

# A 'SUCCESSFUL EXPERIMENT' NO MORE

## THE INTENSIFICATION OF RELIGIOUS BIGOTRY IN EASTERN AUSTRALIA, 1865–1885

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On Saint Patrick's Day 1859 the Yass solicitor George C. Allman addressed a banquet of the town's most prominent men and women. In his address, Allman, the son of a Protestant Irish settler, Captain Francis Allman, praised his town as a 'successful experiment', a place where people 'of all opinions, grades and religions may meet and remember that they belong to a common country'. His sentiments were echoed by the Reverend Patrick Bermingham, one of the town's two Roman Catholic priests, who described the evening's celebration as one 'calculated to make the inhabitants of the southern districts appreciate the sterling good qualities of each other without reference to race or creed'.<sup>1</sup>

The experience of Yass in the 1850s was not unique. At this time, across much of southeastern Australia, the formation and 'working out' of new communities, and the interdependence of those who settled in them, produced striking levels of religious tolerance and inter-denominational cooperation. As Henry Haygarth observed in his account of life in the Australian Bush:

Few places can show so strange a mixture, and yet so complete a 'fusion', of the heterogeneous ma-

terials of its society, as the 'Bush' of Australia. It is curious to see men differing so entirely in birth, education, and habits, and in their whole moral and intellectual nature, thrown into such close contact, united by common interests, engaged under circumstances of perfect equality in the same pursuits, and mutually dependent on each other for all the good offices of civility and neighbourhood.<sup>2</sup>

Mary Durack made a similar point in her celebrated book *Kings in Grass Castles* when she wrote that her descendants 'had almost as many friends in the Scottish, English and Jewish sections of the community as among their own. Only the occasional visit of a Church dignitary, such as the pioneer Archbishop Polding, called for a more or less exclusive Irish gathering'.<sup>3</sup>

In the quarter of a century after 1860, however, a good deal of the amity and responsiveness that characterised inter-denominational relations in mid-nineteenth century colonial Australia diminished. In particular, controversies over education and the course and effect of Irish nationalist politics promoted a highly visible fis-

sion along religious lines, producing what the historian Mark Lyons described as a 'consolidation of sectarian subculture' in Australian life.<sup>4</sup> In this paper, I wish to explore the intensification of religious bigotry in eastern Australia, addressing the questions why did religious bigotry take root so *strongly* in Australia at this particular time, and in what ways did the new sectarian hostility depart from previous patterns of inter-group relations?

## i

Michael Hogan asserted in his book *The Sectarian Strand* '[t]he great sectarian political issue of the nineteenth century was undoubtedly that of education'.<sup>5</sup> In the Australian colonies, the education question came to the forefront from the 1850s, as the inadequacies of the existing denominational system (state funding to churches to provide schools) became more and more apparent. Inadequate funding, poor facilities, the presence of large numbers of untrained teachers and low levels of pupil attendance prompted reformers to advocate a shift from the denominational system to one that was (in their terms) secular, compulsory, and free. As one advocate of reform asserted, 'this is with us not a question of sentiment but of political wisdom and prudence ... [S]uch education as is thought amply sufficient for the working classes in old countries, where men rarely change their social position, will not do for Australia'.<sup>6</sup> Commencing in South Australia, successive colonial governments moved to diminish funding to denominational schools and exert greater state control over the provision and organisation of education. In New South Wales, Henry Parkes introduced his

Public Schools Act in 1866, arguing that reform was urgently required to improve the availability and quality of education. He also proposed (perhaps somewhat disingenuously) that his reforms would help alleviate 'jealousies and uncharitable feelings among the different sections of society'.<sup>7</sup> Instead, Parkes's bill provoked new levels of sectarian controversy.

Australia's Roman Catholic bishops steadfastly denounced the mounting attacks on denominational education. At their 1862 Provincial Council the bishops criticised as 'persecuting sectarianism' the tide towards state-controlled education. The pressure of their opposition increased through the 1860s as the character of the Roman Catholic Church in Australia was recast. English Benedictine control gradually weakened as a succession of Irish bishops was appointed: James Quinn to Brisbane in 1859, his brother Matthew to Bathurst in 1866, Daniel Murphy to Hobart in 1866, William Lanigan in Goulburn in 1867, and the Quinns' cousin, Timothy O'Mahony, to Armidale in 1869. The arrival of these men, ardent supporters of Cardinal Paul Cullen, and deeply influenced by the transformation of the Irish Church following the 1850 Synod of Thurles, ensured not only impressive programs of church construction and parish formation but strident opposition to public schooling.<sup>8</sup> Their presence fanned the sectarian embers in colonial life: Patrick O'Farrell observed, 'the new bishops were, from their arrival, notably—and censoriously—interested in colonial politics, and disposed towards the adoption of a belligerent Catholic sectarianism'.<sup>9</sup>

In 1869 the Provincial Council of the Australian Catholic bishops reaffirmed its

determination to oppose the introduction of secular education and to insist on the teaching of Roman Catholic doctrine in Catholic-run schools. Though Protestant leaders in the colonies were themselves far from acquiescent towards the principle of state-funded secular education, the unwavering Catholic position was easily and quickly represented by its opponents as one of exclusiveness and intransigence—as a demonstration of that Church's overriding commitment to Roman rather than Australian precepts. The issue came to a head most visibly in Victoria in 1872, when in a bitter election the government of the former Young Irelander, now moderate colonial Irishman, Charles Gavan Duffy, was defeated. The new Victorian government, emboldened with its success at the poll, moved to abolish state aid to denominational schools. The education controversy in Victoria foreshadowed conflicts that would occur across colonial Australia, though with varying degrees of intensity and bitterness. But, the general situation was clear: the worlds of Australia's Catholic and Protestant populations were becoming more separate and insular ones.<sup>10</sup>

## ii

The bitter controversy over education in the 1860s coincided with increasing concerns throughout the British empire at the course of Irish affairs. In 1866 militant Irish nationalists in the United States launched two abortive invasions of Canada. The following year Fenians launched an unsuccessful rising on Irish soil. The nationalist organisation's plans in Britain, including an attempt to seize arms from Chester Castle, were foiled.

However, though Fenianism's failures in 1866–7 far outweighed its successes, the movement made its mark and attracted international attention in a series of dramatic events. The rescue of the movement's leader, Colonel Thomas Kelly, from a prison van in Manchester, the trial and execution of the men who staged the rescue, and the bombing of Clerkenwell prison in London instilled across the British empire an unprecedented fear of Irish insurgency.

Fenianism's impact was felt even in distant Australia. Through the latter half of 1867 the Australasian colonies watched with apprehension the rising tide of violence in the British Isles. It was hardly surprising, then, that the British government's decision to dispatch a contingent of Fenian prisoners to Western Australia aroused considerable alarm. Colonial complaints against the perpetuation of convict transportation in general, and of the threat posed by the Fenians in particular, proved ineffectual. In January 1868 sixty-two Fenian prisoners and 217 other convicts arrived in Western Australia aboard the *Hougoumont*. The rebels' presence incited considerable concern, especially among the population of the western colony. But isolation was not the only factor that aroused disquiet. The arrival of the Fenian prisoners was given particular poignancy by the coterminous visit to Australia of Prince Alfred, the Duke of Edinburgh, first member of the British Royal family to tour the Australian colonies.<sup>11</sup>

The prince arrived in South Australia on 31 October 1867 where he received an effusive welcome from the local population. His party subsequently moved on to Melbourne, in tone the most Irish of Australian cities in the nineteenth century.

Melbourne's Irish Catholic population showed a measure of defiance to the royal visit, rallying outside the city's Protestant Hall where a provocative illumination recalling the Battle of the Boyne had been erected. Shots were fired from the hall towards the protestors, and a Catholic youth was killed. A brawl ensued, and an Orangeman was arrested. Though this incident possessed no definite Fenian overtones, it provided a stark indication of sectarian tensions then on the increase throughout the Australian colonies and a chilling foretaste of the violence that would soon engulf the tour.<sup>12</sup>

From Victoria the prince travelled north to New South Wales where, as elsewhere in Australia, he was greeted with effusive displays of affection. The *Sydney Morning Herald* attempted to explain the colonial rapture when it wrote on 21 January 1868, 'there is in the colonies a large reservoir of loyalty long pent up. [The] colonies have had few opportunities to exhibit their love [and these] demonstrations in honour of Prince Alfred are its overflow'.<sup>13</sup> Sydney's Roman Catholic newspaper, the *Freeman's Journal*, likewise wholeheartedly endorsed the royal visit, and made no attempt to disguise its relief that the prince's arrival in the city had proved incident-free. Its editorial comment, though, revealed a scarcely concealed nervousness about the days ahead, an air of fearful anticipation engendered at least in part by the shadow of Fenianism:

So far, at all events, we may congratulate ourselves that the royal visit has been marked by no incident distressing to anybody. *All things being taken into consideration our freedom from accident has been most remarkable.* No offensive display was

made by any body of men. The utmost good humour prevailed. Indeed, the police report shows that the city was more peaceable than ordinary ... of one thing we are quite sure, that there is not a man of any creed or nationality on earth who does not wish the Duke of Edinburgh a pleasant stay here and a safe voyage home.<sup>14</sup>

But the tour did not remain accident free for long. The prince agreed to attend a picnic to raise funds for a new sailors' home. On 11 March, while attending the event in the harbour-side suburb of Clontarf, an Irishman named Henry James O'Farrell shot Alfred in the back. The assassin was wrestled to the ground, arrested, and saved from the vengeful crowd.<sup>15</sup> But even before the culprit had been publicly identified, all attention focussed on the assassin's nationality and his political motives.

As news of the assassination attempt spread, the *Freeman's Journal* feared the worst. Its weekly edition, forced to press before the gunman's identity could be confirmed, admitted 'the prayer which was fervently uttered by thousands of our countrymen on their learning of the sad affair was "Pray, God, that he is not an Irishman"'. Should the culprit indeed prove to be Irish, the newspaper avowed, 'then Irishmen must bow their heads in sorrow, and confess that the greatest reproach which has ever been cast on them, the deepest shame that has ever been coupled with the name of our people, has been attached to us here in the country where we have been so free and prosperous'.<sup>16</sup> Too late for the newspaper's editor, but soon enough for the colony's Irish Catholic population, the awful truth was known: the culprit was indeed an Irish

Catholic and a Fenian connection was strongly suspected.

Despite O'Farrell's cry at the time of the shooting—'I'm a Fenian—God Save Ireland'—historians discount the possibility that the assassin was truly a Fenian. He was, in fact, an unbalanced young man, recently cast out from a seminary.<sup>17</sup> But the prospect that he had Fenian connections, coupled with the recent arrival of the prisoners on Australian soil, incited a wave of anti-Irish, anti-Catholic hysteria the like of which had not been seen in the Australian colonies before. Local politicians, most notably Henry Parkes, inflamed passions with allegations of conspiracy with the result that the cloak of suspicion fell heavily upon the Irish Catholic population. Sleuths scoured the countryside, bounty hunters seeking payment in return for uncovering evidence of the diabolical Australian Fenian connection.<sup>18</sup> The colonial parliament, mortified at the attempt on the life of the monarch's son, enacted a treason felony bill. The New South Wales premier, Cork-born Sir James Martin, declared in parliament that should Fenianism be found in the colony, 'it would be met with a vigour and determination which it had not encountered in the mother country'. Membership of the Loyal Orange Order in the colony doubled by the end of 1868 as outraged and fearful Protestants enlisted their support in defence of queen and country. Across the land, sectarian feelings escalated to levels scarcely imaginable a decade before.<sup>19</sup>

Roman Catholics responded to this sectarian upsurge in two ways. Most heeded the advice of the *Freeman's Journal*, to 'obey the law of the land and patiently wait till the good sense of the people returns'.<sup>20</sup> Underpinning this

counsel was a confident belief in the generally benign circumstances of colonial life and recognition of the presence of freedoms and liberties far exceeding those experienced in Ireland. Firm in those convictions, Irish Catholics cast their opponents as bigots, men and women out of touch with the true tenor of Australian life. As Melbourne's *Advocate* remarked welcoming the New Year in 1869, those who perpetuated sectarian division in the Australian colonies were 'out of date and out of place'. 'The wretched days [of] idiotic nervous no-popery are now passed for ever', it asserted all too prematurely, before prophesying better times ahead for Ireland. 'For the first time in history', wrote the *Advocate*, 'those who have an influence on English opinion seem to think that the wishes of Irishmen should count for something in the government of their native land'.<sup>21</sup> In line with that optimism, most Irish Catholics initially eschewed open conflict with the Protestant majority.

However, a minority of Irish Catholics reacted to the sectarian taunts with a greater measure of defiance—or, at least, a show of fight. Most famously, drunken gold diggers in country New South Wales, worse for wear after the excitement of the St Patrick's Day races, yelled at local townspeople 'We're bloody Fenians! Come On! We'd soon kill a man as look at him!' Others joined in too, if less dramatically, more ambiguously, to assert and defend their own stake in Australian society. A Goulburn resident, Bartholomew Toomey, was brought before the magistrate's court after declaring that the shooting served the prince right for 'he had no business in the country'. Influenced by such incidents, the New South Wales governor, Lord Belmore, reported to the parliamentary

under-secretary for the colonies, 'rumours of a spirit of Fenianism [are] abroad, particularly in the country districts'.<sup>22</sup> But concerns also existed about the likelihood of a radical nationalist presence in the towns and cities. W. A. Duncan, a prominent Scots-born member of Sydney's Catholic community, spoke publicly to deny the presence of organised Fenian groups, but admitted that 'there were a few hot-headed young men who could not keep quiet ... hot-headed youths who talked very foolishly'. Where once such expressions of bravado would have attracted little note, now they were sufficient to sound the alarm that violent Irish nationalist activity would surface in Australia, and served to intensify the fires of sectarian tension throughout the colonies.<sup>23</sup>

Events across the Tasman Sea in New Zealand added further to the commotion. In 1867 a new arrival on the South Island's West Coast, John Manning, founded a newspaper, the *New Zealand Celt*. Manning's journal was provocative and uncompromising, and soon found a strong following among the large number of Irish immigrants on the region's goldfields. The population of single Irish men present on the West Coast proved especially receptive to the *Celt's* enthusiastic promotion of Irish national consciousness. In line with the affirmation of that new and assertive Irish identity, on 8 March 1868 the Irish in Hokitika staged a mock funeral for the Manchester martyrs. Led by a Roman Catholic priest, Father William Larkin, a funeral procession wound its way to the local cemetery where a Celtic cross was erected. This overt display by Irish gold miners caused consternation among local loyalists, and when news of the attempted assassination of Prince Alfred reached New

Zealand soon after, hostility was further aroused. Soon after, when Father Larkin made a provocative speech in which he expressed sympathy with Fenianism, local authorities reacted. Manning and five others were arrested. Rumours of Fenian activism in the West Coast mining community abounded, and the colony's Anglo-Irish governor, Sir George Bowen, dispatched troops to reinforce local volunteers. All Australasia then seemed vulnerable to the tentacles of radical Irish nationalism.<sup>24</sup>

In both New Zealand and Australia, the Fenian threat was grossly inflated—in fact, as best one can tell, invented. But isolation, remoteness, and colonial fragility bred fear and paroxysm. By the late 1860s, Irish Catholics in Australia confronted more strident opposition and there existed for all groups a more hostile sectarian environment than had been present for several decades. In 1869, with the assassination attempt of the previous year still fresh in the colonial mind, renewed attacks were made on the level of Irish immigration to Australia. In a debate in the New South Wales parliament on administrative changes to the assisted immigration program, opponents of the Irish decried the threat posed to the colony by the twin evils of Romanism and Irish pauperism. Henry Parkes, who had exploited the O'Farrell affair to inflame sectarian passions, now advocated greater restriction on Irish entry to Australia, and quoted Charles Wentworth Dilke's observations on the allegedly deleterious effect the Catholic Irish were having upon American life to support the case for immigration restriction.

through drink, through gambling,  
and other vices of homeless,

thrifless men, they are soon reduced to beggary; and moral as they are by nature, the Irish are nevertheless supplying America with that which she had never possessed before—a criminal and pauper class.<sup>25</sup>

Though conditions in Australia and the United States were different in numerous ways, by 1870 the image of Australia's Irish was increasingly influenced by local (Australian) interpretations of the Irish experience in North America, not just by negative stereotypes of the Irish at home. And though the reaction of Australian Irish Catholics was in degree nothing so defiant or abrasive as that evinced by their American counterparts, they would exhibit a decidedly sharper, brusquer exterior to their opponents through the 1870s.

### iii

Historians have debated the question which *group* was most responsible for the worsening climate of sectarianism in Australia in the late 1860s and 1870s. In his detailed study of developments in New South Wales, Mark Lyons identified the attitudes and desires of Australia's Irish Catholic population as the paramount cause of worsening relations: 'the real impediment to Catholic assimilation came from the Catholics themselves'. On Lyons's reading of events, the greater politicisation and heightened national consciousness present among Irish immigrants of the "'forties" generation', in conjunction with militant Catholic intransigence on matters such as religious education, terminated the more amicable inter-group relations that had characterised colonial life in the preceding decades. However, others have

strenuously contested Lyons's analysis. Michael Hogan, in a more wide-ranging study of sectarianism in Australia, argued with justification that Lyons's evidence was equally open to interpretation as demonstrating Protestant culpability for the deterioration in relations, and that the roots of sectarianism in Australia could be identified much sooner than the 1860s. This is of course true, but neither analysis establishes persuasively the specific forces that caused the flame of sectarian hatred to burn so bright in Australia at this time.

Other analysis has focussed on the role of specific issues and events in triggering change. Here the education question and the assassination attempt are identified as primary causes of an upsurge in religious bigotry. Yet, notwithstanding the importance of education and Irish affairs, these causal factors do not in themselves explain adequately the intensity of the sectarian escalation at this time.

Comparison with the eastern United States suggests a much more complicated picture, and provides important insights into the forces that drove Australian tempers to such fevered pitch. During the second quarter of the nineteenth century profound changes affected major American cities such as New York and Philadelphia as early industrialisation displaced the artisan system, urban concentrations expanded to new levels, and immigration reached new peaks. Together these developments engendered deep feelings of insecurity among the native-born population, especially those who Dale Knobel described as 'middling folk who wanted to get ahead and feared falling behind'. Unsurprisingly, in the midst of their unease, many of these Americans were attracted to fraternal organisations. The agendas of

many of these associations corresponded closely with evangelical Protestant concerns including liquor licensing, Sabbath closing and public education. In the 1840s, public education in particular emerged as a key site in American Nativists' struggle against what they understood to be the deleterious effects of mass immigration. Controversies arose in both New York and Philadelphia where Roman Catholic Church leaders demanded the right to have their preferred Douay bible used in public schools in place of the King James version. To Nativists, this Catholic demand for separate religious instruction provided confirmation of the group's suspect loyalty and isolation from Republican ideals, contested though these were. In Philadelphia, violent rioting broke out in 1844, its immediate triggers the issue of bible reading. However, as David Montgomery and others have shown, the roots of the crisis lay much deeper, in the conjunction of economic change, class insecurity and fraternal ideology.<sup>26</sup>

Though aspects of the Australian scene undoubtedly differed from the United States, important similarities can be suggested between the two sectarian upsurges. In eastern Australia, the 1870s marked the beginning of a wave of major manufacturing expansion. Though statistical data for the decade are limited and imprecise, two major studies point to a virtual doubling in the numbers of Australians employed in manufacturing between 1870 and 1880. Growth was particularly strong in the number of persons engaged in the production of metals (468%), textiles (374%) and clothing (505%).<sup>27</sup> With this expansion in manufacturing employment came an increase in the proportion of the population resident

in the largest urban centres. Whereas in 1871, 46 per cent of the population of New South Wales were resident in urban areas, by 1881, 58 per cent of the colony's population lived in the major city or towns. Most of that increase occurred in the capital city, Sydney, where the population increased by nearly 300 per cent between 1861 and 1881 though the population of the colony had increased by only 114 per cent during the same period. In Victoria the proportion of the colonial population resident in urban areas had increased quite substantially in 1860s, and the population of Melbourne continued to increase in the 1870s though some decline occurred in the size of smaller urban centres. The population of smaller Australian cities also rose substantially: Adelaide, for example, doubled in size between 1861 and 1881.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to economic change and early urban concentration, the more feverish sectarian atmosphere in Australia in the 1870s also coincided with significant growth in political movements espousing evangelical demands, a conjunction that occurred in the United States during its earlier period of sectarian animus. Doctrinal differences were subsumed as new, politically active, pan-Protestant organisations emerged. The Protestant Political Association, formed in 1872, provided a forum for Protestant mobilisation against the extent of Roman Catholic influence on colonial life. Social and fraternal organisations also experienced strong growth. Membership of the Orange Order, which had risen sharply in the immediate wake of the 1868 assassination attempt, increased at an extraordinary rate through the 1870s. According to one study, its membership in New South Wales rose



from fewer than 3,000 in 1869 to as many as 19,000 members in 1876, while the number of affiliated lodges rose from 28 to 130. By the late 1870s, Lyons estimated, as many as 15 per cent of Protestant males aged over sixteen years were members.<sup>29</sup> The expansion in the membership of the Orange Order was accompanied by a diminution in its Irish orientation. Gradually, the movement expanded to become one more reflective of Australian Protestantism at large than of its specific Irish antecedents. For its momentum it drew heavily on evangelical religion and its associated reform campaigns, such as temperance, rather than matters Irish. Though the Orange Order encompassed diverse denominations and social backgrounds, its cornerstone membership in 1870 was clear enough: lower middle-class and respectable working-class men of ambition, frustrated in their yearnings, and often insecure in disposition. Protestant fraternity offered such men security, ritual, prestige, connections, and the hope of social mobility. Some were fortunate to secure that upward movement too, if the gradual elevation in social status among the movement's leadership by the end of the 1870s is an accurate guide.<sup>30</sup>

The mobilisation of Australia's Protestant population was matched by a new level of discipline and vigour among Australian Catholics, a phenomenon directly attributable to the arrival of Ireland's 'Devotional Revolution' on Australian shores. However, as Patrick O'Farrell argued persuasively, the Australian scene lent a particular urgency and purpose to the introduction of that model of religious reinvigoration. In colonial Australia, notorious for its apathy and indifference to religious matters, a strong institutional

framework—particularly one instilled with heavy Irish practice, tone and rhetoric—offered the best hope for the Roman Catholic Church to consolidate and strengthen its position.<sup>31</sup> The new Irish bishops came to Australia determined to raise the level of devotion and to instil new vigour into the practice of Australian Catholicism. To this end, they were ready and willing to attack or confront their opponents.<sup>32</sup> In the more heated, confrontational environment, cooler voices were drowned out. In November 1872 a new newspaper, the *Irishman*, was founded in Melbourne. Opposed to the maintenance of sectarian predilections and strongly resistant to party allegiances, the newspaper ceased publication within four months. Its blandness and neutrality appear to have won little support in these contentious years.<sup>33</sup>

#### iv

By the early 1880s, it might be judged that George Allman's 'successful experiment' was at an end. In 1881 the essayist A. M. Topp argued in the *Melbourne Review* that Ireland's population was fundamentally different than that of other regions in the British Isles. Whereas the Welsh and Scots merged naturally with the English, he maintained, the Irish were irreconcilably set apart:

It is only with regard to them that the question of race becomes important. Only as to them can any doubt arise concerning the loyalty and benefit to the empire of any of the races that have acquired the English tongue and are allowed the rights and privileges conferred

on its people by the institutions of the English people.<sup>34</sup>

To Topp, the prevalence of Roman Catholicism in Ireland was an evil and menacing by-product of Irish racial inferiority, a subordinate status that threatened to undermine the future of the whole of the empire in just the way it had been 'sapping the vitals of the great republic'.

Topp's explicit linkage of race and religion is demonstrative of the extent to which sectarian divisions were imprinted in Australian life by the early 1880s. When the Irish Parliamentary Party MP John Redmond and his brother William visited the Australian colonies in 1883 as delegates for the Irish National League they encountered an immensely hostile environment. Arrayed against the Irish delegates was a press that, in John Redmond's view, exceeded England's in its hostility to and ignorance of Irish affairs. The *Sydney Morning Herald* conducted a prolonged and bitter campaign against the Irish representatives, describing their rhetoric as inflammatory and out of place. 'If Mr Redmond does not succeed in provoking disorder in Sydney', it wrote in one editorial, 'it will be due not to the want of inflammable material thrown down, but to the orderliness and self-restraint of the population'. Unsurprisingly, the protestant press was particularly vociferous in its opposition, the *Protestant Standard* describing the delegates' mission as an attempt to 'white wash that blood-stained League'. 'He and his emissaries', it complained vituperatively, 'have stirred up strife in the United States; brought to the surface a body of people ready with dynamite to blow up and destroy public buildings, careless of life, prompted by malice, ready to supply arms for rebellion

and money for assassination; and then Mr Redmond crosses the sea to sow like abominable seed here'.<sup>35</sup> In reply to such charges, John Redmond strenuously denied that he was out to inflame sectarian or nationalist passions. Writing in Sydney's *Freeman's Journal* he declared that he 'viewed with thankfulness and pride the Irishmen of these colonies living in amity with their brethren of other nationalities, occupying the position of respected peaceable and loyal citizens of a great and free country'.<sup>36</sup> At least in the initial months of the tour, however, his energetic protestations did little to convince his critics to temper their attacks and bigotry remained rife.<sup>37</sup>

Yet, weighed against this pessimistic assessment of the situation, at least three counterpoints should be raised. First, despite the rise in religious bigotry in the period 1865–1885 and its real and harmful consequences for peoples of all faiths, the Australian scene remained a mild one compared to other locations. Hilary Carey was correct when she wrote recently, 'Australians lived in a sectarian environment in the nineteenth century [however,] the sectarian tensions of colonial Australia remained a pale imitation of rival tensions in northern England, Ireland and Scotland or in other settler societies, including the United States'.<sup>38</sup> Second, at the end of the period in question some signs of a tempering of the sectarian strains were becoming evident. During the 1880s a fair deal of the heat generated by the question of Ireland's future dissipated, particularly following William Gladstone's acceptance of the principle of Home Rule. In succeeding years, an increasing number of Australians would acknowledge merit in Irish claims to Home Rule, at least so long as

those demands were couched in terms similar to the Australian colonies' own constitutional arrangements. And thirdly, as Andrew Markus and others have shown, the 1880s witnessed a sharp intensification of anti-Chinese sentiment in the Australian colonies and this facilitated further the positioning of Irish Catholics as privileged White insiders.<sup>39</sup>

From the mid 1880s, therefore, the neutralising of Ireland as an immediate political issue and the pathway to White Australian nationhood went some way to alleviating the intensity of overt religious bigotry in Australia. But the power of bigotry in the late nineteenth century was at best dormant, never extinct. The education question had not been resolved, and it would remain for most of the next century a divisive issue in Australian life. And, when during World War One the contentious issue of Ireland's future again came to the fore, religious bigotry returned with full force to divide the nation and its people.

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Yass *Courier*, 19 March 1859. See also Malcolm Campbell, *The Kingdom of the Ryans: the Irish in Southwest New South Wales 1816–1890*, Sydney, UNSW Press, 1997, pp. 84–6.

<sup>2</sup> Henry Haygarth, *Recollections of Bush Life in Australia During a Residence of Eight Years in the Interior*, London, Murray, 1861, p. 22; see also Donald Carisbrooke, 'Immigrants in the Push', *Push from the Bush*, 5, Armidale, University of New England, December 1979.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Durack, *Kings in Grass Castles*, London, Constable, 1959, p. 45. The colonial setting also contributed to this cordiality. Homi Bhaba insightfully observed in an interview that dwelt on his Parsee ancestry that the colonial context could prompt 'an ethic of cultural tolerance, of the survival of various cultures', that contrasted markedly with the rigidity and intolerance of the metropolitan center: Homi Bhaba 'Between Identities' in R. Benmayor and A.

Skotries (eds) *Migration and Identity*, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 188.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Lyons, *Aspects of Sectarianism in New South Wales Circa 1865 to 1880*, PhD thesis, Australian National University, 1972, p. 275.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Hogan, *The Sectarian Strand: Religion in Australian History*, Ringwood, Vic., Penguin Books, 1987, p. 101.

<sup>6</sup> James Rutledge, quoted in Alan Barcan, *Two Centuries of Education in New South Wales*, Kensington, NSW, NSW University Press, 1988, p. 75.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Barcan, *Two Centuries of Education*, p. 107.

<sup>8</sup> Patrick O'Farrell, *The Catholic Church and Community: An Australian History*, Kensington, NSW, NSW University Press, 1992, pp. 127–29; Frances O'Donoghue, *The Bishop of Botany Bay: The Life of John Bede Polding, Australia's First Catholic Archbishop*, London, Sydney, Angus & Robertson, 1982.

<sup>9</sup> Patrick O'Farrell, *Catholic Church*, p. 151.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 160–70; Hogan, *Sectarian Strand*, pp. 100–27; Ronald Fogarty, *Catholic Education in Australia, 1806–1950*, 2 vols, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1959, Vol. I, pp. 208–55; Charles Gavan Duffy, *My Life in Two Hemispheres*, 2 vols, London, Unwin, 1898, Vol. II, pp. 321–46; J. S. Gregory, *Church and State: Changing Government Policies Towards Religion in Australia*, North Melbourne, Cassell Australia, 1973.

<sup>11</sup> Keith Amos, *The Fenians in Australia, 1865–1880*, Kensington, NSW: New South Wales University Press, 1987, pp. 78–99; Patrick O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, Kensington, NSW: New South Wales University Press, 1993, pp. 208–10; T. J. Kiernan, *The Irish Exiles in Australia*, Dublin: Clonmore & Reynolds Ltd, 1954, pp. 152–67; G. C. Bolton, 'The Fenians are coming, the Fenians are coming!', *Studies in Western Australian History*, IV, December 1981, pp. 62–7.

<sup>12</sup> Lyons, *Aspects of Sectarianism*, pp. 74–85; Hogan, *Sectarian Strand*, p. 104; O'Farrell, *Irish in Australia*, pp. 102–3.

<sup>13</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21, 22 January 1868.

<sup>14</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 25 January 1868 (*italics mine*).

<sup>15</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 March 1868; Lyons, *Aspects of Sectarianism*, pp. 89–100; Amos, *Fenians*, pp. 52–3; Robert Travers, *The Phantom Fenians of New South Wales*, Kenthurst, NSW, Kangaroo Press, 1986, pp. 19–26.

<sup>16</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 14 March 1868 (country edition).

- <sup>17</sup> Amos, *Fenians*, pp. 45–77; O'Farrell, *Irish in Australia*, pp. 210–11; C. M. H. Clark, *A History of Australia vol. 4: The Earth Abideth Forever, 1851–1888*, Melbourne, Melbourne University Press, 1978, p. 255.
- <sup>18</sup> Amos, *Fenians*, pp. 45–77; Travers, *Phantom Fenians*, pp. 63–79; Lyons, *Aspects of Sectarianism*, pp. 89–176.
- <sup>19</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 14 March 1868.
- <sup>20</sup> *Freeman's Journal*, 21 March 1850.
- <sup>21</sup> *Advocate*, 2 January 1869.
- <sup>22</sup> Lyons, *Aspects of Sectarianism*, pp. 85, 119–30; O'Farrell, *Irish in Australia*, pp. 210–11; Amos, *Fenians in Australia*, pp. 68–77.
- <sup>23</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 March 1868.
- <sup>24</sup> Richard Davis, *Irish Issues in New Zealand Politics, 1868–1922*, Dunedin, University of Otago Press, 1974, pp. 11–24; David McGill, *The Lion and the Wolfhound: The Irish Rebellion on the New Zealand Goldfields*, Wellington, NZ, Grantham House, 1990; Patrick O'Farrell, 'How Irish was New Zealand', *Irish Studies Review*, 9, Winter 1994–5, pp. 25–30.
- <sup>25</sup> Henry Parkes, Irish Immigration: Speech Delivered in the Legislative Assembly on the Second Reading of 'A Bill to Authorise and Regulate Assisted Immigration', Sydney, 1869, p. 11; on attempts to reduce the Irish component within the assisted immigrant stream, see Pauline Hamilton, 'No Irish Need Apply': *Prejudice as a Factor in the Development of Immigration Policy in New South Wales and Victoria, 1840–1870*, PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 1979, p. 423; Lyons, *Aspects of Sectarianism*, pp. 261–62.
- <sup>26</sup> Dale T. Knobel, *America for the Americans: The Nativist Movement in the United States*, New York, Twayne Publishers, 1996, pp. 49–72; David Montgomery, 'The shuttle and the cross: weavers and artisans in the Kensington riots of 1844', *Journal of Social History*, 5, 1972, pp. 411–46; Michael Feldberg, *The Philadelphia Riots of 1844: A Study of Ethnic Conflict*, Westport, Conn., Greenwood Press, 1975.
- <sup>27</sup> Wray Vamplew (ed.), *Australians: Historical Statistics*, Broadway, NSW, Fairfax, Syme & Weldon Associates, 1987, pp. 286–89, tables Manf. 1–12, 13–22; N. G. Butlin, *Investment in Australian Economic Development, 1861–1900*, Canberra: Dept. of Economic History, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University, 1972, pp. 16–23.
- <sup>28</sup> Vamplew (ed.), *Australians: Historical Statistics*, pp. 23, 40–41.
- <sup>29</sup> Lyons, *Aspects of Sectarianism*, pp. 275–78; Hogan, *Sectarian Strand*, pp. 97–100; Hilary Carey, *Believing in Australia: A Cultural History of Religions*, St Leonards, NSW, Allen & Unwin, 1996, pp. 82–95.
- <sup>30</sup> Lyons, *Aspects of Sectarianism*, pp. 278–300, 422–29; O'Farrell, *Irish in Australia*, pp. 101–5.
- <sup>31</sup> O'Farrell, *Catholic Church*, pp. 194–225; Hugh Jackson, *Churches and People in Australia and New Zealand*, Wellington, NZ, Port Nicholson Press, 1987, pp. 22–47.
- <sup>32</sup> Hogan, *Sectarian Strand*, pp. 101–2.
- <sup>33</sup> *The Irishman*, Melbourne, 28 November 1872; 30 January 1873; 20 February 1873; 27 February 1873.
- <sup>34</sup> A. M. Topp, 'English institutions and the Irish race', *Melbourne Review*, VI, January 1881, pp. 9–10.
- <sup>35</sup> *Protestant Standard*, 24 February 1883. See also the *Victorian Banner*, 24 March 1883 describing the Redmond visit: 'It began with a rant; it has gone on to a riot; it may end in rebellion, and in the vigour necessary to restrain rebellion'.
- <sup>36</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 24 February 1883; *Freeman's Journal*, 3 March 1883.
- <sup>37</sup> *The Bulletin*, 1 March 1883.
- <sup>38</sup> Carey, *Believing in Australia*, p. 94.
- <sup>39</sup> See Andrew Markus, *Australian Race Relations*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1994, pp. 79–84; Malcolm Campbell, 'Ireland's furthest shores: Irish immigrant settlement in nineteenth century California and eastern Australia', *Pacific Historical Review*, 71 (1), February 2002, pp. 59–90.