An Antipodean Establishment: 
Institutional Anglicanism in Australia, 1788–c. 1934

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ABSTRACT

This article argues that the Church of England in Australia maintained for most of this period a culture of conservative political and social values. This conservative culture was a consequence of the Church of England being a subordinate partner in the hegemony of the ruling landed classes in England. In Australia, the Church of England, while never legally established, continued to act as though it was, and to strongly uphold conservative political and social values long after its monopolistic connection with the state had any practical reality. Consequently, the Church of England in Australia supported conventional values and solutions to social problems and marginalized Anglicans who challenged its prevailing conservatism. The catalysts for a change in this prevailing institutional culture were the First World War and the Great Depression. These challenges prompted the emergence within the institutional church of the beginnings of a more cautiously critical outlook towards the social status quo.

In 1842, just a year after he had arrived in the colony of Western Australia, the Anglican priest John Wollaston was bemoaning the lack of official support for the Church of England by the colonial government.

Sad indeed is the state of the Church here—made worse by the measures of an ungodly Government... The truth is the Colonial treasury is poor, & the Govr and Council feel obliged to truckle to the Home Government, or they must lose their places. Yet I tell you they dread application from Romanists and Dissenters, & wd prefer assisting the Church, if their hands were not tied.1

Six years later he still found this lack of official preference for the Church of England a cause for complaint. 'The greatest patience, prudence, firmness and perseverance will be requisite, in the present state of parties under a liberal Government, to obtain a footing for the Church...’2 For Wollaston, the link between Church of England and British state in the colonies was a part of the desirable social and political order.

This article examines the official culture of the Church of England in Australia from its origins in the First Fleet of 1788 to just prior to World War II. The focus of this overview is on that Church as an institution in society which had an evident culture of power which involved its own self-understanding and its relationship with the state. The attitude of other Churches towards this Anglican institutional culture will also be heard here. That is not to say that this institutional culture was all that the Church of England amounted to. This article takes no account of other significant aspects of Anglicanism; the devotional, theological or spiritual dimensions of the life of Anglicans in Australia. It is certainly not the claim of this paper that Anglicanism, or any other religion, is reducible to an ideology of power. Practices of piety, philanthropy and social engagement, and public and private rituals of faith are not addressed in this article though they were probably more important to members of the Church than its institutional culture. However, that culture was very significant to the Church of England’s place in Australian society and to its leading members among the bishops, clergy and leading laity who therefore constitute the major figures in this article.

The tenacious clinging to the idea of the Church of England as part of the colonial establishment remained central to the culture of Australian Anglicanism long after its political reality had been extinguished in the original colony of New South Wales. The maintenance of an establishment mentality can be found principally in Australian Anglicanism’s view of itself as a superior denomination, and as an uncritical supporter of the existing political powers and social elites. This was certainly the way in which other Churches saw their principal rival. Anglicanism’s predominant social and political conservatism in colonial and commonwealth Australia originates in its role as a major transmitter of an English social and religious culture to British Antipodean colonies. This aspect of ‘The Church of England in Australia’ stubbornly endured in Australian society; it was a cultural imperialism that very belatedly began to falter.3 Judging by liturgical standards, for example, it was not


3. It was not until 1981 that ‘The Church of England in Australia and Tasmania’ changed its official designation to ‘The Anglican Church in Australia’; and not until

until the last quarter of the twentieth century that there was official recognition of the need for a more Australian Anglicanism, and one that must include an indigenous Aboriginal component. Preceding the beginnings of this very delayed shift in Australian Anglicanism was the perpetuation of an establishment culture of political conservatism of Anglicanism in Australia, a characteristic identified both by other churches and maintained by its own clergy.

Some historians who have addressed the relationship between Anglicanism and Australian society have recently been concerned to emphasize the nationalism of the Church of England in Australia. Colin Holden in a biography of Frederick Goldsmith, the first Bishop of Bunbury, has highlighted Goldsmith’s nationalism in his push to rename the Church of England in Australia. However, Goldsmith’s decisive defeat of his advocacy of the Anglican Church in Australia at the General Synod of 1900 shows that the bishop, though supported by a minority body of Anglo-Catholic sympathizers, was not representative of the majority of his Church in his nationalism. As Holden admits, ‘imperialist sentiment’ was a major factor in retaining the old name. Despite a further decade of lobbying for national change Goldsmith was defeated again at the General Synod in 1910 by a combination of Low Church bishops and the laity. Bruce Kaye has drawn attention to the long-standing cultural dependence of Australian Anglicanism on English theology in that he has characterized it as ‘a very conservative revision of the English brand’. However, the long-standing nature of this English dependence which Kaye criticizes illustrates that a more assertively Australian theology was not regarded as important to Australian Anglicanism. This lack of an Australian consciousness was undoubtedly perpetuated by continuing British immigration in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which perpetuated Australian Anglicanism’s Englishness. The 1978 that it produced its own prayer book called An Australian Prayer Book. But this was only an alternative use to the English Book of Common Prayer (1662) and not a replacement for it, unlike the new prayer book of the Episcopal Church of the United States of America.

4. However, the reader must look very carefully for signs of an Aboriginal presence in the most recent Australian prayer book—A Prayer book for Australia (1995) —in comparison with the contemporary New Zealand Prayer Book (1989) which is substantially bilingual throughout in Maori and English.

5. C. Holden, Ritualist on a Tricycle, Frederick Goldsmith: Church, Nationalism and Society in Western Australia 1880-1920 (Nedlands: University of Western Australia Press, 1997), Chapter 7.

nationalist revision in recent Australian Anglican historiography generally contrasts with the work of secular historians who have understood Australian Anglicanism as a major vehicle for the maintenance of imperialist predilection in Australian history. This is epitomized by Manning Clark who dismissed Anglicanism in Australia as steeped in sectarianism and as providing the theoretical justification for British colonialism in Australia.7 Examining the celebrations in New South Wales for the jubilee of Queen Victoria in the late 1880s Luke Trainor sees imperialism as identified with Anglicanism and sustained by the social pre-eminence of the Church of England.8 Frank Crowley believes Anglicanism in Australia to be one dimension of a 'governing consensus' which, up to 1914 at least, along with the other Protestant Churches viewed Australian society as a replica of England.9 Like Holden, Brian Fletcher has marked the emergence of an Australian nationalism among Anglican bishops from the 1930s who began to emphasize the importance of identification with Australia and Australians. However, he admits that such nationalism was set within an older and wider Anglican emphasis on support for empire, monarchy and Britain. These aspects of identity were no doubt emphasized by most Australians at the time, except for Irish Catholics and members of the radical political left. However, they were given a religious sanction by the Church of England in Australia. Bishop Goldsmith, the Anglican precursor of Australian nationalism for Colin Holden, was also a member of the English branch of the Royal Colonial Institute, later the Royal Empire Society.10 This conservatism was marked in the 1930s, according to Michael Hogan, by a connection between the emerging political right with bishops such as Crotty of Bathurst and Moyes of Armidale being public critics of the divisive nature of democracy.11

David Hilliard has drawn attention to the way in which Australian Anglicanism acted as a cultural replicator of England in Australia in its design of churches, its church music, schools, dependence of English

theology, and in its 'assumption of automatic superiority' with respect to other religions. He has also commented on the way in which the Church of England maintained its connections with the state, largely through Anglican ceremonial liturgy used on state occasions, so that 'the idea that it was still in some sense a state church lingered on...until the mid-twentieth century'.

This article argues that that lingering establishment mind-set was deliberately fostered by the Church of England in Australia because it found it difficult to relinquish the hegemonic position that Anglicanism occupied in England, which constituted a major part of its identity. Jonathan Clarke has already pointed out the way in which Anglicanism functioned as a central and vital part of the ruling hegemony of England in the 'long eighteenth century' between 1660 and 1828. Here I want to indicate ways in which Anglicanism in Australia continued to maintain attitudes appropriate to an outdated hegemony towards Australian society and to other Churches long after its role in the ruling hegemony has ceased to function in the 1830s. Australian Anglicanism continued to cling to its increasingly outmoded hegemonic attitudes until after World War I, resulting in an increasing dissonance between itself and its actual place in Australian society.

The Church of England had constituted part of the ruling hegemony of England for centuries, and it inevitably exported this position of power when, in 1788, it arrived as a component of the British penal colony. The neo-Marxist thinker, Antonio Gramsci, coined the term 'hegemony' to describe the means by which a ruling group maintains power in a society. Gramsci's insight was that power and control are not sustained merely by force and coercion alone, but also by acquiring the consent of subordinate groups to the cohesive world-view — 'the symbolic universe' — of the ruling group. A group comes to exercise

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15. The nearest Gramsci came to defining this concept in his Prison Notebooks was as 'the "spontaneous" consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on society by the dominant fundamental group: this consent is "historically" caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and frustration in the world of production.' Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, © The Continuum Publishing Group Ltd and The Journal of Anglican Studies Trust, 2003.
hegemony when it succeeds in making its world-view appeal to other groups in a society. However, this dominant world-view always principally serves the interest of the ruling group at the expense of the subordinate groups who have consented to it. This consent is achieved through the world-view or the ideology of the dominant group being inculcated through the intellectual, moral and cultural forces in a society, so that the accepted wisdom in a society reflects this hegemonic world-view. Social forces as diverse as the entertainment industry and religion and folklore are means by which the hegemonic ideology of the ruling group is developed and maintained in a process of continual adaptation to changing circumstances and the challenge of other ideologies. It is not brainwashing, but rather the development of a public discourse which makes attitudes in keeping with the hegemonic world-view more accessible and acceptable to people's awareness, while at the same time ignoring or suppressing alternative ones. Other world-views do concurrently exist, but they are either dismissed in public discourse as inadequate or implausible or, if they begin to be taken seriously, the ruling hegemony must adapt itself to them or perish. It does this by forming alliances through history with potentially threatening ideologies of other groups. Gramsci's concept is not a static closed system, but a flexible process by which a ruling group's ideology continually adapts or dies.¹⁶

The Church of England exhibited these characteristics of a subordinate group allied to the ruling hegemony of England. It was itself controlled by the ruling group of England, and was largely deferential to those rulers. The Church assisted their world-view to maintain its hegemonic dominance by teaching supportive doctrines, such as non-resistance and acceptance of the divine approval of the social status quo, in its theology and preaching. In this way the political elite used the Church as a primary vehicle for spreading its ideology to the lower orders of English society. In return the Church gained a monopoly of official support in the English state from the sixteenth century to the first half of the nineteenth. But the Church was ultimately controlled by the landed classes who constituted the ruling group of England and then the United Kingdom through their control of Parliament which legislated for the Church, and to which the landed class maintained a monopoly of access. This control was rarely expressed in a blunt fashion, although an exception was made in the eighteenth century when the Tory-dominated


Church threatened to question the legitimacy of the Hanoverian monarchy early in the reign of George I. Consequently the Church of England had its Convocations suspended by Royal Writ for the entire century. They were not restored until the nineteenth century when the state had moved away from using the Church of England to maintain control and social order. Consequently, the Church of England reflected the ideology of this ruling group that controlled appointment to its parishes through the landed ownership of advowsons, and to its higher offices through royal and ministerial patronage. In support of this landed class ruling hegemony the Church of England had long delineated for itself the role of moral guardian and spiritual glue for English society. Church of England bishops by the late eighteenth century upheld a view that social stability was maintained in England following the outbreak of the French Revolution because of the role of the clergy in preaching loyalty to the state. This was because they had been raised on the theology of William Warburton who upheld the utility of an Established Church as the social agency of the state. While the Revolution reinvigorated the social concern of the bishops towards the disadvantaged and potentially subversive elements in society, it also renewed their commitment to traditional social hierarchy, aristocratic power and social inequality as a natural and God-given.

17. Prorogued by royal writ in 1717 the Convocation of the Province of Canterbury met for the first time in 1852, and that of York in 1861.
18. It is important not to be simplistic in this historical analysis. Other religious groups which came to constitute a challenge to the ruling group’s power were also absorbed into its hegemony and took on outlooks which were supportive of the aristocratic state that constituted power in England and then the United Kingdom. In return for toleration of Protestant Dissenters in 1689 they had to accept a measure of state control and many of their clergy adopted a similar range of tolerable political views to those of Anglicans over the legitimacy of political resistance and rebellion. See R. Hole, *Pulpits, Politics and Public Order in England 1760-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 21-24, 27-31, 32-39. Hole argues that if these, and the Catholics, had been fortunate enough to enjoy the privilege offered by the state to the Church of England it is likely they would have developed even more closely the same attitudes of Anglicans towards religious toleration and political conservatism.
19. William Warburton (1698-1779) was Bishop of Gloucester and a leading theorist of the links between church and state which he defended in his *Alliance of Church and State* (1736) as an alliance between truth and utility. Support for a variety of religions would be politically unworkable, and therefore the state needs to support the most powerful sect.

So when Australian British settlement was commencing in 1788, it was at a time when Anglicans in England were in the process of renewing their theological support for the existing political and social hierarchy in Britain. It was a conservative reaction to the French Revolution that was shared by all sections of the British elite during the period 1790–1830 and helped to cement the power of what J.C.D. Clark says was essentially an aristocratic society. It was defended by an Anglican political theology developed on the theological inheritance of Richard Hooker that emphasized the mutuality of the state and the Church of England. This Anglican theology stressed the roles of the monarchy and Church as God-given leaders and guides, and social and political subordination as the natural condition of states because they were collections of families. Bishop Samuel Horsley, the pre-eminent defender of this official ideology among High Churchmen in the 1790s and 1800s, claimed, 'all the particular forms of government which now exist are the work of human policy, under the control of God's general over-ruling providence' (emphasis added). Using this providential politico-social theology Anglicans were able to triumph over radicals between 1789–1815, reinforcing the Church of England as a guarantor of social order. This left the Church of England as the possessor of a newly formulated effective corpus of political theory after 1815 particularly based on the need to perpetuate Establishment of the Church because its doctrine was true.

The twentieth-century Catholic Australian historian, Eris Ó'Brien, caustically captured this church-state connection by reducing the Church of England to the 'out-relief department of the British aristocracy'. While Ó'Brien reflected the now questionable view of that Church as spiritually moribund at the end of the eighteenth century, he also pointed to its illegal claim to be the Established Church of New South Wales in the colony's initial decades. But while Anglican establishment may not have been strictly a legal reality, it is the argument of this paper that it was a virtual one in the mind-set of Australian Anglicans for at least a century and a half after European settlement began. This was because Anglicanism arrived in Australia after centuries of formation and identity as a part of the ruling hegemony of the established order in

23. Clark, English Society, p. 231.

England. It was transplanted from there to a colonial society that sought initially to replicate that social and political order and, even after that proved impossible in the early nineteenth century, Australia remained predominantly a society which continued to value strongly its imperial connection and English values. Consequently, there was little in Australian Anglicanism or wider Australian society which prompted the church to question its traditional role and values in the English Antipodean colonies.

So Anglicanism in Australia arrived in the form of clergymen who were military chaplains paid by the state. Their own Evangelical sympathies and that of their supporters and patrons saw their brief as an evangelistic mission to convicts and Aborigines. But this mission was not expected to challenge the existing order. This is evident in Richard Johnson’s first church, which he built by his own initiative using what scarce resources and labour he could find. A T-shaped structure, it had demarcated pews for officers, soldiers, the 130 free people who sat with women convicts (suspicions of sexuality being stronger than threats to social subordination), convict superintendents, and male convicts. The whole congregation was presided over by Johnson at his reading desk. It was an encapsulation of the social subordination and good order desired by Johnson’s Anglican outlook, and that of the colonial authorities, and it sought to reinforce this hegemonic ideology for the new convict population of the colony. Although practical support for the colonial chaplains depended on the differing attitude of the governors, they were allotted resources such as land and convict labour for their church and personal needs. This early solidarity between the Church of England and the state, customary in England, solidified in the 1790s when chaplain Samuel Marsden accepted Governor Hunter’s appointment as a magistrate, giving among his reasons for doing so the need to participate in upholding the political and social order.

First, there is a great want of civil magistrates in the Colony—few that can do the duty of one. My second reason is that the settlement is in a general state of distraction and confusion. A magistrate has it in his power to rectify many abuses in the places where he resides when properly supported in his duty by the superior powers. In hopes of contributing a little towards bringing the inhabitants of this settlement under some proper government and subordination, I accepted the office of a magistrate. A third reason was

26. The Revd Richard Johnson was the first clergyman and colonial chaplain in New South Wales. He arrived as part of the First Fleet in 1788 and eventually left in 1800, a tired and disillusioned man.
that such abuses and grievances as I might not have it in my power to rectify I could with propriety represent them to the governor for his consideration. My last reason was that it was the governor's wish that I should act as a magistrate, and I did not feel myself at liberty to refuse him under the above circumstances.\footnote{A.T. Yarwood, \textit{Samuel Marsden: The Great Survivor} (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1977), pp. 50-51.}

It was an indication that the Church of England was assuming its traditional hegemonic role of moral guardian over colonists' and convicts' behaviour. The Church of England, in the persons of the colonial chaplains, would control not only the religion of the colony, but also enforce its public and legal morality and social order. Cooperation with established authority paid off for the Church. It resulted in the perpetuation of the Church of England as the officially supported Church until the 1820s, when it came under increasing attack. This initial favour extended by the governors to Anglicanism in New South Wales may have had much to do with the revival of a more autocratic governing style in the British empire between 1780 and 1830, following the loss of the North American colonies. C.A. Bayly has maintained that during this period there was a 'constructive conservatism' in imperial development which mirrored the Tory reaction at home to the French Revolution.\footnote{R. Brown, \textit{Church and State in Modern Britain 1700–1850} (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 135-74.} This was centred on the notion of Britain as a Christian empire as a bulwark against godless France, in which the Established Church of England was an important resource in renewed empire building. Anglicanism was to be forcefully supported in the empire among British colonial populations. The British political elite believed Established religion would be a force for greater conformity and docility in British colonial populations, in contrast to the independent cussedness of the North Americans.\footnote{C.A. Bayly, \textit{Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780–1830} (Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1989), p. 142.}

This establishment inheritance of the Church of England as moral supervisor and prop for the established order would continue to be the ideal of many Australian Anglican leaders for generations after initial colonization. It was a perpetuation in a colonial context of that Church's centuries-old role in England. Anglicans in colonial Australia remained staunchly opposed, therefore, to religious toleration in the first decades of settlement. This opposition to greater religious equality was epitomized in the symbolism of clerical dress, which was significant for an age when clothing was redolent with social meaning. In May 1837 the new
Roman Catholic bishop, Bede Polding, arrived at Governor Bourke's reception in his cassock. This was obviously an attempt to claim public recognition as a Roman Catholic bishop when Catholics, in 1828, had only just been emancipated in Britain. Polding was also seeking to have that recognition endorsed by the highest representative of a government that, until recently, had been officially Anglican. It was more than the Anglican bishop, William Grant Broughton, could bear. Scandalized at this public pretension by a Roman Catholic prelate to equality with the Church of England in a British colony he protested ineffectually to the governor.31

Polding viewed the Church of England under Broughton with suspicion and exasperation, mixed with caution towards a Church with self-evident access to the colonial government. Polding's own attitudes were coloured by his unquestioned Catholic presumptions that the Church of England was a heretical sect. He also saw himself in direct evangelistic competition with the larger Church of England, suggesting in 1842 that it was desirable to prevent the appointment of an Anglican bishop in Western Australia by a pre-emptive strike of erecting this colony into a fourth Catholic see.32 Polding, an English Benedictine monk, had arrived in the colony in 1835 as Bishop of Hiero-Caesarea and Vicar Apostolic of New Holland and Van Diemen. Almost immediately he recognized Broughton as one of his principal opponents in his efforts to secure equitable treatment for Roman Catholics from the colonial government. Broughton had been in New South Wales since 1829 as Archdeacon of New South Wales, and was consecrated Bishop of Australia in 1836. Coming from an England where Anglicans had been legally, socially and politically dominant over Catholics for centuries the two men were bound to clash. Polding regarded Anglicanism as 'cold' and was more anxious about the enthusiastic evangelism of Methodism on the adherence of his largely lower-class flock.33

But when it came to political influence Polding sensed himself at an acute disadvantage because of what he saw as an alliance between key colonial officials and the Church of England for the maintenance of Anglican supremacy. He reported on the 'smug domination of Protestant Toryism at Brisbane Water' in 1838, which he had had to oppose.34

33. Polding, Letters, June 1837, pp. 84-85.
34. Polding, Letters, July 1838, p. 106.
Later that year he was fulminating against the machinations of what he termed 'the High Church party' in the colonial government, which he believed was supporting religious intolerance among the judiciary, particularly Judges Willis and Burton. Specifically, Polding was referring to the monopoly on prison chaplaincy granted to the ministry of the Church of England by the prospective Gaol Act. He saw this, and other actions by Anglicans, as a political reaction against Bourke’s Church Act of 1836 which provided state aid to all denominations on a per capita basis. ‘Ever since the passing of the Church Act’, Polding complained, ‘which placed all religious denominations on an equal footing, there has been in the Tory Party a continued itching to resume or retain the name of Established Church as appertaining to the Church of England existing here’. While he disassociated ‘all the respectable Prot[estants]’ from such actions, he found it entrenched among leading figures of the colonial political establishment. Principally, he saw Broughton as heading an influential rearguard action against the religious equality brought about by the Church Act and asked Governor George Gipps ‘whether a hateful exclusiveness is to be introduced and established’. Polding saw Broughton as attempting to influence Gipps to answer affirmatively to the question (as he put it) of ‘whether one, whom the Right Honble Lord Glenelg [the Colonial Secretary] had distinguished “as the Bishop of the Church of England in Australia” is to be the only recognised Spiritual Head in the Colony...’ Nor was this suspicion of the continuing establishment aspirations of the Church of England limited to Polding. In July 1839 a general meeting of the Catholics in Sydney addressed a resolution to the imperial government. Specifically, they objected to Broughton alone of the colony’s ecclesiastical leaders having a seat on the Legislative and Executive Councils. They imputed undue influence to a figure whom they saw as anti-Catholic, and maintained he and his clergy were ‘persons who are aiming at, and struggling for superiority’. In 1840 Polding was still complaining to supporters overseas of Anglican supremacist influence.

Strong An Antipodean Establishment

Their great object is to overturn the Church Act, as it is called, by which perfect equality in civil matters is established in the colony, and to force the government to declare their sect to be the established church. This the government neither can nor will do. One of the judges [Willis] publicly stigmatised us some time since as idolators [sic]; another, Mr. Burton, has filled a large book with false statements and deceptions about us.41

Judge Burton demonstrates that the maintenance of Anglicanism as a dimension of the ruling hegemony was still valid in the 1840s to significant members of the colonial establishment in New South Wales. This was even after the passing of the Church Act demonstrated that Anglicanism was no longer considered valid for this purpose by peak establishment figures such as Governor Richard Bourke and the imperial authorities in London who permitted the Act to pass. The book Polding referred to was Burton's *The State of Religion and Education in New South Wales* which was a legal and partisan argument for the legitimacy of the Established superiority of the Church of England. In England, Burton argued following Edmund Burke, the Church was a 'part of the state itself'. Accordingly, as it was legally established in England it was also the established Church of England's colony.42 The problem, Burton asserted, was not establishment, but that the authorities did not support that Church as they should have, which resulted in unnecessary and disruptive religious pluralism.

Encouraged by the principle that the Colony was open alike to the Establishment of every form of Religion many Ministers of different denominations of Protestants, out of proportion to the number of Professors of their particular tenets, sought the promising field of Australia, at a time when it was in a great measure unoccupied by the Clergy of the National Church, and all of them are zealously engaged in forming congregations from the general mass of the population; often it must be stated, without reference to the Religious Opinions of those to whom they thus associate themselves. Nor is this to be wondered at, seeing that the Colony was almost wholly unprovided with religious means, when it lay as a great Moral Wilderness, apparently inviting culture, that Christian Societies and Pious Men should avail themselves of the opportunity for the propagation of their own particular forms of Worship. The only fault consisted in its being to so great an extent unoccupied by the Clergy of the National Church, as to admit of these new labourers, since [sic] this circumstance arose, not because their Ministrations were rejected by the People, but because the People had never enjoyed the advantages

of their sufficient establishment... In this an injury was done to the national Church, and to the common cause of True Religion.  

Not all Church of England laity saw Anglicanism through the lens of Burton's establishmentarianism. Earlier, E.S. Hall founded the newspaper, the Monitor, in 1826, where he fought for the rights of the marginalized in New South Wales society, including the convicts. Hall was a deeply committed Anglican with a good knowledge of theology. However, for his uncharacteristic Anglican support for the insubordinate sections of society he was summarily evicted from his pew in James's Church in Sydney by Archdeacon Thomas Scott. While some laity were prepared to step outside the bounds of the prevailing Anglican hegemony they were exceptions and were able to be publicly disciplined by the clergy who controlled the church and its official attitudes.

Unfortunately for Burton and Broughton and other Anglican leaders in the colony by the 1830s their Anglican establishment view had been superseded by a government acceptance of religious plurality. It had been replaced with an adaptation in the use of religion within the ruling hegemony. This adaptation can be clearly seen in Governor Bourke's dispatch to E.G. Stanley, the Colonial Secretary, in 1833, which Burton cites as an example of the attitude he inveighs against. According to Bourke, himself an Anglican,

> in a new country, to which persons of all religious persuasions are invited to resort, it would be impossible to establish a dominant and endowed church, without much hostility, and the great improbability of its becoming permanent; the inclination of these colonists, which keeps pace with the spirit of the age, is decidedly hostile to such an institution.

Consequently, Bourke argued for the equal support of all three religions in the colony (Anglican, Catholic and Presbyterian). Bourke's attitude is a useful reminder not to simplistically lump all Anglicans together, but his more liberal Anglican views were not congenial to the Anglican leadership in New South Wales. Bourke was from an Irish landed family who were liberal Anglican Whigs, whose chief cause in the 1830s was effective religious toleration. But his Whig view of religion and society was clearly at odds with the prevailing Toryism of the colony's Evangelicals and High Churchmen such as Bishop Broughton. But

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Bourke believed his analysis was the only one that made empirical sense given the new contemporary political realities and the emerging viewpoint of most colonists. It would also reduce public expenditure on religion, and create a greater obedience towards the clergy by their adherents. But the ultimate reason Burke gives for such a policy demonstrates that this was indeed an adaptation of the ruling hegemony to the new reality of legal enfranchisement of religious denominationalism in Britain and the increasingly prevailing world-view of the emerging colonial society of New South Wales.

I cannot conclude this subject, without expressing a hope amounting to some degree of confidence that in laying the foundations of the Christian religion in this young and rising colony, by equal encouragement held out to its professors in their several churches, the people of these persuasions will be united together in one bond of peace, and taught to look up to the Government as their common protector and friend, and that thus there will be secured to the state, good subjects, and to society, good men (emphasis added).47

Governor Bourke was advocating that although the support previously given solely to the Church of England for the maintenance of order in society and deference to the government should now be extended to other Churches, the government’s agenda about using religion for the inculcation of social subordination and deference remained the same as when it had formerly supported an Anglican monopoly. It was an adaptation of the ruling hegemony to the new imperial and colonial realities which enabled the continuation of the use of religion for political control.

This adaptation had become necessary in response to events in Britain, and from below in the society of New South Wales. In the colony there was an increasingly strong movement for self-government by free (non-convict) and emancipist settlers which provided a rallying point against the colonial government and the Church of England that was identified with it. The emergence of a free press gave these discontented settlers a wider voice. In Britain the constitutional revolution in Britain between 1828 and 1832 enfranchised Protestant Nonconformists and Roman Catholics. This new political fact of an emerging non-Anglican Parliament resulted in increasing government religious neutrality at home and in the colonies.48 Finally, other Churches were becoming organized in the colony and demanding their place in the colonial sun. This demon-


48. This consisted of the repeal in 1828 of the Test and Corporation Acts which formally debarred nonconformists from holding public office; the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1828; and the Reform Act of 1832 which widened the franchise beyond the landed classes of the gentry and aristocracy.
strates the way in which a new world-view, in this case support for a
religiously pluralistic society, can develop from below the socially ruling
group which consequently forces an adaptation of its hegemonic ideo-
logy by that group if its hold on power is not retained. Given that change
in the ruling landed classes’ support for religion, the end to the Church
of England’s quasi-establishment was only a matter of time after 1832.
It finally came in 1836 with the Church Act of Governor Richard Bourke
when state aid for all the churches in New South Wales was instituted
on an equitable basis. It was a loss of privilege that the Anglican clergy
fought against strenuously and lost. Their unwillingness to concede the
new situation of religious pluralism was mirrored in England where the
bishops became targets of popular rage for their hostility to the Reform
Bill in 1831 and the people of Carlisle burned their bishop in effigy,
while the bishop’s palace in Bristol suffered the real thing.49

The Church Act in New South Wales, which was largely copied in
other colonies, witnessed the first and final defeat of any formal erection
of Anglicanism into a legal establishment in Australia. Certainly Bishop
Broughton responded quickly to this when, impelled by his emerging
Tractarian emphasis on the spiritual independence of the Church, he
initiated the first synod of Australian and New Zealand bishops in 1850.
However, notwithstanding such developing institutional independence,
Church of England superior pretensions and support for colonial elites
continued to prevail throughout the nineteenth century. These Anglican
attitudes which had been possible under the old Anglican hegemony in
Britain and her colonies came to constitute the maintenance of an increa-
singly awkward cultural hegemony in Australia that was outmoded
when the state had relinquished it during the 1830s.

This now redundant world-view was perpetuated, among others, by
the expectations and social pressures of Anglican colonial elites who
made it difficult for any Anglican cleric who dared step out of such a
hegemonistic view of Anglicanism into any sort of radicalism, as the
Revd Louis Guistiniani found to his cost. He had been sent to the Swan
River Colony by the newly formed Western Australian Missionary Soc-

49. O. Chadwick, The Victorian Church: Part 1 1829–1859 (London: SCM Press,
brother of Charles James Fox, the leading Whig politician in the House of Commons in the late eighteenth century. In his memoirs of these colonial years Bunbury reveals the antagonism of his class towards Guistiniani.

Luckily he had neither talent nor art enough sufficiently to cloak his evil practices, as to hide them from the eye of the public, and his character soon being known, he was unanimously scouted from society and cut by every respectable person. Even his church at Guildford was deserted, and I think very properly, since no good could be obtained from listening to the doctrines of such a man as this, who had been bred a Jesuit, and turned Lutheran, and then Methodist; who had preached from a cask in Whitechapel; and who had proved himself odious and disreputable in every relation of life.50

Guistiniani had clearly let the side down—he was a spendthrift; if not a thief he was a reprobate to those who patronized him, and impertinent to the established authorities; and he was a wife-beater. Labelling him a Jesuit and a Methodist was to tar him with two of the most suspicious, if not seditious, religious labels known to right-thinking English Anglicans. No respectable colonist, such as Bunbury, would have anything to do with him.

It is true that Bunbury had an animus towards all missionaries, of whatever denomination, believing they were mostly intent on enriching themselves,51 but what had Guistiniani done to have such a blackened character? He had dared to go public about white brutality towards Aborigines on the frontier of settlement. He even went as far as the Colonial Office and was prepared to name specific colonists. While historians have echoed some of the colonists' criticisms by describing him as tactless and overzealous, John Harris describes him as a man whose 'sense of moral duty was stronger than his personal ambition'.52 To add to this colonial moral outrage Guistiniani was not even an Anglican, but a Moravian prepared to work under the aegis of the Anglican mission society. He was one of many German Lutherans and Moravians who made up most of the missionary personnel of the Church Missionary Society and other similar Anglican societies during the first half of the nineteenth century.53

51. Bunbury, Early Days, p. 53.
52. J. Harris, One Blood: 200 Years of Aboriginal Encounter with Christianity, A Story of Hope (Sydney: Albatross, 1990), p. 261.
53. P. Jenkins, 'The Church Missionary Society and the Basel Mission: An Early Experiment in Inter-European Cooperation', in K. Ward and B. Stanley (eds.), The

In addition to his *ad hominem* arguments, Bunbury also maligned Guistiniani’s missionary competence. He imputed that Guistiniani had provided indiscriminate charity for the Aborigines at the Society’s expense, and that he frequently used their labour for his own advantage. Bunbury also criticized the missionary’s lack of knowledge of the indigenous language, which was hardly surprising as Guistiniani was only in the colony for less than two years. Rather than religious knowledge, Guistiniani should have concentrated on teaching Aborigines civilized habits such as agriculture, clothing and honesty without which, Lieuten- ant Bunbury believed, they would not be able to appropriate the civilized belief in a Supreme Being. Bunbury and the others who constituted the establishment of the tiny Swan River colony consequently cut this prick to their consciences because they believed Guistiniani’s behaviour to be outside the pale of acceptability. Leading Anglicans in Western Australia expected political and religious conservatism from their clergy. It was positively required and, if necessary, compelled by the use of powerful social controls such as the social shunning of a recalcitrant clergyman. This would have a powerful effect when colonial populations were so small that social isolation and loneliness could quickly become intolerable. Guistiniani was finally forced to leave the colony in 1838, reflecting bitterly that ‘The Europeans stand in as much need of religious instruction as the natives’.

It therefore took an exceptional character to show any signs of Anglican radicalism against the social and religious conformity enforced by leading colonial elites, bishops and the whole establishment culture of Anglicanism imported into Australia from England. Again in Western Australian Anglicanism another cleric also came to grief on the rock of the power of the colonial establishment for questioning the prevailing social and political status quo. The Revd John Brown Gribble was appointed to the area around the frontier pastoral settlement of Carnarvon in Western Australia in 1885 by the Church of England Diocesan Missions’ Committee as evangelist to the Aborigines. Gribble was an untactful and sometimes hot-headed man, but he had a passionate concern for justice for the Aborigines against what he regarded as ‘unprincipled’ white men. In Carnarvon he encountered a pastoral system that, with its dependence on black labour, had reduced Aborigines to virtual


slave labour with brutal penalties for dissent. The system had a quasi-legal backing through a legal fiction in which it was maintained that Aborigines had voluntarily signed themselves into labour under the Masters and Servants Act. In fact most were forcibly captured. Aboriginal girls and women were assigned to white stockmen, and if they or their men ran away the police hunted them down. Shooting and tortures were not unknown. Gribble soon found himself in confrontation with the pastoralists and white townsfolk who, with a few exceptions, pressured the diocese for his withdrawal. The furore soon spread to Perth where Gribble found that white society and the Church’s missions’ committee had turned against him. The support of Bishop Henry Parry was not enough to override the prejudices of the colonists inflamed by the anti-Gribble attitude of the West Australian newspaper, owned by influential members of the Church of England. By 1886 Gribble had become a cause célèbre, ultimately having his priest’s licence to officiate in the diocese withdrawn and his mission formally closed. His treatment polarized the Church of England in Australia, with the bishops of Sydney, Goulburn and Ballarat pointedly issuing Gribble with general licences to officiate. But Gribble hoped to continue his mission after his libel suit against the West Australian in May 1897. During the case one Anglican pastoralist gave the following evidence.

I have heard of natives...being run down and unlawfully taken and I believed they were chained up... I have heard that nigger hunting in the northern parts of the colony has been a profitable employment... I have sent the women off to the white man myself...the women will be used as the white man wishes.55

Despite such evidence the verdict went against him. Gribble had to acknowledge defeat by the pastoral and Anglican establishment of the colony. He left Western Australia an impoverished and angry man and never recovered from his defeat. Despite going on to work in the Yarrabah mission in Queensland he died a few months later in 1893.56

This implicit cultural and religious requirement for Anglicans (which in the cases of Guistiniani and Gribble was made explicit) of acquiescence in the social and political status quo, coupled with a conviction of the inherent superiority of their Church over others constituted an informal culture of establishment long after its official demise in Governor Bourke’s Church Act in 1836. This assumption of an Anglican superiority naturally infuriated other Churches. John Smithies, the first Wesleyan minister in Western Australia, soon encountered it. In

55. Harris, One Blood, p. 425.
September 1840 he complained of Anglican superiority in a letter to one local newspaper. He had been the subject of a theological attack from the pulpit of the Revd John Wittenoom, the Colonial Chaplain and a rigid, if less than energetic, Tory High Churchman. According to Smithies, Wittenoom charged the Methodists with schism which deserved only condemnation, excommunication and 'final perdition'. Smithies interpreted Wittenoom's attitude as redolent with Anglican establishmentarianism. 'That all sectaries not in or of the Church of England as established by law and of course the Wesleyans too, were formally, publicly, authoritatively, and I suppose apostolically deprived of all claim or connection with a valid Christian Ministry, that our people and body...were doomed as a mass of schismatics'.

Like Polding before him, Smithies was also concerned with Anglican supremacist attitudes in members of the Executive Council where, he felt, a 'Church Party' directed the scant resources available to the impoverished colonial government away from the Wesleyans to the Church of England. The following year he was using the same term as Polding to describe his opponents as a 'High Church Party'. When the Methodists chose to absent themselves from the customary race meeting and ball to celebrate the colony's Foundation Day, and instead held a school feast for their Aboriginal pupils, they found themselves attacked in the newspaper for inculcating 'disrespect' to employers and 'insubordination to Rulers'.

A decade later Smithies was still reporting on how the political influence of local Anglicans stirred up antagonism towards himself and his Church in his attempts to develop an effective Aboriginal mission. The opposition of Governor Fitzgerald he felt had been excited by 'our newly arrived (Colonial) Secretary (High Church) and others...hence many have been our opponents and few our friends, amid other evils almost too much to be endured'.

Yet when colonial Anglicans showed themselves willing to work with the other Protestant Churches they found them almost unctuously grateful. The same John Smithies hosted the visit of Bishop Augustus Short of Adelaide (into whose diocese Western Australia came) to his native school in 1847. Smithies found Short a refreshing change from the superior condescension and opposition of Wittenoom. The bishop was

59. McNair and Rumley, Pioneer Aboriginal Mission, p. 56.
complimentary and supportive and even promised to recommend the mission's needs to the colonial government. Smithies described him glowingly as 'exceedingly affable, kind hearted and a liberal minded Bishop', a 'truly Christian Bishop', and expressed the fond wish—'Would our Mother Church had many sons like him'. Short's successor, and the first Bishop of Perth, Mathew Blagden Hale, got the same approval from local Congregationalists when he finally left the diocese in 1875. He received a formal address from Perth Congregationalists who saw in the bishop one who had their common Evangelical agenda at heart. 'We have ever recognised with pleasure your Lordship's readiness to contend for the truth as it is in Jesus, and for the great doctrine that the redeeming work of Christ alone is sufficient for the salvation of the soul'. In addition, they congratulated the bishop on his readiness to work with other [Protestant] Christians. 'We recognise your Lordship's hearty cooperation with others not belonging to your Church polity, in those measures which aim at the moral and social elevation of our fellow-Colonists...'

However, Hale also typified aspects of the same establishment mentality among colonial Anglicans (and most members of the British and colonial middle and upper classes), if a pamphlet he wrote in 1839 against the Chartists is any indication. This little pamphlet was explicitly titled, *First Letter shewing the Wicked and Rebellious Intentions of the Chartists, addressed to the Inhabitants of all Places in the West of England, where their Destructive Principles are Upheld*. It was written while Hale was curate of Wotton-under-Edge in Wiltshire. The Chartists, a working class movement for universal manhood suffrage which severely criticized the Church of England for siding with the rich and powerful, drew down upon them the full force of Hale's righteous indignation as either foolish or wrong. The Chartists social and political agenda threatened to dissolve the country into anarchy. England would be 'riot and confusion, and would be one scene of bloodshed and contention from end to end'. Accordingly, Chartists were 'a wicked and dangerous set, loving in rebellion against God and against man'. This purported incitement to rebellion by Chartist leaders was breaking both the laws of the land and God's law, for the legal rulers of the country 'MUST protect the laws,

they are ordained for that purpose'. So Hale arrived in Australia well-set in one of the crucial aspects of Anglican establishmentarianism—the existing authorities were divinely ordained and seeking to overthrow them was to rebel not just against the law, but against God and the divinely appointed social structure of the status quo.

Even at the end of his life Hale was still writing in classic Anglican establishment fashion of the need and use of religion as a moral restraint in society in his small book on his mission at Poonindie in South Australia which he wrote in his retirement. Explaining how he came to volunteer for the colonial Church and for Aboriginal missionary work, he cited his concern for the emancipated slaves in the West Indies.

At that time I had thought much and deeply upon the great responsibility which rested upon us, as a nation, with reference to those heathen races, which, in various parts of the world, have become subject to British rule. As regards the slaves just alluded to, I had very great doubts whether the measures which were being adopted for the amelioration of their condition would be really beneficial to them if those measures should be terminated by a mere Act of Emancipation. It appeared to me that the slaves, when freed from the compulsory control of those who had been their masters, would be subject to no control at all, unless some powerful moral influence could be brought to bear upon them, in place of the physical restraint from which they were being relieved, and I know of no moral influence which could be brought to bear upon them except by means of Christian teaching.

Therefore, throughout his life, and notwithstanding his willingness to work with other Protestant Churches in Western Australia, Hale believed in the same Anglican support for British established authority, and had an understanding of religion as a conformist social force, that was being effectively eroded as a hegemony from within colonial society in the eastern states. In the west it was not so offensive because of the overwhelming preponderance of Anglicanism in the small colonial population. State aid to the Anglican Church in Western Australia, for example, continued until 1890.

While Anglican-Protestant relations were fairly amicable in Western Australia due to Hale's moderate and cultured Evangelicalism and the relatively tiny size of the non-Anglican denominations, in the eastern colonies it was more common for other denominations to express hostility towards Anglican establishment mentality. John Dunmore

64. Hale, First Letter, p. 6.
Lang, the feisty first Presbyterian minister in Sydney, had already instructed Governor Brisbane in 1823 that tolerance was not one of the glories of the Church of England. Lang fought a long battle with the colonial government and the Colonial Office to recognize that the Presbyterians in New South Wales were equal to the Church of England because the Church of Scotland, from whence they came, was the other Established Church of Britain. He soon found that Broughton’s predecessor as archdeacon, Thomas Scott, did not see it that way. Scott refused to recognize Lang’s right to conduct legal marriages because he was not an Anglican clergyman. According to Lang, Scott had all the exclusiveness and intolerance characteristic of a High Churchman.

In the late 1840s Presbyterians in Tasmania experienced the same Anglican establishment superiority. The erection by Bishop Nixon of a Consistorial Court to which all colonists, irrespective of their denomination, could be summoned as witnesses was seen as another attempt to impose an Anglican supremacy. On the basis of his Letters Patent Nixon claimed that while his court only had jurisdiction over clergy in his diocese, nevertheless he did have juridical power to summon any witnesses according to law. It raised a storm of Protestant ire. The Congregationalists petitioned the queen to disallow this Anglican claim to jurisdiction over other denominations as contrary to ‘that liberty of conscience accorded to all men by the Divine Founder of our holy religion’. In October the Baptist clergy followed the Congregationalist example. The Presbyterians held a protest meeting in St Andrews on 12 August 1846 and passed a number of resolutions, along with a petition to the queen with 1053 male adult signatures that such a court was contrary to the Treaty of Union which had safeguarded the legal rights of the Church of Scotland. It caused the imperial government to deny that Bishop Nixon’s Letters Patent gave him legal jurisdiction over anyone other than the clergy and laity of his own Church. Nixon had been slow to recognize that the rules of the official game no longer allowed for the government to support only one denomination. No

70. Baker, Days of Wrath, p. 50.
73. Robinson, The Free Presbyterian Church, p. 139.
wonder colonial Protestant suspicions about Anglican supremacy, like those of their Catholic rivals, remained alive and well.

However, suspicions towards Anglicans did not stop other Protestant denominations uniting with them when it came to anti-Catholicism. Reciprocal anti-Catholic and anti-Protestant prejudice has been prevalent in Australian history. The attitude of Bishop Broughton to Bishop Polding at the governor’s reception was not just clerical rivalry. It was indicative of the long history of anti-Catholicism that had permeated Anglicanism since the Reformation. This religious antagonism towards Catholicism, not to say hatred at times, became acute in Australia because the predominant Catholic population was overwhelmingly comprised of Irish convicts and settlers. Consequently, Anglican anti-Catholicism coupled with British anti-Irishness to become a virulent sectarianism.

This became fevered in nineteenth-century Australia in 1868 when an attempt was made on the life of Prince Alfred, Queen Victoria’s second son. The prince’s visit to Australia created a glow of patriotic sentiment that was outraged when, in Sydney, an Irishman attempted to kill him. The inept assassination attempt by a mentally unstable Irishman brought out particularly venomous expressions of Anglican anti-Catholic sectarianism, perhaps because it threatened royalty, the beloved symbol of the political and imperial establishment whose bastion Anglicans saw themselves as forming. The result was that the long-held fear and hatred of the English and Scots for the Irish and their Catholic Church burst out like a boil on the face of colonial society. It remained there for decades to come. In this bitter religious and racial division Anglican clergy were to the fore. The Revd Zachary Barry of St Jude’s, Randwick, in Sydney, lambasted plotters who would ‘shoot the son of our unrivalled Queen—the noblest, the gentlest, the purest, the most sympathetic monarch that ever adorned a throne’. No Catholic could have sung a better paean of praise to Mary than this Protestant clergyman to his queen. But the xenophobic Barry went on to say ‘there has ever been as there is now, jealous, watchful, insidious, unscrupulous, the adverse influence of the foreigner’. Barry did not have to spell out for his Anglican hearers his broad hint that Irish and Catholics were not only disloyal foreigners but also potential treacherous assassins of royalty.

Barry was expressing a normal Anglican anti-Catholicism that, in its emphasis on the potential political subversiveness of Catholicism, was a normative aspect of Anglican establishmentarianism. Bishop Polding

found himself having to combat this, as a consequence of O'Farrell's assassination attempt.

Some unfavourable things have now happened in the colony, and many powerful men in high positions in the conduct of civil affairs have turned those things assiduously to the disrepute of the Catholic religion. They pretend that the Catholic religion is basically Irish and seditious and that Protestantism is an English birthright. It is the same calumny by which after England had been restored to the Church in the reign of Mary who had married Philip of Spain, the schismatics pretended that the Catholic religion would inevitably bring the British throne under Foreign power.75

The same mix of suspicions and beliefs about Catholicism as being treacherous because it was foreign and anti-Christian had constituted mainstream Anglican establishment thinking for centuries, not just among the clergy but also the political and social elites of England. It had been part of the aristocratic and Anglican hegemony of England since the sixteenth century, remembered in the victory over the Spanish Armada and in the annual celebrations and sermons on the anniversary of the 1605 Catholic Gunpowder Plot. In the debates over Catholic emancipation at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Anglicans still played the age-old card of Catholic disloyalty on the basis that Catholics would not keep faith with heretics.76 Even in 1874 William Gladstone, Prime Minister and devout Anglican, questioned the loyalty of British Catholics in his pamphlet, The Vatican Decrees in their Bearing on Civil Allegiance: A Political Exposition, which overreacted to the promulgation of papal infallibility at the First Vatican Council.77 Anti-Catholicism was part and parcel of the upbringing of both lay and clerical members of the Anglican establishment in Britain and, consequently, in Australia. It did not decline as a major social force in Britain until the mid-1850s, due to increasing Protestant disunity, loss of effective pan-Protestant leadership, the wartime alliance with Catholic France in the Crimea, and the distraction of Anglican ritualism.78 However, it still remained a force at the popular social level, where it was often united with hostility to Catholic Irish immigrants.79 Anti-Catholic sectarianism was not disreputable in the nineteenth century, but a mainstream dimension of British religion, culture and politics. It was neither born in Australia, nor parti-

75. Polding, Letters, 6 September 1868, III, pp. 304-305.
76. Clark, English Society, p. 355.
cularly virulent there compared with Britain. More particularly, it was a normal part of Anglican establishment life in England and its religious culture that Anglican clergy and settlers (and British Protestants of all hues) brought with them to Australia.

This combination of Anglican establishment mentality with its associated anti-Catholicism reached its peak in Australia during the conscription campaigns during World War I. Characteristically placing the best interests of the British empire and of God on equal footing, the Church of England enlisted in the government’s cause of recruitment and conscription against the devilish Catholic opposition to the issue led by Archbishop Daniel Mannix of Melbourne. Canon Robert Moore, of St John’s, Fremantle, and a leading advocate of this common position, preached to his congregation in the early months of the war about there being ‘no question about the tremendous vocation of our Empire’. This vocation, he explained in another sermon, was that ‘all nations should range themselves against Prussian arrogance, pledge breaking, and mad grasping after world power’. Lest his hearers objected that Germans were Christians also, the Canon explained that they had lapsed from faith. ‘German Protestantism has become synonymous with Rationalism …which has explained away every Catholic truth’.80 Having cast the war onto a plane of spiritual truth, when it was prolonged beyond early expectations the usual claim of the clergy was that victory would not be won until a requisite moral regeneration had taken place. In 1916 Canon Moore again explained to his congregation in a sermon that the ‘War is a sort of surgery… Not until we learn to cleanse life and purify ideals can we see the end. Not until as one man we put service before gain and sacrifice before self can we hope to end [the] struggle and bring peace’.81

The subsequent defeat of conscription in a referendum in October 1916 revealed that Australian sympathies were narrowly in accord with the Catholic stand. Only after the end of the war, with its horrors increasingly apparent, did Anglican clergy begin belatedly to examine their unquestioning support for the government and the war. From this post-war reaction, slowly there began to emerge a more critical attitude towards the state and established society that was new for Australian Anglicanism. Yet support for established authority which had so long been a characteristic of Anglicanism since the sixteenth century was not going to be jettisoned easily.

From the prevailing outmoded hegemony of an identity as the religious bastion for the prevailing political and social realities there were more departures by a few Anglican clergy by the early twentieth century. Here and there were a few indications of a more nationalist Australian Anglicanism and even of a genuinely socialist Anglicanism among Anglo-Catholics prior to World War I. But these were mostly among clerical minority groups and individuals from an Anglo-Catholic stable which were largely confined to internal church debates or local congregations. They made little impact on wider society until the establishment of the Brotherhood of St Laurence for poor relief and welfare in Melbourne in 1933. But the Christian Socialist views of Anglo-Catholics like Tucker, and even Bishop Reginald Stephen of Newcastle were hardly indicative of a widespread change to the conservative imperialism that still prevailed among the episcopal leadership or the laity of the Church.  

After the uncritical support by clergy for official conscription it was not until after World War I that institutional or official Anglicanism began to appear to the Australian public as anything other than a staunch advocate of the social and political status quo. In this shift away from an establishment world-view the Church of England in Australia was some decades behind similar signs of change in the Church of England. There, it had begun in the late nineteenth century with the emergence of radical socialist Anglicans such as the Revd Stuart Headlam and his small ginger group, the Guild of St Mathew, and the more mainstream Christian Social Union led by the liberal Anglo-Catholic Bishop Charles Gore. It was not until the Great Depression that Australian Anglicanism demonstrated it was beginning to be a cautiously critical Church. Analysis of the 1930s Depression by church leaders tended to be long on moralistic solutions but short on the social or structural change needed to redress the effects of the worldwide Depression, exacerbated by an Australian government committed to non-intervention. Yet there were a few indications of a more critical engagement with the widespread economic deprivation. By 1932 Archbishop Henry Le Fanu of Perth had begun to criticize the Church for not doing more to assist the unemployed.  

82. Father Tucker initially founded the Brotherhood of St Laurence in Newcastle in 1930 where he had been appointed to the parish of Adamstown by his brother-in-law, Bishop Reginald Stephen, who founded the Melbourne branch of the Christian Social Union in 1920. C. Holden, From Tories at Prayer to Socialists at Mass: St Peter’s, Eastern Hill, Melbourne 1845–1990 (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1996), pp. 73, 74, 210-12.

the local level some Anglicans adopted a more challenging response as the Depression lengthened. In Collie, a south-west coal-mining town with a reputation of religious disinterest, there was acute unemployment to which the town’s churches responded traditionally at first by limiting themselves to the alleviation of poverty. But as the distress continued, clergy, including the Anglican priest, began to publicly call for a more equitable society. They called for a government inquiry into the mechanisms of the economic system. They desired to know why, in the midst of an abundance of goods, many Australians were suffering a poverty ‘which is demoralising and degrading to them’. But it was still a circumspect criticism by clergy only slowly becoming aware of alternatives to the prevailing social and economic systems in Australia.

The effect of the Depression in producing a new cautiously critical Anglicanism made a more substantial impact on Australian society in the election of Ernest Burgmann as Bishop of Canberra and Goulburn in 1934. It was an election of a diocesan synod and not merely a diocesan committee. Therefore the choice of Burgmann represented a decision made by all the clergy and all the lay representatives of the parishes of the diocese. As such it was something of a sea change from the usual English episcopal candidates in Australia made by a representative cross-section of Anglicans in Canberra and Goulburn. Burgmann’s theological outlook had been formed by his working-class background, his lively intellectual curiosity, and an experience of people’s hardship and distress during the Depression when he was warden of St John’s Theological College, Morpeth, near Newcastle. He came to believe that Western society was in crisis after the turmoils of war, class division, secularism, and social and economic inequality. He also believed that Christianity had a unique contribution to make in facilitating the more equitable Australian society that he believed was required in order to address this crisis. Burgmann was highly critical of any Church, his own included, which accepted social injustices. ‘Churches’, he asserted, ‘are always a great danger to religion. They get interested in themselves, in their own aggrandisement and power, in countless things that keep them too busy to live close to the life of the people. Churchmen get interested in a world beyond this world largely to escape the trouble of

setting right the wrongs that afflict the human race'. He wanted his own Church to become 'more and more a Church with an Australian temperament, conscious of an Australian task'. According to Burgmann, the Church of England in Australia should be less and less a Church of the English in Australia.

Ideas such as these were sufficient to nickname him 'the Red Bishop' and a Bolshevik by an Australian establishment fearful of Soviet Russia and anything that resembled it. In 1951, when the Menzies' government lost its referendum to outlaw the Communist Party in Australia, Burgmann was named in parliament by the Liberals as being among those church leaders responsible for the loss because he was a Communist stooge.

The liberal Whip in the House of Representatives, H.B. Gullett, made an analogy between Burgmann and twelfth-century Thomas A'Beckett when he ascribed to Burgmann Henry II's famous epithet about that troublesome Archbishop of Canterbury, by stating in the House that Burgmann was 'at least a most meddlesome priest'. It was certainly an unaccustomed hostility from the conservative political party towards the Church of England in Australia. Nor was Burgmann in any more favour, during the same period, among conservative Protestant groups and the Masons where he was commonly described as a 'Judas' or a 'Jesuit'.

But Burgmann was indicative of a new phenomenon among Australian Anglican bishops, a moderate social progressive whose vision of Christ made him hope for an Australian society that was more just and equitable, particularly towards the less well off. He was not alone as there were a few other bishops representative of a Social Gospel approach to their faith, namely Reginald Halse in the Riverina, John Moyes in Armidale, and Bishop Horace Crotty of Bathurst. Alongside Burgmann, the appointment of these bishops represented a radical departure at the highest level of Anglican institutional leadership which indicates the beginning of a change in the prevailing conservative culture. Burgmann had no thoughts of introducing Communism but he stood out in conformist 1930s society because he dared to criticize the way things were. His was 'an ethical idealism that was centred firmly in Jesus Christ as the great, divine exemplar'. The fact that such a man could be elected a

87. Hempenstall, Meddlesome Priest, p. 251.
88. Hempenstall, Meddlesome Priest, p. 251.
89. Hempenstall, Meddlesome Priest, p. 293.
90. Hempenstall, Meddlesome Priest, pp. 287-88.
91. Hempenstall, Meddlesome Priest, p. 303.
92. Hempenstall, Meddlesome Priest, p. 142.
bishop was a small but significant sign that the Church of England in Australia was becoming less wedded to its traditional conservative world-view. The Depression had awakened Burgmann and just a few other Anglicans, such as the Anglo-Catholic Canon Farnham Maynard in Melbourne, to the social and political dimension of the ethical claims of Christianity. That one of these more radical men should have been appointed a bishop was the first chink in the self-satisfied armour of Australian Anglican establishmentarianism.

For too long in colonial and commonwealth Australia the Anglican Church clung to its identity as a subordinate group to the aristocratic and landed society that ruled England, the United Kingdom, and colonial Australia. But by the 1830s that ruling group adapted its need of religion for political and social control, changing course from supporting an Anglican monopoly to a new acceptance of official religious pluralism. However, the Anglican Church was unable to display the same flexibility. In Australia, Anglican clergy and leading laity demonstrated a tenacious attachment to the old hegemony of Anglican superiority and social and political deference towards political authority long after it had ceased to matter in the political processes of either Britain or Australia. They remained attached to it and uncritical of it up to World War I. Only after that conflict did it become apparent that Anglican unquestioned support for the government and the war was increasingly out of step with the conflict’s horrors and its toll of Australian men in combat. That was the catalyst for the beginnings of more circumspection and even for some signs of Anglican attitudes critical of established political authority in Australian Anglicanism. The continued devotion to an outmoded Anglican hegemony had been ultimately self-defeating in Australian society because it alienated potential allies in other denominations, and it also associated Anglicanism with political and social privilege contrary to the emerging egalitarian ethos of Australians. It is a salutary reminder to any religious group of how difficult it can be for privileged subordinates in a ruling hegemony to adapt to their loss of power when a dominant group’s interests change. In addition, the willingness of the Church of England throughout much of its history in England and in Australia to serve as a hegemonic instrument of the ruling order may account for why there has been so little radicalism in the history of Anglicanism in these countries.