

Fledgling South African Anglicanism and the Roots of Ritualism

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Abstract

The early years of Anglican ministry in South Africa were primarily among English settlers. Their worship patterns, for the most part, reflected the general trends of English Anglicanism at the time, which itself was influenced theologically and materially by a moderate form of Calvinism. This article examines the ethos of the early generation of Anglicans, and highlights some of the possible reasons why a moderate Calvinistic stance seemed to suit the ordinary settler classes. However, the status quo was challenged by the arrival of Bishop Robert Gray in 1848. Thus, the article continues by exploring some of the reasons why Gray aroused such strong feelings in certain congregations. Among the most important reasons for the opposition against Gray were his Tractarian sympathies. While many historians have agreed that Gray was a high church cleric, most stop short of labelling him a Tractarian. This article critically examines Gray's sympathies and posits that while he started out firmly within the high church party of Anglicanism, he slowly moved closer and closer to Tractarianism. Finally, the article considers aspects of Gray's leadership which encouraged a gradual move from moderate Calvinism towards a more definite Tractarian and ritualist stance as the nineteenth century drew to a close.

Keywords: South African Anglicanism; Ritualism; Bishop Robert Gray; Tractarianism



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Introduction

There is general agreement among historians that Anglicanism in South Africa has a strong Anglo-Catholic¹ ethos (Davenport 1997, 57; England 1989, 17–20; Hinchliff 1963, 137, 191; Nuttall 2006, 318). It is not only historians who agree on this interpretation. By the end of the nineteenth century, the Anglo-Catholic leanings of Anglicanism in the Cape and Natal colonies had aroused the suspicions of the Imperial Protestant Federation (Wolffe 2008, 55). This is not surprising, given that the colony’s first bishop was supported by the Colonial Bishops Fund (CBF)² and that a great deal of additional backing for clerical stipends and church building was granted through the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG)—both institutions which, in the mid-nineteenth century, were influenced by high churchmen³ and Tractarians.⁴ However, Anglicanism in the southern African colonies did not always embody this ethos.

Anglican Congregations in South Africa before Bishop Gray

The “English Church” (Darby 1977, iii),⁵ as it was known in the Cape and Natal Colonies in the early nineteenth century, appears, for the most part, to have been a reflection of the dominant churchmanship in Britain during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; namely middle-of-the-road Calvinism. It seems that Anglican

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- 1 Today it is common to use Anglo-Catholicism as an umbrella term for movements on the Catholic pole of the Catholic-evangelical Anglican spectrum. It will be used in this article as a descriptive term incorporating Tractarianism, ecclesiology and ritualism (all defined below), but not including the older high church faction.
 - 2 For a detailed investigation into the development and work of the Colonial Bishops Fund, see Hardwick (2014, 99–131). For a brief introduction to the high church nature of the SPG, see Le Couteur (2008, 202).
 - 3 By the early nineteenth century a proponent of high church ideals in Anglicanism was usually someone who valued the apostolic succession and its expression through the traditional three-fold ordained ministry (deacon, priest and bishop); the inherited liturgy and sacraments of the church; the supremacy of the Bible, along with the accepted creeds; the importance of the Early Church and its witness; sacramental grace and its outworking in good works, embodied in self-denial and charity (as opposed to the evangelical focus on individual spiritual conversion and ecstatic experiences); and a belief in the divine right of a royal line of rulers, exemplified in a strong bond between church and state. See Nockles (1994, 25–26).
 - 4 One of the broader movements, which sought to revive an awareness of the Catholicity of Anglicanism during the nineteenth century, was Tractarianism. It centred around three theologians at Oxford University (hence the “Oxford Movement”): John Keble (1792–1866), Edward Pusey (1800–1882) and John Newman (1801–1890), and emerged in the 1830s around the time of John Keble’s *Assize Sermon*. In summary, they espoused belief in apostolic succession; divine right episcopacy; the church as legitimate interpreter and custodian of scripture as mediated through the Catholic traditions of antiquity; priestly vocation and anointing; the real presence at the Eucharist; Eucharistic sacrifice; baptismal regeneration; the power of the ordained clergy to forgive sins; and the autonomy of the church from the state. See Herring (2016, 6) and Pickering (1991, 17).
 - 5 Darby notes that to use the word “Anglican” for this period in history, is really anachronistic. He chooses to avoid anachronisms. I, on the other hand, choose to use “Anglican” and “Anglicanism” simply for convenience.

settlers coming to South Africa carried the broadly Calvinistic sense of worship and worship-space with them. Consider the earliest church buildings of South Africa, of which St John's in Bathurst (built in 1829) is a typical example: simple rectangular white-washed interior, with clear-glass windows and little in the way of furnishings besides a pulpit, reading desk and communion table.⁶ Pew rents determined congregational seating patterns along class lines (Hinchliff 1963, 23). Vestments tended to be simple: clergy wore a surplice for most of the service, but changed into a Genevan-style gown for preaching.⁷ Consider also the descriptions of spirited metrical psalmody in Cape Town Anglican congregations from the late 1820s, indicative of Reformed practice, rather than the hymnody which was characteristic of Methodist and congregational worship of the time (Smith 1968, 49). Even in matters such as Christian conduct and spirituality, a strongly Reformed character was discernable.⁸ Such congregations also shared a desire to remain independent, content to function along congregational lines rather than under centralised Diocesan authority (Hinchliff 1963, 22–24, 35; Whibley 1982, 46).⁹ Additionally, the clergy coming to South Africa to minister as colonial chaplains appear to have been mostly evangelical in character, particularly those sponsored by the Colonial Church Society (Beckman 2011, 36).¹⁰ For such clergy and laity, theological and ceremonial developments which signified a move away from Calvinist teaching on the unmediated relationship between an individual believer and Christ, would have been offensive at best. For them, defending the church from a perceived Catholic advance may have been paramount to defending the true Christian faith. Yet, despite this independence and the Calvinistic influences on churchmanship, there were requests for a local bishop through the SPG to the government in Britain (Hinchliff 1963, 24–26).¹¹

Equally important, though, was that the colonial Anglican Church in South Africa at the time was dominated by lay involvement and a strong sense of the democratic rights of

6 Lewis and Edwards (1934, 20) speak of the British Colonial state paying for a building to seat 1 100–1 200 people, including a pulpit, reading desk, clerk's desk and an altar. Hardwick (2014, 73) suggests that "Churchmen in both Canada and the Cape claimed that colonists built churches simply because they wanted 'something respectable to build'."

7 Note the strong negative response of the congregation at St Paul's in Durban when a priest tried to preach in a surplice (1856–57) (Darby 1977, 169–170). Note also the cries of "No Popery" from the St George's congregation in Cape Town when their priest preached on fasting during Lent in 1840 (Lewis and Edwards 1934, 25).

8 For example, the accusation of "Popery" from the St George's congregation in Cape Town when their priest preached on fasting during Lent in 1840 (Lewis and Edwards 1934, 25).

9 Hinchliff (1963) notes that clergy were not necessarily against the diocesan structures that a bishop would bring, but the congregations themselves seemed to prefer the independence to which they had become accustomed. Democratization of hierarchical ecclesiastical models was not unique to Anglicanism, or to the Cape. Indeed, the Roman Catholic congregation in Cape Town before the arrival of Bishop Griffith in 1838 also fostered a strong lay leadership model, along with Catholics in the USA (Denis 1998, 75–82).

10 Beckman also lists all the clergy in the Cape Colony with a brief biography (Beckman 2011, 30–35).

11 Even evangelical clergy were requesting the appointment of a bishop (Beckman 2011, 110).

its church members (Hardwick 2014, 8, 67).¹² Because of the Cape Colony's history as a military garrison, the ministrations of Anglicanism began through military chaplains, but were extended to civilian chaplains once non-military settlers began arriving.¹³ It was the burgeoning lay settler groups in Cape Town, Grahamstown and Port Elizabeth which supported and galvanised the church (Hinchliff 1963, 10–18; Lewis and Edwards 1934, 12–25).¹⁴ Thus, Hardwick (2014, 89) is probably correct when he says, “The laity in South Africa ... helped transform a military chaplaincy into a civilian church.” Perhaps it was this vested interest in the church which shaped the special role lay members played in the early growth of the church. Hardwick (2014, 72), speaking of colonial Anglican churches in general, adds, “... the colonial Church grew because it was supported by a diverse lay community that was highly mobile and highly proficient in raising money and building networks of recruitment. The colonial Anglican laity was, however, a shifting, heterodox population who could voluntarily join the Church and voluntarily leave it.”

Also important is the nature of respectability which was linked with Anglican worship in South Africa during the early days of the colony under British rule. It seems that numerous Dutch colonists, who were actually members of the “established” Dutch Reformed Church, attended Anglican services to increase their standing and respectability (Hardwick 2014, 68). Some even claimed that the Dutch enjoyed Anglican liturgy (Hardwick 2014, 68). Indeed, the *Book of Common Prayer 1662*, which inherited much from its 1549, 1552 and 1559 progenitors, contained a great deal of Reformed doctrine (Devereux 1965, 49–68). In a few cases, such strategic allegiance converted into actual adoption of Anglicanism, as in Graaff-Reinet where 15 Dutch settlers were among the signatories of a petition for an Anglican clergyman (Hardwick 2014, 72). Indeed, the man who came in response to this plea was a staunch evangelical whose preaching style suited the theological stance of both the small British settler population and the large Dutch population (Beckman 2011, 109–111). In other circumstances, attendance did not necessarily convert to acceptance of Anglican rituals and membership. It is possible that the strong Calvinistic influence of the Dutch attendees in Anglican churches resulted in a stronger sense of Reformed doctrine and practice. Additionally, there appears to have been significant fluidity between Christian denominations in the colony, such that rules of membership were fairly flexible. Hardwick relates an incident where the voting rights of lay members of a vestry meeting

12 Hewitt claims that the colonial clergy of the time were not licensed and were only subject to the governor of the Cape Colony (Hewitt 1887, 1).

13 For a full list of clergy stationed at the Cape Colony from 1795–1847, see Hewitt (1887, Appendix F).

14 Much of Anglicanism's early history in South Africa appears to be based on a series of articles which appeared in the *Church Chronicle* in 1884, written by James Hewitt. Hewitt later produced a book entitled *Sketches of English Church History in South Africa* (1887), incorporating these articles. It is presumably Hewitt's book which Hinchliff (1963) uses as a source in his history, even though it is not always cited. Hewitt does not venture before 1795, so where Hinchliff got his earlier records is a mystery.

in Grahamstown were called into question by the resident clergyman (John Heavyside). Heavyside thought that only members who received Anglican sacraments were entitled to vote. His vestry, on the other hand, felt that anyone who attended church regularly should be considered a member, and therefore an eligible voter (Hardwick 2014, 76). Thus, historians have found it tricky to gauge the accuracy and reliability of attendance records for Anglican churches.

There was no Anglican bishop in South Africa before the arrival of Robert Gray in 1848. While newly consecrated bishops *en route* to their dioceses in India and Australia had performed episcopal duties, the secular role of bishop was designated to the governor (Davenport 1997, 52; Lewis and Edwards 1934, 18–23). Thus, there was no specific system of parishes, nor for that matter, clerical formation and support. Significantly, there was no specific authority figure to promote particular doctrines or to regulate worship before his arrival.

Robert Gray, High Churchman or Tractarian?

It was into this context that Robert Gray (1809–1872), the newly appointed metropolitan Bishop of Cape Town, arrived in the Cape Colony on 20 February 1848 to take up residence in his diocese.¹⁵ Recent historians have been alternately scathing (Beckman 2011, 87; Guy 1983, 39, 114) or indifferent¹⁶ concerning Gray's contribution to South African history. Only a few paint him in a guardedly positive light (Southey 1998, 18–25). In current church and social history, he is overwhelmingly overshadowed by the figure of John Colenso (1814–1883), first Bishop of Natal (see below). Nevertheless, it is clear that he was respected during his lifetime and in the immediate decades after his death, most particularly by clergy and laity with Tractarian leanings. Notwithstanding his current position in the greater historical narrative, historians agree that Gray should be remembered for two contributions: for his untiring energy, visiting vast swathes of his diocese and establishing numerous churches on the way; and for his ambition to secure independence for the Anglican Church in South Africa.

The aim in this section is not to evaluate whether his contribution to history was positive or negative, nor to analyse his personal leadership style as a bishop, but to see to what

15 Gray's diocese covered what is now the geographical region of South Africa. It was one of the largest dioceses in the world at the time.

16 Southey (1998, 18) supplies an excellent list of contemporary historians' views.

extent he enabled the growth of ritualism¹⁷ in the Province he helped to shape. An important aspect of this aim is to determine where Gray's sympathies lay, primarily through his actions as a bishop. Was he a typical high churchman? Did he, as Le Couteur (2008, 196) suggests of colonial high church protagonists, envision an "organic society held together by bonds of deference, affection, and habit ... a conception of society as hierarchic and authoritarian, in which a person's station in life was defined by private (landed) property (or lack of it)?" Additionally, was he a conservative upholder of the *status quo* who was known neither as a pioneer nor an innovator?¹⁸

Gray told a colleague that his aim in his new diocese was to "engraft a new system—a new phase of religion—upon a previously existing one" (Hardwick 2014, 118). From the context detailed above, this entailed imposing an episcopal and hierarchical model, influenced by Tractarian theologies of episcopacy espoused by the CBF, upon a strongly democratised and Calvinistically influenced laity. If funding is anything to go by, the financing of the new Cape Town Diocese, which was initially administered by the CBF, showed just how nominal the interest in a local bishop was. Indeed, of the £17 700 required to establish the diocese, local fundraising had accumulated a mere £193 (Hardwick 2014, 109)!¹⁹ When the Diocese was eventually created and Gray consecrated, he was warmly welcomed by a good many of the clergy and congregations in the Cape Colony, but not everybody was quite as happy; after all, clerical and lay independence was being severely curtailed by episcopal authority, even if that authority was essentially "conciliatory" (Hinchliff 1963, 35, 38). Interestingly, historical accounts seem to dwell equally on the clerical *and* lay opposition to episcopal oversight. Indeed, all the South African bishops of the 1850s were at some point or another challenged for their so-called tyrannical leadership and ritualist tendencies; Gray was not the only target.²⁰ The point is that independence was not only a lay phenomenon. If the popularity of the *idea* of a bishop is laid aside, to what extent did Gray conform to the authoritarian model, which seems to have been so feared by democratically-minded settlers? The answer lies in the type of historical source you consult. "Supporters spoke in praise of his principled determination and single-mindedness, opponents of an authoritarian

17 A new and more militant form of Anglo-Catholic revival began in the 1860s. This is what has come to be known as "ritualism" in Anglican literature. Theologically, one of the most important underpinnings of the later ritualist wave of revival (from the 1860s onwards) was related to the doctrine of the real presence at the Eucharist, which had gradually been developing since the 1830s. For the early Tractarians, real presence was a "spiritual" reality; but for the ritualists it had become a physical one (see Herring 2016, 201). The reality of the physical presence required, in their minds, the appropriate liturgical and ceremonial context; hence the revival of Roman ceremonies and manual acts, as well as the introduction of incense. While it seemed to the ritualists that their theological beliefs were natural steps in a gradual progression of logical thought, the general English public was not ready for such advanced imitations of Roman Catholicism.

18 Reed (1996, 112) has suggested that high churchmen embodied such characteristics.

19 Interestingly, Hinchliff (1963) puts the figure closer to £18 000—a small difference in our modern thinking of currencies, but a fairly large sum in the nineteenth century.

20 See, for example, Hinchliff (1963, 43–45 and 48–53).

rigidity and inflexibility” (Southey 1998, 20). Perhaps what was missing from Gray’s approach was a concerted effort to adjust to local sensibilities, mainly working class,²¹ before making major liturgical and structural changes reflecting upper class sensibilities. On the other hand, a form of diocesan government may never have evolved if Gray had not been strongly resolute in his approach to impose structure. Whatever antagonistic clergy and laity thought of Gray’s leadership style, he did seem to value the voice of the laity, even if guardedly. After all, he was willing to go against his mentors in England, and some clergy in South Africa, and give the laity a voting voice within local Provincial and Diocesan governing systems (Southey 1998, 22). His reason was that in a voluntary church system, the bulk of the funds would come from the laity. Thus they were entitled to a say in its governance (Southey 1998, 22).

Most historians agree that Gray was a Tractarian sympathiser (Beckman 2011, 87; Brember 2013, 208; Hinchliff 1963, 30; Southey 1998, 20). Southey (1998, 21) goes so far as to suggest that he was “profoundly” influenced by Tractarianism. Gray often consulted Samuel Wilberforce (1805–1873), then Bishop of Oxford, who was the unofficial leader in high church circles (Hinchliff 1963, 83). It seems that Gray considered Wilberforce a mentor or, at the very least, a confidant. It is likely, then, that he too considered himself a moderate high churchman. Indeed, it seems that he considered himself as a moderate churchman (Beckman 2011, 87). But was Gray’s ministry in South Africa typically high church?

High churchmen were characterised as valuing the following: the apostolic succession expressed through the traditional three-fold ordained ministry; the inherited Anglican liturgy and sacraments of the church; the supremacy of the Bible and accepted creeds; the importance of the Early Church and its witness; sacramental grace and its outworking in good works; and a belief in the divine right of a royal line of rulers, exemplified in a strong bond between church and state (Nockles 1994, 25–26; Platt 2016, 332). If these criteria are examined alongside the evidence of Gray’s life, the following conclusions can be deduced.

Firstly, he accepted apostolic succession and the three-fold ministry as well as the hierarchy which it implied. Importantly, he seems to have accepted this tenet with particularly high church nuances, where the bishop represented *and* embodied the church in a given geographical place.²² Thus, when Gray appointed Charles Mackenzie (1825–1862) as missionary bishop to the Zambezi, he was putting into practice the model of sending a bishop as the centre of a missionary endeavour, rather than appointing someone once local congregations had already been established (see discussion below). In other words, the bishop launches the church, rather than

21 In Gray’s own words, on his visitation of the eastern part of the diocese, “The people are too often course and offensive ...” (Hinchliff 1963, 39).

22 This was in direct opposition to Venn’s evangelical missionary outlook which stressed the building up of a local community from the base. This local base would later elect/appoint its own episcopal leaders.

consolidating it. Perhaps he was responding to his own hard experience of shepherding an existing loose structure of churches, hoping that starting from scratch would be more expedient. Thus, Gray was an exponent of the bishop as head of the local church. One of his first sermons, once arriving in Cape Town, was on “the subject of episcopacy—the Scriptural argument for it, its duties and responsibilities ...” (Lewis and Edwards 1934, 35). Additionally, Gray seems to have accepted the idea of hierarchy and deference. For example, he appears to have been taken aback that Colenso would treat him as an equal, rather than as his superior (Guy 1983, 112).

Secondly, in terms of theology and liturgy, Gray was not a trendsetter. For example, he remained a devotee of the *Book of Common Prayer 1662*, requiring his clergy to sign a declaration that they would “conform to the Liturgy of the United Church of England and Ireland, as it is now established.”²³ Indeed, he seems to have merely been intent on adhering to the existing prayer book rubrics, much as high churchmen were advocating and Tractarians were teaching. For example, when Colenso introduced a newly written prayer for afternoon and evening services at one of the Durban churches in Natal, Gray accused him of “liturgical innovation and of going beyond the proper canonical authority of a bishop” (Hinchliff 1963, 50). However, one cannot argue that he fitted the high church mould entirely in this principle. For example, he introduced daily services to the Cathedral in Cape Town (Smith 1968, 54), not an innovation as such, but certainly a trademark of Tractarianism (Reed 1996, 76). Perhaps more to the point, he introduced these daily services without first building rapport with the Cathedral congregation—hence their antagonism to him. He also encouraged the keeping of Lent through fasting (Lewis and Edwards 1934, 34), without investigating the congregation’s reaction to such introductions in the past.²⁴ Again, this was not particularly advanced practice, but it was a mark of Tractarianism rather than high churchmanship. However, it could be argued that the principles of economy and reserve would have characterised a true Tractarian (qualities which Gray did not seem to embody), and perhaps induced a more gradual pastoral approach.

Thirdly, in his approach and reaction to Colenso’s biblical criticism of the 1860s, he showed himself a typical high churchman. Like Wilberforce, he was consistent in his apprehension in relation to Colenso’s early writings, and later in his uncompromising defence of the Bible, particularly its divine inspiration and accepted teachings regarding its composition. For example, he was horrified that Colenso would question the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Here again, the line between high churchmen and Tractarians is rather blurred. Both groups reacted strongly against liberal biblical criticism; high churchmen because it challenged the *status quo*, and Tractarians because it brought into question the authority of scripture and the traditions which had been developed to interpret it. Where did Gray fall in this spectrum? It is more likely that he,

23 Declaration by James Barrow (October 1848), Cory Library, MS 16 653.

24 In 1840, the congregation had accused their chaplain of “papism” for advocating fasting and wearing a surplice (Hardwick 2014, 75).

as the son of a bishop and of the educated elite, fell on the side of the high churchmen. It was not only the Bible he was defending, but the entire structure on which British society, and indeed the British Empire, was built.²⁵

Fourthly, he valued the high church and Tractarian focus on the Early Church (Hinchliff 1963, 49). His appeal for synodical government and a church unfettered by establishment was indicative of this. Indeed, his supremely negative experience with the established nature of the Church of England through the law courts, and its consequences for what he, and many of his contemporaries, felt were spiritual issues, must have cemented his determination to form an autonomous church. This is actually where he splits with the high church definition quite markedly. While maintaining establishment was generally an accepted focus of high churchmen, it seems that Gray was more strongly allied to the Tractarian position; for very much the same reasons which Keble (1833) articulates in his *Assize Sermon*.

Fifthly, in terms of the sacraments, Gray would probably be considered high church. His views on the Holy Communion never took him to the Tractarian extremes which James Green (1821–1906),²⁶ one of his clergy recruits, espoused. He tended to accept what he had received without any change. Likewise, in terms of baptism, he did not rock the boat, although it seems that he advocated baptismal regeneration.

Seventhly, high churchmen have been characterised as “high and dry” by some commentators, and by others as staid. And yet, Gray can be viewed as a pioneer of sorts: particularly in the sense that he had the foresight to found a church independent of the English establishment, and that he covered huge areas of geographical land to administer and expand Anglican work (Southey 1998, 22, 24). However, as has been stated above, he was not a theological innovator, nor did he test the boundaries of inherited liturgical norms. Indeed, he seems to have been genuinely perplexed at the extreme views of James Green in terms of Eucharistic theology. He may well have looked askance at the genuinely ritualistic developments which occurred in the 1880s in South Africa after his death.²⁷

Eighthly, towards the end of his episcopacy, Gray became more and more interested in developing a religious community in Cape Town. Eventually he established a sisterhood called the St George’s sisters in 1869, a few years before his death. That some of the sisters were originally “disciples” of John Mason Neale (Lewis and Edwards 1934,

25 For a detailed historical account of the “Colenso controversy” see Guy (1983) and Draper (2003).

26 James Green was recruited by Gray to accompany him to South Africa in 1848. He was eventually appointed Dean of the newly created Diocese of Natal in 1854 and was to become a thorn in Bishop John Colenso’s side. Green became increasingly ritualistic throughout his ministry (Darby 1977, chapter 12). For a complete, but fairly biased view of Green, see Wirgman (1958).

27 Note Hinchliff’s (1963, 191) comments regarding Gray’s disapproval of the lionising process in which James Green was involved.

107), perhaps gives an indication of their Tractarian and ecclesiologist²⁸ sympathies and formation. It also shows where Gray was looking for suitable candidates for religious life, namely Neale, the leader of the ecclesiologists. Gray's willingness to consider establishing a religious community provides a possible sign of his developing attitudes towards Tractarianism. Would a traditional high churchman have encouraged and actually started religious communities? Perhaps he was moving more decidedly towards a Tractarian outlook as his episcopacy came to a close.

Ninthly, Gray seems to have had ecumenical leanings. He shared amicable relationships with the Dutch Reformed Church's leaders and he initiated talks about a possible merger between 1848 and 1870.²⁹ In the end, the talks stalled because the two churches could not agree about polity—Gray and the Anglicans insisted on episcopal authority, whereas the Dutch Reformed clergy rejected this hierarchical system. Nevertheless, that Gray was willing to consider merging with a Calvinistic church shows his willingness to look beyond the bounds of Anglicanism itself. It also possibly demonstrates his own Calvinistic sympathies, even if they were subconscious, perhaps absorbed over many years of Anglican worship through the strongly Calvinistic *Book of Common Prayer 1662*. The Tractarians in England would have frowned on Gray's relationship with the Dutch Reformed Church. They had strongly opposed the creation of a bishopric in association with the Lutherans in Jerusalem, expressly because the Lutheran Church could not demonstrate apostolic succession through their episcopal lineage (Strong 2012, 78–98). In reality, that Gray did not compromise on the three-fold ministry with bishops at the head, probably reinforces the idea that he was essentially wedded to apostolic succession and thus, at the very least, to the high church agenda.

Tenthly, as Beckman notes, the clergy he appointed were either Tractarian sympathisers or fully-fledged Tractarians (Beckman 2011, 87).³⁰ He also sought to block the appointment of Henry Cotterill (1812–1886), a staunch evangelical, as Bishop of Grahamstown, preferring Nathaniel Merriman (1809–1882), the Archdeacon of Albany at the time (Beckman 2011, 83–85). Merriman has been characterised by one recent historian as a practising Tractarian (Bremner 2013, 210). Thus, in terms of sympathies, it is clear that Gray favoured Tractarians against evangelicals.

28 Tractarianism was only one movement among a wave of other Catholicising initiatives within Anglicanism. One of the other movements was ecclesiology. In 1839, John Mason Neale started the Cambridge Camden Society. Their work was to encourage the study of Christian art, to restore existing ancient churches and to provide "correct" (in their minds "Gothic") plans for newly planned ones. They achieved this mainly through their periodical *The Ecclesiologist*, which was published regularly between 1841 and 1863. There was a related movement in Oxford, although not as famous or as notorious, called the Oxford Society for Promoting the Study of Gothic Architecture. Both groups were instrumental in creating general acceptance of what would become the Gothic Revival in architecture in England.

29 For a fascinating discussion regarding this merger, see Le Feuvre (1980, 94–105).

30 Beckman notes that Colenso was the only non-Tractarian Gray appointed.

Finally, one of the defining characteristics of Gray's episcopacy was the neo-Gothic architecture of the church buildings he commissioned. His wife, Sophy, was an avid amateur architect, and it was her designs, along ecclesiologist lines, which dominated during Gray's tenure. He also established a periodical called *The South African Church Magazine and Ecclesiastical Review*. Bremner claims that its first editor was a staunch Tractarian, and also an ecclesiologist, whose Romantic ideals concerning architecture were to flower in this regular publication (Bremner 2013, 210). Perhaps Gray's approach to the existing church which he encountered in South Africa, can be linked to his comments on the Cape Town Cathedral (based on St Pancras, London): to "throw it overboard" (Bremner 2013, 255). He makes no mention about the congregation's feelings about the existing building, nor of their attitude towards possible architectural change. Thus, in this sense, at least, Gray certainly espoused an ecclesiologist stance.

Was Gray more of a high churchman or a Tractarian? It is quite difficult to make a definitive conclusion. The evidence seems to support the idea that he started his episcopal ministry very much in the high church camp, but that the circumstances he encountered in South Africa propelled him increasingly to a Tractarian position. In the long run, in terms of the Province of South Africa, Gray's influence and actions meant that the ideals of Tractarianism, and later ritualism, could begin to characterise Anglicanism³¹ throughout the area; and because the church was not linked to government, ritual and doctrine were not a matter of secular law in the South African context.

Other Contributors to the Anglo-Catholic Ethos of Anglicanism in South Africa

Hinchliff (1963, 190–191) makes an interesting observation regarding the Anglo-Catholic nature of the South African Anglican Church:

One of the effects of the Colenso controversy [over biblical literalism and interpretation] was to make the Province the great "Catholic" part of the Anglican Communion. In that Gray put the Church before the individual, the controversy did come between those who held a "high" and those who held a "low" doctrine of the Church. It was not a battle between Tractarians and Evangelicals ... [but] the controversy, nevertheless, labelled the Province a "high church" province.

His suggestion is that the ritualist nature of the province can be attributed to the fallout from the Colenso saga, which ravaged the local and international church between 1861 until Colenso's death. Colenso, being an Erastian and latitudinarian of sorts, was so demonised by the worldwide Anglican Church that contemporary opinion favoured a

31 Overall Gray's leadership appears to have had a similar effect to that of Bishop John Henry Hobart of New York, a high churchman in the Episcopal Church, who exercised the role of setting the scene for ritualism to flourish (Platt 2016, 332).

complete distancing from his churchmanship, missionary style and biblical commentaries (Hinchliff 1963, 190). Colenso's philosophy was shaped by his encounters with Frederick Maurice (1805–1872) and his reading of theologians such as Coleridge and Arnold. In particular, Maurice's views about God's presence in all cultures and his work in comparative religions were to find fulfilment in Colenso's mission work with the Zulus in Natal. His mission work and published works did not endear him to his dean or the metropolitan and he was eventually excommunicated by a church court; however, history has been far kinder towards him than either the dean or Gray.³²

The constitutional shape of the church in South Africa certainly did owe much to the Colenso fallout. In particular, the idea that secular courts could make decisions regarding doctrine and practice disturbed church members all over the Anglican world. To what extent could secular authorities, some of whom were not even Anglican, decide on matters pertaining to spirituality? The Colenso saga, and the general crisis of legal insecurity for Anglican churches outside of Britain, precipitated the first Lambeth Conference in 1867.³³ Gray and his colleague, George Selwyn (1809–1878), the Bishop of New Zealand, advocated for a system of provincial and diocesan synods, the latter being subordinate to the former. This was accepted and mechanisms for the developing of local constitutions were created by a sub-committee of the Conference (Hinchliff 1963, 113). In reality, Gray and Selwyn had hoped for a further tier of authority, that is, the Anglican bishops from around the world sitting in synod to debate and promulgate international church law, discipline and doctrine (Hinchliff 1963, 112). Their vision was hierarchical and fell very much within the ambit of Tractarian teaching regarding the authority of the bishop within the governance of the church, and the episcopacy's independence from the state. In the political climate of Britain, where some bishops were sceptical of the Lambeth Conference in the first place, the chances of adopting the highest tier framework were fairly weak, and in the end did not materialise. Since then, the Lambeth Conference has not been a legislative body, but rather one which consults and advises.

It was within this context that South Africa's Anglican constitution was drafted in the 1860s and passed in 1870 at the church's first Provincial Synod. The synod adopted the standards of faith of the Church of England, its doctrines, sacraments and disciplines, as well as its general ethos (including the *Book of Common Prayer 1662*) and the

32 Green, in particular, has increasingly disappeared into obscurity. His name is glossed over by most historians, except in narratives in what appears to have been rather childish behaviour in making life difficult for Colenso (Guy 1983, 154–157).

33 Lambeth Conference is usually held every 10 years, depending on circumstances. All the bishops of the Anglican Communion are invited to attend. For many years, the bishops passed resolutions concerning the governance, ethos, discipline and standards of faith. These resolutions were not binding on autonomous Provinces and Dioceses, but did provide a "temperature gauge" of the Communion at large. More recent conferences have focused more on dialogue and prayer between bishops, rather than resolutions.

English Bible. However, unlike its English mother body, it was specifically created as a voluntary association which voluntarily accepted the diocesan boundaries, the authority of bishops and the respective legislative synods (Hinchliff 1963, 114). Significantly, it did not allow any interference from secular legal bodies, unless the church specifically requested their advice—a direct reaction against the numerous secular battles which had characterised the episcopal mission of the 1850s and 1860s. It also allowed for the amendment of liturgy, practice and doctrine, provided that any change was done in the spirit of the general Anglican ethos and did not infringe on the *Book of Common Prayer 1662*, the accepted creeds and the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion.³⁴ It was these specific concessions which allowed for Anglo-Catholic doctrine and practice to begin to take root. While it was only much later that formal liturgical change was enacted (after the turn of the nineteenth century), clergy and congregations began taking liberties long before then.

As has been noted above, the consecration of missionary bishops was, in a sense, a flowering of high church and Tractarian ideals of episcopacy. While I have shown Gray's allegiances through the consecration of Mackenzie, the ideal itself was much bigger than Gray, and pulsed through the South African church and the burgeoning Anglican Communion. Even though Mackenzie's mission ended in failure when he died after only two years in the field, the scene was set for a new model. For one thing, it firmly established the unique high church and Tractarian position on mission against the prevailing evangelical policy. The Church Missionary Society (the evangelical wing

34 “The Church of the Province of South Africa, otherwise known as the Church of England in these parts: First, receives and maintains the Faith of our Lord Jesus Christ as taught in the Holy Scriptures, held by the Primitive Church, summed up in the Creeds, and affirmed by the undisputed General Councils: Secondly, receives the Doctrine, Sacraments, and Discipline of Christ as the same are contained and commanded in Holy Scripture according as the Church of England has set forth the same in its standards of Faith and Doctrine, and it receives the Book of Common Prayer, and of Ordering of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, to be used, according to the form therein prescribed, in the Public Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and other Holy Offices; and it accepts the English version of the Holy Scriptures as appointed to be read in Churches; and, further, it disclaims for itself the right of altering any of the aforesaid Standards of Faith and Doctrine. Provided that nothing herein contained shall prevent the Church of this Province from accepting, if it shall so determine, any alterations in the Formularies of the Church (other than the Creeds) which may be adopted by the Church of England, or allowed by any General Synod, Council, Congress, or other Assembly of the Churches of the Anglican Communion; or from making at any time such adaptations and abridgements of, and additions to, the services of the Church as may be required by the circumstances of this Province ...” (Article 1, *Constitution of Church of the Province of South Africa* (1870), WITS Historical Papers, AB2891). Further, “The Provincial Synod shall have the power to make such adaptations and abridgements of, and additions to, the Services of the Church as may be required by the circumstances of this Province; but all such adaptations, abridgements, and additions shall be regarded as provisional, until they shall be confirmed at a subsequent Session of the Provincial Synod as being consistent with the spirit and teaching of the Book of Common Prayer. All adaptations, abridgements, or additions, allowed or made by any Bishop of this Province for his own Diocese, whether in his Diocesan Synod or otherwise, shall be open to revision by the Provincial Synod” Article X, *Constitution of Church of the Province of South Africa* (1870).

of international Anglican mission work) preferred the ideals of Henry Venn (1796–1873). He espoused a vision where missionaries evangelised groups of people, helped them to establish church communities, and then allowed them to raise their own indigenous leaders. In essence, this policy came to maturity in the consecration of the first black Anglican bishop in Nigeria, Samuel Crowther (c. 1809–1891). In reality, though, Venn’s fullest plans were too advanced for most Victorian missionaries. Sadly, while Crowther’s consecration was monumental for evangelical work, the increasing racism of British colonial settlers in Nigeria meant that the full impact could not be realised; in the end, white clergy refused to be under the authority of a black bishop. Ultimately, then, neither the Tractarian nor the evangelical models had actually been altogether successful. The realities of the mission field, coupled with the pressures of colonial government policy and the breakdown of traditional African societies, meant that any evangelisation would be an uphill battle. Yet, lack of success did not dampen spirits in the long term. The Tractarian model was used elsewhere, particularly as the Universities’ Mission to Central Africa established its reach in Zanzibar and later Malawi.

Frank England (1989, 19) has suggested that the “Oxford Movement’s most particular contribution to the [Anglican Church in South Africa] was its influence which led to the formation of religious communities in the latter part of the nineteenth century.” While they played an important part in mission work in some dioceses, they were not very influential during the period this study investigates.³⁵ Before the turn of the nineteenth century, religious communities had been established in only a few places, most especially by the Diocese of Bloemfontein; first in 1865 under the diocese’s first bishop, Edward Twells (1823–1898) with the Society of St Augustine (Lewis and Edwards 1934, 401–404), and further extended under his successor Alan Webb (1839–1907).

Conclusions

This article has provided historical context related to the church in which Anglican ritualism was to take root. The earliest days of the church were characterised by autonomous congregations, served by unlicensed clergy, which operated broadly according to a democratic system where laity held a great deal of power. Clergy themselves often met head-on against the laity, much as bishops did decades later. Essentially, then, groups of lay congregants and a few clergy enjoyed the freedoms of colonial life and seemed to resent official power which was forced upon them. This can, perhaps, be attributed to the fact that many of them were originally from the British working classes who, back home, were not able to exercise political power in any meaningful way at the time. Nevertheless, it was these tenacious lay people and their colonial chaplains who managed to create some sense of parochial life in a vast colony. It is unlikely that such an independently minded church would ever concede easily to

35 For a brief, but helpful, summary of Anglican religious communities in South Africa, see Hinchliff (1963, 225–229).

episcopal authority, especially the kind of authority Bishop Robert Gray was keen to exercise. Indeed, the passage from independent congregations to organised parochial, diocesan and provincial structures was far from easy.

Bishop Gray's encounter with this lay-organised church seems to have forced him to reconsider his initial high church leanings. For one thing, he needed to concede to lay leadership and lay voting rights, given that ordinary congregants were, to a large extent, financing the church. It is difficult to make concrete conclusions regarding Gray's own allegiance in terms of church parity. The evidence I have presented above seems to point towards a man who started out very much in the vein of his father, also a bishop: a conservative and conscientious high churchman who wished to perpetuate the *status quo*. Yet, as his ministry in South Africa continued, he seems to have moved ever progressively towards the teachings, and practices, of the Tractarians. The evidence, though, shows that he was not always in harmony with the Tractarian leaders. Whatever his churchmanship, it is clear that the branch of Anglicanism which he established in South Africa was constitutionally wide enough to foster the growth of Anglo-Catholicism.

What was it about Anglicanism in South Africa which encouraged Anglo-Catholics to emigrate there? It is likely that the independence of the church from the state was one of the reasons. An independent episcopal church, voluntary by nature, was not answerable to the state on matters of doctrine, liturgy and ceremonial. The highest authority in these matters was now the metropolitan bishop of the Province. If the metropolitan was broadly receptive to Tractarian, ecclesiologist and ritualist ideas, then it was likely that they would eventually be able to flourish. Here, it is also important to note that while the church was voluntary, its members also voluntarily accepted the authority of their local bishop. If the bishop was supportive of the clergy in matters of worship, the laity was not in a strong position to oppose them.

Perhaps another draw card was that the Province's constitution allowed for changes to existing models of Anglicanism, if the need should arise. While it is likely that such changes were intended to accommodate the local need for different languages and prayers (not on behalf of the English monarch, but for local leaders), Anglo-Catholics would later take the opportunity to use such a doorway for their own ends, even if this took place after the period this study examines.

Finally, the fact that Bishop Gray was willing to consecrate a missionary bishop showed ordinary Tractarian and ritualist clergy that he was positioning himself directly within the auspices of the general Catholicising movement within Anglicanism. An evangelical or latitudinarian bishop is unlikely to have taken such a bold step, especially since it entailed creating a bishopric outside of the British Empire. Such a move would, no doubt, have lifted popular Tractarian, ecclesiologist and ritualist opinion of him fairly high, and thus encouraged young men of such tastes to opt for South Africa.

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