymen, and that interpretation of Australian religious behaviour should not be made on the pre-supposition that the colonists were badly served compared with Englishmen, or, at least, with the masses in English cities. Another claim is that the Churches prejudiced their chances of securing a substantial place for religious instruction in the nation's schools, by fighting in the way they did in the eighteen thirties and forties. A third theme is that, although the Churches had considerable support in the colonies, their messages fell on deaf ears among a majority of colonials (especially of the poorer colonials). Examining the way in which the Churches in Australia often lost their victories, and yet survived their defeats, between 1835 and 1850, leads to a major (if tentative) theme that

the Churches have always held much the same place, and faced essentially the same problems, in the Australian community. There have been many changes. It is to be emphasized, for instance, that overt support for Christianity from the Governments was much greater in these early years than it is today. Yet the result of these researches (or, perhaps, the feeling of this researcher) is that the real position of the Churches among the Australian community at large has changed very little. Contempt, criticism and conformity are present in about the same proportions as ever, and the Churches often had almost as much difficulty in imposing their wills upon politics and society in colonial days as they have in our own day.

One large omission from this essay is that of strife within denominations. Every denomination had, to a lesser or greater degree, its internal feuds, but, apart from the Evangelical-Tractarian controversy, these are passed over. The most serious of the intra-denominational quarrels occurred among the Presbyterians on the mainland, who split asunder and re-formed only to split again; but this involved personalities (and especially that personality, J.D. Lang) probably more than principles. The Evangelical-Tractarian contest within the Church of England is discussed at length because it touched all the Churches, and involved doctrine and the practice of the faith, to a far greater extent. It may be argued that the whole question of Church and state eventually became a crucial element in the Presbyterian differences; but the importance of this problem is stressed in this thesis by discussing state aid for religion on a wider (and, it has seemed, the proper) basis.

Similarly, inter-denominational bitterness is largely ignored except where it becomes a part of the church-aid and church-schools issues. A study devoted to sectarian sympathies and antipathies would shed light on Australian Church history, and a discussion of the degree to which denomination rivalries assisted or hindered the advance of religion in the land would be valuable; but it has not seemed that to do so here would be to put first things first. Sometimes it can be useful to draw attention to the fact that in

a particular area one denomination was over-represented and another was under-represented, for this did happen in some districts in the colonies. No use is made of these variations here, however, for the broad picture of the colonies is that the strong denominations were strong nearly everywhere, and the weak were weak nearly everywhere. To give weight to the unusually high proportion of adherents claimed by a particular denomination in a particular small area would be important in a local history, but misleading in a history of the colonies as a whole.

I owe much in many quarters, beginning with all who smoothed my way towards a scholarship and the South Australia Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia which allowed me to take it up. With wisdom, patience and courtesy, Professor C.M.H. Clark moved me from a position of appalling ignorance to the point of being able to write a thesis, then left me in peace to get on with it. In the final stages, Professor Sir Keith Hancock and Associate Professor K.S. Inglis made valuable suggestions, and Mrs Ann Mozley gave me the benefit of her knowledge of the Rev. W.G. Clarke and of scientific sources. While no self-respecting cartographer would willingly take any responsibility for the maps I drew to illustrate the text, I owe it to Mr Hans Gunther to say that without his advice and assistance they would have been very much worse. I am deeply indebted to other staff members of the A.N.U., to officials of various Churches and to the staffs of the National, Mitchell and A.N.U. Libraries and the Tasmanian State Archives. My wife accepted the role of thesis-widow in place of being a minister's unpaid assistant; if this was to leap out of the frying-pan into the fire, her only complaint was about clumsy sentences in successive drafts of the thesis. Not least have I appreciated the moral support of fellow research scholars - 'For sufferance is the badge of all our tribe'.

Apart from this help, only my own work went into the thesis.


JOHN BARRETT

SUMMARYPART I

Chapter 1: Although religious provision for lower-class persons in the eastern Australian colonies was no worse than in the great towns of England, and although the bulk of the colonists lived in areas where the Churches were fairly active and moderately well represented, religious provision was quite inadequate in the mid-thirties. The Church leaders were, therefore, very worried about the situation, and government authorities also wanted better provision to be made.

Chapter 2: Nineteenth century tolerance and the mixture of sects in the colonies gave rise to a very strong aversion to exclusive endowment: hence the passing and popularity of the egalitarian Church Acts. Even Anglican opposition was muted (especially in N.S.W., where the needs were most pressing) because of the huge task of extending religious facilities and because of the overwhelming support enjoyed by the measures. Church progress between 1836 and 1841 was unparalleled, and this was not least because of the Church Acts.

Chapter 3: The very success of the Church Acts (i.e. the number of applications for aid) embarrassed the Governments, which were in financial difficulties anyway. This forced the legislatures to impose limits upon assistance to the Churches. Even so, Government assistance under the Acts amounted to over half a million pounds between 1836 and 1850. Government policy was based on denominational equality, non-interference with internal Church affairs, and financial assistance to religion; but a trend towards abolishing state aid was becoming very evident.

Chapter 4: The principle of state aid retained much popular support throughout the forties, but it also came under increasing criticism - partly because of the cost, and partly through distaste for denominational rivalries. Abolition of state aid was often predicted in the newspapers, but public opinion was

divided and uncertain. Purely private giving to the Churches was very large, with perhaps the most consistent support coming from the commercial and middle classes, rather than the landed and upper classes - although the 'squatters' gave much financial assistance once their stations were developed.

Chapter 5: Religious provision in 1850 was much better, absolutely and comparatively, than it had been in the mid-thirties. The great increase in population had been more than matched by the increased numbers of churches and clergymen (with the lusty young Port Phillip District partially excepted). The quarter where the Churches were least successful was in the squatting districts: most colonists were well served, but the outback minority was poorly served.

PART II

Chapter 6: The Churches had the strength to slow, but not enough support to prevent, the coming of a state system of schools. In N.S.W., the Irish system was abandoned in 1836 because of united Protestant objections to it as a 'pro-Catholic' scheme. A plan to adopt the British and Foreign system was abandoned in 1839, mainly because of Anglican opposition to its non-credal character, but also because of Catholic, Wesleyan and some Presbyterian preferences for their own schools. The Select Committee's recommendation of a general system was not put into effect in 1844 because the clergy's opposition had not diminished. But sectarian instruction was not popularly desired above secular education, and the cost of separate church schools was very great; hence, in 1847-8, a general system was at length introduced.

Chapter 7: In 1835 the public schools in V.D.L. were almost exclusively Anglican. For eight years (1839-46) they were non-Anglican, a modified British and Foreign system being adopted. For the next two years (1847-8) half the schools were state-aided Anglican schools, and from 1849 to 1854 nearly all the schools were once more controlled by the Anglicans. A determined Anglican campaign, and the backing of Gladstone, won this brief

triumph; but the Anglican clergy's refusal to co-operate even in the compromise general system had antagonized many colonists, and the clergy could not long retain their victory. The final result was unfavourable to religious instruction in the schools.

Chapter 8: Both the modified British and Foreign system operating in V.D.L., and also the Irish system, allowed a great deal of religious instruction. Although many churchmen (especially Anglican, Catholic and Wesleyan clergymen argued that there was danger of a general scepticism emerging from a general system, their ideal of teaching all things in an unfettered context of religious faith could not often be put into practice. There was little, if any, more religious education given in church schools than in state schools. Sunday schools had a double role - the teaching of both religion and reading; but the teaching of religion was most prominent. Anglicans were comparatively weak in this work and, coupled with their opposition to state schools, this hindered religious instruction.

Chapter 9: The principle of universal education was accepted in the Australian colonies - by the clergy as well as the laity; but the class distinctions were rigidly maintained in the schools, and the church and state elementary schools were the preserve of the lower classes. The identification of the clergy (and their children) with the higher classes meant that they fought over, rather than with, the working classes; and this militated against their effectiveness in winning the lower classes to their side and point of view.

Part III

Chapter 10: The Tractarian-Evangelical controversy, and the degree to which Church tradition was to complement purely biblical authority, caused turmoil among Anglicans and mistrust of the Church of England by Nonconformists. The barrier between Nonconformity and Anglicanism was strengthened, although the trend within the Church of England was towards the via media.

Chapter 11: The colonial preaching was quite skilled. Features of it which are discussed include: the constant warnings of a judgement to come, without much resort to fire and brimstone; the absence of a strong predestinarian doctrine for the individual; belief in the direct intervention of God; Sabbatarianism; cautions against making an idol of worldly goods; the uncritical acceptance of the social order; and the belief that the new scientific knowledge simply bolstered the Paleyist argument from design.

Chapter 12: The clergy and their lay helpers attempted to spread the gospel and induce moral reform by the distribution of tracts and Bibles, by frequently epic tours of the out-back (not at all the preserve of the Catholics), by charity and temperance advocacy. These efforts met with considerable success, but even greater failure.

Chapter 13: The failure to practice religion was widespread in the colonies, but there was also considerable religious observance which reflected true faith as well as conventional and utilitarian motives. Both aspects need to be given full weight in Australian history. Australians have not been simply materialistic, and materialism is not merely the product of the post-1850 age.

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MAPS

The Nineteen Counties of New South Wales: Population, Clergymen and Churches, 1836	facing p.31
Van Diemen's Land: Stationing of Clergymen, 1837.	" " 44
New South Wales, including Port Phillip and Moreton Bay: Stationing of Clergymen, 1850.	" " 152
Van Diemen's Land: Stationing of Clergymen, 1850.	" " 159

ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviated titles not followed by date and place of publication are used to indicate books previously cited, when use of op.cit. would not show which of an author's works is referred to.

ANU	Australian National University, Canberra.
B.T. Miss.	Bonwick Transcripts from Documents in London, Missionary Section (Mitchell Library).
<u>Courier</u>	<u>Hobart Town Courier.</u>
CSIL	Colonial Secretary, N.S.W., In Letters (Mitchell Library).
CSOL	Colonial Secretary, N.S.W., Out Letters (Mitchell Library).
CSO	Colonial Secretary's Office, V.D.L.: Correspondence Files (Tasmanian State Archives).
<u>Examiner</u>	<u>Launceston Examiner.</u>
GO	Lieutenant-Governor's Office, V.D.L.: Duplicate Despatches sent to the Colonial Office (Tasmanian State Archives).
<u>Herald</u>	To 1 Aug. 1842, <u>Sydney Herald</u> ; thereafter, <u>Sydney Morning Herald.</u>
<u>H.R.A.</u>	<u>Historical Records of Australia, Series I (unless otherwise stated).</u>
<u>H.R.N.S.W.</u>	<u>Historical Records of New South Wales.</u>
<u>J.R.A.H.S.</u>	<u>Journal and Proceedings, Royal Australian Historical Society.</u>
Lowe Committee	Report from the Select Committee on Education, with Appendix, and Minutes of Evidence, N.S.W., 1844.
LSD	Lands and Surveys Department, V.D.L.: Correspondence Records (Tasmanian State Archives).
Min. of Exec. Coun., N.S.W.	Minutes of the Executive Council of New South Wales (Mitchell Library).
Min. of Exec. Coun., V.D.L.	Minutes of the Executive Council of Van Diemen's Land (Tasmanian State Archives).

ML	Mitchell Library, Sydney.
NL	Australian National Library, Canberra.
N.S.W. Wes. Dist. Min.	Minutes of the New South Wales District Meeting, Wesleyan Methodist Church (Dixson Collection and Mitchell Library).
TA or TSA	Tasmanian State Archives, Hobart.
V.D.L. Wes. Dist. Min.	Minutes of the Van Diemen's Land District Meeting, Wesleyan Methodist Church (Wesley Church, Hobart).
<u>V. & P., N.S.W.</u>	<u>Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council, New South Wales.</u>
<u>V. & P., V.D.L.</u>	<u>Votes and Proceedings of the Legislative Council, Van Diemen's Land.</u>

(The term Votes and Proceedings has been used loosely to cover volumes entitled Minutes and Papers as well. There is considerable irregularity in the available volumes, but reference to Ferguson's Bibliography of Australia will indicate the likely source used.)

INTRODUCTION

In 1788 Botany Bay was simply an extension of England's prison system, a wretched camp of convicts and their guards, but the settlement thus begun was not to be long confined. Food had to be grown, and stock raised; convicts became free, and free men saw opportunities in the new land; the Australian continent beckoned to all who could master her, and many came to compete for her favours. In the thirties free migration was swelling, and New South Wales and its offshoot, Van Diemen's Land, had begun to develop into diversified communities of some sophistication. By 1850 the marks of society were more obvious in eastern Australia than the scars of the penal colonies.

In the forties, a respectable citizen of Sydney could stroll along paved, gas-lit footpaths between gracious Georgian buildings. Houses, inns and shops were there in abundance, and there were also numerous schools (public and private), a subscription library containing fifteen thousand volumes, a hospital, a legislative council chamber, the churches and chapels of half a dozen denominations, a number of banks and insurance houses, a post office embellished with six Doric columns, a theatre accommodating two thousand persons, and two luxury hotels of three and four stories. The perambulating citizen might have acknowledged the salute of the mayor (or a physician, a judge, a geologist, an elected legislative councillor) whose carriage moved along a macadamized street. He might have resisted overtures from the secretary of a total abstinence society, greeted a prosperous iron manufacturer, succumbed to the plea of the treasurer of a benevolent society, discussed investments with a merchant and land-tenure with a squatter, and bowed to a doctor of divinity, before settling himself for a performance by a choral society, or for speeches arguing the case for national schools. Next day he might have read an account of his evening's entertainment in the Sydney Morning Herald. Through it all, he might have been little conscious of convictism in the city, though a glance at a policeman's face might have reminded him of the source whence the constabulary had sprung.

It was the steady growth of the colonies along these lines which made the years 1835 to 1850 most significant. Water piped to the city houses, steam-boats in the harbours, a growing quantity and variety of manufactures, a vigorous free press, the local publication of books and pamphlets, an expanding number of elementary schools, the opening of colleges for secondary education, the arrival of the first bishops, the general development of the Churches, and of literary and scientific societies, of mechanics' institutes and other voluntary societies, the settling of huge new areas, a vast expansion in the wool industry, squatters securing their land, stations improved and wives and families brought to them - all these, and more, were the things which distinguished the period. Indeed, the legal transformation of the colonies from penal settlements into communities with partially representative government was the achievement of these years. Transportation was abolished in 1840 for New South Wales, and in 1853 for Van Diemen's Land. By 1842 New South Welshmen occupying houses valued at £20 a year could elect twenty-four of the thirty-six legislative councillors; in 1850 a £10 franchise was adopted for the colony, and for new, similar councils in Van Diemen's Land and Victoria.

Yet this polite society was still formed upon a base of villainy and ignorance, of debauchery and coarseness. When Sir Richard Bourke, eighth Governor of New South Wales, proposed a radical change in the relation of Church to state (advocating state aid for all denominations), he hoped that thereby would be 'secured to the State good subjects, and to society good men'.¹ Good subjects and good men had to be secured; they did not crowd out to the Australian colonies on every ship, and those who came did not enter a society conspicuous for loyalty, honesty, sobriety or piety. And this was partly a result of convictism.

¹Bourke to Stanley, 30 Sept. 1833, H.R.A., xvii, 229-30.

A grand total of over one hundred and fifty thousand convicts was landed in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. In the mid-thirties convicts constituted over one third of the population of New South Wales, and they still amounted to much the same proportion in Van Diemen's Land in 1850, while there remained in both colonies large numbers of former prisoners, and many influences stemming from the worst penal era. Some convicts reformed, some were never criminals in any true sense, and the presence of the convicts helped to promote Government interest in schools, and Government support of the Churches; but, on the whole, convictism did not foster good subjects and good men. Most of those transported were ignorant and brutalized, and the many Irishmen among them (who were no less degraded) had their own reasons for despising English law and English religion.

Another part of the problem of developing a decent, orderly society arose from scattered settlement and primitive conditions beyond the main centres. Sydney's streets were macadamized, but it took a bushman to follow safely most of the 'roads' in the interior. In tiny Van Diemen's Land the difficulties were more restricted, but in sprawling New South Wales, where the governors completely failed to confine the spread of settlement, the problem was immense. The theoretical boundaries of settlement were those of the nineteen counties, but men continuously pushed out with their flocks and herds to squat wherever there was grass and water. After 1834, the flock-owners forced upon the authorities a whole new district (Port Phillip) which was soon to become a separate colony. The constant expansion brought difficulties over ownership of land and the maintenance of law and order, and also made it extremely hard to provide schools and churches - each an important factor in the attempt to produce and preserve good subjects and good men.

At this time, indeed, churches and schools belonged together. Traditionally, the Church of England had been responsible for the schools both in England and in the colonies.

In Scotland and Ireland, and in England among the Dissenters, the schools were also largely associated with religious bodies, or conducted according to an agreement between such bodies, and the state had only recently admitted its responsibility to bring education to the masses. The conflict in England between the state, Dissent and the Church of England over the control and support of the schools was carried out to the Australian colonies, and there made - if possible - even worse by the nature of colonial communities, which were small, scattered and denominationally mixed. How to overcome this problem was one of the most hotly debated questions of the time.

The debate extended to the relative positions of the Churches themselves. In England, rivals and reformers were questioning the position of the Established Church, and English colonists brought the challenge to Australia, where it was eagerly espoused by Scots and Irish who clung loyally to their respective national Churches. If the Anglican Church was no Church to the Irish, and if the Presbyterian Church was established by law in Scotland, why should the Church of England alone be supported by colonial Governments? The question was raised fiercely, and had to be answered tactfully. Men like Bourke, with liberal ideas, were not displeased by all its implications, yet they did not find the solution easy. Though it was scarcely practicable (and not, in their view, desirable) to restrict aid to Anglicanism only, the placing of all denominations upon an equal footing meant braving the wrath of powerful Anglicans and involving the state in enlarged expense. The denominational tangle thus aggravated the problem of securing good subjects and good men.

Convict influence, colonial rawness and denominational rivalry were not the only sources of the problem. Much religious ignorance and carelessness in the colonies had first taken root in England, and was simply transplanted. Even as late as March 1851, the Australian-born formed less than half of the population of New South Wales, and just over a quarter

of Victoria's. For most people in the colonies, therefore, their British background was directly significant. What that background could mean in the matter of religion was vividly suggested by a chaplain on an emigrant ship in 1850. He wrote:

Now that I am thrown into a mixture of all classes of society, I find with regret, that in this heterogeneous mass there are very very few who seem to have fixed notions of what religion is. There seems to be no rational confession of faith amongst them. They have no idea of the nature of the Sacraments. Some think that religion consists in not being an absolute infidel; others in not being a Papist; others in allowing their neighbour to be of what creed he likes; all their ideas on religious subjects seem imbued with a cold vague negative Protestantism, 'that evil spirit of unbelief which departs from the living God'...¹

Here was the hard core of the problem - English indifference. 'English' is used advisedly, because the Scots were more likely to have a religious training and the Irish, for all their hooligan element, were usually ready to confess their sins and assist at the Mass. But vast numbers of Englishmen from the cities especially, and from the lower classes, were quite unconnected with either church or chapel at home. The problem had a long history and a wide range, and contemporary witnesses to its existence are numerous and diverse.

At the end of the eighteenth century, the evangelical William Wilberforce described even the professed churchmen of the more privileged classes as being 'little acquainted' with Christianity.² Some thirty-five years later, the radical William Cobbett answered his own question, 'Does the Establishment conduce to religious instruction?', with a blunt 'No: flatly no'.³ The unorthodox theist, Thomas Carlyle, saw among the masses only the symptoms of the Church's neglect, and among

¹ J.D. Mereweather, Life on Board an Emigrant Ship: Being a Diary of a Voyage to Australia, London 1852, p.64.

² W. Wilberforce, A Practical View of the Prevailing Religious System of Professed Christians in the Higher and Middle Classes in this Country..., Glasgow 11th edn. c.1829, p.92.

³ W. Cobbett, Legacy to Parsons... [1835], London 1947, p.65.

other classes the reduction of God's laws to 'a Greatest-Happiness Principle, A Parliamentary Expediency'.¹ Frederick Engels, German visitor and embryonic Marxist, produced evidence from which he argued that even farm workers in England had 'to a great extent, broken with the Church' and that, where they outwardly complied, they often inwardly rebelled.² No enemy of the Church of England, but one of her bishops - C.J. Blomfield - reported in 1840 on 'the thousands of miserable destitute souls' living without pastoral care in the Diocese of London alone.³

Nor did Dissent or Methodism fill the gap. Dissenters were notoriously middle-class, and usually not missionary minded as far as the working masses about them were concerned. Although the Methodists were supposed to be effective among the poorer classes, and London was a Methodist stronghold compared with many other centres, only about one half of one per cent of that city's population was Methodist in 1815.⁴ If Methodist numbers in the metropolis are multiplied by six, to allow for adherents as distinct from members, no more than three per cent were touched by Wesley's followers. The idea is quite false that some time after 1738 (the year of John Wesley's 'conversion') the English people generally began to attend church or chapel, and retained the habit until the maturing of the generation born in 1859-60 (the years of The Origin of Species and of Essays and Reviews). All too many Englishmen (particularly from the town working-classes) were growing up without the practice of religion, or much knowledge of it. When they came to Australia, whether as

¹T. Carlyle, Past and Present [1843], London 1899, pp.136, 146; and Chartism [1839] in Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, London 5 vols. 1899, IV, pp.155-6.

²F. Engels, The Condition of the Working Class in England [1844], trans. and ed. by W.O. Henderson and W.H. Chaloner, Oxford 1958, pp.303-4.

³A. Blomfield, A Memoir of Charles James Blomfield..., London 2 vols. 1863, I, pp.225-6.

⁴Methodist numbers in London (6,350) are taken from M. Edwards, After Wesley, London 1935, Appendix I, p.163. London's population was well over one million.

convicts or as migrants, they brought their indifference with them, and piled it on the heap of difficulties already made large by isolation and pre-occupation with the business of living, by the breaking of old ties and the shortage of churches and clergymen.

Colonial Church and state authorities recognized the great need for moral and Christian teaching. Public men and newspapers supported religion - at least in the public eye, in a general sense, and as the handmaid of morality and social order. Religious provision received the serious attention of Government between 1835 and 1850, a heavy expense was borne by the colonial Treasuries (and Imperial Military Chests) in giving and continuing state aid, and the Churches' ideals for education were allowed - if restively permitted - to dominate the school systems for years. That this happened indicates that religion in nineteenth century England had another aspect.

Though there were millions untouched by religion throughout the period, there were other millions - especially among the middle and upper classes - who were deeply influenced by religion and by high moral ideals. Evangelicalism - in the broadest sense - achieved its 'maximum influence' about 1840 and showed its 'first signs of decline' about 1870, so that Victorian England, was, of civilized countries, 'one of the most religious that the world has known'.¹ The Oxford Movement contributed to this religious seriousness; beginning in 1833 under the leadership of Keble, Pusey and Newman, and widely circulating its Tracts for the Times, the movement both inspired and provoked the Christian public by its High Church emphases. Methodism and Dissent were effective enough among the middle classes, and were increasing in prestige and influence. Among the people who counted, religion was pervasive and was therefore prominent in the national code of England, and considered important by the officials and respectable citizens who came from England to Australia.

¹R.C.K. Ensor, England, 1870-1914, Oxford 1952, pp.140, 137.

The most devout churchmen, and the most dogmatic, often looked with suspicion and dislike upon the religious beliefs of the colonies' leading citizens. They saw that Christian revelation and doctrine were being weighed in minds saturated with the philosophy of Liberalism, with its tolerance of all creeds and its faith in the light of knowledge. In some churchmen's eyes, state aid to all sects and attempts to do away with denominational schools in favour of a general system witnessed only to a carelessness about religious truth. Perhaps it did show at least religious casualness.¹ Yet the colonies' influential men were not positively averse to Christianity (or very rarely so), and were not unappreciative of the Churches' importance; on the contrary, their concern for religious provision and observance was noteworthy. Religion, even if it was often broad and shallow, was strikingly apparent among the more respectable classes when they are compared, not with the Kingdom of Heaven, but with the Australian state today.

But not all, and not even a majority, of the colonials were very respectable. Many were socially disreputable and religiously ignorant, and were often both together. Representatives came to Australia from each of the 'two nations' into which Benjamin Disraeli divided England, calling them the rich and the poor.² He might have distinguished between the religiously disposed and the religiously ignorant and found that, by and large, they remained the same groups. From these two nations, Australia drew her people; and the impoverished nation's representatives should not be underestimated while attention is focussed upon the men of the more privileged nation, and upon how they tried to secure good subjects and good men. After all the debates about state aid

¹See Michael Roe, 'Society and Thought in Eastern Australia, 1835-51', Ph.D. thesis, A.N.U., 1960. Roe's thesis is that the 'Authority' which sustained colonial society was 'Moral Liberalism'.

²B. Disraeli, Sybil: or, The Two Nations, first published in 1845.

to Churches and religious teaching in schools, and after all the practical experiments, it had to be acknowledged that many in the colonies possessed 'that evil spirit of unbelief which departs from the living God'.