

RELIGION.

THE progress of all matters relating to denominational Religion since the early years of Australasian settlement has been steady and remarkable. For the first fifteen years after the foundation of the Colony of New South Wales only a single denomination was recognized by Government, or possessed either minister or organization—the Established Church of England. In those days the whole of Australasia was ecclesiastically within the Diocese of the Bishop of Calcutta, of which it formed an Archdeaconry; this continued until 1836, when the Bishopric of Australia was constituted, and the Rev. William Grant Broughton, D.D. (formerly Archdeacon), was consecrated the first Bishop. There are now twenty Bishoprics in the Colonies, including the Sees in New Zealand. Each Colony preserves its autonomy in church matters, but the Bishop of Sydney is nominal head or Primate within the boundaries of Australia and Tasmania. In 1872 the ties between the church and the various Colonies under the jurisdiction of the Primacy were strengthened by the adoption of one common constitution. A general assembly of representatives of each of these Colonies meet in Sydney every five years to discuss church affairs in general. New Zealand is excluded from this amalgamation, as it possesses a Primacy of its own. The Synodical system of Church Government, by means of a legislative body, consisting of the clergy and representatives of the laity, prevails throughout Australasia, whether as individual Colonies or collectively as a group.

Church of Rome. In 1803 a grudging recognition was extended to Roman Catholics, one of whose chaplains was then placed on the Government establishment; but it was not until 1820 that any regular provision was made for an adequate staff of clergy. Until 1834 the Roman Catholics of Australia and Tasmania were under the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Mauritius, but in that year Sydney was constituted a see, and the Rev. John Bede Polding, D.D., was consecrated Bishop, with jurisdiction over the whole of the Continent, and Tasmania. Some eight years later this Episcopate was raised to the rank of an Archiepiscopal See. The present Archbishop of Sydney, who was created a Cardinal in 1885, is the head of the Roman Catholic Church throughout Australasia, and to assist him in the church administration there are five Archbishops, fifteen Bishops, and four Titular Bishops throughout the Colonies.

Presbyterian. Amongst the earliest free colonists who settled in the Hawkesbury district was a small party of Presbyterians, and one of the first places of worship erected in the Colony was put up in 1810 by their voluntary exertions. Services were conducted there for years before any ordained minister of the denomination reached New South Wales; indeed it was not until 1823 that the Rev. Dr. Lang, the first Presbyterian minister in Australia, arrived in Sydney. The Presbyterian Church is united in a federated union, but the church in each Colony acts independently as regards local ecclesiastical administration, and preserves its autonomy in respect to funds and property. A Moderator is elected annually as a representative head in each Colony, but he cannot exercise independent jurisdiction.

Wesleyan. The first Wesleyan minister came to New South Wales in 1815, but it was not until 1821 that a Wesleyan place of worship was erected in Sydney, and it was even later before the denomination was allowed to share in the Government provision for religion. Till 1873 the church in Australasia was affiliated with the British Wesleyan Conference, but in that year it was

constituted an independent and separate conference. The church in each Colony holds annual sessions, and at triennial periods a general conference is convened for the whole body in Australasia.

In the eyes of the State all religions are equal in Australasia. ^{State-aid.} State aid to all denominations has been for many years practically abolished in all the Colonies except Western Australia. South Australia, in 1851, was the first Colony to withdraw such aid after it had been in force only three years, and Queensland, in 1860, shortly after the assembling of the first Parliament, passed an Act abolishing any future maintenance to religion, and limited future payments to the clergy then actually in receipt of State aid. Only one clergyman now survives, who is in receipt of £100 per annum. New South Wales passed a similar Act in 1862, and the expenditure on this account, which in that year was over £32,000, had fallen in 1890 to £9,793. The other Colonies of the group subsequently abolished State aid with the exception previously mentioned, Victoria being the last to withdraw in 1875.

No other denominations beyond the four mentioned above were ever officially recognized, nor was any State contribution ever made towards the support of any other. This was no doubt owing to the fact that the greater portion of the inhabitants belonged to these persuasions. Nor has the enormous increase of population since then in any considerable degree altered this condition of things, though in different Colonies different bodies of Christians have represented a larger proportion of the people than in others. Thus, in New South Wales, Queensland, and Victoria the proportion of Roman Catholics has been, and still is, larger than in the other Colonies, while in New Zealand it has been much smaller. ^{Proportion of different bodies.} Presbyterians bear a greater proportion to the population in New Zealand than in any other Colony, while Wesleyans and Lutherans are more numerous in South Australia than elsewhere. The adherents of the Church of England predominate numerically in all the Colonies.

STRENGTH OF THE DENOMINATIONS.

The religious returns of the census for Australasia are still incomplete, but from such information as is available a very close estimate of the strength of the various denominations may be made. This is given in the following statement :—

Adherents to various Religious Denominations,
Census Period, 1891.

Denomination.	Number.
Church of England	1,516,190
Roman Catholic	829,180
Presbyterian.....	495,830
Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists	440,680
Congregational.....	78,120
Baptist	84,340
Lutheran	75,240
Salvation Army	42,820
Unitarian	4,230
Other Protestants	49,770
Hebrews	14,820
Pagans	49,580
Others and Unspecified	129,280
	3,810,080

Predominant
denominations.

Thus, at the Census of 1891, it appears that about 86 per cent. of the population of all the Colonies was attached to the Church of England, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian, and Wesleyan denominations. Next to these, although at a great distance, came Baptists, Congregationalists, Lutherans, and Salvation Army, the numbers of each, with the exception of the last-named, being about the same. With the exception of Pagans (under which term the Chinese have for the most part been erroneously classed), no other persuasion held adherents amounting to 1 per cent. of the population. The Salvation Army is a new element in the 1891 Census, any adherents of this persuasion that may have existed in 1881 having been grouped with "Other Persuasions." The large number classed as "unspecified, &c.," includes small sects, those objecting to State religion, and those who claim no religion at all.