Secularisation

Secularisation:
New Historical Perspectives

Edited by

Christopher Hartney

CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING

Secularisation: New Historical Perspectives,
Edited by Christopher Hartney

This book first published 2014

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-5662-2, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-5662-1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter One 1
Secularisation: New Historical Perspectives
Christopher Hartney

Chapter Two 8
Secularism Versus Christianity in Australian History
Hilary M. Carey

Chapter Three 34
Religious-Secular Politics of Jesuit Frontier Missions as Colonies in Ibero-America
Roberto J. González-Casanovas

Chapter Four 58
"Decently and in Good Order": The Salvation Army in Nineteenth-Century South Australia as an Example of the Interface between Religion and Secular Society
Jennifer Hein

Chapter Five 68
Where are all the Men?: An Attempt by the Anglican Church in Australia to Counter Secularisation at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century
Howard Le Couteur

Chapter Six 90
Joseph Fletcher: The Secular Priest?
Doris LeRoy

Chapter Seven 107
Rejecting the Secular: Religious Instruction in Queensland Public Schools
Cathy Byrne

Chapter Eight 134
"To Thrash the Offending Adam out of Them": The Theology of Violence in the Writings of Great War Anzacs
Daniel Reynaud and Jane Fernandez

Chapter Nine 151
Secular Republic or Christian Nation?: The Battlefields of the American Culture War
Barry A. Kosmin

Chapter Ten 173
Secularism, Myth, and History
Ian Tregenza

Chapter Eleven 190
History, Sociology, and Secularisation
Steve Bruce

Chapter Twelve 214
States of Ultimacy and the Cult of the Dead Soldier: The Anzac Tradition, the Secularisation Paradigm, the Charisma of Materiality, and Civil Religion as it in Embodied in the Australian War Memorial, Canberra
Christopher Hartney

Chapter Thirteen 251
The Secular Sacred Gallery: Religion at Te Papa Tongarewa
Zoe Alderton

CHAPTER ONE

SECULARISATION: NEW HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

CHRISTOPHER HARTNEY

The Religious History Association (RHA) has been dedicated to ensuring the best scholarship on the history of religion for over fifty years. In association with the Australian Historical Association (AHA) a number of joint conferences have been held over the years. In 2012 an AHA conference was held at the University of Adelaide, July 9-13, with the theme 'Connections'. The RHA ran its embedded conference on the theme of 'Secularism'. It is out of this sub-conference that many of these chapters were developed and commissioned for the present collected volume of scholarship. To flesh out the scope of this collection, some additional international scholarship was also included.

Recently the issue of 'secularisation' has significantly increased in importance as a key term in the study, historical or otherwise, of religion. The French Revolution and the appearance of the Constitution of the United States of America at roughly the same time towards the end of the eighteenth century marked two substantial symbolic and legal moves in Western civilisation towards the disestablishment of Church and State. Historically, however, the process of moving towards a world that could be called secular was not a sudden and easy set of steps, then or now. The French Revolution led to empire—bourgeois in tenor though it may have been—monarchic restoration, and more empire. It was only in the traumatic aftermath of defeat in the Franco-Prussian war in 1871 that the Third Republic was given the space and time to develop a working model of the kind of Republic that would place religious influence well outside the domain of public discourse. As the Third Republic slowly mutated through World Wars into the Fourth and presently the Fifth Republic, religion eventually came to be understood as something that was relegated to the private sphere. The eternal, we might say, became housebound,

whilst the public space belonged entirely to its age (or '*saeculum*' as the Etruscans would put it).

Unlike in France, in the United States, the constitution of the new republic seemed to do everything but guarantee freedom *from* religion, religion it seems was mandatory. Rather, the new constitution helped ensure that a multiplicity of religions would flourish. Amongst the religious plurality of this emerging state, religious allegiance in some form seemed to develop as a mandatory part of public life. What was feared was that one particular religious system would dominate the New World. It was an anxiety that still seemed to be playing itself out when in 1960 the first Catholic American took over the White House. Moreover, one wonders if even today a publicly-declared atheist would ever have a real chance at the highest office of the land. Amongst all the predominantly Anglophone countries, the population of the United States remains unique in its potent adherence to some form of religious allegiance. The debate continues as to whether the new millennium is having a deep effect on that potency.

Australia and New Zealand were two nations that were founded in light of these moves towards the relegation of the religious life away from the official space of the state. In the young colony of New South Wales, Governor Burke's Church Act of 1836 was one of a number of Antipodean legal instruments that, by insuring religious diversity and state funding to various congregations, ensured that the establishment of the Church of England as an official Australian church was nipped in the bud. Nevertheless, the ongoing relationship of the churches and the states in our part of the Southern Hemisphere provides the backbone of this volume, and so it should. I believe that the use of 'secularism' in Australia and New Zealand, coming as it did after the axial year of 1789, presents an insight into a very particular example of how the official and social relation to religion can be managed.

Hilary Carey begins this volume by presenting an overview of moves towards secularism from a deeply historical perspective. Commencing with the popular debates between Churchmen and Secularists in Adelaide in 1886, she builds currents and thematics in the antipodes into a wider conception of how we should approach and challenge our understanding of the 'secular' at a worldwide level today. To do this, she examines—but not for the last time in this volume—the important overview that Charles Taylor has brought to this discussion in his *A Secular Age* (2007). Carey is critical of some of Taylor's conclusions, but overall uses Taylor's approach to better define this present volume: one that presents an

Australian scholarly take on secularisation through New World developments upon an Old World theme.

Carey notes the 'northern moment', which Taylor ascribes to Secularism – a phenomenon that he relegates to the North Atlantic world. And she critiques this attitude in her chapter. It is, however, not only antipodean scholarship but also the 'southern moment' that this volume seeks to enunciate in the following papers. This idea of the 'southern' condition is investigated in great detail through Roberto Gonzalez-Casanovas' examination of Jesuit frontier missions in Ibero-America, which to get at the complexity of these movements he calls "religious-and-secular." His scholarship, at first glance, reminds us of the deep affinities that exist in the way southern New Worlds established, related to, developed, and denied old northern worldviews and modes of thinking. Gonzalez-Casanovas wants us to understand the delicate balance in the Brazilian and Paraguayan reductions between a privileged Eurocentrism that could never be fully denied, and the development of 'states within states' infused with a utopian hue that seemed to promise something powerful and new. His scholarship reminds us of the possibilities and peculiarities in the relationship between history and the colonial experience in the south.

Providing a wider historical context to the secular-religious debates with which Carey begins this volume, Jennifer Hein returns us to South Australia at the end of the nineteenth century to examine how the missionary fervour of the Salvation Army disrupted the growing expectations that religion would not overtly intrude on the public space. What comes through in her study "Decently and in Good Order" is that after their arrival in Adelaide in 1880, the Salvation Army not only sought to insert religion into the public sphere but also did so in a way that raised significant issues relating to taste and grace in the way religion should be practiced. The subtext of Hein's paper is a reading of the social aesthetics and the particular balance of the public sphere between a diversity of religious traditions. It was a balance that in its own particular way seemed to ensure that no Christian tradition would predominate. Yet at the same time it ensured that a patina of religiosity be maintained in the way religions claimed a non-demonstrative respectability, and signalled their presence discretely but powerfully in that manner in which the Sabbath was held – in quietude. By studying the new religious fervour of the Army, Hein makes a fascinating study of the limits and sensibilities of the emerging 'secular' public space.

Howard Le Couteur, in his detailed study of how the Church of England reacted to the decrease in numbers of men attending services at

the start of the twentieth century, provides us with another insightful prism through which to examine the decreasing role of religion in the life the West. In "Where are All the Men?" Le Couteur exactingly traces the sort of weekend attractions that seemed to be leading men in particular, away from the church. A British reaction to this trend—the "Church of England Men's Society"—was seen as a broad empire-wide solution to the crisis, and Le Couteur traces how elements of the solution were carried out in Australia. One feels, reading Le Couteur's scholarship, that the framing of the problem and any possible solution was already far removed from the control of the church. As nationalism and the modernist paradigm developed through the twentieth century in the West, we might agree that the conundrum of religion in the life of an industrialised workforce had already been set by other, and more influential, forces.

As these twentieth century trends increased, significant figures in the matrix of thought, worship, and action bring to the fore key themes in ongoing changes regarding the place of religion. This is very much the case with American-born Joseph Fletcher (1905-1991). Doris LeRoy, in her chapter, insightfully examines the key aspects of his career. She illustrates how her subject, fired by social justice and a concern for peace, came to inhabit ever more deeply a liminal position both politically and religiously. At first an Episcopalian minister, and associated with the World Peace Council, he was accused on a 1950 trip to Melbourne of being too sympathetic with the red menace of Communism. LeRoy takes this moment to begin her detailed examination of his life and his contribution to peace – a life that led him further away from the church. Along this journey, Fletcher invented situational ethics, and in so doing embodied a sense of the ethically secular in the radical, but also the pragmatic development of this process.

The move by the state away from all religious engagement was never a simple, predictable, or assured journey. As the 1925 Scopes Trial in Tennessee proved, some of the southern states of America, for numerous reasons, were slow to move towards a model of pure disengagement by the state when it came to religious matters – especially when education was involved. A similar thing happened in Australia in the State of Queensland, as Cathy Byrne demonstrates, with the 1910 *Education Amendment Act*. This was a law of the Queensland Parliament that allowed religious education during class time and facilitated Bible classes via state-paid teachers in religious education. Byrne demonstrates how this attitude, distinct from the other Australian states, came about and how it was perpetuated up to the present day. The result of the legislation means that although Christianity continues to lose numbers, and faiths such as

Hinduism and Buddhism continue to rise, schools in Queensland continue to privilege the teaching of Christianity in what may be either a holy or unholy alliance between church and state depending on one's view. Byrne does much to hint at how many of the themes raised in Queensland over the last century still have their part to play in the ongoing negotiation between church and state even in a zone that is believed to be secular, such as that of Australia.

With the chapter by Daniel Reynaud and Jane Fernandez we come face to face with the ANZAC myth, which has conditioned the way civil religion has played itself out in Australia and New Zealand since 1915. In "To Thrash the Offending Adam Out of Them," Reynaud and Fernandez deploy a Girardian methodology in their comprehension of the religiously justified violence that pours through the letters of Australian volunteers fighting for empire in World War I. Although the authors choose to apply an anthropological methodology, there is still something very historical in the way they have very carefully explored the letters collected in archives from the war. They show that the Girardian framework on violence enables Australian soldiers to shift the blame for the war onto the heads of those they were attacking – principally the Germans. What their careful research also demonstrates is the malleability of Christianity for a state religious purpose when an issue a great as war arises.

Many of these 'southern' issues then serve as a background for a return to wider considerations of 'the secularisation paradigm' in the West via the chapter by Barry Kosmin, which is written predominantly from an American perspective. In "Secular Republic or Christian Nation?" he provides a fascinating overview of the controversies present concerning assessments of the motivations of the founding fathers of the United States. This is the focus of a broader historical debate on whether the new republic was devised as a Christian nation or as a space for a wide scope of religious tolerance. Whilst this debate rages on the assumption that America remains deeply religious, Kosmin then places these debates into a new factual context. He reveals new trends in irreligiousity demonstrated in his survey work through the Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture at Trinity College Hartford. What this information gathering demonstrates is that American non-religiousness continues to increase. In 2012, Kosmin notes that up to 18% of the population have stepped away from religion. This still leaves a significant part of America identifying itself as religious and principally Christian, but the trend away from faith identification is clearly growing.

Kosmin suggests we look to other social indicators as well to get an idea of the growing trends away from religion. He notes that non-religious

attitudes to a whole range of public issues are prevailing from abortion, to restrictive laws on activities on Sunday, to homosexuality, and euthanasia. The author suggests aspects of religico-political development on the right of the political spectrum and the rise of mega-churches have clouded commentators' views on the increasing secularity of the American Republic.

It is with the argument of Ian Tregenza's article "Secularism, Myth, History" that we change gear somewhat. In the second half of this book, I have placed those articles that begin to explore the secularisation paradigm as a cultural creation in its own right. In fact, Tregenza believes that a sound understanding of the secularisation paradigm cannot be explored without further consideration of the terms 'secular' and 'religious'. As one does so, he avers, secularisation as a concept begins to take on a mythic status in its own right. To explain this further, Tregenza has recourse to a range of commentaries including, once again Charles Taylor's *A Secular Age*. From out of his insightful study, he demonstrates that "the secular is one of a cluster of terms that has been central in shaping the master narrative of Western Modernity." It is then, on this point, that we need to consider the implications of what we have made of 'secularisation', and the way it has been used as a means of understanding ourselves.

Kosmin concludes by quoting the work done by Steve Bruce in examining motivations for why citizens of the West continue to move away from religious allegiance, so it is fitting that Steve Bruce was encouraged to include some of his research in this volume. In "History, Sociology, and Secularisation," Bruce takes on the different methods of approach between sociology and history. Bruce worries that a minute historical approach may do much to encourage the historical project, but does, in the examples that he provides, seek to lessen the sociologists' approach to secularisation by challenging their manner of generalisation. In the end, Bruce maintains that the secularisation paradigm as explained by sociologists is not an erroneous take on the matter.

The reader will note in my chapter, that I challenge even this. Returning to the ANZAC paradigm and descriptors of civil religion in the West, I make the suggestion that as long as we hold to a tight, culturally conditioned, and, I would suggest, unjustifiably narrow definition of what constitutes religion the secularisation paradigm itself will continue to cloud our understanding of where religious sentiment has moved since 1789. In this chapter, I utilise research on the idea of the nation, sociologically and philosophically, to demonstrate how both history, and to an extent sociological explanations through the secularism paradigm

seriously underestimate the scope of human belief as it manifests in the West.

This is an issue that Zoe Alderton amplifies in the final chapter, which examines the religious confusions that arise when the state continually steps into the field of religion and belief as a supposed 'secular' institution. She shows how in placing secular institutions like museums in the service of the nation, the museum itself must take on a significant curatorial role over artefacts of significant religious import. That is, in the two final papers, the site of the museum becomes a point of national narrative that subsumes history and religion, rather than merely explicating them. It is a function of the most recent aspects of modernity that, I hope, leaves readers of this volume with the feeling that the most recent trends in personal belief, rather than institutional attendance, make the secularisation paradigm one that requires deep investigation.

To conclude, I return to the origins of this volume. At the Adelaide conference, religious historians piggybacked on the wider historical conference in a telling way. One might claim, as the founders of the Religion History Association did, that modernity excludes a decent coverage of religious history within the mainstream historical approach. Thus attempts to rectify this situation (such as the RHA) must be maintained in order to correct an increasingly blatant bias. Could it be, as Bruce explains, that some historians feel that that the secularisation paradigm is itself a device that discourages historians from studying religion? Or is it, as Bruce avers himself, that churches have simply become increasingly irrelevant. Or is it, as Alderton and I suggest that the religious impetus has moved elsewhere? Whatever your final feelings, I hope this volume has increased the scope of your thinking and encourages you to continue the consideration of the secularisation paradigm and the ever-new perspectives we might take upon it.

Acknowledgements

I would specifically like to thank the hard work and sagacity of Ms Sarah Balstrup and Dr Zoe Alderton in aiding with the completion of this edition.

CHAPTER TWO

SECULARISM VERSUS CHRISTIANITY IN AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

HILARY M. CAREY

In November 1886, in the Academy of Music, Adelaide, South Australia, the Freethought Lecturer Isaac Selby, and the Reverend M. Wood Green, Christian Minister, fought a vigorous mental duel on the theme 'Secularism versus Christianity'.[1] For over a week, the speakers debated: 'Is Secularism superior to Christianity as an Ameliorator of Mankind?', 'Is Christianity of Divine Origin?', and 'Is there a God, and is the portraiture given of Him in the Bible a rational one?' The event had a high profile and the Mayor of Adelaide presided for the last five nights, sometimes, it was reported, having his work cut out to keep order.[2] While there was no winner, it was a notable occasion for the Adelaide Secularists given that Jill Roe estimates that their monthly meetings usually gathered no more

[1] Isaac Selby and M. Wood Green, *Secularism Versus Christianity Being a Full Report of Eight Nights' Debate in the Academy of Music, Adelaide, South Australia, in the Month of November 1886* (Adelaide: Carey, Page & Co., 1886). For similar British debates, see Brewin Grant and George Jacob Holyoake, *Christianity and Secularism. Report of a Public Discussion* (London: Ward, 1853) on the question: "What advantages would accrue to mankind generally, and the working classes in particular, by the removal of Christianity, and the substation of secularism in its place?" See also: David King and Charles Bradlaugh, *Christianity V. Secularism. A Report of a Public Discussion, Between David King of Birmingham Evangelist And Charles Bradlaugh, of London, President of the National Secular Society* (Birmingham: D. King, 1857). The subjects in the later case were: "1. What is Christianity? 2. What are its legitimate effects? 3. What is secularism, and what can it do for man that Christianity cannot?"

[2] "Our Australian Letter," *Otago Daily Times*, December 6, 1886, 4. Both Selby and Green were originally from Dunedin, New Zealand.

than 30 souls in 1877.[3] The encounter between Selby and Green was one of many similar events, which pitted Christian orators and secularists in the ring for programmed bouts across the British world. While often excellent entertainment, it is less clear whether these encounters tell us very much about the broader forces of social secularisation and disengagement from formal and informal religious belief and practice, which some have seen as beginning to get underway at this time. While there was debate and questioning in the wake of the discoveries of Darwin and Lyell and the New Criticism of the Bible, few would seriously doubt, in the words of Owen Chadwick, that in an "age of unsettlement" the Victorians at home and abroad in the colonies were both a religious and a questioning people.[4]

Today, more than 125 years after Selby and Green's debate, the balance of power between religious and secular worldviews has been transformed in the West. The signs are evident everywhere in terms of church attendance, belief in God, and the political and social influence of religious leaders, but perhaps the smaller indicators are the most telling of the profundity of the change. In July 2013, for example, it was reported that the Australian Girl Guides had decided to remove references to both God and the Queen from their oath of allegiance and, in order to encourage membership from girls of all faiths, to change their pledge to support for "the community" instead.[5] In his recent review of the historical process of secularisation in Australia, David Hilliard considers that religion has become something largely experienced as a personal lifestyle choice with profound changes in belief, culture, and practice impacting on all the major historical denominational traditions.[6]

Despite this seismic shift in the Australian religious landscape, recent decades have seen an explosive return of the old battle between secularists and religious proponents on a global scale with a widespread acknowledgement that the secularist grand narrative of the inevitable decline of religion as a product of modernity can no longer be assumed to

[3] Jill Roe, *Beyond Belief: Theosophy in Australia, 1879-1939* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 1986), 35. The South Australians also produced a *Review*, which survived for a year, from March 1878 to April 1879.
[4] Owen Chadwick, *The Victorian Church*, vol. 2 (London: A&C Black, 1970), 149.
[5] "God Vow Dropped from Girlguiding UK Promise," BBC Online, accessed June 19, 2013, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-22959997
[6] D. L. Hilliard, "Australia: Towards Secularization and One Step Back," in *Secularisation in the Christian World*, eds Callum G. Brown and Michael Snape (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2010), 75-91.

be universally valid.[7] While static in some parts of Europe and the United States, Christianity, far from fading away, appears to be achieving new visibility in regions such as the former Soviet Union and newly capitalist People's Republic of China. Other world religions are experiencing similar revivals. Secularist regimes in the Middle East have been brought down in Islamist popular uprisings, radical Hinduism and Judaism are on the rise in nominally secularist India and Israel, and there is an alarming resurgence of a phenomenon which most western democracies had thought was gone for ever, namely religious terrorism. Secularism itself, no longer defined in rhetorical opposition to confessional Christianity, has emerged as a field in its own right with its own journals, websites, and conferences, covering a wide spectrum of non-religious belief and ethical systems. The lively Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network, founded in 2008, aims to cover: "the atheistic, agnostic, religiously indifferent or areligious, as well as most forms of secularism, humanism and, indeed, aspects of religion itself. It also addresses theoretical and empirical relationships between nonreligion, religion and secularity."[8] At the same time, the old sport of intellectual ping pong between secularists and religionists continues to attract a popular audience for writers such as Richard Dawkins in the United Kingdom and Philip Adams in Australia.[9] The gods, to paraphrase the title of Christopher Hitchen's witty anti-religious bestseller, may not be great – but neither, it would seem, are they entirely dead.[10]

Discussion of the secularisation thesis retained its intellectual currency through the work of sociologists and some social historians writing in the tradition of Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Émile Durkheim. In the mid 1960s, sociologists such as Bryan Wilson argued that the statistical decline in denominational religious adherence was an indication of declining religiosity for society as a whole, and that this process was unlikely to be

---

[7] For summary of the debate and a defence of principles of secularism and the principles of social harmony and cultural cohesion, see Paul Cliteur, *The Secular Outlook. In Defense of Moral and Political Secularism* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010).

[8] "About Us," NSRN Online: Nonreligion and Secularity Research Network, accessed July 1, 2012, http://nsrn.net/about/ The Institute for the Study of Secularism in Society and Culture (ISSSC), Trinity College, Connecticut, has recently launched a new academic journal for the field titled *Secularism and Nonreligion*.

[9] Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (London: Black Swan, 2006). For a representative collection of views by contemporary Australian secularists, see Warren Bonett, ed. *The Australian Book of Atheism* (Melbourne: Scribe, 2010).

[10] Christopher Hitchens, *God is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (London: Atlantic Books, 2007).

reversed.[11] Historians were more sceptical—with a notable intervention by the late Alan Gilbert—pointing to the complexity of the entanglement between society and religious formations over the *longue durée*, and the way the relationship had waxed and waned in different historical periods.[12] There was also general agreement that the decline of public performance of religion, encompassing census data on denominational adherence, church attendance, membership of religiously-based political parties, or rituals performed on state occasions such as prayers before Parliament, was an imperfect measure of personal religiosity and the potential for religious revival.

The more recent explosion of scholarly interest in the secularisation thesis owes much to Charles Taylor's seminal study, *A Secular Age* (2007), originally presented as the 1999 Gifford Lectures in Edinburgh. Taylor's influence stems from his capacity to ask the right probing questions, of which one of the more sentient was: "why was it virtually impossible not to believe in God in, say, 1500 in our Western society, while in 2000 many of us find this not only easy, but even inescapable?"[13] His answer to these kinds of questions was that religious belief was incorporated into the worldview of people of an earlier age in three important ways: firstly, God was part of the natural world and religious forces were assumed to be responsible agents for creation and natural events. Secondly, God formed an integral part of political society from elite to local level, from kingdom to parish, so that, in Taylor's words: "One could not but encounter God everywhere." Thirdly, people in the West lived in an "enchanted world" by which Taylor meant to invoke the antonym of the "disenchantment" (German: *Entzauberung*) proposed by Max Weber (1864-1920).[14] More than one eminent thinker has nominated *A Secular Age* as *the* most important work to appear in their lifetimes. For example, in a recent piece for a popular online journal, the Chicago

[11] Bryan Wilson, *Religion in a Secular Society* (London: Watts, 1966).

[12] For the UK, see Alan Gilbert, *The Making of Post-Christian Britain: A History of the Secularization of Modern Society* (London: Longman, 1980); Sheridan Gilley and W. J. Sheils, *A History of Religion in Britain: Practice and Belief from Pre-Roman Times to the Present* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); Hugh McLeod, *Secularization in Western Europe, 1848-1914* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000).

[13] Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 2007), 25.

[14] Weber discusses the process of disenchantment in various places, but most famously in 1918 at a lecture at the University of Munich on the theme 'Science as a Vocation' in which he argued that the growth of science led inevitably to the decay in religious explanations of reality. "[E]mpirical knowledge has consistently worked through to the disenchantment of the world and its transformation into a causal mechanism."

historian of religion Martin Marty nominated five books to exemplify the theme of Religion and Secularism in History of which Taylor's *A Secular Age* was the first.[15] Taylor, for Marty, encourages us to question the secularist rhetorical claims for modernity and its relationship to the Enlightenment.

Taylor has, in his turn, sparked considerable discussion of secularism by philosophers, sociologists, theologians and other intellectuals, though historians have been slower to follow his lead. A major conference was held in April 2008 at Yale University devoted to the complex themes and issues raised by Taylor's work.[16] In the present collection, Ian Tregenza has chosen to take Taylor as his starting point for a critique of contemporary philosophical debates about secularism, notably the suggestion that Taylor privileged Western models of secularisation and failed to recognise the extent to which the debate about secularism has now extended to become a global conversation. In the edited papers from a Religious History Association workshop on Church and State, John Gascoigne and I also raised questions about the Taylor thesis as it related to the transplanted Christianities of settler and colonial societies of the Southern world.[17] In Taylor's introduction titled "What does it mean to say that we live in a secular age?" he refers only to "'we' who live in the West.... or otherwise put, the North Atlantic world," suggesting that secularity is a condition constrained in time and space to a Northern moment, against which the non-secularities of contemporary Islamic, Indian, or African societies, and the pre-modern history of Europe itself, appear as anomalies against a Western norm. In addition, patterns of post-colonial emigration have led in some cases to a return of old-style

[15] Martin Marty, "An Interview with Martin Marty on Religion versus Secularism in History," FiveBooks.com, accessed June 21, 2012, fivebooks.com/interviews/martin-marty-on-religion-versus-secularism-history
Marty's other choices for review were R. A. Markus, S*aeculum: A History of Society in the Theology of St Augustine*; Ronald Gregor Smith, *World Comes of Age: A Symposium on Dietrich Bonhoeffer*; Eugen Resenstock Huessy, *Out of Revolution*; Richard Fenn, *The Dream of the Perfect Act.*

[16] Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, Craig Calhoun, eds. *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2010). Contributors include Robert N. Bellah, John Milbank, Wendy Brown, Simon During, William E. Connolly, Akeel Bilgrami, Colin Jager, Jon Butler, Jonathan Sheehan, Nilüfer Göle, José Casanova, and Saba Mahmood with an afterword by Taylor himself.

[17] John Gascoigne and Hilary M. Carey, "Introduction: The Rise and Fall of Christendom," in *Church and State in Old and New Worlds*, eds Hilary M. Carey and John Gascoigne (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 1-30.

European denominationalism through the impact of African, West Indian, and Pacific Islander emigrants and clergy who have been successful in reviving observant and morally conservative Christian communities in the West. [18] A rather different debate has emerged in the context of experiments in national secularism by states as different as France, India, Turkey, and the United States.[19]

The development of an Australian perspective on this vital international debate is long overdue.[20] There are now many studies of the relationship between church and state in Europe and in the colonised states of the East and the global South, as well as the vast religious workshop of the United States. However an important gap remains in relation to the "new Britains" of the second British Empire including the settler states of Australia, New Zealand, and Southern Africa. The discussion that follows seeks to consider how major terms in the secularisation debate emerged historically and how they relate to the particular circumstances of secularism in settler societies. It will be argued that it is important to consider the long pre-history of the battle between church and state in order to understand the strength and resilience of the issues, even in colonial societies such as Australia, which were never burdened with an established, confessional church. Secondly, it considers the clash between secularism and Christianity in settler Australia, providing an intellectual genealogy to the Adelaide debate considered in the opening to this essay. Finally, it makes some reflections on secularism in post-colonial Australia with thoughts for directions in new research.

Secularism and Secularisation in the Old World

Theories of secularism tend to distinguish 'secularism' from 'secularization', that is, the move to transfer control of property and institutions from

[18] José Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

[19] Linell E. Cady and Elizabeth Shakman Hurd, eds, *Comparative Secularisms in a Global Age* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010). This volume was the result of a multi-year comparative investigation of secularism by an international team. It suggests the limitations of analysis of secularism restricted to western models.

[20] Although, some studies have been undertaken, see for example Hilliard, "Australia: Towards Secularization and One Step Back"; Carole Cusack and Christopher Hartney eds, "Virtual Issue: Secularism," *Journal of Religious History*, 36:1 (2012), accessed April 28, 2012, http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/%28ISSN%291467-9809/homepage/secularism__virtual_issue.htm

church control to that of the state, though the two processes have necessary connections.[21] In its legal and political form, secularisation has been responsible for some of the most violent and culturally destructive acts in human history and has occurred wherever and whenever the donation of property to religious institutions has allowed for the accumulation of material wealth over time. Historically, it is important to think in terms of cycles of secularisation during which the relationship between church and society rose or fell in intensity rather than a single march toward modernity and ever-increasing secularity as its inevitable accompaniment.

As defined in the previous paragraph, secularisation has a longer history than secularism. German historians consider that the Frankish strongman Charles Martel (c.688-741) and his ancestors carried out the earliest secularisation program in the seventh century on their path to the establishment of the Carolingian dynasty.[22] Other landmark events in the history of secularisation include the suppression of the Knights Templar (1312) by Philip the Fair of France, the Albigensian Crusade against the Cathar heretics of southern France, the property seizures associated with the Papal Inquisition in Europe and the Spanish empire, and the seizures and transfers which followed the Protestant Reformation. Henry VIII of England (1509-47) preserved some church property for church purposes, although Henry's monastic confiscations, and those of his son Edward VI, ensured that vast territorial holdings, which had been held by the church, fell into secular hands. Even more violent seizures were associated with the Thirty Years War (1614-48) and the uneasy peace secured as a result of the Peace of Augsburg under the brutal pragmatism of *cuius regio, eius religio* ("Whose realm, his religion").

While confiscation of church property was usually accompanied by transfer of religious adherence to new institutions approved by the state, this was by no means always the case. Secularisation has led in many cases to irreparable loss of community resources for worship, education, health, and social welfare. Nor should it be assumed that secularisation or state transfer of church property invariably attracted popular support. Some secularisation movements have been accompanied by popular agitation, but many have been actively resisted. Popular revulsion at the Tudor suppression of the monasteries was reflected in the Pilgrimage of Grace in York in 1536, brutally suppressed by the Henrician regime. The

[21] For terminology in English, French and German, see Hartmut Lehmann in "Secularization," *Religion Past and Present: Encyclopedia of Theology and Religion*, vol. 11, ed. Hans Dieter Betz et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 568-570.
[22] Hans J. Humer, *Politics and Power in Early Medieval France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 77.

continuing adherence of Irish Catholics in the face of the forced transfer of property to the Protestant state church, and the resilience of popular Protestantism in Catholic Bohemia, or of Welsh Nonconformity prior to the disestablishment of the Church of England in Wales in 1914 are just a few better-known examples.[23]

The wars of religion of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries led to a profound distrust of religious solutions to political problems and a commitment to Reason, rather than God, as the true font of human wisdom. Enforced secularisation with expropriation of property was associated with state formation throughout the eighteenth century with the Jesuits targeted first in the Portuguese Empire (1759), then France (1764), Austria and the two Sicilies (1767), and the Spanish Empire (1769-1771), with the order completely dissolved from 1773 until it was restored by Pope Pius VII in 1814. Paradoxically, the Jesuits had been closely associated with the promotion of enlightened humanism through their secondary schools and seminaries across Europe and the New World, which provided an alternative to state Protestantism and Catholicism which was generally a vehicle for royal and aristocratic privilege. The Jesuits were also forced from their South American reductions, with significant negative consequences for their Indigenous missions. Jesuit colonising efforts were regarded with particular opprobrium by enlightened critics such as the Jesuit-educated Voltaire (1794-1778) whose novel *Candide* delightedly imagines a revolt by the Paraguayan natives who decide to turn on their educators by preparing them for the cooking pot. "A Jesuit, a Jesuit!" they shouted, "We shall be revenged, and shall have a good meal."[24] More recent scholarly investigations have been less hostile. In his chapter for this collection, Roberto Gonzalez-Casanovas considers the Jesuit Reductions in Brazil and Paraguay arguing that these Catholic missions were the work of the first global missionary power. This work was less about the extension of the church—which at this stage was still fused to the state everywhere in Europe—than of something recognisably part of the Enlightenment, rationalising ideal. Indeed, Gonzalez-Casanovas suggests that the Jesuits were the first "modernising" religious order whose missions enabled the Jesuit humanist project to be

[23] The phrase is attributed to Joachim Stephani (1544-1623). While achieving an end to the war, it did not lead in all cases to the unity of prince and people under a single religion. For the case of Ireland and Bohemia, see Tadhg Ó Hannracháin, "The Consolidation of Irish Catholicism within a Hostile Imperial Framework: A Comparative Study of Early Modern Ireland and Hungary," in *Empires of Religion*, ed. Hilary M. Carey (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 25-42.

[24] Voltaire, *Candide* (London: Penguin Classic, 1997), 39 ff.

enacted on a global stage and escape the constraints of the European confessional state. In addition to church planting from the home churches of the United Kingdom, Australia benefitted directly from the political difficulties of the Jesuits in the age of revolutions which, beginning in 1848, encouraged Austro-Hungarian Jesuits to send chaplains to support a mission to settlers in South Australia.[25]

The material allure of church property continued as the symbolic and real target of revolutionaries and reformers across Europe in the Age of Revolutions with the French Revolution (1789) only the first salvo in a wave of formal and informal dissolutions, which included the secularisation program of the Hapsburg Emperor Joseph II in the late eighteenth century, the loss of the Italian Papal States in 1870, and the *Kulturkampf* of 1871 to 1878 mainly directed against the power of the Catholic Church. Not till the Weimar Republic (1919-33) were the German churches able to recover some of their former dignity in relation to the state.[26]

In Europe, state-led attacks on church establishments were accompanied by the emergence of a secularist intellectual critique of religion with anti-clericalism attached to emerging philosophies of the state and society including socialism, communism, and the cooperative movement. In opposing the Old Religion with the Old Regimes, the new non-institutional religions of deism, unitarianism, and secularism sought the high intellectual moral ground, provoking in turn a Romantic backlash, and the turn to the emotions of evangelicalism, pietism, and the Catholic revival. While advocates of secularism have tended to argue that religion is responsible for the violence associated with these historical episodes and for resistance to liberal and democratic reforms, the evidence for this is mixed. Regardless of the opposition or denominational hue of the established church, the end result of industrial development in the West was the creation of societies characterised by greater human freedom and participatory democracy. It has also been argued that religion, or at least some Protestant forms of it, were responsible for the work ethic and time-based diligence which was an essential precondition for industrial modes of labour. E.P. Thompson suggested that the more important religious movement of the nineteenth century, Methodism, was a religion *for* rather

[25] Austin Kelly, "Jesuit Pioneers: A Page of Australian Mission History, 1848-1901," Catholic Truth Society, accessed March 17, 2013, http://www.pamphlets.org.au/docs/cts/australia/html/acts1063.html.

[26] This short narrative draws on Rudolfine Freiine von Oer, "Secularization," in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, vol. 4. trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 901-903.

than *of* the poor, which inculcated habits of industry and frugality, and provided a functioning ideology for the emerging proletariat.[27]

Overall, the polarisation of the secularisation debate into an artificial conflict between those in favour of Christianity and those against has been an impediment to understanding the complex ways in which varieties of church and state were entangled with each other. In some cases, the creation of a 'modern' secular state has led to greater cultural integration, but not always, and the price of stability has all too often been the crushing of religious and ethnic minorities. The record of the institutional churches in opposing democratic movements is also mixed. In Europe, certainly, the major state-supported churches including Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and mainline Protestant churches were hostile or doubtful about democracy.[28] But in Britain, Nonconformist Protestants were stout defenders of the expansion of rights and, in both the UK and Australia, Established and Dissenting Protestant churches developed representative institutions well in advance of the secular legislature.

In the older European literature, secularism—meaning the strict separation of church and state and the transfer of power and influence from religious to secular authorities—has generally been distinguished from secularisation, and from this point I intend to do the same. Nevertheless, the shadow of the violent pre-modern history of secularisation continues to hover in the interstices of colonial discussion about the role of the church in the modern state. The historical memory of forced appropriation of property by the state and the advancement of an established church at the expense of disenfranchised dissenters from a large cross-section of colonial society fuelled hostility to religious claimants in the new world and enhanced the political claim for the secularisation of the public sphere in the new world. Yet, partly because of the myth that the Australian colonies were 'born modern' and bypassed the older history of religious oppression and church establishment,[29] there has been a tendency for secular histories of Australia to omit discussion of religion or to downplay its significance. The most important discussions to date have addressed issues such as state aid to the churches for education,

---

[27] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Gollancz, 1963), 37, 350-374.

[28] John W. de Gruchy, "Democracy," in *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, ed. Peter Scott and William T. Cavanaugh (Malden: Blackwell, 2003), 443.

[29] For this theme, see review essay by Nicholas Brown, "Born Modern: Antipodean Variations on a Theme," *The Historical Journal* 48 (2005): 1139-1154.

a key forum for the contestation of rival visions for society, as well as the short-lived colonial experiment in direct state aid for the building of churches and clerical salaries for chaplains, and religious issues in the framing of the Australian Constitution.[30] The next section will contribute to literature by focussing on the reception of British secularism in the relatively benign environment of the late nineteenth century Australian colonial city.

Secularism in Settler Australia

In the Anglo-American tradition, 'secularism' as a word and a tradition has a relatively recent intellectual history, generally seen to date from the work of the English freethinker G.J. Holyoake (1817-1906) to invoke the gradual decline of the role of religion in everyday life and thought. Secularism in this sense is seen as the modernist antithesis of religion, "a view of reality which excludes reference to the transcendent or sacred... [and] requires the rejection of supernaturalist religious beliefs," as a recent reference book puts it, citing authorities from Epicurus (341-270 BCE) to John Lennon.[31] Holyoake does not stand alone, but emerged from a broader movement concomitant with the rise of industrial society. Thomas Paine (1737-1809), Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), and Robert Owen (1771-1858) each in their different ways attacked the Old Regime and the alliance of established church and aristocracy that it represented. Holyoake's secularism was the institutional heir to the ultra-radicalism of Owenism, chartism, and European communism and was a movement that married well with the intellectual and social aspirations of the self-educated artisan elite.[32]

---

[30] For earlier studies of church state issues in Australia, see Richard Ely, *Unto God and Caesar: Religious Issues in the Emerging Commonwealth, 1891-1906* (Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1976); J. S. Gregory, *Church and State. Changing Government Politics Towards Religion in Australia* (Melbourne: Cassell, 1973); Michael Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand: Religion in Australian History* (Ringwood: Penguin, 1987); Walter Phillips, *Defending "A Christian Country": Churchmen and Society in New South Wales in the 1880s and After* (St Lucia, Queensland: University of Queensland Press, 1981); Walter Phillips, *The Protestant Churchmen's Campaign Against Secularism in Australia in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Melbourne: Uniting Church Historical Society, 1983).

[31] Trevor A. Hart, ed. *The Dictionary of Historical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2000), 519.

[32] For the northern British context of British secularism, see Edward Royle, *Victorian Infidels: The Origins of the British Secularism Movement, 1791-1866* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974).

Secularism arrived in Australia by travelling down the imperial pathways and networks, in much the same way as other itinerant lay speakers who toured the provincial lecture circuits in England and Scotland and spread across the Atlantic and into the southern British world.[33] Through his lectures and publications, Holyoake aimed to show that "where freethought commonly ends secularism begins." [34] The defining campaign for the British movement was the struggle by Charles Bradlaugh (1833-1891), founder of the National Secular Society (1866) who, upon his election in 1880 as the member for Northampton in the House of Commons, fought for the right to take his seat with a non-religious affirmation of loyalty instead of an oath. According to Royle, secularism as preached by Holyoake never enjoyed the level of popular success of earlier chartism or Owenite socialism, possibly because of its antagonism to religion, though good speakers could gather considerable crowds to public lectures and this was no less true in Australia as it was in the secularist heartland of northern England.[35] In Australia, as Frank Bongiorno has been the most active in articulating, radical religion and anti-religion including secularism, freethought, Spiritualism, Theosophy, and other radical creeds, often came coupled together in an alternative program for the individual and society, which encompassed sexual, religious, political, and social reform, albeit for what was a small intellectual elite.[36]

---

[33] For network theory, see David Lambert and Alan Lester, *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001); Garry M. Magee, and Andrew S. Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c. 1850-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[34] George Jaocob Holyoake, *The Origin and Nature of Secularism. Showing That Where Freethought Commonly Ends Secularism Begins* (London: Watts, 1896), 58-87.

[35] Royle, *Infidels*, 287. For further assessment of Holyoake, see Graeme Smith, *A Short History of Secularism* (London: Tauris, 2008), 172-173. The hardcore membership may have been as few as 3,000.

[36] See especially Frank Bongiorno, "In This World and the Next: Political Modernity and Unorthodox Religion in Australia, 1880-1930," *Australian Cultural History* 25 (2006): 179-207. The categories of 'Unbelief' in the Australian Census from 1901-1933 included Agnostic, Deist, Freethinker, No Denomination, Rationalist, Socialist, Spiritualist, Other, No Religion, Atheist, and No Reply. See Roe, *Beyond Belief*, 385, table 6.

Secularism for Holyoake and his heirs was seen not just as an observable social phenomenon that might be measured by reference to church attendance and the prominence of religious rituals in public life, but as an organic process moving society in a more positive, modern, and, indeed, millenarian direction. It was partly because of such claims that secularism became a target for hostile critique by theological and political conservatives as more or less synonymous with atheism, 'modernism', and an undefined conspiracy to overthrow Christian society and replace it with godless socialism. While Holyoake's Australian followers were few in number,[37] the churches were sufficiently mobilised by the perceived threat of secularism that there systematic attempts to counteract its most alarming features. Walter Phillips has written the history of the Protestant campaign to provide legal protections for Christianity, effectively bolstering Australia's claim to be 'a Christian country' more or less for the first time. This was a curious development given that establishment was in general anathema to British Nonconformity, which suggests considerable acclimatisation to Australian conditions.[38] Despite their fears, denominational Christianity was not under any realistic threat at this time, partly because of the immense field of opportunity that was being opened up to the Christian churches in the British Empire. The fever for mass emigration to the new settler colonies was at its height at more or less the same time as anxieties over the religious commitment of the working classes. For both problems, religious authorities suggested that migration may provide a solution to the problem or at least send the problem somewhere else.

The hostility and defensiveness of the institutional churches to secularism arose from the perception that it was, potentially at least, a fully-fledged rival to religious systems of thought with its own humanistic philosophy and system of moral norms. This might be demonstrated by reference to the life story of the Henry Elliott (1814-1857), Anglican

[37] For followers of Holyoake in Australia, see Australian Dictionary of Biography entries: C. E. Sayers, "Syme, George Alexander (1822-1894)," accessed May 5, 2012, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/syme-george-alexander-4938; C. E. Sayers, "Syme, Ebenezer (1825-1860)," accessed May 5, 2012, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/syme-ebenezer-4680; C. E. Sayers, "Syme, David (1827-1908)," accessed May 5, 2012, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/syme-david-4679; E. M. Finlay, "Supple, Gerald Henry (1823-1898)," accessed May 5, 2012, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/supple-gerald-henry-4670; G. W. Symes "Ross, John (1833-1920)," accessed May 5, 2012, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/ross-john-4507. None were influential in launching a secularist movement in Australia.

[38] Phillips, *Defending "A Christian Country"*; Phillips, *The Protestant Churchmen's Campaign Against Secularism.*

chaplain to the convict penal station of Norfolk Island.[39] In 1862, when secularism was beginning to be organised into its societies in Britain and elsewhere, the Reverend E. Strickland published a biography of Elliott that was probably intended to provide motivational material to encourage candidates for the hard-pressed Anglican colonial ministry. Another, however, was to demonstrate the capacity of the national church (that is the Church of England) to achieve conversions from what Strickland referred to as "the mazes of secularism." The early chapters of the book are devoted to recounting Strickland's successful campaign to secure Elliott's conversion to Christianity and a vocation on the colonial ministry. Elliott studied Platonism, Spinoza, Berkeley, Strauss, and the "French infidels" before adopting a resolutely secular philosophy which be believed as good as Christianity: declaring:

> I abandon all my previous professions, religious and political; I go to no place of worship whatever, and yet I think I am as moral as many who do go. I have no confidence in the purity of the text of Scripture, on account of the variations of manuscripts. I discard all miracles; and yet, accept the morality of the New Testament; because, in all my reading, I never met with such a sublime concept as this: 'Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you'.[40]

Strickland states that he visited Elliott frequently over a period of three years to argue "heathen v Christian philosophy" until Elliott called on him one night to announced that the had become a "conformist." Strickland began training him for the Anglican ministry almost immediately and was instrumental in securing him an appointment with the Society for the Propagation to the Gospel to Norfolk Island.

Without the financial resources of the established church and its missionary societies, secularists were hard-pressed to provide institutional support for converts to the movement. Holyoake went some way to providing secularist alternatives to traditional religions, such as ethical rules that could be followed in secularist schools and secularist rituals for naming of children, marriage, and memorials for the dead. While hostile to the truth claims made by institutional religion, he argued that secularism as a creed was completely tolerant and even-handed to religious beliefs of all kinds and promoted inter-creedal harmony where Christianity demanded

[39] E. Strickland, *The Australian Pastor: A Record of the Remarkable Changes in Mind and Outward State of Henry Elliott* (London: Wertheim, Macintosh & Hunt, 1862).
[40] Strickland, *The Australian Pastor*, 11.

exclusivity and conflict.[41] Such views have traditionally been used to promote secularism as preferred government policy. For example, Dr John Wilkins argues that secularism is not hostile to religion but was a means to promote pluralism of belief and thus protect religion from ideological coercion.[42]

Despite Holyoake's aspirations for tolerance, secularism had a belligerent streak and proved itself to be an effective vehicle for anti-clericalism in Australia. As a settler colony with a dynamic, moving population of recently arrived migrants—mostly from the United Kingdom and Ireland—Australia soon acquired Secularist societies of its own, part of a rich cornucopia of religious commodities of every colour and creed.[43] Australian secularists provided alternatives for those who wished to maintain household rituals and moral teaching without the forms devised by the institutional church. To this end, the Australian Secular Association issued a 'Lyceum Tutor' for use at the Secularist Sunday School. This allowed the neophyte to build their knowledge of the secular system and provide their own forms of moral education, burial service, and ethical practice.[44] It recommended that freethinkers form themselves into twelve groups to make up a full Lyceum, which would be called by suitable names such as Liberty, Fraternity, Harmony, or Dawn. Typical meetings included marching, record of attendance, reading of poems and anthems which were called "Leaves of Liberty" and "Flowers of Freethought," as well as Calisthenics, singing, and lessons.

Students were instructed: "Wear badges on left breast. Breathe deeply while reading or singing. Be punctual. Let everyone who can bring flowers. Be courteous." The flowers were not literal blooms, but poems and moral epigrams. Appropriate choices for 'Freethought Flowers' included extracts from the Transcendentalists poets such as Walt Whitman. For example, Whitman's "Selfhood" celebrated the principle of

---

[41] Holyoake, *Secularism*, 68. This work concludes with a chapter on 'Secularist Ceremonies' on marriage, naming children (where he recommended that names be avoided which created expectations that the child might not wish to live up to), reading at a grave, where he suggested Esdra and Uriel as 'an argument in which the Prophet speaks as a Secularist', or at the grave of a child.

[42] John Wilkins, "The Role of Secularism in Protecting Religion," in *The Australian Book of Atheism*, ed. Warren Bonett (Melbourne: Scribe, 2010), 314.

[43] For religious settlement throughout the settler empire, see Hilary M. Carey, *God's Empire: Religion and Colonialism in the British World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[44] Bernard O'Dowd, ed. *The Australian Secular Association Lyceum Tutor* (Melbourne: Tyzack & Picken, 1888).

masculine independence from the burden of civic and religious duty: "O the joy of manly selfhood!/ To be servile to none, to defer to none, not to any tyrant known or unknown,/To walk with erect carriage, a step springy and elastic/ … To be a man indeed."[45] Another good choice was the Scottish political hymn "The Tree of Liberty," attributed to (and rendered in standard English by) Robert Burns (1759-1796) though these days there is considerable doubt about whether Burns did write this: "Heard ye of the tree of France?/ I know not what's the name of it/ Around it all the patriots dance,/ Well Europe knows the fame of it./ It stands where once the Bastille stood,/ A prison built by kings, man,/ When superstition's loathsome brood./ Kept France in leading strings, man." Freethinking children were also trained to defend themselves from "superstition's loathsome brood" and other demons of idolatry. For example, a Conductor was instructed to lead through a lengthy question and answer sequence of which the first few exchanges went as follows and included a rejection of all forms of belief – past and present, Eastern and Western:

> Conductor. What has been the prevailing feature of the religions of the past?
> Lyceum. The worship of Idols
> Conductor. What is an idol?
> Lyceum. Something made by man for the purpose of worship.
> Conductor. How many kinds of Idols are there?
> Lyceum. Two, Physical and Mental.
> Conductor. What are physical idols?
> Lyceum. Real things, which through ignorance, man considers worthy of worship.
> Conductor. What are Mental idols
> Lyceum. Those created by man's imagination.
> Conductor. Give examples of Physical idols!
> Right Division. The fetishes of the Negroes, the josses of the lower Chinese.
> Left Division. The golden calf of the Israelites, the sacred cats of the Egyptians.
> Conductor. Of mental idols!
> Right Division. The Jove of the Romans, the Jehovah of the Jew and Christian.
> Left Division. The Woden, the Thor and the Freya of our own ancestors
> Right Division. The Brahma of the Hindu.

[45]O'Dowd, *The Australian Secular Association*, 8. For a reading of the poem by Robbie Coltrane and a discussion of the questionable attribution of this poem to Burns, see "More About this Poem," BBC Scotland, accessed June 22, 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/arts/robertburns/works/the_tree_of_liberty/

> Left Division. The Manito of the Red Indian.
> Conductor. Is it right to worship idols?
> Lyceum. No it is a crime against reason.
> Conductor. Beware of it in every form, it can but stunt the growth of three mind, and clip the wings of the airy aspiration!
> Lyceum. Idolatry is concealed in many beautiful beliefs as poison often lurks in lovely flowers.
> Conductor. When we are unable to prove scientifically the existence of a thing, we have no right o assume its existence and to worship it.
> Lyceum. For our experience is our only guide to the realms of Truth?[46]

If these tussles with idolatry provoked any child to fears of the night, there were also soothing words to settle them, such as "A Request" by W.W. Collins:

> Let the shades of evening gather round my bed.
> Let the sweet soft light come streaming near my head.
> ...
> Let no superstitious priest stand near my bed,
> Bring no cruel ghastly symbol near my head,
> Let no word of idle meaning vex mine ear,
> Let the soft, soft hand of kindness ever dear
> Smooth my pillow, ease my pain, clasp the hand that colder grows;
> Hushed my voice, my eyelids close in last repose.[47]

By 1887, the Sydney secularists (who were rather more successful than their brethren in Adelaide) had funds to build their own hall, which they claimed would be devoted "to teaching the highest of all religions – the Religion of Humanity."[48] Despite these ambitions, Jill Roe notes that secularism and its rituals never really acclimatised to the Australian scene and petered out in the harsh economic times of 1890s depression. Equally indigestible for respectable working-class intellectuals who might otherwise be attracted to the movement was the sexual adventurousness and malleability of the beliefs of some of its major proponents, a number of whom followed a trajectory from radical Protestantism, particularly various kinds of Methodists and Baptists, via Unitarianism, 'Socialism', Secularism, and Atheism, then back to esoteric religion of which Theosophy and Spiritualism were the most successful. This was not a turning away from religion—as other historians of Victorian unbelief have

[46] O'Dowd, *The Australian Secular Association*, 10.
[47] O'Dowd, *The Australian Secular Association*, 8.
[48] Quoted by Roe, *Beyond Belief*, 35.