Religious attitudes in Australian literature of the 1890s

M. Zaunbrecher
University of Wollongong

Recommended Citation

Unless otherwise indicated, the views expressed in this thesis are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of the University of Wollongong.
RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES IN AUSTRALIAN LITERATURE
OF THE 1890s

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of
the requirements for the award of
the degree of

Master of Arts

from

The University of Wollongong

by

M. Zaunbrecher, B.A., B.D.

Department of History
June 1979
ABSTRACT

Religion has not been attributed major significance in Australian history and culture. However, an analysis of the literature of the 1890s reveals a concern to find a religious interpretation of the meaning of life in Australia. In Chapter 1 the stereotype of the irreligious Australian is examined. It is argued that a considerable minority of the population was actively involved in the practice of the Christian religion. The non-practice of Christianity, however, did not make a person irreligious, and according to the definition of religion here employed, the literature of the 1890s did have a religious dimension. Chapter 2 examines the religious background and the religious attitudes of the writers of the 1890s, revealing that while rejecting organized Christianity, most writers formulated a religion of their own. Chapter 3 takes up the hostility expressed towards the Church, hostility expressed through criticisms of hypocrisy, sectarianism, and the alliance between Church and ruling classes. Criticism of the clergy is analysed in chapter 4. The clergy failed to measure up to the expectations of the writers of the 1890s in that they were not true Christians who put the principles of mateship first. In chapter 5 the religious beliefs of the characters in the literature are examined. These beliefs include a faith in the Godhead supplemented by socialist interpretations of Jesus' teachings. The relationship between religion and mateship is considered in chapter 6. Mateship was not seen as a substitute for the religion of the churches. It was understood rather as the essence of religion, the pure and practical Christianity for which the writers of the 1890s aspired.
My thanks go - to the University of Wollongong for its University Award

- to Ralph and Stuart who both shared, in their own ways.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The Problem and Definitions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. The Poets and Novelists of the 1890s - their Religious Experiences and Beliefs</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Attitudes to the Church in the Literature of the 1890s</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Attitudes to the Clergy in the Literature of the 1890s</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Religious Beliefs in Australian Literature in the 1890s</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Religion and Mateship</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Conclusion</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix I</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

The Problem and Definitions

Australia has been described as the land of little religion.¹ A picture of the irreligiousness of the Australian population is drawn, not only by historians and contemporary visitors and authorities, but also by popular tradition. It is part of the Australian heritage to believe that Australians are basically irreligious and unconcerned with theological dogma. Manning Clark epitomises this attitude by calling Australia the 'kingdom of nothingness'.² Australia is the irreligious land, peopled by an irreligious people. As the 'first genuinely post-Christian society'³ our cultural history has been characterized by the absence of religious literature, art and music. Religion, it is said, has played no significant role in the nation's heritage. Thus McLeod, in his preface to The Pattern of Australian Culture, explaining the lack of treatment of religion in his book says, 'Religion because it cannot be regarded as a cultural force in Australia....has been omitted'.⁴

Many historians ignore or cursorily dismiss the religious strain in Australian culture. Thus Allan states that though the Australian is generous, open handed, and a man of broad humanities, 'it must be

---

3. O'Farrell, op.cit., p.70.
said, for better or worse, that he is not a "religious" type as far as dogma is concerned. Ward, attempting to trace and explain the formation of the national character, devotes very little space to Australian attitudes towards religion and the Church. He concludes that part of the Australian stereotype is an aversion to religion; abstract speculation is foreign to the Australian's nature. The 'typical Australian' is a 'hard case', 'sceptical about the value of religion and of intellectual pursuits generally'. Manning Clark, in his fourth volume of *A History of Australia*, similarly recognizes the non-religious Australian character. 'He had no metaphysical anguish; he was an Australian', he says, referring to Dad Rudd. Thus he perpetuates the Australian stereotype in history, that the many were irreligious. The lives of the many were taken up with the bourgeois dream of laying up treasure on earth. Yet the theme of Clark's work is a religious one. Though man and his situation may change, he comes up repeatedly against the resilient overpowering nature of the Australian environment. 'The earth of Australia abideth forever'. In his paraphrasing of a biblical passage Clark reveals that strange paradox of the Australian character: an aversion to theological abstractions and teachings, especially as represented by the Christian

---

7. Ibid., pp.167-70.
8. Ibid., p.2.
10. Ibid., p.94. McQueen also sees the whole of Australian history characterized by the search for bourgeois aspirations.
Church, yet a searching for an inner meaningfulness to life in Australia.\textsuperscript{12}

It is only in religious histories that a religious strain is recognized, but even there its limited influence is apprehended. Thus Bollen feels that religion is a force in Australian life which has been neither dominant nor negligible.\textsuperscript{13} Barrett, in his study of the religious life in the eastern colonies concludes that though there were many who supported religion for conventional and utilitarian reasons there were many who ignored it.\textsuperscript{14}

The \textit{Bulletin} school of writers, partly responsible for the creation and dissemination of the stereotypical Australian image, created the picture of a society opposed to the Christian religion. Historians such as Palmer, Ward and McQueen analyzed the development of the myth of the Australian's character. They recognized that his sterling qualities are a myth; a stereotype which serves to focus a nationalist identity. However, the myth of the Australian's irreligiousness has not been dispelled.

A part of the myth of the irreligiousness of Australia is the observation that during the latter half of the nineteenth century support for the churches declined. Roe theorises that from 1830 to 1860 the authority of the penal government was replaced by the authority of moral enlightenment. This new faith replaced traditional

\textsuperscript{12} In referring to the explorer Giles he says, 'Once again life in a "ghastly country" turned the mind of a man of sensibility to the eternal questions. The desert had spawned another prophet'. \textit{Ibid.}, p.201.


Christianity, being founded on 'the philosophes and reinforced by Jeremy Bentham - individualism, rationality, man's power to control his environment, the need for reform, the concept of progress...the quest for perfection'. Suttor feels that the masses abandoned Christianity from the 1850s. Manning Clark, too, accepts the decline of religious belief, and sees this as being paralleled by the acceptance of earthly happiness in place of heavenly acceptance.

However, these generalizations have been questioned by historians such as Barrett and Phillips. The former concludes that religion gained ground during the latter part of the nineteenth century, although it remained a minority belief, and the latter uses statistics to show that religion, though never very strong in its appeal to the populace, did, in fact, gain some ground during the 1870s, and by the end of the century had in no way lost its numerical adherents.

As evidenced by census returns, the majority of people did not believe themselves to be irreligious or 'unchristian'. In 1891 free thinkers, agnostics and those of no religion totalled a little over one per cent. Admittedly census figures are doubtful criteria

---

20. 'The professed allegiance of the vast majority of the population...is an inadequate guide to the religious feeling or practice of the people, although it is at least significant that such a large proportion should continue to indicate a religious preference'. W.W. Phillips, Christianity and its Defence in N.S.W., circa 1880-1890, (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, A.N.U.), 1969, p.7.
for religious belief: they merely show that people were disposed to vote in a certain way on census day.\textsuperscript{21} Census figures do not indicate the active support which the churches received. They might suggest that amongst Australians religious affiliation was a habit.\textsuperscript{22} They also suggest that religion is part of a tradition inherited from one's ancestors: if of English ancestry the Church of England was the spiritual home, if Scottish, Presbyterianism was called for.\textsuperscript{23} Census figures however may also indicate the strength of conscious belief in an age of scepticism and scientific questioning of the validity of the Christian religion.\textsuperscript{24}

The active support of the churches can best be measured by church attendance. This did rise in the second half of the nineteenth century, peaking at 34% of the total population of N.S.W. in 1870, then declining, slightly rising to 33% in 1895, and then again declining.\textsuperscript{25} From these figures it would appear that only a third of the total population was interested enough, or committed enough to the Church to attend her services regularly. However, as these figures include the sick, the old and the young, they are not totally accurate. Phillips has estimated that the actual proportion of adults attending was as follows.\textsuperscript{26}

\begin{itemize}
\item[21.] Ibid., p.41.
\item[22.] "The persistence through generation after generation of adherence to a particular denomination suggests that religion in Australia is among other things, a habit'. A.F. Davies and S. Encel (eds.), Australian Society, (Melbourne, 1965), p.44.
\item[23.] This view is strengthened by the fact that nominal adherence is strongest amongst Anglicans and Presbyterians. See ibid., p.45.
\item[24.] Phillips, Historical Studies, op.cit., p.380.
\item[25.] See Appendix I.
\item[26.] From Ibid., p.388.
\end{itemize}
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1850</th>
<th>1860</th>
<th>1870</th>
<th>1880</th>
<th>1890</th>
<th>1900</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church attendance as a percentage of the adult population (15 years and upwards)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>41.1</td>
<td>58.6</td>
<td>49.0</td>
<td>43.1</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These figures reveal that those practising the Christianity of the Church were in the minority. Barrett concludes that 'the Australian Churches have never been able to claim the dedicated allegiance of more than a minority of the people'.

27

The data supplied by the churches of the late nineteenth century, however, also support the view that there was no general decline in church attendance. The following tables, taken from Mol's *Religion in Australia*, reveal the extent to which the legend of the nineties, the extent of man's irreligiousness as noted by observers, historians and Bulletin writers, is a myth. In fact large numbers were attracted to church services, a far larger number than a reading of the literature of the nineties would lead one to believe.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1861(a)</th>
<th>1871(b)</th>
<th>1881(c)</th>
<th>1891(c)</th>
<th>1901(c)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>no returns</td>
<td>15.15</td>
<td>16.44</td>
<td>20.16</td>
<td>16.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>20.08</td>
<td>23.13</td>
<td>34.31</td>
<td>49.60</td>
<td>54.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist</td>
<td>85.68(2)</td>
<td>89.25(3)</td>
<td>78.89(d)</td>
<td>87.65(4)</td>
<td>78.12(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>29.01(1)</td>
<td>39.52</td>
<td>56.33</td>
<td>41.81</td>
<td>42.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27. Quoted by Phillips, *ibid*.

Table 2 (contd.)

(a) 'usually attending' not defined.
(b) usually attending principal service. This makes comparison between denominations difficult.
(c) Number of distinct individuals attending all services.
(1) This is a slight underestimation as more Presbyterians are included in the census than in attendance returns.
(2) Wesleyan, Primitive Methodists and Bible Christians.
(3) Wesleyan, Primitive Methodist, United Free Methodist, New Connection and Bible Christians.
(4) Wesleyan, Primitive Methodist, United Free Methodist, Bible Christians.

As can be seen from Table 1, in Victoria church attendance rose dramatically in the period reviewed. These figures may not be completely accurate as 'usual attendance' could be very widely interpreted. However, it is still fair to conclude from the figures that during the third quarter of the nineteenth century Catholics and Presbyterians increased their church attendance substantially. Anglicans maintained their relatively low and Methodists their extremely high level of church activity. The New South Wales churches were never able to attract the same high numbers to services as Victoria did. (See Table 3).

Table 3

Percentage of adherents of various denominations attending church in New South Wales from 1861 to 1901

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Anglican</th>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Methodist</th>
<th>Presbyterian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1861(1)</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>103.0(a)</td>
<td>20.6(d)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871(1)</td>
<td>17.3</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>88.5(a)</td>
<td>22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881(2)</td>
<td>16.76</td>
<td>30.22</td>
<td>44.64(b)</td>
<td>22.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891(2)</td>
<td>17.07</td>
<td>38.12</td>
<td>41.14(b)</td>
<td>26.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1901(3)</td>
<td>17.01</td>
<td>31.42</td>
<td>62.30(c)</td>
<td>20.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

29. Ibid.
(1) Number of persons generally attending public worship.
(2) Attendance not defined.
(3) Estimated habitual adult attendance at Sunday and week-day services.
(a) Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists only. Either the clergy overestimated the attendance in 1861 or a proportion of people from other denominations attended Methodist services; only in this way can one account for the fact that there were more people attending Methodist churches than there were in the population at large.
(b) Wesleyan Methodists only.
(c) Methodists undefined.
(d) Includes Presbyterians unattached.

Dale calculated that in 1886 35% of the total population in Victoria attended church regularly, while in N.S.W. the number was only about 24%. Phillips, working from N.S.W. statistics found a gradual increase from 22% of the total population to be attending church in 1850 to 38% in 1870. After this the numbers declined.

It is not the intention of this inquiry to examine the reasons for the difference between Victoria and N.S.W. figures, but merely to show that religion, when measured in terms of church attendance, was neither insignificant nor declining.

However the fact remains that the majority of the population did not wish or see any need to attend church. Did this mean that they were therefore irreligious? Contemporaries and historians as well as those who did attend Christian services regularly, claimed that church attendance is the best measure of faith. Because the majority of Australians did not attend church there has arisen the concept of Australian society as basically irreligious, lacking in the refining element of religious faith and belief. Because large numbers felt

30. See ibid., p.12.
31. See Appendix 1.
little inclination to participate in worship of the British or Irish God, even in the urban areas where churches were more readily accessible, is it correct to label them 'irreligious', 'infidels' and 'heathen'? Surely there is more to religion than church attendance.

In many an Australian there is a paradox: while eschewing religious hopes for a Kingdom of Heaven in the afterlife, he dreams of a Kingdom of Heaven in Australia. This is not the secular Utopia as spoken of by historians but a mystical orientation based partly on communion with mankind, partly on the whimsical cycle of the bush and partly on material stewardship. The religion transplanted to Australia with its conscripted and voluntary settlers failed to relate man to his society and the environment. For O'Farrell the failure of European religion in Australia has resulted in a search for substitutes, 'frauds' or distortions of what O'Farrell sees to be the true religion, the ideals of Christian community. O'Farrell reveals the basic weakness of most western religious observers of society: the Christian ideal as interpreted from one's own background is held to be the norm of religious behaviour. Yet in every culture religion has had to adapt to its environment, so that while there may be features of religion common to many cultures, the phenomena are never the same. Hinduism is a unique development within Hindu society, adapting and changing as society changed. When the teachings of the Tao and of Confucius were no longer vital to the society of their birth they were superseded by the teachings of the Buddha. Similarly Mormonism and the American Baptists are a result of the impact of the American environment upon its inhabitants. The Roman Catholicism of

32. See Barrett, op.cit., p.206.
33. O'Farrell, op.cit., p.70.
Ireland is different from that of Italy or South America. Rightly or wrongly the teachings of a religion are always adapted to the culture of its adoption. Should the religion refuse to change, it often dies a natural death. This has happened to a large extent in Australia. The religion of the churches has an 'expatriate' quality. The lack of conformity to traditional Christianity has given rise to the myth of the irreligiousness of the Australian. The myth has ignored the search for meaning within Australian culture.

Beatrice Webb could see few signs of religion in the Australian colonies. For Mrs. Webb, religion was a facet of the cultured society, and to her, religion and culture in the British sense were inseparable. The 'squatter has established no church or school at his gates. he has provided no instruction, no religion, no ideal of refinement or culture to his subordinates'. Beatrice's sentiments are echoed by a far more perspicacious observer, Francis Adams. Our 'new-world youth is a pure positivist and materialist' he said. He found little spiritual life in the colonies. However Adams does recognise a spiritual effect of the Australian environment upon the individual - an effect which produces the opposite to Adams' concept of religion. 'The heathenism of the bush is intense, everyone is at heart a pessimist'.

Similarly, the Bulletin of the 1890s ostensibly reveals a picture

34. Bollen, op.cit., p.53.
37. Ibid., p.46.
38. Ibid., p.148.
of Australian irreligiousness or imperviousness to the appeal of the traditional European religions. This is aptly illustrated by the youngster's response in John O'Brien's verse 'Tangmalangaloo'.

In answer to the bishop's question concerning the importance of Christmas Day, 'the hefty son of virgin soil' answers, 'It's the day before the races out at Tangmalangaloo'.

Hence, the tendency on the part of historians to equate religion with European Christianity, this usually being the religion of the migrant's country of origin, is here rejected. To equate religion with church attendance would seem equally false - that larger numbers did not join the traditional denominations does not necessarily imply that there is no search for religious reality for the inhabitants of this land of contradiction. Therefore it is necessary at this stage to come to terms with the word 'religion'. 'From the point of view of research there is no true or false definitions of religion, but only more or less fruitful ones.' To find an abstract definition of religion capable of application to a host of cross-cultural and transhistorical situations has troubled scholars for generations. So rather than define religion it will be more fruitful to think of religion as a continuum or spectrum. At one end of the continuum are those who would define religion in terms of a concern with a supernatural reality. Scholars like Rudolf Otto who wrote of the 'wholly other' and Durkheim and Eliade who divide the phenomena of life into the sacred and profane fit into this end of the spectrum.

40. Ibid., p.137.
42. I am indebted to Professor M.J. Charlesworth for this concept.
For such scholars 'Religion offers what is felt to be a way of entering into a relationship with the supraempirical aspects of reality, be they conceived as God, gods or otherwise'.

At the other end of the continuum are those who perceive religion, not as something distinct from the natural order, but as an extension of the natural or secular. They conceptualize religion as concerned primarily with basic attitudes or life styles. Thus Allport sees religion as the sentiment that joins all experience into a single meaningful system giving direction to life as a whole. Tillich sees the concern of religion as living one's life with 'ultimate concern'. Religion is concerned with bringing meaning into life. There are many definitions of religion lying between the two extremes of this continuum, ranging from a revelational religion like Roman Catholicism to that of 'Confucianism' which is totally concerned with the ethics of life in this world.

In Australia religion has been understood in ways which cover the entire continuum. But those who identify religion with church attendance tend towards the supernaturalist pole of religion, for those worshipping wish to experience the 'wholly other'. In the literature of the 1890s the experience of religion among the writers gravitates towards the other pole. The writers of the Nineties, while ostensibly supporting the view of the irreligiousness of the Australian people, actually reveal a different picture. There is a concern among the writers of the 1890s to seek the meaning of life and find for it ultimate

purpose. In order to do this, the religious concepts with which they were most familiar were borrowed, such as the Christian concept of an all-powerful, all-embracing God, but a God who, like that of animistic tribes, was perceived to be whimsical in His actions. They borrowed the social teachings of Jesus to strengthen the necessity of the dependence of one man upon the other, and partly out of this arose the great Australian traditions of loyalty, mateship and unionism. These are the concepts which give Australian writing its unique religious dimension.

Revealed in the literature of the 1890s is not an obvious blatant religiousness. It is more like the diffident yet dogmatic mouthings and searchings of a teenager, too awkward to find the appropriate words and too embarrassed by his longings to reveal them accurately. But the awkwardness and the hesitancy do not hide the attempt to find a comprehensive meaning and final goal to life in the Australian environment. The concern for a 'new world', a 'new Utopia' and a 'new Australia' were not meant to be secular solutions for society but aimed at bringing a religious reinterpretation upon reality.

It is the aim of this work to analyze the religious attitudes in Australian literature of the 1890s. An 'attitude' is defined as a disposition to an organization, set of practices, or beliefs, a disposition expressed in written sources. Thus religious attitudes incorporate not only the religious beliefs as expressed in Australian writings, but also the authors' or their characters' feelings towards and criticisms of the organized Church and Christianity. The aim is to discover exactly what it was these writers and their characters

felt about religion, what their own religious concepts were, and how these were expressed.

The image that will emerge is different from that projected by T. Inglis Moore in his generalization that 'Australian literature mirrors a society fundamentally irreligious, loosely pagan'. Rather it will be argued, Australian literature of the 1890s reveals a society basically religious, having an 'Australian' image of God, and rejecting most of the orthodox doctrines about Him, although preferring the hedonist and stoic outlooks on life to the faith of orthodox Christian religion. The observer of today may see only paganism in Australian literature but the authors and characters themselves, though denying their religiousness, believed that they were carrying out the true Christian religion.

In this study the aim is to look not for religious writing as such, as do most literary critics lamenting the lack of religion in Australian literature but for attitudes towards religion, God, the Church and life generally, as expressed in the literature written in the 1890s.

The resulting analysis unveils a picture which, though revealing the writers' open rejection of all that is traditionally considered 'religious' - the Church, its dogma and its clergy - also reveals a faltering fundamental religiousness, where the characters accept the presence of God and yearn for a lack of hypocrisy. The picture reveals a search for truth, for a relevant interpretation of a

47. T. Inglis Moore, Social Patterns in Australian Literature, (Sydney, 1971), p.137.
48. Ibid., p.292.
religious dimension, for a message that will be bound up with man in the Australian environment, with the reality of the caprices of flood and fire, and not tied to the lofty vaulted interiors of churches. The picture drawn will be that of a literature searching for a religious outlook.

This study of the literature of the 1890s has been confined to that of the Eastern coast, partly for practical reasons and partly because it was here that a national consciousness was chiefly expressed. As Francis Adams put it when referring to the 1890s, 'at present the national life of Australia, the articulate expression of the community as a community is to be found, and to be found only in what I have called the Pacific Slope and the Eastern Interior'.

Literature is a valuable medium for the communication of attitudes as it is a record of both imagination and observation. Both these are necessarily limited by the experience of one's environment. Each age, each society, will have its own spirit, its zeitgeist, mirrored within its literature. In general, each writer will reflect the climate of his own day. The writings of the 1890s reflect the turbulent, exciting struggle in search of an identity for the young nation. Their authors were as much influenced by the life around them as they, in turn, influenced those who read their words. Thus they become social commentators both by choice and by the expectations of their readers. The literature of the 1890s can be taken as a social mirror reflecting traits of sentiment and outlook distinguishing the character of the nation being formed. 'Whatever his personal or universal character, every writer is also a part of his society, his country, and his century'.

50. F. Adams, *op.cit.*, pp.11-12.
The influence of the Bulletin during the 1890s may have been exaggerated. Though it was 'the headquarters of a conscious attempt to develop both a national literature and a sense of national identity through literature', it never appealed to as wide a range of writers as the Yorick Club in Melbourne. Yet its influence should not be underestimated. 'The Bulletin was the only cultural centre this country possessed. It dominated opinion whenever people were looking for an intelligent outlook on life'. As a left-oriented social commentary, the Bulletin attracted a large following. It was eventually said of it that 'half Australia writes it; all Australia reads it'. During the 1890s it was a paper extremely influential in creating a national spirit and thus bringing to the fore the national myth. As Thomson said 'From the late '80s well into the twentieth century the Bulletin was probably the most universally read and most influential weekly in Australia'. Thomson ascribes the popularity of the Bulletin to the combination of elements like radicalism, nationalism and humour. The variety of its interests appealed to a variety of people. 'The consistency of its programme, once established, and its forceful repetition of its policy.... probably account for much of its influence'. There were many other papers with a similar subject matter or style, or humour or

54. The Old Bulletin Book of Verse, (Melbourne, 1975), cover.
56. Ibid., p.40.
illustrations, however the Bulletin survived them all. The Bulletin's contribution towards the development of a national dream-time was considerate and deliberate.

In her work on the Bulletin, Thomson has shown that nationalism in Australia, as revealed in the Bulletin was commonly expressed in terms of hostility to Britain and Chinese immigrants, independence of spirit, distrust of the law, in the concept of mateship and the lack of religion. It was an 'irreverent paper', making 'a joke of priests, parsons, or any conventiculeridden (sic.) sect which sought to impose its narrow creed on the community at large'. It was the paper's deliberate policy to avoid all 'religious literature' as any reference to religion would only awaken old-world resentments and controversies.

With reference to your otherwise excellent 'Church Sunday' item...I should like to point out to you that whatever one's private opinion may be about so-called 'Sacred things' any specific reference in the scriptural way to 'Christ', or the 'Holy Ghost', or (say) the 'Virgin Mary', is apt to be taken as an exhibition of bad taste if not even of a desire to insult to those who think differently. Any such references always lead to trouble and I am sure you'll see the advisableness of carefully keeping them out of your book. Indeterminate references to 'Providence', 'Heaven', 'The Deity', and so on, will better pass muster.

Thus, within its pages little attempt is made to clarify or elaborate upon religious belief. Yet it does reveal a religious content. McQueen has shown how the myth of mateship was merely that - a myth. Palmer questions the truth of the concept of the nineties as

57. Ibid., p.39.
58. See ibid., ch.1.
59. Norman Lindsay, op.cit., p.89.
60. Letter from Archibald (editor of the Bulletin) to Steele Rudd, October 14th, 1897, quoted by Winifred Hamilton, Steele Rudd, His Life and Letters, (Mitchell Library Ms.), pp.16-17.
61. McQueen, op.cit., p.138.
a national dreamtime, a flowering of culture, for 'the various impulses, ideas and aspirations that made up the Australian dream cannot be limited to a particular decade'. The irreligiousness of Australian literature, and perhaps the Australian, can also be shown to be untrue, for the writings of the 1890s do, in fact, contain a remarkable faith and search for meaning. But the fact that the myth was believed so fervently in the 1890s and the fact that the myth is perpetuated today needs explanation, for the view that 'people hold towards their past is one of the controlling factors in their morals, religion, art and intellectual pursuits, to say nothing of the sights, sounds and actual feel of their daily experience'.

The culture may have emerged over a long period, 'from Eureka to the first World War', but the 1890s still remains the period of the national dreamtime. The myth found its voice here. Many historians still feel that 'Australian culture...was born in the nineties'. Semmler calls the 1890s 'the storm-centre of Australian historiography'. To Palmer it was a 'period of intense self-absorption'. The 1890s provided a quantity of lively writing. No other period of our literature has produced such a wealth of writers, minor poets, versifiers, popular poets and balladists. The writers of the 1890s are unique within the history of Australia, concerned as they were with the search for a national identity. The emphasis in the literature is an amplification of characteristics

---

63. Charles Frankel, quoted by Woodward, _op.cit._, p.118.
64. Palmer, _op.cit._, p.13.
68. With perhaps the exception of modern days.
that are uniquely Australian. Perhaps 'the notion of a national dream-time is not all a myth'. 69

This analysis of the religious attitudes of the writers of the 1890s will develop a stereotypical Australian attitude to religion which has been influential in that many Australians accept it as true, though it is in fact partly the product of fantasy and wishful thinking.

From the sketches of countless occasional writers of the eighties and nineties, as well as from the more permanent work of Lawson and Furphy, a special type emerged - a laconic but sociable fellow with his own idiom and his own way of looking at things. He had the humour of a dry sardonic kind, a sensitive spirit with a tough covering, initiative and capacity that were qualified by 'near enough' standards of achievement. His mental horizons were comparatively narrow, but his sympathies were broad. What little he had read of Biblical or secular history he liked to reduce to the homely terms of his experience....he had a streak of idealism in his nature that expressed itself in his statements about mateship and in political movements that made for equality. 70

As this mythical, though influential, stereotype is analysed, a picture will emerge, not of an irreligious society, but of an unorthodox religious society, where any decay or negligence of traditional European Christianity was accompanied by the intensification of other spiritual values which may also be labelled 'Christian'.

69. Ibid., p.40.
Chapter 2

The Poets and Novelists of the 1890s -
their Religious Experiences and Beliefs

The writers of the 1890s came from various backgrounds; some were wealthy, others poor. Their education varied, as did their upbringing, their parents' attitudes and teaching on religion. As a result many of their personal views and attitudes also varied. Yet, taken as a group, there is a remarkable similarity in attitude towards religion; an attitude that contributed heavily towards the formation of the national myth. This chapter examines the backgrounds and personal religious attitudes of these writers.

The poets and prose writers chosen for consideration are those well-known today as the writers of the 1890s. Most of them were popular and widely read and most were contributors to the Bulletin.¹ They form a group of writers unique in the history of Australia, in that, for the first time, they wrote about Australia as Australians, proud of their country and way of life, and critical of exotic influences. Though they formed a unique manifestation they drew on sentiments and elements already present in the Australian way of life. They did not create a national spirit out of chaos and nothingness.²

The poets of the 1890s may be divided roughly into three groups.³

1. See the quotation from Ailsa G. Thomson on p.16.
2. For the development of the Australian legend see R. Ward, The Australian Legend (Melbourne, 1958).
There are the 'public' poets, 'commemorating or reprehending and often looking hopefully to the future', characterised by James Brunton Stephens (1835-1902) and George Essex Evans (1863-1909). Secondly, there is a smaller group which stands aside from the Australian scene, as typified by Victor Daley (1858-1905) and Roderick Quinn (1867-1949). Then there is by far the largest group, the bush balladists, 'Banjo' Patterson (1864-1941), Henry Lawson (1867-1922), Will Ogilvie (1869-1963), Edward Dyson (1865-1931), E.J. Brady (1869-1952) and Barcroft Boake (1866-1892).

Standing alongside the poets are the novelists, Ada Cambridge (1844-1926), 'Tasma' - Jessie Couvreur (1848-1897), Rosa Praed (1851-1935), Joseph Furphy (1843-1912) and Miles Franklin (1879-1954), and the short story writers "Price Warung" - William Astley (1855-1911), Edward Dyson, Henry Lawson and "Steele Rudd" - Arthur Hoey Davis (1868-1935). Besides these are the poets of the Federation period, to which only two, Bernard O'Dowd (1866-1953) and Mary Gilmore (1865-1962) are referred, as the rest, C. Brennan, S. Neilson, Hugh McCrae, Frank Wilmot and Baylebridge, had little of the nationalistic note of the other poets and reflected values of the later period. Moreover, besides Brennan, they were mainly influential after the 1890s. Brennan's poetry had more of a universal attraction: it 'might as well have been written in China as in his own country'.

4. Ibid., p.47.
5. Treatment of these three women has been omitted, the first because she was essentially English rather than Australian (see Vance Palmer (ed.), A.G. Stephens, His Life and Work, (Melbourne, 1941), p.105), the second because she left Australia before the 1890s, and the third because she moved to London in the 1870s and all her novels were written there (see H.M. Green, A History of Australian Literature, Vol.1, (Sydney, 1961), p.239).
6. Omitted as he wrote of the convict period.
Thus the writers under consideration are those who consciously aimed at producing a uniquely Australian literature. Their popularity amongst the Australians of the 1890s reflects their appeal to nationalism and their growing awareness of a uniqueness of the Australian way of life. There are some, like Mary Gilmore and Joseph Furphy, who were not well-known until after the 1890s, but they are included in that their writings are indicative of this period. Others have been omitted, either because their output was so small or because of their lack of popularity.

Poets

James Brunton Stephens and George Essex Evans are minor poets and may be dealt with briefly. Stephens was a well educated man, having attended Edinburgh University where he obtained a diploma but no degree, being forced to leave because of lack of funds. He came to Australia when he was thirty-one years old (1865) and his poetry was mostly written during the next fifteen years. His reputation as the most notable poet of the time lasted until the arrival of Lawson and Paterson. Stephens was representative of the zeitgeist of his time in that though raised in the Presbyterian faith, he 'seems to express in both letters and publications a secular attitude, and his mild scepticism was tolerant of all creeds - or of no creed at all'. However, the Darwinian controversy brought out his belief in God the Creator. 'In spite of Büchner I say á Dieu'. Although throughout his life his outlook had been lukewarm towards organized religion, he

---

8. James Brunton Stephens, Newspaper Cuttings, (Mitchell Library Ms.).
10. Ibid., p.81.
11. Writer of a book called Man, in which he elaborates upon the descent of man from the animal kingdom.
12. In a letter written 1875, quoted by Hadgraft, op.cit., p.82.
was buried with the rites of his native Church.  

George Essex Evans was born in London in 1863 and migrated to Queensland at the age of eighteen (1881). He was the son of a Queen's Counsel and was educated at Haverfordwest Grammar School (Wales) under Dr. John Scott, and then at St. James College for six years. In Queensland he became in turn farmer, teacher, journalist and finally civil servant. Little is known of his religious predisposition, for available records make no mention of it. Though he was a patriotic poet, with a deep love of mateship and delighting in describing Australian scenes 'his pictures are not typically Australian, they might almost have come from some other country'.

Victor Daley and Rod Quinn, writing as they did from outside the Australian scene, take only a small place in contributing to the Australian myth. The latter's parents migrated from Galway, Ireland in 1855, and it is probable that they were Catholic and brought up their son in the faith. The available records show no evidence of a religious faith during his lifetime, except that in 1851, in a ceremony to place a headstone for Quinn, Archbishop O'Brien gave his address 'as a Catholic Bishop who is speaking about Quinn who was also a Catholic'. Quinn had been educated at Sydney in various Catholic schools and for a short time studied for the Bar.

Victor Daley was also brought up as an Irish Catholic. He was educated at the school of the Christian Brothers in Armagh, Ireland. When almost fourteen years old, Daley was taken to Plymouth where he

---

14. G. Essex Evans, Newspaper Cuttings, (Mitchell Library Ms.).
17. Colin Arthur Roderick Papers, (Mitchell Library Ms.).
19. Rod Quinn, Newspaper Cuttings, (Mitchell Library Ms.).
20. The Tatler, August 20th, 1898.
went to a Catholic school for a year and then became a clerk in the Great Western Railway office, remaining three years. At twenty he migrated to Australia. Here, Daley did not practice the religion of his forbears.

He wasn't religious. He was Irish and formally Catholic, but he never went to Church, never dreamed of going to confession. With priests he talked gaily as with ordinary mortals. One or two 'made desperate attempts to convert me', he related; 'it seemed sad to see a son of Holy Church outside the fold'. Such attempts made no impression on him; he adhered to his non-belief that did not go as far as unbelief.

Yet he often judged matters in the light of what he believed to be Christian principles. For example, when a newspaper reported that an official inquiry had been ordered because a school teacher had advised his students to pray for the Boers, Daley came out with:

There was a Personage Divine -
Long long ago; in Galilee -
Who taught - and tried - the creed benign
of praying for the enemy.
He might redeem mankind - but he
Would not, do for Burrangaree.

Though Daley may have shared the strong democratic anti-authoritarian views of the Bulletin these were only revealed in few of his poems. Usually Daley is more the romanticist living in a world of fancy. Therefore, though held in high regard by his contemporaries, his poetry reveals little of national emotion.

Bush Balladists

Of by far the greatest importance are the bush balladists of the

25. Ibid., p.16.
nineties. The ballads circulating in Australia prior to the 1890s were 'subversive and anti-authority', and as they were essentially lower class and expressive of national ideas and sentiments, they provide rich material for the study of Australian attitudes. The Bulletin literary balladists of the 1890s upheld this tradition, giving a concrete formulation of ideas and sentiments which suggest social patterns seminal in past decades. 'This formulation was particularly effective as a social force because the balladists spoke the language of the people and expressed popular sentiments so that they found their audience not in a few literary readers but in a whole nation'.

Lawson and Paterson are in the forefront of the balladists. 'The Australia that Paterson and Lawson knew and wrote about was the base upon which our society has grown forth. No other local writers devoted themselves so wholeheartedly to the Australian scene'. It is very difficult to discover what Paterson's religious attitudes were; he seems to have deliberately hidden all personal features of his life. His parents were married by the Rector of Holy Trinity Church in Orange and Paterson was christened by him. This, and the fact that he was married in the Presbyterian Church at Tenterfield appear to be the only references to any religious affiliation throughout his life.

29. T. Inglis Moore, op.cit., p.91.
30. Ollif, op.cit., p.53.
31. Ibid., p.398.
32. Ibid., p.16.
33. Ibid., p.85.
Paterson's education went beyond what was usual for his time. His first school had been a little bush public school at Binalong, 'a tired township out in the bush'. He then attended a private preparatory school in Sydney 'a nice, quiet institution where we were all young gentleman, and had to wear good clothes instead of hob-nailed boots and moleskins in which my late schoolmates invariably appeared. Also we were ruled by moral suasion instead of "handers", a thing that I appreciated highly'. He matriculated at sixteen from Sydney Grammar School and having sat unsuccessfully for a university scholarship he entered a lawyer's office. He became managing clerk and later a partner in a legal firm.

Although the available material reveals little evidence of his religious beliefs his verse does reveal a little more of his attitudes. Generally he was critical of the Church. He was conversant with biblical knowledge, using biblical phrases and stories with great ease. He accepted God as the Creator and giver of life.

However, Paterson's ballads never attempted an effective analysis of emotion or of situation. They were narratives, idealistic and descriptive only of country side and occurrence. Paterson wanted to present an idealised version of the way of life he had known in his youth. He was concerned with the concrete, not with the hypothetical abstract. He shied clear of any mystical gropings or expressions of

35. A.B. Paterson, "My Various Schools", Sydneian, June, 1890, p.5.
36. Ibid.
emotional extremes. Heseltine therefore calls him 'the protector of the superficial integrity of our minds'.

Elliott makes an accurate assessment of Paterson's ballads when he says

There is no depth sounded; psychology is never strained; generally speaking it is taken for granted that what lies underneath the surface is the same as what you see.

Perhaps his mediocrity goes a long way towards explaining his popularity in the Australian culture.

Henry Lawson represents a different aspect of the Australian personality. At the worst he was mawkish as in some of his poorer verse. However, in the best of his short stories his language is never emotional, yet the emotions are highly aroused by his deceptively simple matter-of-fact telling of the tale. 'As a serious poet, he does not really rate consideration; as a symptom of the times, as a short-story writer, and as a man, he is significant'.

Religion was not left out of Lawson's life, instead, it appears to have left an indelible mark upon the whole of his life. Judith Wright had said of Christopher Brennan that, in a sense, his whole exploration and achievement stem from his religious upbringing - it is an attempt at reconciliation and reanimation of his early religious experiences. And if there is one note in his writing that is unmistakable, it is the habit of mind, and even of diction that his early experience left in him. His mind is not secular; his vision and the imagery he used are constantly coloured by, and refer to, his early training.

---

40. H.P. Heseltine quoted by Semmler, loc.cit., p.60.
42. As in "The Drover's Wife".
44. Ibid., p.87.
Wright might also have been talking about Henry Lawson. Although they differed vastly in their background and writings, their early religious experience had, for both, left an indelible trace. Lawson's nature and upbringing 'seem to have required, if not a religious dogma, at least a religious outlook on the universe'. This religious outlook came to him from a variety of sources: his parents, his education, his environment and his experience.

Of his father's religion very little is known. His son called him a free thinker: 'Father always professed to be a free thinker'. According to his wife, Louisa, he was an educated man who had studied navigation and could speak five languages.

Henry Lawson's mother, Louisa, as a child had gone regularly to the local Methodist chapel. She had cried when she had read about Christ's crucifixion, and her sensitivity towards religion remained with her for the rest of her life. Her son spoke of her 'religious spells'. She had been a solitary and introspective adolescent and this 'expressed itself in the sloughing off of her inherited religion and the substitution of a form of mystical pantheism consistent enough to last the whole of her life'. When residing in Sydney she came into contact with a spiritualist organization which taught its members about 'Zoistic Science, Free thought, Spiritualism and Harmonial Philosophy'. Her son Henry, and daughter Gertrude went

45. Brennan had been brought up as a Catholic and had intended to go into the priesthood.
46. Ibid., p.84.
48. Louisa Lawson Papers,(Mitchell Library Ms.).
49. Ibid.
to its Sunday School.\textsuperscript{53} Lawson's story 'Table-Rappin''\textsuperscript{54} shows that, when still living in Eurunderee, his mother had conducted several seances, which no one appeared to take very seriously. Louisa, however, did believe in spirits. In her autobiography she made reference to their knowledge of 'peace and certainty'.\textsuperscript{55}

According to Manning Clark, Louisa Lawson had been 'talked out of her spiritualism' by Thomas Walker.\textsuperscript{56} However, Louisa remained interested in religion for the rest of her life. In Sydney her house became a meeting place of people interested in journalism, spiritualism, free thought, republicanism and social reform.\textsuperscript{57} In her later years she wrote

\begin{verbatim}
God bless our enemies
Lord they love thee
God make them good and wise
Let our prayer be
When we our voices raise
All through the happy days
Let it be but to praise
Thee only Thee.\textsuperscript{58}
\end{verbatim}

The lovely simplicity of this prayer perhaps goes a long way towards explaining why Henry Lawson was so influenced by his mother's religion. His biographers and critics agree that he was greatly influenced by his mother, especially during the younger years. Usually this is held to be a negative, almost evil influence, as in those who hold that 'A Child in the Dark' was a true account of Lawson's childhood.\textsuperscript{59} But

\begin{enumerate}
\item Prout suggests this was the Children's Progressive Lyceum, which specialized in lectures on religious subjects, golden chain recitations, singing and calisthenics. See ibid., pp.58-59.
\item Louisa Lawson Papers, op.cit.
\item C.M.H. Clark, In Search of Henry Lawson, 1978, p.25.
\item 'A Prayer', Louisa Lawson Papers, op.cit.
\item See Cecil Mann, op.cit., pp.29ff, and Clark, Henry Lawson, op.cit., p.7.
\end{enumerate}
Louisa Lawson had stretched the sensitive, imaginative nature of the child by feeding it with rich if unorthodox morsels of religion, philosophy and literature. It was due to her early influence that he was later to be so sympathetic to republicanism, women's suffrage, socialism and religion.

Henry Lawson's education also contributed towards giving him a religious outlook on life. He had three irregular years of schooling in a 'poorly equipped bush school'. In 1879-80, however, because of his mother's disagreement with local education authorities, he was sent to the Catholic parish school at Mudgee. Here the priest's tolerance towards Protestants left a lasting impression upon the young boy's mind. In his later years it was the lack of this same tolerance that caused him to criticise the Christian churches.

The sensitive nature of young Henry Lawson responded hungrily to the appeal of religion. Gertrude says he was 'almost' a 'religious fanatic' at fourteen and a 'Christian spiritualist' at sixteen. Though Roderick has criticised reliance upon Gertrude's words, Lawson himself supports her, mentioning also that under the influence of some prevailing issues on religion, he later became a freethinker like his father - or imagined he did, revealing that Lawson himself realised he never lost his religious outlook upon life.

I was extremely sensitive and almost, if not quite, developed religious mania at one time (when I was about fourteen)....(we went to the other extreme later on in Sydney, during the freethought craze of the Eighties, and became freethinkers - or thought we did).

60. Roderick, op.cit., p.xv.
61. Ibid., p.xx.
63. See C. Roderick, 'Can This be Lawson?', Sydney Morning Herald, May 12, 1978.
Such an experience creates a metaphysical dimension which it is impossible to fill without some religious feeling.

Yet in his adult life Lawson had no wish to be associated with the Church, possibly because he thought it would damage his reputation as a writer. 'Do you want my readers to think that the Salvation Army has got hold of Henry Lawson?' He felt that he and his peers had little in common with the organizers of religion:

We have learnt to do without parsons or priests; we have had to, because of the marvellous difference between our creeds, or the want of a creed or of having been excommunicated, kicked out of, or of having renounced or deserted or fallen away from one and all respectable creeds or religious bodies.

Though he feared any public admission of religious inclinations, the religious dimension was always to remain with Lawson. In the words of E.J. Brady

No matter what the academicians may say about him, this Young Carpenter of the South came into the world on his red-robed Angels, and with his red-robed Angels he went out of the world, and his voice - barbaric though they deem it - will be heard over the roofs of the world when theirs have long been muted in oblivion.

His enemies are the enemies of humanity. His friends are the friends of God.

The paradox of Lawson, the man of religion who denied the practice of religion, was by no means unique. The bush balladist Barcroft Boake, provides another contemporary instance of this curious contempt.

Barcroft Boake received an 'ordinary education', but in his early youth spent a few years in New Caledonia, learning French there. His education completed, he was apprenticed to a surveyor. He worked at this profession intermittently, mixing it with boundary riding and droving. Although his father was an agnostic, his mother had strong religious convictions. When he was twelve his mother died, and his grandmother, a lady of 'exemplary piety', took over the management of the household. His father said of him:

He was early trained into the principles of the Christian religion as taught by the Church of England and although as he grew older he naturally absorbed somewhat broader views from his father who was agnostic, he was never known to treat lightly any religious subject. On one occasion his father was cross examining him as to his beliefs and doubts and he remarked that after all he thought the best religion for a man was that which he learned at his mother's knee.

Boake's ballads reflect his religious awareness. They showed promise of a keen analysis of the deeper aspects of the Australian outback. In some of his poetry the 'sense of spiritual darkness emanating from the land itself...comes from a deeper layer of the mind than the easy optimism, the simplicity of faith which are more constantly present' in other Australian poetry.

Two other writers to whom organized religion was of little importance are Will Ogilvie and Edward Dyson. Ogilvie was a Scot who came out to Australia when twenty years old. He stayed in the country for twelve years, and though he was one of the most prolific of the

69. See B.C. Boake's biography of his son's life (Mitchell Library Ms.).
70. Ibid.
bush balladists, his words project a conventionally romantic vision of the outback which owes more to romanticism than to any apparent awareness of the harsh realities.\textsuperscript{72} Religion seemed to have played little part in his life in the outback. Dyson, similarly, is an unknown quantity as far as his religion is concerned. He received his education in various country schools in Victoria, leaving school at an early age.\textsuperscript{73} He obtained his first job at the age of twelve working for a travelling draper and in turn worked in the mines, in a Melbourne factory, and for a newspaper.\textsuperscript{74} His writings reflected these various experiences.

Like most of her contemporary writers, 'religion does not seem to have figured very largely,'\textsuperscript{75} in the life of Miles Franklin. She also had received an intermittent elementary schooling. When she was six her education began in the hands of a tutor hired by her uncle to teach his children.\textsuperscript{76} When she was ten the family moved to Thornford and Miles went to the local school for the first time.

She received her religious education from the maternal side of the family. Her grandmother conducted weekly services at her home when Miles stayed there as a child. Her mother wrote poetry, amongst which were some of the highest piety

\begin{center}
\begin{quote}
Alone with Thee, my Lord, my God!
My Lord, I am alone with Thee;
And it is what my real soul desires,
To be, and feel, alone with Thee.\textsuperscript{77}
\end{quote}
\end{center}

However, Miles herself rejected the traditional image of God 'Before

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{72} See Miller, \textit{op.cit.}, 1956 ed., p.364.
\textsuperscript{73} Green, \textit{op.cit.}, p.383.
\textsuperscript{74} See Miller, \textit{op.cit.}, p.158.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., p.25.
\textsuperscript{77} Miles Franklin, Miscellaneous Papers (Mitchell Library Ms.).
\end{footnotesize}
I was ten I became critical of the anthropomorphic God as interpreted in the churches. During her formative adolescent years she had numerous introspective intellectual struggles with religion, one of which she had left for us in 'A Dialogue. An Infidel and a Religious'. In answer to the religious person she put the following words in the mouth of the Infidel:

It appears to me that religion is a belief we must take unquestioningly and should we dare to look into it it falls to pieces and we are called a blasphemer. I long for truth and soul's peace and a god that I could worship... you may say the God you worship is a just and merciful being and yet he could send an unbeliever to eternal death. I would not pray to believe in such a God, he would be beneath my contempt. Not with all my sins and shortcomings I could not condemn an irresponsible to eternal hell. You're (sic.) God is no god, but a feeble joss you have uprisen as a bogey with which to terrify the superstitious. Your God according to your representation is not omnipotent but is subservient to the more powerful Devil who takes countless millions with him while your God is powerless to save all but a few.

Though Miles Franklin rejected as superstition many of the traditional concepts of God, she was typical of her fellow writers in that she did not reject the concept of God itself:

I had managed to alleviate my early unhappiness about God by discrediting the unpleasant representations of His vindictiveness with which religion abound, by crediting only what was beautiful and noble in conception and by eschewing prayer as a superstition.

Another writer who was typical of his peers in rejecting organized Christianity while retaining his own concept of what Christianity

79. Probably written in the 1890s. In Miles Franklin Literary Papers, Vol.8 (Mitchell Library Ms.).
really ought to be, was Joseph Furphy. Yet Furphy was different from his fellow writers in that he emphasized heavily the importance of religion, and, in fact, one of his books, *Rigby's Romance*, can be interpreted as a treatise on the practical impact of Furphy's form of Christianity. Thus Furphy has left us with a very clear impression of his religious attitudes. His favourite creation, Rigby, declared 'Didn't I acknowledge that my religious faith was invisible to the naked eye?'. This was Furphy's belief, that religion as such should not be visible, but religion when put into practice in the form of practical ethics, is what should be discernible.

Furphy had been brought up by religious parents who were probably Methodists. The young Furphy was early taught to recite the chapters of the Bible as well as pages of Shakespeare. His education, begun by his parents at home, was continued at school when the family moved to Kangaroo Ground and at Kyneton after another move there when he was nine. He left school at an early age to work on his father's farm. However, though he had had little formal education, he was a prolific reader, acquiring much of his vast knowledge in this way. In fact, toward the end of his life he spent so much time in catching up on his reading that there was no time for writing.

Furphy's attitude towards religion and Christianity paralleled that of many of the other writers. He had tried both the Methodist Church and the Churches of Christ but was disappointed by their materialist philosophy.

---

82. See Appreciations of Joseph Furphy, (Mitchell Library Ms.), p.13.
83. Green, op.cit., p.610.
I tried religion (Church of Christ) but had to give it best; not because it was too exacting but the other way about. I didn't want a church that prohibited actual vice - for I am not vicious - but I wanted one that would expel me with contumely for having two coats while another bloak (sic.) had none.86

Furphy did not confine himself to the study of Christianity but studied other religions and philosophies as well. He was profoundly influenced by Stoicism and displayed an almost evangelical zeal toward it: his first present to both Kate Baker and Miles Franklin was a volume of Epictetus.87 'Amongst dead and moribund religions, the stoic philosophy probably came nearest to the discovery of a positive line of morality',88 he wrote. He felt it was 'supremely noble in all its aspects',89 as it came so close to the self-sacrifice taught by Christianity. He also became interested in spiritualism, participating in various seances.90 He inquired into Theosophy, writing to Kate Baker that 'I think it will be found that Theosophy was the religion taught by Christ'.91

But throughout his life Furphy believed firmly in his own interpretation of the Christian religion. With him it was Christ's teachings which were always the canon of another philosophy, religion, teaching or morality. To Furphy, being a Christian meant following a strict line of morality. It meant being a socialist and Furphy used the romance of Rigby to elaborate upon this in full. The message of

86. Letter of Furphy to Miles Franklin, quoted in John K. Ewers, Tell the People, (Sydney, n.d.), p.32.
87. See Miles Franklin, Joseph Furphy - The Legend of a Man and His Book, (Sydney, 1944), p.94.
89. Ibid.
90. Miles Franklin, Joseph Furphy, op.cit., p.123.
91. Miles Franklin Literary Papers, (Mitchell Library Ms.), Vol.67.
Christianity, to Furphy, implied a guideline of right or wrong.

Partly because Pessimism and Scepticism are the correct capers just now, I am an Optimist and a Christian...Optimistic, in the sense that I see in the future a type of humanity farther above present attainment...Christian, inasmuch as I believe Jesus (or his inventor) to have given us a Square, which obviates any necessity for working out a mathematical problem when we wish to gauge the Absolute Morality (or Ultimate Expediency) - in a word the Squareness - of this or that action.  

Furphy believed that one need not practise the detailed requirements of any particular Christian church or sect to lead a Christian life. 'My own Sunday-school conceptions of heaven, hell, the judgement day, etc. have long ago gone by the board, and without affecting my sense of right and wrong in the slightest degree'. He held the Victorian concept that ethical standards are unchangeable. Right and wrong, derived from eternal Christian principles, are also fixed immutably: 

Just as white will be white and black will be black, to the end of time, so the right and wrong of a million years hence will be precisely the right and wrong of today; unchanged since yesterday, since last year, since last century.

Furphy did not believe that the Christian churches were interpreting the Christian message aright. Because of their financial involvement they were trying to serve both God and Mammon. Therefore Furphy would have nothing to do with the organized church.

He was deeply religious. Paragraph after paragraph in his books and letters establish this. Again and again he declares his faith . But everywhere he questioned the organized profession of religion, its conventional manifestations he denounced uncompromisingly. He was a protestant.

92. Undated letter to 'Bookfellow', in Miles Franklin Literary Papers, op.cit.
93. Furphy to C.H. Winter, quoted by Miles Franklin, Joseph Furphy, op.cit., p.110.
95. Miles Franklin, writing about Joseph Furphy, on a scrap of paper in Miles Franklin Literary Papers, op.cit., vol.73.
Another writer having a strong affinity for Christianity whilst eschewing the Christian Church was Arthur Hoey Davis (Steele Rudd). Like the majority of his contemporaries in literature, Davis' parents were 'God-fearing people'. Though his biographer (and son) says they were not 'deeply religious', they made sure he was instilled with a love and respect of the scriptures, and his mother had wanted him to be a clergyman. After every Sunday evening meal a chapter from the Bible would be read. Arthur Davis' education consisted of 'a little scrappy schooling and a succession of bush jobs', after which he went to work in a Government department in Brisbane.

While his wife 'Tean' was still alive Davis maintained a nominal contact with Church. His children were sent to the Woollahra Presbyterian School. 'Mother became a regular attendant at Sunday Services while my father went along occasionally'. However, a letter written to a friend, probably in the 1890s, reveals that Davis even then felt little kinship with the Christian Church.

Maybe I am not a strict religionist that is, if a religionist means a constant churchgoer and Psalm Singer - not nearly as strict as Tean would have me be - but when one sees the worst and hypocrites conducting church affairs and worshipping in all (apparent) sincerity their Maker Sunday after Sunday - is it any wonder that a person becomes indifferent to religious formalities - I don't mean belief - and grows a sceptic.

After his wife's death Arthur Davis disdained to have any interaction with orthodox religion, yet 'he nevertheless firmly

97. Ibid., p.37.
98. Ibid., p.29.
100. Eric Drayton Davis, loc. cit., p.118.
believed in the Supreme Being, the Great Architect of the Universe.\textsuperscript{102} He formed a close friendship with Winifred Hamilton who shared many of his attitudes towards religion. She says of him

He had practically given up orthodox religion before I met him but never-the-less held a strong belief in a future life....He found much consolation in Isaiah and the Psalms....Together we visited many temples of faith, and together discarded them all - Unitarian, Christian Science, Anglican Cathedral, Catholic, Theosophy, we visited in turn. But none of them made any great appeal.\textsuperscript{103}

Another short story writer, Barbara Baynton, had also received a strong religious sense from her mother.\textsuperscript{104} She retained her devotion to the Bible for the rest of her life, but one senses that her mother's religiosity, caused as it was by an oppressive sense of guilt,\textsuperscript{105} kindled little response in the strong-willed daughter. In 'Bush Church' she was a contemptuous observer of religious practices rather than a sympathetic participant. This characterised her attitude towards others. Little appears to be known of Baynton's attitudes towards religion otherwise, for beyond her contribution of Bush Studies she made small impact upon her generation.

Mary Gilmore also had a keen affinity with religious doctrine. She had been brought up in obedience to the tenets of the Kirk.\textsuperscript{106}

'Mother's people were Wesleyans of the rigid Presbyterian kind.... My father was something the same in his "face to face with God" attitude but he was more of the "The Sabbath is the Lord's and Let Him not encroach" on the other days'.\textsuperscript{107} Her father had been an

\textsuperscript{102} Eric Drayton Davis, \textit{op.cit.}, p.189.
\textsuperscript{103} Quoted \textit{ibid.}, p.194.
\textsuperscript{104} Barbara Baynton, \textit{op.cit.}, p.9.
\textsuperscript{105} Because of her adultery.
\textsuperscript{106} Colin Roderick Papers, \textit{op.cit.}
\textsuperscript{107} Mary Gilmore in A.G. Stephens Papers, (Mitchell Library Ms.), Vol.4.
Mary Gilmore's education had been scanty. In her biographical note to A.G. Stephens she wrote 'only went to school three years'. She had been taught to read from an old Bible before she was six. Her first formal education was at Brucedale Public School, and then at Wagga Wagga public school. Before she left Wagga public school she 'worked hard single-handed and passed highest grade candidate for pupil teacher of my year'. She began immediately as assistant pupil teacher at Wagga. She studied voraciously at night, and in 1880 she came to Sydney as assistant teacher, where she became interested in the Labour Movement. In 1894, while at Broken Hill she became the first woman member of the Australian Workers Union, and in the following year joined William Lane in his famous social experiment in Paraguay.

As a small child Mary had been 'fired with religious enthusiasm', but her experiences as a young woman led her to believe religion was 'only for Sunday and had nothing to do with life'. As she grew older her attitude towards religion moderated and about 1937 she wrote 'I am tolerant of religion, but against the rule of any church'. Although she has been called 'Australia's outstandingly religious poet', she did not consider herself to be a religious person. In a

109. Ibid., pp.29-30.
111. Ibid.
112. Mary Gilmore, quoted by Cusack, Moore and Ovenden, op.cit., p.42.
113. Mary Gilmore, quoted ibid.
114. Ibid.
letter written 3rd July 1959 she says, 'Apart from "The Rue Tree" which was intentionally so, it would never have struck me to say I was definitely religious'. Yet she frequently attended St. Stephen's Presbyterian Church in Sydney, where she had a rented pew, and in her will she bequeathed £100 to be applied to the payment of pew rent for a sitting for the use of strangers. It appears that Mary Gilmore felt there was a tension between being religious and being Christian. To the time of her death she believed that the principles of Christianity were embodied in the teachings of socialism, that to be Christian was to be a socialist, and not a 'religious' person.

Deeply Christian in belief and practice, only a few weeks before her death she summed up her life-long conviction that 'under Capitalism the predominating value of something is its money value. This is the stone wall which defeats the teachings of Christ - the preacher spends his breath against it for nothing.'

Like so many of her contemporaries there was a strange Calvinism about Mary Gilmore's religion. She believed strongly in the sovereignty of God, yet she had her own way of worshipping and serving Him. She thus interpreted religion in her own unique socialist way.

In this regard, she was very similar to E.J. Brady, who, though no longer willing to attend church, still clung to his own conception of God:

Sixty years ago I left the churches looking for God. After a long search I found him - in the hearts and minds of human beings. I am going to end I trust, with my faith in the Ultimate Goodness of Humanity unbroken.

117. Cusack, Moore and Ovenden, op.cit., p.42.
118. Ibid., p.22.
119. E.J. Brady in letter to 'Carroll' 21st October, 1946, in E.J. Brady Papers (Mitchell Library Ms.).
E.J. Brady was proud of his Irish Protestant ancestry. Through his father he was a descendant of Hugh Brady, first Protestant bishop of Meath. 120 His mother, however, was Irish Catholic. 'She had cured him121 of the tobacco habit and converted him to her faith, brought a representative of a line which wandered in Episcopalian darkness for more than three hundred years back into the fold'.122 Brady's education was begun at Washington D.C. and continued at the age of thirteen at the Marxist Brothers' High School, Sydney.123 He qualified for admission to the University, but instead he became a clerk on the wharves, and later a journalist and farmer. He too, rejected the Church and its teachings, believing instead in the justice of socialism to redeem mankind.

Another who was brought up in a religious family was Bernard O'Dowd. His parents were sincere and devout Irish Catholics.124 The young Bernard attended a private school at Beaufort (Victoria) at six, and then a state school at Snake Valley. When he was ten his parents moved to Ballarat. Here, unlike Snake Valley, there were Catholic Schools for the boy to attend. Believing that he would get a better chance to do well his parents sent him to a State School. 'It was directly against the advice of the Church and ultimately in defiance of it'.125 The other children all attended Catholic schools. However, the boy's success may have vindicated his parents' ambitions. He

---

120. See Brady Papers, 'Personalia', op.cit.
121. i.e. his father.
122. E.J. Brady, Two Frontiers, (Sydney, 1944), p.312.
123. Miller, op.cit., p.76.
matriculated at fourteen, and passed his final examination for B.A. before seventeen. He was forced to leave his studies by his father's death. In 1888 he resumed, took his degree in Arts in 1889, honours in Philosophy in 1891, and was admitted to the Victorian Bar.  

In the meantime however, O'Dowd had changed his religious and political affiliations, but not before he experienced a period of doubt and torment in the midst of contradictory sciences and philosophies.

Woe-weary my heart is, forbidding the world,  
I struggle with sickness, I writhe with despair, 
My soul from the watch cliffs of promise is hurled,  
And gall-barbed doubtings my consciousness tear. 
O Science! You fail Me; Philosophy! you:  
I will find no consoling in logic, in lore. 
Wild anguishes haunt me I fly, they pursue,  
O give me, O give me a God, I implore!  

At seventeen he was already far removed from the fundamental beliefs of his faith. He lost his job as a teacher in a Catholic school because of his strange ideas. He read widely and experimented with different philosophies. He founded the socialist weekly, the Tocsin, and wrote several radical pamphlets. He returned to Catholicism for a while in 1903, only to depart again. 'Intellectually he was swayed between the Right and Left on religion, but finally rested in the half-way house of the relatively free atmosphere of Unitarianism'.

Writing to Macartney on 8th October 1913, O'Dowd says

I am pretty sure that when all the religions of the world have played their part and faded, the great Mystery that is yet near to us will reassert itself as a God again, and the worship of Venus, Aphrodite, or what you like to call Her/Him/It,

127. Written in his younger days, in Melbourne, quoted in Hugh Anderson, op.cit., p.17.
will again, purified by age-long silences and frosts and snows, be the world-wide religion of the whole race. It is the one thing for certain, we are here for.  

For the rest of his life O'Dowd was to support the Unitarian Church. Thus O'Dowd rejected the formal religion of his day, 'but his mind is religious. His religion is Christianity in a new form: he calls it Democracy'.  

Unlike Lawson and Boake, who regretted the loss of religion in society, O'Dowd welcomed it, preferring to build his new religion out of its ruins. However, his intellectual approach to his solutions for society rendered his poetry attractive only to a select following. The general populace found him too 'different'.  

To try and obtain an overall picture of the religious attitudes of the writers of the 1890s, their background and beliefs have been summarised in a tabular form (see Table I). This is to oversimplify and to do them all an injustice, for it is impossible to compare one person's philosophies to that of another and give full justice to these ideas by setting them out in such a fashion. However, it will serve the purpose of showing just how similar the religious conceptions of these writers are, even though their backgrounds were so varied.  

From the available sources it appears that not one of the writers adhered to a conventional and orthodox form of Christianity. Except for Henry Lawson all had been brought up in one or other denomination of the Christian Church. With the exception of Mary Gilmore, none attended Church services with any regularity, yet all apparently

130. Brian Elliott, op.cit., p.158.  
131. See Judith Wright, op.cit., p.75.  
believed they were Christian in the true sense of the word, and had a better understanding of the Christian message.

**Table I**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Writer</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Parents' religion</th>
<th>Church attendance</th>
<th>Adhered to own interpretation of Christianity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J.B. Stephens</td>
<td>Uni.</td>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>Yes, not strongly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.E. Evans</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. Daley</td>
<td>Secondary (Cath.)</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Quinn</td>
<td>Secondary (Cath.)</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A.B. Paterson</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>Church of England?</td>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>Yes, not strongly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. Lawson</td>
<td>Primary (some Cath.)</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Ogilvie</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. Dyson</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.J. Brady</td>
<td>Secondary (Cath.)</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Boake</td>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>mother-Church of England?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Furphy</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Methodist?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Franklin</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Church of England?</td>
<td>Unlikely</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. Davis</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Church of England?</td>
<td>Only while wife was alive</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.O'Dowd</td>
<td>Uni.</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Yes, Unitarian</td>
<td>Yes, Unitarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Gilmore</td>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Denotes insufficient evidence from available sources.

It has thus been demonstrated that the writers of the 1890s had remarkably similar religious experiences and came to remarkably similar conclusions. Nearly all, though brought up in an atmosphere of
Christian devotion and given Christian education, rejected their upbringing. Nearly all, 'being steeped in the religious, mystical, philosophical and sociological enthusiasms of the latter years of the nineteenth century', rejected the formal church and its teachings but retained a strong belief in God the Creator. Few other doctrines were readmitted to this religion, except a concern for the after life, typified in Barcroft Boake's words,

When I go up will the passage be barred? Am I a chosen one? Must the gates close on me?

Usually one's acceptance by God was assured because of a good life or adherence to the twin principles of mateship and socialism. Socialism and mateship are the key of interpretation to the religious attitudes of the writers of the 1890s. It may have been a myth, but it was a myth in which they believed. Though rejecting all formal aspects of religion, they accepted and reinterpreted religious beliefs to imply generally socialism and mateship. Religion, in Australia, becomes humanism, the belief that man is ultimately justified by his faith in his fellow man.

134. Barcroft Boake, Where the Dead Men Lie and Other Poems, (Sydney, 1897), p.83.
Attitudes to the Church in the Literature of the 1890s

The attitude towards the organized Church, expressed by the writers of the 1890s represents an ambivalence in outlook. On the one hand it was felt that the Church epitomised religion, for without the Church there was no religion. Yet the Church was continually criticized for its betrayal of true religion. The Church had not made itself relevant to the ways of the bush. The alliance between the Church and the upper classes had weakened its position. The faithful often could be, and were, accused of hypocrisy, and the representatives of religion, the clergy, appeared pharisaical in their behaviour. The reaction to the sectarianism of earlier decades also meant a rejection of organized churches. Added to this was the fact that church and religion were only for women anyway!

Thus an essential element of the religious outlook portrayed in the literature of the 1890s was a rejection of traditional organized religion:

The Church quibbles well and palters well, and in her own pusillanimous way, means well, by her own silky loyalty to the law and the profits, and by her steady hostility to some unresisting personification known as the Common Enemy....and the Kingdom of God fades into a myth.¹

There was a sentience that the message of the Church was not the true message, that the God of the Church was not the true God, and that the

religion of the churches was an unnecessary adjunct to life. It was felt that people outside of the Church had a much truer concept and understanding of religion. Thus Brady said:

Sixty years ago I left the churches looking for God. After a long search I found him in the hearts and minds of human beings. I have never gone back to the churches - that to me would be like swimming\(^2\) in an empty cistern after discovering a spring of clear water.\(^3\)

The commonly accepted opinion of the literature of the 1890s seemed to be that church attendance was futile. 'Why should I go to the church?' said a backblocker on being asked for a subscription. 'I don't fear the devil; I've been thirteen years in Northern Queensland'.\(^4\) The backblocker's comments reflect how Australia's expanses and sparse population influenced the conceptualisation of religion. The country is so vast, so harsh and so cruel that if one survived living in it, the Church of the European had no reality or meaning. 'One can easily imagine...how the narrow beliefs and observances of the old world would become dwarfed and meaningless in the vast spaciousness of the new bush world'.\(^5\)

The European religion transplanted to Australia was one predominantly reliant on the clergy for its practice. In the Catholic tradition the Church mediated the graces and favours of God to the individual. Often where the clergy were present their religion was resisted because of their connections with the authorities, traditionally rejected by the men of the outback. As Manning Clark in his article

---

2. This is a holograph letter so the word was difficult to decipher. It appeared to be 'swimming'.
3. Edwin James Brady Papers (Mitchell Library Ms.).
4. From 'Buckjumping Contest' in 'Banjo' Paterson Scrapbook, (Mitchell Library Ms.).
on 'Faith' says:

all faiths in Australia have been the faiths of exiles, and so suffered from a tendency to serve purposes other than those of their founders....In Australia (Protestant Christianity) was used by men who were indifferent to such aims, but desperately anxious to use any faith which encouraged subordination and all behaviour or moral qualities conducive to subordination. This usage did not benefit the Christian religion in any way, nor did it encourage its acceptance by people grown sceptical and phlegmatic to spiritual things generally.

The rejection of formal church attendance also implied a criticism of the way the faithful observed religion.

The desire of man in luxury:- To sit in the calm of sabbath mornings in the mighty theatres of religion and muse in their hush and subdued light filtering through the gorgeous windows. To be the observer and observed of the expensively raimented and decorous crowd pomposely filing in. To arise to the heavenly swell of the giant organ: to doze on velvet cushions during the perfect chanting of the choir; to apply the words of the preacher to others. To drape the desire of sin in a mantle of art or virtue: to bamboozle conscience. To thrust aside as of no import those duties galling to the sense self-complacency.

To the faithful religion was a matter of 'going to church'. This was contrasted with the popular conception of religion that religion did not mean church attendance but the much more practical concept of doing one's duty to one's neighbour.

The other side to this is that church services were a rarity. The clergy were too few and the distances too vast to enable the churches to make any sort of continuous appeal. Barrett has estimated that by the 1830s perhaps forty per cent of the people in New South Wales were

7. Miles Franklin, written c1901, in Miles Franklin Literary Papers, Vol.8, (Mitchell Library Ms.).
beyond the reach of the clergy. This helps to explain why the Catholics were just as good at absenting themselves from church as the Protestants. Many who had come to Australia with no interest in religion were being left as they were and those who had gone to church at home could not retain strong religious connections in the outback. As the decades went by this situation was exacerbated by new generations growing up on the absence of religious traditions. The scarcity of churches in the outback made church attendance difficult and because of this a church service became a social event.

A large congregation of all denominations came from the surrounding district at the appointed time in all manner of horse drawn conveyances. Some had never been to a church service of any kind before, and all the parson said was of great interest to them.

Any sort of open house like this would have attracted large numbers, as at the dances in Steele Rudd's stories. A more revealing picture was drawn by Barbara Baynton's 'Bush Church'. The service was held in a grazier's house, and all the neighbours attended. The service was repeatedly interrupted by the children and adults. The distance between the parson and the congregation was painfully obvious, for neither comprehended the other.

For a short space only the voice of the preacher sounded, as, in studied stoicism, he pursued his thankless task.

Occasionally his congregation looked at him to see "'oo 'e was speakin' ter", but finding nothing directly personal even this

attention ceased'.

The literature reveals that, because of lack of experience many people were completely ignorant of religious practices and beliefs. When the litany was used 'no one knew what to make of it and would not join in'.

It is not surprising therefore that, except for its social value, church attendance was generally held to be a waste of time. Prior religious knowledge seems to be essential to any vital religion; the Evangelical Revival built on a habit of church going and orthodox religion. The Revival was an intensification of what was already there. In Australia, however, there was no such foundation. The fervent revivalist religions so successful on the American frontier failed to gain a foothold in the Australian bush.

As settlement spread, churches were built, but one had still a long way to travel to reach them and the reward hardly seemed worth the effort. Besides, if one did go, it became a physical endurance test.

We don't go to his church down the mountain:
Seven miles is a wearisome trot,
With the glass playing up like a fountain
And the prayers correspondingly hot.

Surely, all this self-torture was totally unnecessary.

The challenge to the Church was to shed itself from its European vestments and draw closer to the Australian reality. The charge that it failed to do so is inherent in the writings of the 1890s. 'Whilst the intellectual socialist and the bushman both condemned orthodox religion, where the former abused it with a rival religious zeal, the

11. Ibid., p.127.
latter treated it with amused contempt'. 14 Thus church services often became the object of satire as in 'A Sabbath Morn at Waddy' by Dyson. 15 Dyson described the Bible reading 'with wonderful, original expositions of the obscure passages'. 16 The prayer session became a psychological battle between the two major antagonists 17 and Mrs. Eddy in her prayers sobbed 'Throw up the windies, an' let the speerit in!'. 18

The interesting paradox is that the organized church was still usually identified with religion. Where there was no church, there was no religion, and religious practices were unknown. In one of Steele Rudd's country towns a church was to be built. Before its erection the townspeople 'never said prayers nor grace, and never went to church'. 19

Also implicit in the dislike of church attendance was the criticism that it was the domain of the rich, the upper classes. Having descended from Australia's squattocracy, Miles Franklin drew attention to the fact that amongst this class, adherence to religious practices was the norm.

The rector came once a month...to conduct service in the drawing room on Sunday morning. On other Sundays Grandma deputized for him, not a sermon, a psalm, a lesson or a collect missing. 20

It is perhaps because she was so well acquainted with the practices of

---

16. Ibid., p.31.
17. Ibid., p.33.
18. Ibid., p.32.
society people\textsuperscript{21} that she was so reproachful of the lack of relevance and sympathy on the part of the upper classes.

The content preached by pastors and masters to the less fortunate in goods and opportunities sounds like an impudent assumption of betterism by those who are often in the worse collection of parasites.\textsuperscript{22}

Not only was the church the domain of the rich but the church actively encouraged the division between classes.

While the Church teaches you to pray 'Thy Kingdom come' she strikes with mercenary venom at the first principle of that kingdom, namely, elementary equality in citizen privilege. Better silence than falsehood; better no religion at all...than one which concedes equal rights beyond the grave and denies them here.\textsuperscript{23}

Upper and lower classes alike 'identified religion with affluence and respectability'.\textsuperscript{24}

Miles Franklin was not alone in her criticism of the vested interests of the Church. Banjo Paterson had an ironic irreverence for religious institutions. He held that

\begin{quote}
It's grand to be a 'cockie'
With wife and kids to keep,
And find an all-wise Providence
Has mustered all your sheep.\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

The criticism was taken up particularly by those who were more

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} She had one of her characters say 'It is good to keep in with the Church. Sometimes the most distinguished people from England have introductions that keep them tight in church circles. Besides, men say that a girl without religion is like a rose without perfume'. My Career Goes Bung, (Melbourne, 1946 ed.), p.139.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Ibid., p.219.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Joseph Furphy, Rigby's Romance, (Sydney, 1946 ed.), p.111.
\item \textsuperscript{24} C.M.H. Clark, in Coleman, op.cit., p.78.
\item \textsuperscript{25} A.B. Paterson, 'It's Grand' in The Collected Verse of A.B. Paterson, (Sydney, 1921 ed.), p.173.
\end{itemize}
militantly socialist. O'Dowd referred to churches as 'Religion's hypocritic spires' and Daley felt that the rich church-goer keeps the Hoi Polloi in peace With opiates of Kingdom come.

There was an uneasy conviction that those who professed piety and charity were really involved in it for some other devious reason.

The champion dodge of all, And one that brings in most Is 'answering to duty's call' and 'rescuing the lost'.

Furphy similarly held little but contempt for official Christianity.

Ecclesiastical Christianity vies with the effete Judaism of olden time, as a failure of the first magnitude... There is not one count in the long impeachment of that doomed Eastern city but may be repeated with sickening exactness and added emphasis, over any pseudo-Christian community now festering on earth.... Eighteen-and-a-half centuries of purblind groping for the Kingdom of God finds an idealised Messiah shrined in the modern Pantheon, and yourselves 'a chosen generation', leprous with the sin of usury; 'a royal priesthood', paralyzed with the cant of hireling clergy; 'a holy nation', rotten with the luxury of wealth, or embittered by the sting of poverty; 'a peculiar people', deformed to Lucifer's own pleasure by the curse of caste.

For Furphy the Church had taken the pure Word and deformed it beyond recognition. The complacency and self-righteousness of those that supported its structure brought him grief. He sneered at the pious people who did not live up to their professed religion. However,

29. Such is Life, op.cit., p.111.
30. For example, in Such is Life, p.143, the behaviour of those returning from the Sunday School picnic seems to have been anything but Christian.
'the chief reason for Furphy's hostility is still deep-rooted in the church - the church's support of capitalism and a materialist society.'

Furphy's poetry, though not the best example of his literary efforts, is superb in its cynicism concerning the alliance between money and the Church:

You must race, like St. Paul - you must race for the dollar -
No pause of compunction must ever intrude:
You must watch, you must pray; never missing a collar
The course is severe, and the company good,
You must reverence the Thrift-God and earnestly pray
To be grounded and built up in virtues that pay.

By this means you will serve the Almighty and Mammon,
And die in a state of salvation and wealth.'

According to Miles Franklin Furphy questioned every aspect of organized religion. He was particularly hard on those Calvinists who put more faith in works than in faith itself. In many of his letters he used the vague phrase 'more Popery than fiscal' - by which he meant that someone had more faith in works than in faith. He also disapproved of the Calvinist idea that because one was of the elect one naturally prospered. In 'A Spec That Failed' it was the unbeliever who made good, despite the prayers of his neighbours to prevent his prosperity.

According to Furphy, the financial emphasis of Christianity

33. Miles Franklin, Joseph Furphy - The Legend of a Man and His Book, (Sydney, 1944), p.110.
resulted in an attempt to serve both God and Mammon - an effort which Furphy particularly ascribed to the Methodists. Running parallel with this attitude was that poverty, although a divine institution, was to be avoided at all costs. 'Poverty is, in the eyes of the orthodox Christian a hell in the hand, better worth avoiding than two hells in the book'. The Church's tacit approval of class barriers, even to the extent that she widened them, was completely contrary to Furphy's conception of Christianity. To him the ordinary man's naive religion was preferable to official views. 'Holy Willie's God, at least, heaps no beatitude on successful greed; and your Christian civilization does so'.

The alliance between the upper classes and the Church was criticized because of the inherent hypocrisy contained within the behaviour of the faithful, as it was perceived by the non-attenders.

I've noticed this with 'Christians' since,
And often thought it odd -
They cannot keep their hands from things
They say belong to God.

Two of Steele Rudd's characters, Peter and James, having nothing better to do, decided to go to church in the big city. Having accidentally occupied the Premier's pew they are persona non grata until Peter, again accidentally, put half a sovereign into the collection plate. 'The Premier and his wife seemed to take a different view of Peter. They looked as though they would be pleased to know him'. The doorman

35. See Rigby's Romance, op.cit., p.185.
36. Ibid., p.193.
37. Such is Life, op.cit., p.108.
39. Ibid., p.110.
41. Steele Rudd, The Dashwoods and Grandpa's Selection, (St. Lucia, 1970 ed.), p.78.
'was waiting with beaming countenance. He shook hands with Peter and enquired if he was a stranger...The churchman said nothing to James'.

It appeared as though all were welcome in church as long as they carried their passport - money. The love of money, according to its critics, had caused the church to swerve from its true cause of help for the common man; it had 'wrecked a Universal Church on Simony'.

To the writers of the 1890s the acquisition of money was incompatible with Christian beliefs, hence the accusation of hypocrisy. This latter heinous crime was deserving of hell. "What crime has earned them this?" said he. The Usher said, "Hypocrisy". That the majority of the populace shared in the accusation of hypocrisy can be seen by the applause that greeted W.G. Spence's statement that 'many of our most accomplished swindlers have been pious men and active members of the Church'.

Added to this was the observation that few Christians seemed to be enjoying their lives. God had meant man to have fun and happiness, yet those specimens attending church appeared to be deliberately seeking out the more sombre side of life.

The narrow, thorny path he trod
'Enter into My joy', said God.
The sad ascetic shook his head;
'I've lost all taste for joy', he said.

Not only did church attenders not wish to enjoy the fuller aspects of life themselves, but they also attempted to prevent others doing so.

42. Ibid.
43. 'Avarice' in Bulletin Mss., Vol.1, (Mitchell Library Ms.).
44. Holburn and Pizer, op.cit., p.125.
We must not kiss in the gardens
We must not sing in the street
We must not jump with a joyous shout
When a long-lost friend we meet.
We must not race by the sea-shore,
We must not sit in the sand.
We must not laugh on a New Year Night,
For this is the Wowsers' land.^[7]

Most of the writers of the nineties were idealists with the
idealist's tendency to judge harshly those who fell short of the given
standard. Foremost among them was Henry Lawson. Lawson's contemporary,
Brereton, says of him that

With the cruel insistence of an idealist he
had set up a standard of which very many fell
short and which some could scarcely understand.
Their rough and ready ways abashed him, careless
brutalities jarred a sensitive heart which
ached for friendship and understanding, and when
he found evidence of gross selfishness he was
angry.^[8]

Lawson the idealist had set very high standards for others, including
the Christian Church. Most of its members, according to Lawson, fell
short of them.

So Lawson judged them quite severely. His pen was at its most
vitriolic wherever he saw unchristian behaviour in so-called Christians.

The then (in my time) governor of the Gaol was
a scrofulous little Christian Indeavouring (sic.)
cow. He'd go to a Christian Indeavour (sic.)
meeting and then come back and give a man twenty-
four cells (sic.) without meat.^[9]

That Christians did not practise what they preached appears to have
been Lawson's main complaint against them. They showed no love or
mercy or compassion, they did not share their belongings, they

47. Henry Lawson, 'The Song of the Heathen', in C. Roderick (ed.),
48. J. Le Gay Brereton and Berth Lawson (eds.), Henry Lawson - By
expressed no fairness of attitude or went another mile with their brother. Instead they condemned, they were treacherous and deceitful and they lied. Therefore Lawson called them 'wowsers'.

There is no youth in Wowserland,  
there's nothing clear and sweet; 
There is no faith in Wowserland, but  
treachery and deceit. 
There is no truth in Wowserland where  
shamming never dies -  
these half and those three quarter  
lies - the shiniest of lies.^^

Although this was written in 1910, at the height of the Prohibition campaign, at a time when Lawson was extremely dejected and cynical, the words do express adequately his contempt for 'wowsers'. Other poems of his further support this attitude.

The resentment of the hypocrisy of the Church is typified by the invention of that uniquely Australian word 'wowsers'. In 1910 the Daily Telegraph conducted an inquiry into its meaning and origin. Several definitions of the word were given, e.g. 'a wowser is a man who wants to make out that everything he does is done for the love of God and Christianity. He does things for Christianity and makes profit out of them at the same time'. 51 Others interviewed for the paper defined the word as 'a hypocrite, or more specifically, a Wesleyan'. 52 'Wowser' was a word that had arisen because of the need to vilify or describe members of the churches. It was invented by John Norton editor of the Truth. 53 It is of significance that the word was invented in the 1890s.

Sectarianism contributed to the rejection of organized religion

52. Ibid.  
53. Ibid., pp.113-114.
in Australia. The 1870s and 1880s had witnessed the rapid growth of Orangeism in N.S.W. The education issue, Protestant revival (with a significant element of anti-Catholicism), the Fenian organization in Ireland and the attempted assassination of the Duke of Edinburgh had fuelled the fires of sectarianism. This had further been 'exploited'\textsuperscript{54} by such able politicians as Henry Parkes. However, during the 1890s there was a general revulsion against such un-Australian sectarian attitudes, as witnessed by the decline of the Orange Lodges. There was a widespread reaction against the heated interchanges between the rival Irish groups, and a general wish for peace between them. Victor Daley, in his poem 'The Glorious Twelfth at Jindabyne' gave the feud a happy ending, with all getting merry together at the 'pub'.

\begin{quote}
And that this broad, kindly feeling should increase in coming time
Is the wish for Green and Orange of the writer of this rhyme.\textsuperscript{55}
\end{quote}

Extreme devotion to a religious cause and religious fanaticism had no place in the Utopia visualized by the idealists of the 1890s. William Lane had little difficulty in signing up two hundred and forty people to go with him to 'New Australia', 'kindred spirits, prepared like himself to forswear religious fanaticism and strong drink'.\textsuperscript{56}

Sectarianism and religious fanaticism represented the old world view. It therefore had no place in the freedom preached by the new world.

\begin{quote}
Why do you believe your own particular church is the best and from your pulpit mock at the way of others? If a Jew or a Papist or an
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{55} Holburn and Pizer, op.cit., p.100.
Anglican or a Nonconformist all have a chance of Heaven independent of creed why this war and ill-feeling between different sects?\textsuperscript{57}

All creeds and churches ultimately led to the same place.\textsuperscript{58} So the differences were of no consequence. For in heaven we will see 'chatting pleasantly with Moors and Jews, His Eminence the General Torquemada'.\textsuperscript{59} True religion did not consist of adherence to a creed but of acts of piety. In heaven all men of true religion shall meet and be in unity. There

Their creeds are many, as befits the free,
But each to each is bound in charity.
No rabid bigotry, fanatic zeal,
Debase their Spiritual Commonweal,
Content are they unto the Blest Abodes
To wend by various but conveying roads
Hoping when life is past, old friends to greet
When they with them at Heaven's gate shall meet.\textsuperscript{60}

Another contributory cause to the general disrepute of organized religion was that religion was for women anyway. Any display of religion was for women only. 'She's awfu' releegious, ye ken',\textsuperscript{61} excused any eccentricity in a woman's behaviour. It was felt that women were the ones primarily concerned with religion. It was a basic necessity of a woman's life.

When a lot o' women gits together one o' them reads out something religious, an' the rest all wires in æsewin', or knitting or some (adj.) thing,\textsuperscript{62}

The patronizing attitude of this speaker well illustrates the contempt

\textsuperscript{57} 'A Dialogue', Miles Franklin Papers, op.cit.
\textsuperscript{58} Reflecting not the similarity of all denominations, but the belief that life after death does not depend on faith, but on actions.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., p.131.
\textsuperscript{61} Steele Rudd, Stocking our Selection and the Book of Dan, (St.Lucia, 1970 ed.), p.48.
\textsuperscript{62} Joseph Furphy, Such is Life, op.cit., p.60.
felt for the alliance between women and religion.

It was fine for a man to believe in God, but he should make no show or practice of it, except in trouble. 63 When things went well or wrong it was acceptable for a woman to ascribe this to God, but a man must find another, more reasonable explanation. 'Mother, in her thankfulness, attributed our success to the mercy and goodness of God. Dad reckoned it was all due to his own head'. 64 Religion and church was the domain of women, or equally as bad, the Chinese.

A Chinaman he;
But christened you see
A Sunday-school scholar of Millagadee,
Where charming young ladies
Preach Heaven and Hades
To simpering chinkees of humble degree. 65

That Australian organized religion was adhered to mainly by the female species can be seen in frequent references to their attendance at worship, and in their influence in religion. 'Where there were wives...the standard of religious observance...was improved'. 66 The excess of female over male worshippers has been a feature of Australian religious behaviour for one hundred and fifty years. 67 Religion was the domain of women.

Miles Franklin, one of the precursors of Australian feminists, reflecting her own prejudices, explained this female predisposition by accusing men of inventing God to make women happy. She referred to 'His masculine bullying unfairness'. 68 She came to the conclusion that

64. Steele Rudd, On Our Selection and Our New Selection, (Sydney, 1954 ed.), p.140.
67. For details see Current Affairs Bulletin, 22(4), 16th June, 1958, p.63.
'the more I thought the more did old men seem like the God they had set up in their own image for women and children to worship'.  

Because the criticism levelled at the other churches did not apply to the Salvation Army, it was more often praised and respected. This was the church of the working classes. Here there were 'so many men in proportion to women...such intensity of feeling as distinct from superficial ardour and rank'. The Army was respected, from a safe distance for its enthusiasm and hard work. It was not completely bereft of criticism however. Miles Franklin felt that it 'had too much of a corner on salvation to leave it any glamour'.

Lawson, in spite of his eulogies of the Salvation Army felt that, though the Army was doing a praiseworthy work, religion in the form of an organized church like the Salvation Army was unnecessary for the Australian male.

The bushmen are much too intelligent for the Army....In case of sickness, accident, widows or orphans, the chaps send round the hat without banging a drum or testifying....For the rest, we work out our own salvation - or damnation - as the case is - in the bush, with no one to help us, except a mate, perhaps.

The Church of the 1890s came in for so much criticism because of a belief that it was not living up to its mission.

69. Ibid., p.18.
71. Ibid.
73. Bung, op.cit., p.108. See also E. Dyson, op.cit., pp.107-111.
74. See 'That Pretty Girl in the Army', 'Charity', 'Booth's Drum', etc.
As I leave the building a great hunger for a little Christianity fills my heart. Oh that a preacher might arise and expound from the Book of books a religion with a God, a religion with a heart in it - a Christian religion, which would abolish the cold legend whose centre is respectability, and which rears great buildings in which the rich recline on silken hassocks while the poor perish in the shadow thereof.  

An examination of the literature of the 1890s shows that the Christian message was being reinterpreted, and the writers were investing it with new meaning outside of the organized Church. That the Church was being rejected did not mean a rejection of its gospel. Much of the criticism was levelled as a result of the search for relevance in the Christian message. It is therefore indicative of the concerns of the writers of the 1890s that they attacked the Church and not ignored it, for this reveals a basic concern with the meaning and relevance of religion in society.

76. Miles Franklin, Brilliant Career, op.cit., p.205.
Chapter 4

Attitudes to the Clergy in the Literature of the 1890s

The literature of the 1890s not only displays an abhorrence of organized religion but also reveals a contempt of the earthly representatives of God, the clergy. Just as it was held that the God of the churches was not the true God, so the clergy of the churches were not the true icons of God's message. Throughout the history of Australia's development, the clergy, particularly those of the Protestant Church, had been so involved with the policy of the ruling classes as to discredit them in the eyes of many of the writers of the 1890s.

In the literature of the 1890s the true Christian was the true mate. 1 Similarly, the clergyman thought to be representative of the message and ministry of Christ, was one who put mateship above all else and was prepared to rough it with the men of the bush. This was the ideal of the clergyman held dearly by the writers of the 1890s, and any who fell short of this were severely criticised and held up to ridicule.

A major cause of the distrust of the clergy was the alliance between clergy and government that had existed since the first settlement of Australia. The rulers of early convict Australia, though they

1. See p.94, ch.6.
were true apostles of the Enlightenment in their disdain for religion, believed in its social utility. They were supported in this belief by the attitude of the first clergymen:

through whose work evangelical Christianity dominated the religious life of Protestant Christianity in Australia throughout the whole of the nineteenth century. It was a religion with an obvious social usefulness in a convict society, for it preached in favour of subordination and against drunkenness, whoring and gambling. By such labours the evangelical parson became in the eyes of those in authority the natural moral policeman of society. Samuel Marsden epitomised this role of moral policeman by accepting the office of magistrate. By such acts the clergy became identified with the English governing classes and much of what they preached became futile mouthings.

This alliance, albeit an uneasy one, continued throughout the nineteenth century. Whenever the forces of law and order clashed against the demands of the unionists, the clergy normally were on the side of the former. During the depression of the 1890s the clergy tended to blame the poorer classes for their own plight. By such excesses as drinking and gambling man had wrought his own ruin. The Anglican Bishop of Melbourne, on the 4th of May 1893, asked his clergy to set aside a day

for special humiliation before God, and for prayer to Him....I trust that no one will take exception to the use of the word 'humiliation'. The course of God's Providence and the repeated declarations of His Word, show that there is an intimate connection between sin and suffering.

3. Ibid.
The call to humiliation and prayer, repeated by the Presbyterian church, led the *Bulletin* on the 13th of May, in reply, to condemn the clergy during the depression.

The Church, up to date, hasn't done anything of a surprising nature to ease the depression, saving that it has pounded its pulpit cushion considerably on the subject....The Church... consists mostly of boomers and it is these same individuals who want to humiliate and pray when it would be much more seemly if they would go out and hang themselves.\(^5\)

The writers of the 1890s gleefully seized upon examples of clerical identification with the forces of law and order and used them to illustrate and underline the seeming hypocrisy of the clergy. Lawson scornfully condemned the alliance, for example - not least because the actions of clergymen were totally out of accord with Lawson's understanding of the Christian message. In referring to events in the Legislative Council of New South Wales he said

A Wesleyan rose with gabble - only fitted for his bearers;  
He lied about our leaders: lied about the Queensland shearers;  
He, who claims to teach the lessons of the father and the teacher,  
Rose to lie about his brother: slandered mankind like - a preacher.\(^6\)

Thus the major charge levelled at the parson was the same as that levelled at the rest of the Christian Church - the charge of hypocrisy. There was a widespread feeling that the parson was not living up to the precepts that he preached to others. Victor Daley presented the parson who graphically describes the sacrifices made by the missionaries

---

6. From 'More Echoes From the Old Museum', C. Roderick (ed.), *Collected Verse 1* (Sydney, 1967), p.182. These verses and others of a similar nature pertaining to events in the Council were written to order for John Norton. See *ibid.*, p.440.
who went to China, and then told his congregation to 'Go forth and do likewise'. However,

They may have sailed across the foam
To die in heathen lands -
The Parson stayed and prayed at home
With white, plump, pretty hands.7

Any example of hypocrisy like this was taken by the authors and held up for judgment. The parson had no right to transgress for he himself weekly charged his congregation not to sin.

At this time it came to my father's knowledge
that one of our bishops had money held in trust for the Church. On good security he was giving this out for usury, the same as condemned in the big Bible out of which he took the text of the dry - harsh sermons with which he bored his fashioned congregations in his cathedral on Sundays.8

Because the cleric was continually in the public eye, and because he dared to tell others how they should be living their lives and where they went wrong, he was judged the more severely.

Theoretically the clergy preached a message of hope and love, but in practice, by his seeming lack of charity and compassion towards the labouring classes, he appeared to heap coals upon their unfortunate heads. He sowed seeds of hate not love.

And godless phalanxes assist
Our priesthood celebrate
A diabolic eucharist
With chalices of hate.9

---

9. Bernard O'Dowd, The Poems of Bernard O'Dowd, (Melbourne, 3rd ed., 1944), p.41. In 1904 when O'Dowd's book Dawnward was being prepared for publication O'Dowd had intended to add an explanatory note to this as he had returned to the fold of Catholicism. However, he eventually abandoned this idea. This poem was probably written in the 1890s when O'Dowd's anti-clericalism would have been popular.
The clergy were trying to frighten people into being believers by the threat of hell. However, such tales of fear could not intimidate those who knew the terrors of the outback.

If thou should'st come to me with threats from hell
Pah! I would go bravely and would say tis well
But if thou should'st come to me with words of love
And kiss away my years of sin and pain
Ah! then Oh God perhaps I might wish I had been good again.\textsuperscript{10}

Friction frequently arose when clergy had no awareness that they were transgressing in the eyes of their observers. For just as people and clergy often disagreed as to what constituted sinful behaviour on the part of the labouring classes so they often disagreed as to what constituted a transgression for clergy. Joseph Furphy held very high ideals of the clergy, not shared by the clergy themselves. To Furphy, all parsons and lay preachers thus became fair game. Harold Lushington, a young Methodist minister in Rigby's Romance, became an obvious target for ridicule because he innocently championed a way of life which was out of keeping with Rigby's concept of Christianity. Lushington tried to persuade Furlong to put a little money away:

Believe me, I appreciate unselfishness as a principle, but you should be just before you are generous. You ought to reserve something. You owe it to yourself. Now a series of periodical payments into the Endowment Fund of an Assurance Society, in which I have some interest, would in due time give you a good return, and would much increase your power of usefulness in more advanced life.\textsuperscript{11}

To Furphy it appeared that the clergy of all denominations 'by

\textsuperscript{10} Unpublished poem written by Morant the night before he was executed. (Mitchell Library Ms.).
\textsuperscript{11} Joseph Furphy, \textit{Rigby's Romance}, (Sydney, 1946 ed.), p.151.
judicious suppression, perversion and manipulation of what they call
the revealed will of God'\textsuperscript{12} were out to make money and even to line
their own pockets. This was quite a popularly held belief:

There's one thing sartin - none o' them theeer
planer-fingered parsons is a-going ter take
the trouble ter travel out inter this God-
forgotten part to hold sarvace over him,
seein' as how his last cheque's blued.\textsuperscript{13}

Similarly, in a poem entitled 'The Hypnotist', published by the
Bulletin, 19 July 1890, Paterson depicts a fairly ominous portrait of
a preacher.

With sanctimonious and reverent look
I read it out of the sacred book
That he who would open the golden door
Must give his all to the starving poor.
But I vary the practice to some extent
By investing money at twelve per cent.\textsuperscript{14}

The clergy's unfortunate obsession with money was mainly due to
the financial situation in which he found himself. His salary, when
compared to those of his class who had received a similar education,
was minimal. Reductions in pay were not uncommon.\textsuperscript{15} Often he was
destitute and in need of charity. However, if he had been ministering
in England, his social position would have allowed him to give charity
rather than be the recipient of it. Ada Cambridge, a British clergy-
man's wife in Australia during the latter part of the nineteenth
century, complained feelingly of the clergy's reliance on succour,
attributing the low regard in which the clergy was held to this
situation.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., p.233.
\textsuperscript{13} H. Lawson, 'The Bush Undertaker', from Prose Works of Henry Lawson,
(Sydney, 1948), p.119.
\textsuperscript{14} 'Banjo' Paterson Scrapbook, (Mitchell Library Mss.).
\textsuperscript{15} See Maurice French, 'The Church Extension Crisis in South Australia:
The impact of Depression and Demographic Changes on church
organizations in the Late Nineteenth Century', The Journal of
The schools teach their\textsuperscript{16} children for half fees; the doctors doctor them for no fees at all; the very shipping companies - some at least - make special fares for them. And so long as they accept this role of the lame dog that needs helping over the stile, so long will there be that tinge of contempt and patronage which embitters the favours to some of us who receive them.\textsuperscript{17}

The financial embarrassment of the clergy was worsened by the need to build churches by public subscription, turning the clergymen into collectors of money. Paterson told the story of the Bishop who was collecting money for his church. One man called upon his neighbour and asked him to contribute. "'You tell the bishop", he says, "that if he comes out here we'll guarantee him twenty-five pounds, and if he don't come we'll give him fifty'." The bishop accepted the fifty.\textsuperscript{18}

W.G. Spence felt that their involvement with money was the cause of the clergy's silence towards the evils of capitalism. Speaking about the 'preachers of Christianity' he said,

Some of them are afraid to denounce the sins of the wealthy class because many of them subscribe largely to the church and they dare not denounce them. They make collections and appeal for funds in the nature of a demand for services rendered.\textsuperscript{19}

It is true that many of the clergy, by their reliance upon the generosity of others, found themselves in an enviable position. The need to appeal for money did little to build up the public image of the colonial clergy.

Another reason for the low repute of the clergy was the clergy's

\textsuperscript{16} i.e. the clergy's.
\textsuperscript{17} Ada Cambridge, Thirty Years in Australia, (London, 1903), p.44.
\textsuperscript{19} Quoted by Clark, Select Documents in Australian History, 1851-1900, (Sydney, 1955), p.752.
philosophy of life and man. Society generally held the enlightenment view that man was naturally good. This was in apparent opposition to the traditional Christian doctrine of the innate depravity of man or the doctrine of original sin steadfastly held to by the Christian clergy. Moreover by the late 1800s Darwin had made his impact on the philosophical thinking of the day. The biological theory of evolution was applied to the social structure. Survival of the fittest naturally meant that man would progress to better and better things. This too was in apparent contradiction to the traditional Christian weltenschauung.

The situation was further heightened by conservative Christian refusal to tolerate some of the latest developments in science, biology and biblical criticism. It appeared to Banjo Paterson that the parson was adhering to dogmas totally incongruous with popular philosophy.

And when they prove it beyond mistake
That the world took millions of years to make,
And never was built by the seventh day
I say in a pained and insulted way
That 'Thomas also presumed to doubt',
And thus do I rub my opponents out.
For folk may widen their mental range,
But priest and parson they never change.

Passmore attributes the clergy's dogmatic reaction towards the new ideas to the 'exceptionally ignorant and bigoted nature of the clergy'. It is true that many were unable to cope with the flood of new intellectual developments. However, throughout her history the Christian Church has frequently sought shelter behind the walls of reaction. Looking towards the past meant safety through an affirmation of a past faith.

The cleric's position was further exacerbated by his isolation from the people.

We have learnt to do without parsons or priests; we have had to, because of the marvellous difference between our creeds, or the want of a creed or of having been excommunicated, kicked out of, or of having renounced or deserted or fallen away from one and all respectable creeds or religious bodies.  

The clergy voiced heavy opposition to the traditional Australian pastimes of drinking and gambling. The Temperance movement, though most vocal at this time, did little to improve public relations with the Church.

A tramp was trampin' on the road -  
The afternoon was warm and muggy -
And by-and-by he chanced to meet
A parsin ridin' in a buggy.
Said he: 'As follerers ov the Loard,
To do good offices we oughter!' ....
An' guv the tramp, a drink er water.

The tramp went on until he met  
A bullick-driver, bullick drivin' -
'It's bilin' 'ot,' the driver sed,
As soon's the dirty tramp drawed nearer,
And from a little keg he poured,
And giv the tramp a pint of beer - 'ah!'
I ain't agin the temperance cause,
Nor yet no advocate ov drinkin' -
I only tells the yarn because -
Well, at the time it somehow seemed
Ter kind or set me thinkin'.

Implicit in the above yarn of Lawson is not only a criticism of the clergy's attitude towards alcohol, but also a criticism of the parson's reasoning towards a justification of giving a thirsty man a drink, for...
the parson acted out of pious righteousness, the bullock driver out of sympathy with the other's position.

The cleric was further alienated from the populace by his social and educational inclinations. He tended to see himself as socially superior to the labourers of bush and town.

Fancy Phil a parson now! He's smug as grease, the Reverend Tullock.
Yes, he's big - his wife and fam'ly are a high and mighty lot. 26

In his speech the clergy invariably tended to use vocabulary unknown to his bearers. 'The minister thundered at this stoic congregation and charged the air with strange, charitable precepts'. 27 Australians generally had had little contact with the teaching, vocabulary, customs and theology of the Christian Church as it was represented in Australia. This wide gap meant that there was no meeting ground.

Furphy's Reverend Lushington reproved one of the characters, Dixon, for using 'O God'. Dixon apologised, 'adroitly veiling his non-apprehension under the mask of urbanity'. 28 Evangelical Christianity makes most of its converts from people having some previous knowledge or connection with the Christian Church. In Australia this knowledge was extremely low if not nonexistent. Frequently, therefore, encounters degenerated into a harping on non-essentials with no comprehension from either side.

The parson's part in the dialogue was chiefly remonstrative as to the necessity of Ned's variegated adjectives. And he had frequently to assure the bushman that it would be useless for him to search in his clerical pockets for tobacco, as he didn't smoke. 29

There were exceptions. Some clergy were accepted because they lived up to the standard set for them by the writers of the 1890s. Lawson's 'Christ of the "Never"'\textsuperscript{30} was a 'plain spokesman', 'rough link 'twixt the bushman and God', though unheeded by the churches. Here was praise of one who actively practised rather than preached.

\begin{quote}
I place him in front of all churchmen
Who feel not, who know no - but preach!\textsuperscript{31}
\end{quote}

Another of Lawson's laudable clergymen was Peter McLaughlin, a bush missionary who was not like other preachers, but entered into the life of the bush. 'He could take his drink and swear a little when he thought it necessary'.\textsuperscript{32} He displayed Christianity in action, not using 'hackneyed arguments'\textsuperscript{33} but by giving away most of his money.\textsuperscript{34} He understood the bushmen\textsuperscript{35} and they therefore respected him.

Generally, too, Catholic priests, who had traditionally identified themselves with the struggles of the working classes, were accepted.\textsuperscript{36}

In Steele Rudd's stories, the clergy also were accepted by the other characters, although the acceptance is limited. Though the parson was generally an approachable human being, with the commendable qualities of justness, kindness, forgiveness and generosity,\textsuperscript{37} it was these very qualities which led to his being the target for scorn and satire.\textsuperscript{38} Rudd thus portrayed the cleric as a comical figure who is

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{30}Collected Verse 1, op.cit., p.351.
\item \textsuperscript{31}Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{32}Henry Lawson, Prose Works, op.cit., p.519.
\item \textsuperscript{33}Collected Verse 1, op.cit., p.250.
\item \textsuperscript{34}Prose Works, op.cit., p.519.
\item \textsuperscript{35}Ibid., pp.524-525.
\item \textsuperscript{36}Clark, Short History, op.cit., p.36.
\item \textsuperscript{37}See Steele Rudd, The Poor Parson and Dad in Politics, (St. Lucia, 1968).
\item \textsuperscript{38}e.g. Steele Rudd, The Dashwoods and Grandpa's Selection, (St. Lucia, 1970), pp.67-74, and On Our Selection and Our New Selection, (Sydney, 1954), p.73.
\end{itemize}
moreover unable and inept in dealing with difficult situations. When one of Steele Rudd's families were faced with eviction the old parson said

'Tis both foolish and useless to resist. Have courage and God will help you'. Mother gulped down a lump that was in her throat and silently led us all inside. Then the bailiffs entered and carried all the furniture out.\(^{39}\)

Yet it is unmistakeable that Steele Rudd's characters respected the parson for he was in a unique position. He was special; he was different, being a vehicle of God's grace. 'Naethin' can vera weel happen him...he's a life-saving apparatus himsel' y' ken'.\(^{40}\) This respect was tinged with the usual lack of comprehension of the clergy. 'Dad stared at the parson with a look of wild weird reverence about him'.\(^{41}\)

It is possible that it was because the writers of the 1890s cherished the ideal of the clergy so highly that they were judged so harshly, for they inevitably, almost always fell short of the ideal. The writers of the 1890s in their interpretation of Christianity required a clergy consistent with this interpretation. This ideal cleric, was a man amongst men, not different in his behaviour and speech patterns, yet still separate because of his dedication to mankind. Where they found such a man they praised him, where they did not, they were condemnatory and cruel. Their antagonism towards the clergy often became anti-clericalism, but this anti-clericalism was the sign of a search for something better. The literature of the 1890s did not portray the anti-clericalism of atheism, but the anti-

\(^{41}\) Steele Rudd, *On Our Selection*, op.cit., p.115.
clericalism consistent with the concept that the clergy are abusing an ideal. Had there not been the yearning for clergymen truly representative of the writers' understanding of Christ and his message, there would not have been such unmistakeable signs of anti-clericalism in their writings.
Augustine claimed that the heart of man is restless until it finds God. The hearts of the writers of the 1890s however, did not find the God of orthodox Christianity or of any other recognized religion. Rather, they sought the God of the bush and it is the religion of the bush which attracted the Bulletin school of writers. They did not agree as to the exact nature of bush religion: to some the bush fostered atheism, to others it was spiritual in its powers. To some God was kind and compassionate, to others he was indifferent and remote. To some all religion was superstitious, to others superstitious beliefs reflected the Australian's adaptation to the environment. Some saw death as the final end, others saw it as the beginning of an idyllic afterlife. The significance of these writers lies not in their concurrence but in their divergence from traditional Christian beliefs. They did not represent orthodox Christian beliefs but presented oversimplifications, made for polemical purposes, of the immanence and transcendence of the Christian God.

The literature of the 1890s reflects a society adhering to a form of religion not propagated by the churches. However, the literature paints a picture not of an atheistic society but of a society concerned with basic religious questions. This literature is fertile soil, in

which has been planted a tenacious and resilient seed of belief in the Godhead - the father of mankind, the refuge in time of trouble, the compassionate one with an omniscient eye. This attitude towards God has been supplemented with a confident, almost brash, belief in man's justification in God's sight and an entrance into his rest. There was in fact, considerable occupation with religious experience, coming out sometimes in a 'facetious or mawkish or otherwise bashful way, but not the less real for that'.²

For most of the writers God existed. There was a simple acceptance that his omniscient and omnipotent presence was everywhere. How or why was seldom questioned, it was enough that he existed

...God's omniscient eye
Looked on them all the time.³

A dichotomy of thought is expressed however. Generally the intellectual elite of writers such as O'Dowd⁴ and Miles Franklin,⁵ themselves expressed atheistic beliefs, but acknowledged that others had experienced the presence of God. Perhaps the all-pervading, limitless presence of the bush so enveloped one's consciousness that somehow it seemed not difficult to abstract from the one to the presence of God, for 'the bush life is by no means without its delicate and constructive spiritual power'.⁶

That presence, though all pervasive, was rarely defined and

---

5. See Miles Franklin, My Brilliant Career, (Sydney, 1966 ed.), pp.36f.
distinct. The tendency to define God in the usual anthropomorphic terms was unacceptable to a writer like Miles Franklin. The God whom the Church presented was not the God of the literature of the 1890s. 'The trouble with the Church of England God', wrote Miles Franklin

...is that he is made in the image of some darned old cackling prelate, so mean and cowardly that the Devil, for consistency and ability, is a gentleman beside him.\(^7\)

Franklin had her own private fight with the traditional concept of God when she was told that she had to behave like a woman because 'it is God's will'.\(^8\)

It was a relief to be indignant with God, but a trial not to be able to get at Him in any way....His way of saving the world did not appear to me as efficient for a being who was all-powerful. He so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to save it, and allowed Him to be nailed on a cross in ghastly agony - without saving anything considerable as far as history shows.

Heaven knows what He would have permitted to be done to a daughter.\(^9\)

Victor Daley explained the differences between the traditional and popular concepts by naming two Gods -

The One He is Almighty Named in Sabbath psalmody;
And One He goes without a name, and a greater God is He.\(^10\)

The former is worshipped by all the nations of the world but the latter 'needs no shrine, though many a shrine has He, in ev'ry mart, in ev'ry heart, wherever man may be'.\(^11\) Most orthodox appellations

---

8. Ibid., p.17.
9. Ibid., p.18.
11. Ibid.
are thus denied to Him, rather He is

Fate, Providence, God, men have different
names for the same thing. 12

God is recognized as the Creator;

...and the print
Of one great maker, lies upon each race. 13

In the midst of the cruelty of the bush, men were aware of the creation
process; they could see the recreation, the resurrection after death.

Certainly Ogilvie is reassured by a bird's cry

And knew that God kept still in mind
seedtime and harvest, horse, and kind. 14

The concept of God that is communicated by Banjo Paterson is that
he is the 'Supreme Architect', who activated the running of the
universe 'by a mighty power with a purpose dread'. 15 Generally, the
God of the literature of the 1890s is not a personal God, taking care
of his people, but is aloof from humanity. For Goodge, man's supreme
egocentricity is manifested in any belief that God should, merely for
him, interrupt the workings of his world.

In vast and unimaginable space,
Where countless suns sent forth their
life-light rays
Each to his group of whirling satellites,
There rolled one little miserable ball!
And on that ball a tiny atom knelt
And prayed the great Controlling Force of all
To wreck the order of the universe;
Unchain the suns and cast the spheres adrift,
Set world careering madly on to world,
And bid ungoverned chaos come again!
For what?
To damp the dot whereon the atom dwelt! 16

12. Barcroft Boake, 'Poem', (Mitchell Library Ms.).
13. Ibid.
14. From 'Last Night', in Will Ogilvie Scrapbook (Mitchell Library Ms.).
A consciousness of the harshness of the environment is evident in the refusal to accept God as anything else but the great immortal though indifferent arbitrator of good and evil, whose depths cannot be fathomed. How presumptuous therefore are the clergy to imagine they can understand his workings.

The parson said 'Your sinful Past
Will make for you a fiery rod.'
I smiled, and thought upon the vast
Amused indifference of God.\(^\text{17}\)

His indifference does not mean that he can be trifled with however. Though religiosity is of no value in appeasing a distant God, one must never take Him lightly or for granted, for He has the final word.

God is defined in the image of the Australian bushman: God is strength, standing almost superciliously aloof from the trivialities of life, ready to mete out a rough justice, understanding of man's inadequacies, but not to be taken for granted.\(^\text{18}\) 'Holy Dan', when all his bullocks had died in the drought, turned his back on God - to his sorrow.

'That's nineteen Thou hast taken, Lord,
And now you'll plainly see
You'd better take the bloody lot,
One's no damned good to me.'
The other riders laughed so much
They shook the sky around;
The lightning flashed, the thunder roared,
And Holy Dan was drowned.\(^\text{19}\)

So the impression is given of God the just ruler of the universe who, while he does not in any way interfere in the doings of man and tolerates his fumblings, must, however, be respected and appeased by man.

19. Stewart and Keesing, op.cit., p.84.
Other writers of the 1890s present a contradictory view of God. To them it was the Christian concept of the love of God that is retained. However, it was a love that is inexplicable and beyond the realm of man.

...God's love is very peaceable. 
Too great for us. It tops the middle sky 
Reaching to earth and back unceasable, 
Beyond the confines of philosophy. 20

It is this acceptance of the ultimate love of God that made the bushman turn to God when he was in danger.

To the God we scorned when full of strength 
and free from all heart-aches, 
And we prayed to Him to save us for our 
wives and children's sakes. 21

God, the saviour, the recourse in time of danger, is a recurrent theme. In time of trouble, when man was alone, no longer able to rely on himself or on a mate, God became a necessity. Help, in the form of a rescuer or in the timing of an event, was often attributed to the intervention of Providence. If things went wrong, it was because a man did not have faith in God.

For I trusted not God 
To the full in the hour of my need, and 
my lips will not cleave to the rod 
Of His wrath, and I fall in the sand, with 
the weight of the cross that I bear. 22

The ability to save or rescue man was not limited to God alone, but extended to all things recognizably religious, for example, the Scriptures. 'Thinkin' of the bible as I often do in troublesome circumstances'. 23 Anything religious becomes a good luck charm. The Bible was carried around as a talisman to protect from evil. Boys
were given New Testaments when they shifted into new and uncertain situations. Men would not be parted from their Bibles though they were not 'religious'.

Furphy's characters similarly had a very simple, straight-forward belief; a matter of cause and effect which came close to superstition. Their religion was one similar to that revealed in the faith of personalities in the Old Testament, in that, if one broke God's laws, then punishment must follow. Yet it is not God's active punishment so much as a matter of an automatic result; you break a commandment and bad luck will follow. This is revealed in the curse on Thompson. As Thompson 'cheated' a dead man he was left with a curse on him that remained with him ever since. All the characters, including Tom Collins, did not doubt that there was indeed a curse on Thompson. Similarly, bad luck in the form of Cooper's broken down wagon was attributed to the breaking of the Sabbath. It is interesting that not all agree with this interpretation, though an external cause was the most popular.

Cooper had maintained that nothing better could have been hoped for after leaving Kenilworth shed on a Friday; Thompson, untrammelled by such superstition, contended that the misadventure was solely due to travelling on Sunday; whilst I held it to be merely a proof that Cooper, in spite of his sins, wasn't deserted yet.

The faith of Furphy's characters was thus almost a superstition. This is brought out more clearly by Thompson's words:

Isn't it well known that a grog-seller's money

---

27. Ibid., p.60.
28. Ibid., p.60.
never gets to his children? Isn't it well known that if you mislead a woman a curse 'll follow you like your shadow? Isn't it well known that if you're disobedient to your parents, something 'll happen to you? Isn't it well known that Sabbath-breaking brings a curse on a man that he can't shake off till he reforms?  

This superstitious element in the religion of the bush was frequently criticised by the writers of the 1890s. Often, they caricatured the acceptance of religious practice because they apparently had talismanic value. In Paterson's famous ballad 'A Bush Christening' the writer was able to convey the impression that religious ceremony was misunderstood by the majority of people, and furthermore had no value except to further a superstitious practice.

Now this Mike was the dad of a ten year old lad, Plump, healthy, stoutly conditioned; He was strong as the best, but poor Mike had no rest For the youngster had never been christened. 

And his wife used to cry, 'If the darlin' should die Saint Peter would not recognise him!' But by luck he survived till a preacher arrived, Who agreed straightway to baptise him.

No one condemned this superstitious element more vividly than Barbara Baynton. 'The Chosen Vessel' told the story of Hennessey an Irishman who saw a vision of the Madonna and Child, informing him that he had been chosen by God. Unfortunately what he had seen was a woman with a child in her arms appealing to him for help as she was about to be murdered by a swagman. But Hennessey with 'all the superstitious awe of his race and religion' was unable to perceive reality. In her

29. Ibid., p.21.
30. Paterson, op. cit., p.175.
32. He was an Irish Catholic, and in part, Baynton is attacking Irish Catholicism.
superb, masterful way Baynton has chillingly communicated the dangers inherent in superstitious religion.

The scriptures were not valued for their talismanic value alone, but also for their contents. Most bush families had family Bibles and the children were 'acquainted with the Biblical legends of the Garden of Eden and of Noah and his Ark'. Many, like Steele Rudd, grew up to love the 'sonority and grandeur of the prophets and the old testament; he enjoyed immensely the absolutely (sic.) ribaldry of portions and he delighted in the many lovely stories it contains'.

The Scriptures were not considered to be a textbook for religion, but a collection of stories, the veracity of which was confirmed by life in the bush. Paterson's 'Saltbush Bill on the Patriarchs' shows the remarkable adaptability of Bible stories to the popularised Australian way of life. The Scriptures were cherished even by those critical of orthodox religion. O'Dowd's colleagues were amazed by his possession and knowledge of the Bible. 'Only the Atheist knew that the Bible didn't have an index: quietly he took the book and found the Good Samaritan story'.

An intrinsic part of the religion of the writers of the 1890s was a nonchalant acceptance of death. Death was a recurrent theme in Australian literature. However, due to a fear of seeming to be too deep, it was often treated in a light, almost superficial, way. There appear to be three different attitudes towards death. The first was

---

33. Miles Franklin, My Brilliant Career, op.cit., p.79.
34. Winifred Hamilton, Steele Rudd, His Life and Letters, (Mitchell Library Ms.), p.50.
36. i.e. O'Dowd.
that death was the final end, the place of rest.

We don't wanter go ter Heaven
We don't wanter go ter Hell!
.......... 
When I dies and turns me toes up
I jest want a little ease.\[^{38}\]

Death was the pulling down of the blind, the extinguishing of the flame for

What praise or blame, what cheers or groans
Affect a buried box of bones.\[^{39}\]

The second attitude towards death was that the question of an after life was in the realm of 'the great Perhaps'.\[^{40}\]

Whether now a heaven or hell come
Pat will find old mates to welcome.\[^{41}\]

Life continued after death, and wherever that might be, one would meet again one's loved ones\[^{42}\] and even one's beloved horse.\[^{43}\]

The third attitude towards death was a slightly more complex one typified by Barcroft Boake. Boake accepted that there was an after life in heaven because he could not 'face the thought' that at the end there was 'one convulsive struggle and the rest a blank'.\[^{44}\] To Boake heaven was everything that earth was not, the place where ideals were given substance,\[^{45}\] the place where the tribulations of man on earth were finally rewarded.

\[^{39}\] Goodge, 'What Boots it?', op.cit., p.12.
\[^{42}\] e.g. 'We shall meet with our loved ones gone before', Paterson, 'Over the Range' in Snowy River, op.cit., p.101.
\[^{43}\] e.g. 'Old Pardon the Son of Reprieve', ibid., pp.18-19.
\[^{44}\] From 'Qexata Quoestio', Poem, op.cit.
\[^{45}\] See 'A Song', ibid.
In eternity of joyous days,
Our earthly troubles find their recompense.\textsuperscript{46}

To Daley heaven was the place of the realisation of the socialist's dreams where all were free.

\begin{quote}
Ah, Hymn divine, I ne'er may hear again!
Song of the full-voiced soul, freed from the yearning
Known here on earth!\textsuperscript{47}
\end{quote}

That heaven was the eventual reward of all, and that God would reward action and suffering, rather than faith and words, was a commonly stated belief in Australian literature of the 1890s.

\begin{quote}
God will remember the generous hand
Before the praying tongue.\textsuperscript{48}
\end{quote}

It was not a matter of living a holy life, or of searching for God, or of being good or even of having the balance sheet weighing in on the credit side for,

\begin{quote}
if God is, as I think him, great
...he will wipe my score out once for all.\textsuperscript{49}
\end{quote}

Rather it was a matter of being willing to help a person when he needed it. In the \textit{Memoirs of Corporal Keele} Condie told Keeley where he could find work. Keeley remarked 'I couldn't help thinkin' Condie was a fine Christian chap, an' I started givin' him mister'.\textsuperscript{50} This, in the final analysis, is what constituted the true Christian.\textsuperscript{51}

In the literature of the 1890s a distinction is drawn between 'true religion' and theology. The latter had little relevance to the

\textsuperscript{46} From 'Qexata Quoestio', ibid.
\textsuperscript{47} Daley, 'A Vision of Sunday in Heaven' in Holburn and Pizer, \textit{op.cit.}, p.113.
\textsuperscript{48} 'Message', Victor Daley Correspondence, (Mitchell Library Ms.).
\textsuperscript{49} Bulletin Ms., \textit{op.cit.}, Vol.III, p.54.
\textsuperscript{50} Steele Rudd, \textit{The Old Homestead and Memoirs of Corporal Keeley}, (St. Lucia, 1971), p.139.
\textsuperscript{51} See also Steele Rudd, \textit{Sandy's Selection and Back at Our Selection}, (Sydney, 1957), p.139.
man in the bush. True religion was primarily ethical in character. Most of the characters described in the writings of the 1890s felt that they tried to live up to a certain religious standard. Thus their religion affected their conduct. Even Furphy's Mosey, a most disagreeable young man, said that 'I'm a great believer in Providence myself, Tom; an' what's more I try to live up to my (adj.) religion'. The ethical emphasis inevitably led to the identification of true religion with mateship.

The man of the bush had a faith which did not attempt to grapple with theological issues. Tom Collins said that 'A metaphysical question keeps slipping away from the grasp of the bullock driver's mind, like a wet melon-seed'. The conservative Collins, who entertained slight feelings of superiority towards the people in his life, laughed at their superstitious beliefs. However it was unlikely that his creator, Joseph Furphy, and the rest of the writers of the 1890s did so. Though they chided people for their superstitions, the impression one gets is that they regarded these religious beliefs as the more genuine and valid.

The religious beliefs presented in Australian literature of the 1890s are therefore a cocktail of contradictions. Though the God and religion of the bush, as represented in the literature, had many similarities to the God of the Christian religion, they actually represented conceptualizations caused by the effect of the Australian

54. See ch.6.
55. Ibid., p.37.
environment upon the European man. Added to this was the fact that
the writers of the 1890s were trying to create an indigenous
literature, with emphasis upon characteristics indigenous to the
Australian scene. What they were applauding was not man's search for
God, but man's acceptance of God, not man's worship in the temples of
religion, but man's actions when applying religion to ethics. To
them it is man's actions which invest religion with value. To the
writers of the 1890s it was the men of the outback - and not organized
Christianity - who, through their sharing and mateship had captured
the spirit of Christianity - the sermon on the Mount.
Chapter 6

Religion and Mateship

The search of the writers of the 1890s to find a religion indigenous to Australia, truly representative of Australian values, led to the glorification of mateship. The philosophy of mateship was one that had been born in the Australian environment. The demands of the bush meant a man needed his mate to survive. Individuality thus gave place to loyalty. And it seemed to the writers of the 1890s that this very loyalty and altruism, was what Jesus was talking about in his Sermon on the Mount. Mateship was therefore not a substitute for Christianity but represented the truth of Christianity. Similarly socialism apparently embodied the ideals of Jesus. The 1890s saw the blossoming of the socialist philosophy in Australia, and the writers of the 1890s, believing fervently in the promise of socialism, drew upon the roots of mateship and Christianity. Mateship and socialism was religion put into practice.

Though the majority of the writers of the 1890s may have made no act of active allegiance to the organized Church, they did claim allegiance to religion; to be called 'irreligious' would have been horrifying to them. In the words of Furphy:

The comrade of nature, unconsciously profane, is rarely irreverent, never flippant. For instance, though Dixon habitually uttered the name 'God' without slightest mitigation or remorse in his voice, his pronunciation of 'the Lord' was unaffectedly grave and devout. Briefly, the worst you can say of this wild-flower of the plains is that his Jahwistic
ideal was anthropomorphically on a level with that of the writers of the Pentateuch.¹

This apparent inconsistency was based on the distinction between 'true religion' and theology, the religion of the clergy.² The latter had little relevance to the man in the bush. 'The "bushman" was "free" unshackled by customs and constraints of civilized communities"; he was "a man's man" and "one of nature's gentlemen", a nationalist, one whose inherited faith was often replaced by the vague sentiment of "mateship".³

True religion was therefore primarily ethical in character.⁴ It was not to be confused with ethics, however, for religion was practical, concerned with man's conduct.

Religion, divested of frill, formalism, and fable, is merely the science of conduct... Yet religion is not ethics...Ethics is a moral science..., whilst religion is an applied science, applied namely to conduct. And any belief in revelation, any belief in the supernatural, if it fails to control conduct is of no more moment than a belief in the bunyip....A belief which leads up to unselfishness to championship of the lowly and challenge of the overweening, to the living of a clean and useful life; or one which, on the other hand leads to servility, tyranny, or condescension, to the apotheosis of thrift, or to the toleration of any manifest evil - such a belief, I say, rises to the dignity of a religion, inasmuch as it controls conduct.⁵

2. 'The distinction between "true religion" - conceived as primarily ethical in character - and theology dates back to the relatively early days when Australians were looking for ways of circumventing the ambitions of the clergy or of side stepping sectarian issues. But by about 1880, it took a more intellectual form'. A.L. McLeod, The Patterns of Australian Culture, (Cornell, 1963), p.135.
5. Furphy, op.cit., p.179.
The emphasis on right conduct inevitably led to the identification of true religion with mateship and therefore with unionism, for this 'after all was the organized manifestation of mateship'.

Admittedly, Ward suggests that mateship did not even rise to the status of a religion.

It is not suggested that 'mateship' was, or ever could have been, in any serious philosophical sense, comparable with Christianity or any other religion possessing a long historical tradition.

And T. Inglis Moore similarly argues that mateship is non-religious and even provides an alternative to religion. However, it is here maintained that mateship was not so much a substitute for religion but the very quintessence of religion itself. Once it is accepted that religion in the Australian understanding of the word, implied a certain type of behaviour, without any necessary theological or religious belief, then it can be seen that the man practising 'mateship' was the true Christian. In the words of E.J. Brady:

The back-country bushmen, who form the backbone of this new outcome of Unionism may have no orthodox creed, but he is one who has practised towards his mates those precepts that were given by the Nazarene to humanity. He believes in mateship, and he loves his neighbour more than he does himself. He is not religious, but he is Christian enough to act square, and Christ-like enough to feel righteous indignation at wrong and injustice wherever he may see it or hear of it.

The full meaning of mateship can only be understood in the framework of the vast solitudes of the land. Judith Wright sees mateship as

that which enabled man to triumph over his environment: to defeat and
to humble it. 'No man can survive alone but everyone is dependent on
his neighbour'.\textsuperscript{10} As in America the frontier formed the American
ethos of individualism and self-reliance,\textsuperscript{11} so in Australia it was
seen as essential to survival for a man to have a reliable mate.

'Australia...has in a sense concentrated its energies on protecting the
underdog; the doctrine of mateship, which embodies this aim is of
cardinal importance in the Australian ethos'.\textsuperscript{12} Two other factors,
caused by the isolation of the bush, were also influential in the
development of mateship. The first was the void caused by the lack of
religious representatives. The other was the absence of women.\textsuperscript{13}

The writers of the 1890s reveal that for them mateship was not
an alternative to religion so much as the true kernel of religion,
the logical result of Christianity applied to Australian conditions.
The true Christian was the true mate. In Lawson's 'That There Dog of
Mine', Macquarie, the main character, called his dog a 'Christian',
because he had been a mate to him and had stuck with him through thick
and thin:

That there dog...is a better dog than I'm a
man - or you too, it seems - and a better

\textsuperscript{10} Judith Wright, Preoccupations in Australian Poetry, (Melbourne,
\textsuperscript{11} Hence the success of individualist religions like Methodism and
the Baptist movement.
\textsuperscript{12} H.C. Allen, Bush and Backwards, (Michigan, 1959), p.92.
\textsuperscript{13} 'Two factors seemed to have been important in developing bush
mateship: the relative lack of religion and the absence of women
in the bush in the early days. The lack of religion left an
emotional vacuum which was largely filled by mateship as a creed,
with a man having faith in and dependence on a mate instead of
God, and with the virtue of loyalty becoming a paramount one.
Mateship acquired a semi-religious character which it has never
quite lost'. T. Inglis Moore, 'The Meanings of Mateship',
Christian. He's been a better mate to me than I ever was to any man - or any man to me. He's watched over me; kep' me from getting robbed many a time; fought for me; saved my life and took drunken kicks and curses for thanks - and forgave me. He's been a true, straight, honest and faithful mate to me.\textsuperscript{14}

This was the outback's image of what a true Christian was - not one who had a certain belief but one who acted in a certain way, one who was 'sorry for most men and all women and tries to act to it to the best of his ability, and if he ain't a Christian, God knows what is - I don't'.\textsuperscript{15} The true Christian is the understanding mate, a 'Good Samaritan'.\textsuperscript{16}

It was Henry Lawson 'the evangelist of mateship and the constant and consistent apostle of its doctrine'\textsuperscript{17} who became one of the main exponents of mateship. Brereton says of Lawson's characters:

'Rugged and true, his bushmen helped each other in times of difficulty and trouble. However unworthy some of them might be, they all seemed to recognize the ideal of mateship, and therefore while nothing could reconcile him to meanness he saw mateship as the living spirit of his people'.\textsuperscript{18} The theme of mateship repeatedly occurs in his stories and verse. It is from Lawson that we learn that a man 'stuck to his mate as Bushmen can';\textsuperscript{19} that 'it isn't bush religion to desert a mate in a hole; and the boss was a mate of ours; so we stuck to him',\textsuperscript{20} that

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., p.683.
\textsuperscript{17} F. Bloomfield in J. Te Gay Brereton and Berth Lawson (eds.), \textit{Henry Lawson - By His Mates}, (Sydney, 1943), p.76.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., p.15.
\textsuperscript{19} From 'Since then', \textit{Collected Verse}, Vol.1, (Sydney, 1967), p.290.
\textsuperscript{20} From Henry Lawson, 'His Brother's Keeper', \textit{Prose Works}, \textit{op.cit.}, p.529.
\end{flushleft}
'mates are closer than brothers in the bush' surpassing the relationship between male and female - 'the faith of men is as strong as the sympathy between them, and perhaps the hardest thing on earth for a woman to kill'.

Through Lawson's stories run the themes of loyalty, sharing, defence of one's mates, and acceptance of their faults and, above all, self-sacrifice for others.

Bush mateship...meant, if needed, the sticking to a mate at all costs in the sense that a man would lay down his own life to save that of his mate...This sacrificial element not only gave depth to the meanings of bush mateship but also helped to strengthen its semi-religious character.

Heseltine sees mateship manifesting itself in three ways in Lawson's writings:

First, as the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, a vision of future perfection to be striven after and, perhaps, ultimately to be achieved....Second, mateship appears as a remembered or imagined Paradise, a dream, achingly recalled of an unspoiled life that probably never was....Third, and most important, mateship may be represented as part of Man's various contradictory, incomplete existence in the fallen world.

The religious terms used by Heseltine emphasize the basic religious quality of the mateship about which Lawson writes. Mateship has several features in common with Christianity. The loyalty of a man 'bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things'. Similarly self-sacrifice for others was another facet

25. I Cor. 13: 7, R.S.V.
of human behaviour lauded and adhered to by Christ. 'Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends'. 26 Mateship represented the ideal - to be striven for and lived by, above all to be reached in a Utopian-like existence.

For Lawson himself it was only his own faith in mateship which gave him periods of comparative happiness. He says 'I had found drink and comradeship and comparative happiness - I found mateship later on'. 27 Ultimately, it was the creed of mateship that was to fill the spiritual vacuum left by his earlier religious experiences. Lawson's wife, Bertha said: 'I think that when, later, he found mateship - which was the strongest note - that and sincerity - in his life, he won back some of the old fire, which had slipped from him since he passed from the atmosphere of his youth'. 28 Lawson was happiest when mateship was able to be put into practice in his own life - when he could spend time with true mates; camping out, or drinking, or telling yarns. During his time at Yanco his renewed friendship with Jim Grahame gave him some of the happiest times of his life.

Lawson has been the one mainly responsible for crystallizing the myth of mateship for Australians. He gave them a sense of security in their uniqueness, in their development of a national trait, that of mateship. 'Lawson's variety of it resulting from the physical conditions of the outback and the economic conditions of the period has almost become an Australian patent'. 29

Other writers of the 1890s also applauded the way of mateship. Paterson's biographer, Semmler, claims that, contrary to prevalent

26. John 15:13, R.S.V.
belief, Paterson was not the upholder of the established order, but the writer for the underdog.

Paterson's (championship of the underdog) was just as deep-seated as Lawson's even if more intellectual and more emotional.\(^\text{30}\)

The elements of loyalty, courage, stoicism, acceptance and self-sacrifice are also present in the poems of Paterson.\(^\text{31}\) In the final analysis however, it was the whole school of *Bulletin* writers who adopted the tradition as enunciated by Lawson and who gave final expression to a myth already existent in Australia, so that its concrete formulations were added to the history of Australian folklore. Utopia could exist - within the shores of the great Southern Land.

The promise of a Golden Age to be,
When, from the Gulf Land to the Southern Sea,
All men will feel their common brotherhood,
And Love, not Gold, shall be the Greatest Good.\(^\text{32}\)

Mateship inevitably led to an easy and comfortable acceptance of unionism which was merely mateship in an organized form. For the ideal inherent in mateship is the equality of two mates. It is only two independent equals who are able to give genuinely and selflessly. While in America the rise of democracy meant a comparative lack of collectivism, in Australia men had to group together for survival, both in the city and in the bush. Living in the bush and fighting its caprices still left a man reliant on another, for he was, and only ever could be, a wage earner. In America hard toil might be repaid by ownership of a small plot of land. In Australia hard toil merely meant survival and rewards for the pastoralists whose tenure on the

\(^{30}\) Semmler, *op.cit.*, pp.55 and 81.
\(^{31}\) e.g. see 'How Gilbert Died'.
land, because of financial and historical reasons, was secure. 

'Thus it was that men huddled in the great cities in Australia from the earliest days...and...their ideals became, not those of individual equality of opportunity as in the United States until the closing of the frontier, but of collective equality of enjoyment enforced by joint action'.

Allen attributes the strength of the new union movement in the nineties to various causes: to the class feeling which was strong in Australia; to the tradition of reliance on government inherited from the days when New South Wales was a mere penal colony; to the urban majority which made the rise of the Labor Party possible; and to the awareness of Australian democracy occurring at just the right time to feel the impact of socialist ideas from overseas. Thus Australian unionism was not a frontier but an urban phenomenon. But its impact on the bush was a logical result of the traditions of mateship and the traditional mistrust of the wealthier classes and pastoralists. The collective tendencies of the Australian outback tradition meant unionism was accepted in both bush and city, and its acceptance in turn reinforced the stereotyping of the idea. The Amalgamated Shearers' Union was a uniquely Australian result of the tradition, giving reality to a hitherto vague ideal.

All the religious sentiment to be found in mateship was easily transferred to its offspring - unionism. W.G. Spence, the president and secretary of the Australian Workers' Union (A.W.U.) and the Australian Shearers' Union (A.S.U.) wrote:

35. Ibid., p.93.
Unionism came to the Australian bushman as a religion. It came bringing salvation from years of tyranny. It had in it that feeling of mateship which he understood already, and which always characterized the action of one white man to another.  

The relationship between Christianity and socialism has always been ambiguous. This ambiguity goes back to the very roots of Christianity, and is inherent in the very nature and function of religion and its enigmatic role as a force in human society.

The principles of the 'Galilean Carpenter' were applied to social questions; Lane's New Jerusalem was a Christian Utopia; Christian idealism permeated Spence's lecture on New Unionism, Hughes takes the Sermon on the Mount to prove the modern Churches wrong, while McNamara invokes Christ's name as 'that Socialist of old time' who would give no quarter to capitalists.

The leaders of the Union Movement were not alone in their acceptance of Christianity as the true kernel of socialism; the poets and writers of the Bulletin found the beliefs and phrases of Christianity well suited to their task of propagating the faith. The love of money was rejected and its evils painted clearly so as to let the upper classes know that there was no hope in Heaven or Utopia for them.

Wealth is the idol now,  
To whom they pray,  
Night and day; and care not how  
That God to whom they bow  
Hath feet of clay.  
Creatures whose petty creed  
Soars not above  
Wealth seeking - foolish greed,  
They are but worms indeed  
Who know not Love.

39. Barcroft Boake, Poem, (Mitchell Library Ms.).
The *Bulletin* writers had ample ammunition, for, as usual in Australian history, it was the capitalist classes who were the main support of the established churches. Thus it was that the majority of writers came to view the churches and capitalism as close allies who had perverted the true cause of Christianity. Victor Daley depicted Christ as the embodiment of Labour, being crucified daily by the oppression of the capitalists.

Who are Thou that cometh from far Galilee
With Thy nail-pierced hands and Thy thorn-crowned brow?
Sweat of blood drops down from Thy forehead
to Thy knee -
In the name of God who made us, who art Thou?

Sadly He replied, 'I am the Crucified!
I am He for Whose garments the world's cutthroats have died.
Lo, I die every day, as on Calvary I died,
And My true name is Labour, though priests call me Christ'.

Christ's examples, precepts and teachings were adopted and adapted. He was the Brother of man, showing the supreme example of Brotherhood. His words and example were an inspiration for a movement relying totally on the common bond between men. Rod Quinn prayed the following prayer to Him:

We built for Thy Glory
Thy Wisdom beseeching;
We founded and fashioned
Our house on Thy Teaching.

It is unlikely that most adherents of the Trade Union movement were

---

40. e.g. A reading of C. Irving Benson (ed.), *A Century of Victorian Methodism*, (Melbourne, 1935), shows that most of the support for the churches came from the 'bourgeoisie', owning or aspiring to own their own businesses.
42. From 'The House of the Commonwealth', in Newspaper Cuttings, Mitchell Library Ms.
actively conscious of their adoption of the Christian religion as their guiding light. However, religious words are emotional words and their use by the Bulletin school of writers fitted in well with the Australian tradition of vague acceptance of the Christian religion plus the concept of mateship.

To the Henry Lawson of the 1890s socialism was the 'true religion'. Labour in revolt was the 'upraised hand of God' whose victory had been prophesied by God. God was unmistakably on the side of the workers.

Ah! Mammon's slaves, your knees should knock, your hearts in terror beat,
When God demands a reason for the sorrow of the street.45

The young Lawson firmly believed in the revolution when the workers would march to fight for and reinstate the New Order. He pictured the Revolution as the time of Christ's second coming, for Christ would avenge the worker and lead the battle for justice.

Christ is coming once again,
And his day is drawing near;
He is leading on the thousands of the army of the rear!
We shall know the second advent
By the lower skies aflame
With the signals of his coming, for he comes not as he came -
Not humble, meek and lowly, as he came in days of old,
But with hatred, retribution for the worshippers of gold!
And the roll of battle music and the steady tramp of feet
Sound for ever in the thunder and the rattle of the Street.46

As Lawson became involved in the republican and socialist movements

44. See 'The Triumph of the People', Ibid., p.129f.
45. 'Faces in the Street', Ibid., p.16.
46. 'In the Street', Ibid., p.452.
he seemed to merge their tenets with his earlier experiences of religion. To him, socialism was the logical result of the teachings of the Scriptures. "I demand the rights of Labour in the Law of God defined".\(^{47}\) When thirty-six of the forty-five Labor candidates were returned to the New South Wales Parliament in 1891 - the first time the Labor Movement had attempted to enter Parliament - Lawson was moved to 'religious fervour'.\(^{48}\) This was the beginning of the New Age, the 'Workers' new religion which is the oldest in the world'\(^{49}\) would now rule.

Barr attributes Lawson's republicanim and socialism to his experience on the goldfields 'where hard-shelled republicans from the U.S.A., revolutionaries from Germany and Italy and the legacy of the Chartists of England had their influence'.\(^{50}\) Thus the seeds for these philosophies were sown as early as those of religion. No doubt he was also influenced by his early years in Sydney. His mother associated with reformers and socialists from about 1883. Moreover, around him he saw the faces of gaunt, hungry men; he experienced the injustices of an urban economy. He met some of the early Labour leaders - McNamara, Holman, Black, Rae, Ferguson, Rosa, and Jim Mooney.\(^{51}\) He attended meetings where he heard republicans and socialists and his sensitive heart responded to their appeal just as earlier he had responded to that of religion.

\(^{47}\) Ibid., p.150.  
\(^{49}\) Collected Verse 1, op.cit., p.129.  
\(^{50}\) J. Barr, biography of Henry Lawson, (Mitchell Library Ms.), p.63.  
\(^{51}\) J.C. James, Henry Lawson and the Labour Movement, (Mitchell Library Ms.), p.4.
I heard Tommy Walker...and Collins, and the rest of 'em, and of course, a host of Yankee free-thought and socialist lectures. I wore the green, in fancy, gathered at the rising of the moon, charged for the fair land of Poland, and dreamed of dying on the barricades to the roar of the 'Marseillaise' - for the Young Australian Republic.\textsuperscript{52}

Neither his Republican beliefs nor his faith in the Labor Party were to survive the test of time. Barr feels that Lawson had never been a true republican, but simply a sympathiser with the underdog.\textsuperscript{53} His interest had always been more theoretical than practical. 'With the political turmoil of 1890 Lawson had little to do. He had little interest in practical politics'.\textsuperscript{54} It is likely that once the heat of the moment cooled, so did Lawson's ardour for republicanism. Similarly, as time revealed that the Labor candidates were but men as selfish as any other, Lawson became disillusioned with the whole Movement. Referring to 1893 he said '"The Cause" didn't loom so high in my eyes as it used to'.\textsuperscript{55} In a letter of 1900 he wrote, 'The whole business\textsuperscript{56} has been rotten for years'.\textsuperscript{57} In later years he was interested in politics but never interested enough to go and vote.

The attitude of the Bulletin School of writers can best be summarized in Lawson's poem 'Saint Peter'.\textsuperscript{58} Saint Peter became a mate because of the similar experiences of the Australian bushman and the fisherman who trampled the widths and breadths of Galilee in pursuance of an ideal.

\textsuperscript{52} Quoted by Roderick, 'Formative Years', \textit{op.cit.}, p.118.  
\textsuperscript{53} Barr, \textit{op.cit.}, p.64.  
\textsuperscript{54} C. Roderick, 'Formative Years', \textit{op.cit.}, p.123.  
\textsuperscript{56} i.e. the Labor Movement.  
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Collected Verse I}, \textit{op.cit.}, p.232.
Now I think there is a likeness 'Twixt St. Peter's life and mine, For he did a lot of trampin' Long ago in Palestine, He was 'union' when the workers First began to organize, And I'm glad that old St. Peter Keeps the gate of paradise.59

A far more intellectual consideration of Christianity’s approximation to socialism was made by Joseph Furphy. 'Christianity ...inaugurates a perfect Socialist system'.60 His Socialism was based on Christianity - the brotherhood of man as taught by Christ. This was to be expressed politically as State Socialism. 'State Socialism must be built on a foundation of religion....There is no other foundation possible'.61 This was Furphy's creed.62 His personal letters were liberally sprinkled with this idea, as were his writings, principally Rigby's Romance.

Furphy felt that Christ's teachings basically pertain to material stewardship. God, the Creator, has bestowed his gifts upon the world, man must worthily use these gifts. 'There is ample reason why sharing, not giving - irrespective of quantity in either case - should be the sentiment of bona fide Christianity'.63 Work - good, honest, cheerful work - was the duty of every man. From this he obtained his livelihood. But the recompense he obtained must not be accumulated.64 For the natural law - ordained by God, is that food is supplied from season to season - it never comes as a two years' supply.65

---

59. Ibid.
60. Furphy, Rigby's Romance, op.cit., p.175.
61. Ibid., p.233.
63. Furphy, Rigby's Romance, op.cit., p.94.
64. Ibid., p.154.
65. Ibid., p.156.
Christ's teaching was that we ask for our daily bread; we should expect no more, and make no more provision than this for the future.  

In Rigby's Romance Rigby praised Furlong's economic dependence on God. Furlong will be looked after because God has promised to do so. 'Furlong (is) consistent in his working out of the economic problem on Biblical lines'.

The love of money, as embodied in material possessions was contrary to the argument of the four evangelists. And 'where the vindication of money per se is promptly to the fore, the love is not far off. Once temporise with the Christian principle of Mammon renunciation - once concede the appreciation of money as property - and you open the door to evasions without end. This relapse has taken place throughout Christendom'.

The social system of Furphy had Christ at its centre. People were adopted into brotherhood with him. This brotherhood was one of complete equality. 'Whoever denies to the obscure specimen of humanity initial equality in the fullest sense, thereby tacitly repudiates his own relationship to Christ'. This doctrine had no room for class barriers, or for a justification of caste. To Furphy 'no "gentleman" can be a Christian; for Christianity postulates initial equality, Christ recognises no gradation, except in usefulness'.

Furphy's scorn for the self-opinionated position of the upper classes

66. Ibid., p.155.  
68. Ibid., p.165.  
70. Ibid., p.213.  
72. Furphy, Rigby's Romance, op.cit., p.211.  
73. Furphy, Such is Life, op.cit., p.205.
was at its best in Mrs. Beaudesart's argument with Ida. Mrs. Beaudesart spoke as one secure in the knowledge that God had made her better than most others. 'What a tempting of Providence it is for people of the lower classes to have notions above what their Maker intends for them'.

The relationship with Christ not only necessitates recognition of the equality of man, but also devotion to the rest of society. Only in this way can God be glorified. In a letter to Miles Franklin, Furphy wrote:

> Just take your head in your hands for a moment, and consider what you are here for. For the 'Glory of God, I suppose', says you. A fine loose phrase; but how in the Fiend's name can you glorify God except by championship of the lowly - an attitude in which the Redeemer of the world, irrespective of all other considerations was always found. This subject, by the way, constitutes the kernel of Rigby's Romance: which is the main cause of my anxiety to see the book in print.

The Kingdom of God, to Furphy, was the place where these socialist principles rule. It started within man, and man held the key to its actualization. He it is who must give it 'form' and 'effect'. The parables explanatory of the Kingdom of God illustrated for Furphy facets of socialism.

Furphy's kingdom was not one to be ushered in by a violent overthrow of the existing order. He was a reformer rather than a revolutionary. It was by simply being a Christian that a person's whole life was a protest against the injustice of the economic and

74. Ibid., p.265.
75. Furphy, Rigby's Romance, op.cit., p.171.
76. Published by Meanjin, Vol.11, no.iii, p.16.
77. Furphy, Rigby's Romance, op.cit., p.186.
78. Furphy, Such is Life, op.cit., p.118.
79. Furphy, Rigby's Romance, op.cit., p.231.
and social system. Furphy's Christian had to be poor and refuse all private possessions.

Although Furphy believed that socialism was implicit in Christianity, he was very much aware that the established churches did not share this belief. The opinion of churchmen seemed to have been that to be a socialist meant one was damned with no hope of salvation.

"So your address must be 'Below', Where Socialists and such-like go." Furphy stated that by their courting of the rich the churches made 'the greasing of the fat pig a work holy unto the Lord'. To Furphy, this was contrary to Christ's teachings.

The essence of Furphy's teaching on socialism was that God had made all men equal. By application of the Christian principle of outflowing benevolence the human race could be elevated. Believing in the power of the pen, he used it to enunciate the truth as he saw it, and he attempted to bring down the paper walls of the old order and inculcate the blessings of socialism, the new order. He was never a militant propagandist, but a mellow philosopher, who knew what it was to struggle for a living and never had much in the way of material possessions.

Though Furphy's treatment of Socialism was far more thorough and scholarly, his acceptance of Christianity as the true source of Socialism, and his distrust and disdain for all organized forms of religion, were held in common with his contemporaries.

An anonymous poem sent to Paterson when he was compiling his Old

80. Ibid., p.98.
81. Ibid., p.158.
83. Furphy, Such is Life, op.cit., p.200.
84. Miles Franklin, op.cit., p.151.
Bush Songs, well expresses the common belief that true religion - found in no church - lay in the expression of the brotherhood of man.

Let Romanists all at Confessional kneel,
    Let the Jew with disgust turn from it,
Let the mighty Crown Prelate in Church pander zeal,
    Let the Mussulman worship Mohamet.

From all these I differ - truly wise is my plan,
    With my doctrine, perhaps, you'll agree,
To be upright and downright and act like a man,
    That's the religion for me.

I will go to no Church and to no house of Prayer
    To see a white shirt on a preacher.
And in no courthouse on a book will I swear
    To injure a poor fellow - creature.

For parsons and preachers are all a mere joke
    Their hands must be greased by a fee;
But with the poor toiler to share your last 'toke'
    That's the religion for me.

Let Psalm-singing Churchmen and Lutherans sing,
    They can't deceive God with their blarney;
They might just as well dance the Highland Fling, 
    Or sing the fair fame of Kate Kearney.

But let man unto man like brethren act,
    My doctrine this suits to a T.
The heart that can feel for the woes of another,
    Oh, that's the religion for me. 85

True religion resided in a moral attitude towards one's fellow man.
In this the Australian of the bush was not so very far distant from the prevalent view of the Victorian churches, in that religion resided not so much in revelation but in one's morality. Thus the teachings of the Church would have reinforced a faith in morality rather than weakened it. To be a Christian meant to live aright. In this both church and bush concurred. The only difference lay in the interpretation of what was that right way of life. For the bushman the answer lay in his hopes for mateship and unionism. What the church meant or means is still a matter of controversy.

Many Australian historians ignore or cannot substantiate a religious strain within Australian culture. Only religious historians have been concerned to speculate upon the religiousness of Australian history, yet these too recognise that religion has played a limited role. Through the consolidation of the Australian stereotype the Australian has been pictured as a Homo sapiens with no religious inclinations.

These generalizations have been little questioned. Statistics do show that though church attendance was a habit of the minority, this minority was by no means negligible in terms of numbers and influence. However, because the majority of Australians did not choose to attend Church, the concept of the tough, rough he-man, who had no need for Church and religion has continued to this day.

This concept of the irreligiousness of the Australian of the 1890s can be challenged on the grounds that the tendency among historians to equate religion with Christianity or even just church attendance is too limiting: religion can cover an entire spectrum of desires, concepts and experiences. Thus religion is concerned with finding a meaning and relevance within this world such as will give ultimate purpose. This

1. See chapter 1.
2. See chapter 1, p.6.
concern reveals itself in a study of the literature of the 1890s. Here there is no lack of religion but, in fact, a considerable preoccupation with this theme.

The writers themselves show a concern to find an ultimate purpose and meaning for life in the Australian bush. Though most of them reject organized Christianity as having little relevance to Australian life, they feel that religious concepts have intrinsic value in the harsh environment of the outback.

An essential feature of the religious outlook of the literature of the 1890s was a rejection of organized religion, both in terms of its values and its customs. The values of the Church were seen to be avaricious and money-oriented. The customs were held to be archaic and of little relevance to Australian life. The churches and their clergy were criticized for their hypocrisy, their sectarianism and their financial obsessions. The writers of the 1890s were reinterpreting the Christian message and giving it new meaning outside of the organized Church.

Many of the traditional and sometimes superstitious concepts of Christianity were retained. As a variety of environments had given birth to these concepts a contradiction of religious beliefs emerged. Some characters in this literature believed in God, some did not, some thought God was kind and compassionate, some thought him aloof and disinterested. Some thought all religion was superstition, some thought it brought meaning to life. The writers are united however, in presenting a faith unlike that held by the Christian Church. This is in spite of the fact that most of the writers of the 1890s had been brought up in one or another denomination of the Christian Church. In their adult years however, few attended church with any regularity or
conviction. Yet the majority of the writers believed they were true Christians. Each had his/her unique interpretation of the meaning and purpose of Christianity, yet all were united in believing that Christianity had ultimate relevance to life in Australia, that it required a social conscience and application. The key to their religion lay in socialism and mateship.

True religion, to the writers of the 1890s, was a matter of right action and not right belief. Religion was a matter of doing the right thing; of providing succour and food for a starving mate, of helping a neighbour fight a bushfire, of sharing a beer on a hot day, of comforting a mate's widow, of finding pasture for one's bullocks, and of sharing a windfall. It was a matter of being a true mate.

These values were crystallized in the coming of socialism and unionism to the outback. Unionism was everything that mateship meant to a man. As a result, unionism became the religion of much of the literature of the 1890s. However, mateship - socialism - unionism was not a consciously held substitute for religion but a subtle extension of the meaning of Christianity to the man in the bush. This was what the Christian gospel was all about; this was the message of Jesus in his sermon on the mount.

It is tempting, finally, to speculate upon the extent to which the general population shared the religious attitudes of the writers of the 1890s. There appears little doubt that, like the popular writers, a majority of the populace did not attend church. Church attendance figures do suggest admittedly that a significant proportion of the Australian people were actively committed to the Christian dogma; in

3. See chapter 1.
spite of the clergyman's harangues on the growing materialism of the day, traditional Christianity was very much alive and well.

What the majority of the population believed, however, whether they were religious though anti-Church, whether they believed in God or an after life, remains, at present, a matter of conjecture. But there is a distinct possibility that the new Christianity presented in the writings of the 1890s, approximated to the religion of the majority, since these writings enjoyed considerable popularity, suggesting a range of experiences, beliefs and ideas held in common by writer and reader.
Church Attendances as a Percentage of the total Population 1850 to 1894 and 1897, 1900, 1904

Note: In 1886 attendances were for the Principal Services only.

The Bibliography includes material listed in footnotes together with a limited range of sources immediately relevant to the issues treated in the thesis.

The sources have been divided as follows:

I. Primary Sources
   (a) Published
      (i) Literature of the 1890s
      (ii) Other literature by Bulletin School of Writers
      (iii) Background
   (b) Unpublished
   (c) Newspaper Collections

II. Secondary Sources
   (a) Published
      (i) The writers
      (ii) Australian background
      (iii) General background
   (b) Unpublished
   (c) Journal Articles

115.
I. (a) Published Primary Sources

(i) Literature of the 1890s


Boake, B., Where the Dead Men Lie and Other Poems, Sydney, 1897.


Cutlack, F.M., Breaker Morant, Sydney, 1962.

Dyson, E., Rhymes From the Mines and Other Lines, Sydney, 1896.


Franklin, M., Childhood at Brindabella, Sydney, 1963.

Franklin, M., My Brilliant Career, Sydney, 1966 ed.

Franklin, M., My Career Goes Bung, Melbourne, 1946.

Furphy, J., Rigby's Romance, Sydney, 1946 ed.

Furphy, J., Such is Life, Sirius ed. Sydney, 1962.


Furphy, J., (ed. by Kate Baker), The Poems of Joseph Furphy, Melbourne, 1916.


Goodge, W.T., Hits! Skits! and Jingles!, Sydney, 1899.


Holburn, M. and Pizer, M. (eds.), Creeve Roe, Sydney, 1947. This is a collection of the poems of Victor Daley, Creeve Roe being one of his pen names.

Kenna, F., Songs of a Season, Melbourne, 1895.


Paterson, A.B., 'My Various Schools' and 'More Reminiscences', *Sydneian*, 1890, May, pp.7-8, June, pp.3-5, and August, pp.6-7.


(ii) Other literature by Bulletin school of writers


(iii) Background


I. (b) Unpublished Primary Sources

Mitchell Library Manuscripts will be referred to as M.L. Ms.

Boake, B., Poem, M.L. Ms. no.C217.


Brady, E.J., Papers-Personalia, M.L. Ms. no. A3175.

Brady, E.J., Victor Daley Papers, M.L. Ms. no. A1696.

Daley, V.J., Autobiographical Notes, M.L. Ms. no. Ad43.

Daley, V.J., Correspondence, M.L. Ms. no. A1696.


Franklin, M., Miscellaneous Papers, M.L. Ms. no. 1128 item 6.

Franklin, M., Notebook, M.L. Ms. no. 1360.

Franklin, M., Letters, M.L. Ms. no. Af64.

Franklin, M., Literary Papers, M.L. Ms. nos. 364/52-79.

Furphy, J., Letter to Cecil Winter, M.L. Ms. no. Af 87/1.

Furphy, J., Letters of, M.L. Ms. no. A 1964.

Gilmore, M., Poems, M.L. Ms. no. A 1575.


Gilmore, Dame Mary, An Address, M.L. Ms. no. 1257.

Gilmore, M., Poems, M.L. Ms. no. 1929.

Gilmore, Dame Mary, Miscellaneous Papers, M.L. Ms. no. 2522.

Gilmore, Dame Mary, Letters and Related Papers, M.L. Ms. no. 1287.

Hamilton, W., Steele Rudd, His Life and Letters, M.L. Ms. no. A 2578.


Lawson, L., Papers, M.L. Ms. no. A 1630.


Ogilvie, Will, Scrapbook, M.L. Ms. no. A 1908.


Quinn, Rod., Poems and Short Stories, M.L. Ms. no. C406.

Roderick, C., Papers, M.L. Ms. no. 1221/29.

Spalding, Miscellaneous Papers, Part 4:12-24 being letters from Mary Gilmore, M.L. Ms. no. 669.


Stephens, A.G., Letters to and Stories by, M.L. Ms. no. A 1926.
I. (c) Primary Sources, Newspaper Collections

These collections are mainly, but not exclusively, composed from Bulletin cuttings.

Baynton, B., Newspaper Cuttings, M.L. Ms. no. Q A 821/ B 358.1/ 1A1.

Brady, E.J., Newspaper Cuttings, M.L. Ms. no. Q A 821/ B 821.4/ 1A1.


Daley, V.J., Newspaper Cuttings, M.L. Mss. no. Q A 821/D 141 and Q 049/14-5 (2 vols.).

Dyson, E., Newspaper Cuttings, M.L. Ms. Q A 821/D.

Evans, G.E., Newspaper Cuttings, M.L. Ms. no. QA 821/ E 92.1/ 2A1.

O'Dowd, B., Newspaper Cuttings, M.L. Ms. no. QA 821/026/1A1.

Ogilvie, W., Newspaper Cuttings, M.L. Ms. no. QA 821/0346A1-2.

Paterson, A.B., Newspaper Cuttings, M.L. Ms. no. QA 821/ P 296/2.

Quinn, R., Newspaper Cuttings, M.L. Ms. no. QA 821/Q.

Stephens, J.B., Newspaper Cuttings, M.L. Ms. no. QA 821/S.

II. (a) Published Secondary Sources

(i) The Writers


Barnard, M., Miles Franklin, Melbourne, 1967.

Barnes, J., Joseph Furphy, Melbourne, 1963.


Franklin, M., Joseph Furphy - The Legend of a Man and His Book, Sydney, 1944.

Hadgraft, C., James Brunton Stephens, St. Lucia, 1969.
Lawson, B., My Henry Lawson, Sydney, 1943.
Matthew, R., Miles Franklin, Melbourne, 1963.

(ii) Australian background

Bollen, J.D., Protestantism and Social Reform in New South Wales, 1890-1919, Melbourne, 1972.


Ewers, J.K., *Tell the People!*, Sydney, n.d.


Nadel, G., Australia's Colonial Culture, Ideas, Men and Institution in Mid Nineteenth Century Eastern Australia, Cambridge (Mass.), 1957.

Palmer, V., Legend of the Nineties, Melbourne, 1954.

Pearl, C., Wild Men of Sydney, Melbourne, 1965.


Rees, L., Toward an Australian Drama, Sydney, 1953.

Roderick, C., Suckled by a Wolf or the Nature of Australian Literature, Sydney, 1968.

Roe, M., Quest for Authority in Eastern Australia, 1835-1851, Melbourne, 1965.


(iii) General background


II. (b) Unpublished Secondary Sources

Barr, J., Biography of Henry Lawson, M.L. Ms. no. A 6999.

Bayley, W.A., Notes re Mary Gilmore, M.L. Ms. no. 1254.


Joseph Furphy, Appreciations of, M.L. Ms. no. A 1968.


Kennedy, V., Bernard O'Dowd Biography, M.L. Ms. no. 601.


O'Sullivan, E., Short Biographical Notes - Miles Franklin, M.L. Ms. no. 936.


II. (c) Journal Articles


Brady, E.J., 'Biographical Sketch', Cerise and Blue, 1907.


Daley, V.J., 'A Few Biographical Notes', Tatler, July 30, August 20, 1898.


Taylor, 'Dame Mary Gilmore', *New Australian*, 1889-1926.

