

The shifting attitudes of Australian evangelicals towards race in the 1960s

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Australian attitudes to race and racial discrimination were changing in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The Commonwealth Government's policies of restrictive immigration (known as the 'White Australia' policy) had enjoyed strong support as the majority of Australians believed the country was destined to be, in the words of Prime Minister John Curtin in 1939, 'forever the home of the descendants of those people who came here in peace in order to establish in the South Seas an outpost of the British race.'¹ Yet the Second World War stoked fears of being overrun by Asian masses and this prompted a relaxation of the policy to enable non-British Europeans to become citizens.² While this change was motivated by racist fears, over the next decade as former British colonies declared their independence and as the world reflected upon the actions of Nazi Germany, many in Australia started questioning Australia's racial policy. In 1963, Hubert Opperman replaced Alexander Downer (Sr) as minister for immigration, signalling a shift in the Liberal party, and by 1965 Gough Whitlam had convinced the Australian Labor Party (ALP) to remove its support for White Australia.

Yet, as historian Judith Brett notes, there was still significant support for the policy among older ALP members and voters, and among much of the Coalition.³ Paul Strangio likewise observes a division in Australia regarding the question of race. On the one hand, Prime Minister Harold Holt saw humanitarian reasons for increased non-European immigration and 'keenly appreciated that the White Australia policy was a blot on the nation's reputation in Asia'.⁴ Over the remainder of the 1960s, he liberalised immigration policy yet stated publicly that the government would not alter the 'fundamentals of the restrictive policy'.⁵ Thus, it appears that by the 1960s, political elites were opposed to Australia's restrictive immigration policy, but the majority of Australia's population still favoured the idea of White Australia enough to force the government to proceed with reform throughout the decade 'sotto voce', as Strangio puts it.⁶ On the other hand, Australian leaders of the late 1950s and early 1960s strongly supported the assimilation and White Australia policies and generally did not condemn the Apartheid, even when the latter two were receiving criticism around the world.⁷

Given the pre-eminence of the Church of England in Australia at the time, and the keen sense of Australian identity as white, British and Christian in the previous years, this paper will examine the stance of evangelical Anglicans to race during the 1960s.⁸ How did evangelicals negotiate between their belief in the equality of humanity and their legacy of social action in this sphere on the one hand, and their political conservatism and desire to maintain Australia's Christian identity on the other? Was the majority supportive of restrictive immigration? Were they divided, like the major political parties?⁹ What did they think of assimilation policy at home and Apartheid abroad? On what basis did they argue?

¹ 'Abolition of the White Australia Policy', The Australian Government Department of Immigration and Border Protection, last updated 2011, accessed November 25, 2017, <https://www.border.gov.au/about/corporate/information/fact-sheets/08abolition>

² Lachlan Strahan, *Australia's China: Changing Perceptions from the 1930s to the 1990s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 146.

³ Judith Brett, 'The Menzies Era, 1950–66', in *The Cambridge History of Australia: Volume 2, The Commonwealth of Australia* (ed. Stuart Macintyre and Alison Bashford; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 129.

⁴ Paul Strangio, 'Instability, 1966–82', in *The Cambridge History of Australia: Volume 2, The Commonwealth of Australia* (ed. Stuart Macintyre and Alison Bashford; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 136.

⁵ Strangio, 'Instability, 1966–82', 136.

⁶ Strangio, 'Instability, 1966–82', 136.

⁷ Anna Haebich, *Spinning the Dream: Assimilation in Australia 1950–1970* (Fremantle: Fremantle Press, 2008), 29.

⁸ Hugh William Chilton, 'Evangelicals and the End of Christian Australia: Nation and Religion in the Public Square, 1959–1979' (PhD Thesis, Sydney: Sydney University, 2014), 6.

⁹ See Graeme Davison, 'Religion', in *The Cambridge History of Australia: Volume 2, The Commonwealth of Australia* (ed. Stuart Macintyre and Alison Bashford; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

The collapse of these three pillars of Australian identity (white, British, Christian) in the 1960s brought a crisis for evangelicals, but as Hugh Chilton has shown, they responded in 'diverse and often creative ways'.¹⁰ Jennifer Clark, Sue Taffe and Anna Haebich have examined the period with respect to issues of race, Aboriginal activism and assimilation, though each largely ignores the evangelicals.¹¹ Chilton, Stuart Piggin, Stephen Judd and Kenneth Cable have examined evangelical history in the metropole and Laura Rademaker has considered the way in which missions were a site of negotiation between evangelicals and Aboriginal people.¹² This paper will bring together the secular and evangelical literature on the 1960s in Australia to understand evangelical racial dynamics in a new way, by examining the manner in which race was discussed in the Australian Church Record (ACR). This will shed light on evangelical responses to the 1960s and reveal the way in which evangelical Anglicans in Australia thought about racial politics in a time when the Australian identity was undergoing considerable change. The ACR was decidedly evangelical and produced by Sydney Diocese but its letters demonstrate that it found a global readership that crossed boundaries of theology and denomination. As such it offers the historian a lens through which to view the opinions of Australian Anglican evangelicals and their allies and critics.

Throughout the period 1957–1972, three racial issues dominated discussions and generated the numerous articles, editorials and letters that this essay will analyse. These were: Apartheid in South Africa, restrictive immigration in Australia, and Australia's treatment of its indigenous population. These three are not chosen only because they are the most prominent but also because ACR contributors saw them as interrelated.

This paper will argue that the ACR vacillated on questions of race. Evangelical commitments that would lead it to support the common humanity of all races were brought into tensions with support for evangelical allies in South Africa, and staunch rejection of Communism both at home and abroad. As such, we will show that there was no unified evangelical Anglican voice on the matter of race during the 1960s in Australia.

Nervous anticipation: 1957–1962

Contributors to the ACR were generally conservative with regards to racial policy. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, almost all tended to repudiate South African Apartheid in practice, if not in theory and all were against separate development at home. In 1958 a large advertisement for 'Aborigines' Sunday' appeared with the subtitle 'End Australia's Apartheid' (the theme for the day). The accompanying article detailed plans for education posters with the caption 'toward assimilation'.¹³ Likewise, when the day was advertised in 1960, the caption argued for the collective responsibility of Federal and State governments, and the Church in continuing the work of 'assimilating a stone-age people into the general community'.¹⁴

Yet, support for assimilation did not always extend to granting immediate equality in all areas. For instance, a number wrote against the removal of restrictions on the purchase of alcohol. One argued 'society has to have discrimination to protect certain people from their own weak or evil ways' and concluded 'drink is the aborigine's worst enemy over all Australia and the greatest bar to their assimilation'.¹⁵ An editorial the following year argued along similar lines, identifying Aborigines as 'clearly weaker brethren within the scope of Romans 14 and 1

¹⁰ Chilton, 'Evangelicals and the End of Christian Australia', 37.

¹¹ Jennifer Clark, *Aborigines & Activism: Race, Aborigines & the Coming of the Sixties to Australia* (Crawley: University of Western Australia Press, 2008); Sue Taffe, 'Aboriginal Rights and Justice Campaigns: A People's History', in *The 1960s in Australia: People, Power and Politics* (ed. Shirleene Robinson and Julie Ustinoff; Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012); Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*.

¹² Chilton, 'Evangelicals and the End of Christian Australia'; Stuart Piggin, *Evangelical Christianity in Australia: Spirit, Word and World* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1996); Stephen Judd and Kenneth J. Cable, *Sydney Anglicans: A History of the Diocese* (Sydney: Anglican Information Office, 1987); Laura Rademaker, 'Language and the Mission: Talking and Translating on Groote Eylandt 1943–1973' (PhD Thesis, Canberra: Australian National University, 2014).

¹³ Australian Church Record, September 10, 1958, 7.

¹⁴ Australian Church Record, July 21, 1960, 1.

¹⁵ Australian Church Record, March 1, 1961, 4.

Cor 8'.¹⁶ Another noted that 'many Aborigines don't want to assimilate' but argued the 'wishes of most Australians and the interests of the nation as a whole must come before the wishes of the adult aborigines who are too set in their ways to change easily'. The interests of the nation were cited as avoidance of the kind of racial tension seen in Africa.¹⁷

The ACR, like the Australian government, held deep reservations about the growing anti-colonial sentiment fomenting in Africa which it suspected had communist ties. The paper's editors also consistently supported the Dutch Reformed Church of South Africa (DRCSA) and the Church of England in South Africa (CESA), which they saw as theological kindred spirits due to their shared commitment to Calvinism. CESA was also seen as an ally against Anglo-Catholicism and liberalism within the global Anglican Communion. As both the DRCSA and CESA supported Apartheid in some form, the ACR's editors appear to have felt it necessary to allow representatives of both churches to defend their position and in some cases, to do the job for them.

In 1958 the ACR reported on the possibility of the deportation of Joost de Blank, Archbishop of Cape Town for the Church of the Province of South Africa (CPSA), on the basis of his anti-Apartheid campaigning. de Blank argued '[Apartheid is not a] fair and just separation of races... but is rather the maintenance and consolidation of White domination and White privilege'. He concluded by repudiating DRCSA support for the practice saying, 'as a Christian he could not discover any justification for White Supremacy'.¹⁸ The following month, an editorial taken from the DRCSA newsletter *Die Kerkbode* appeared in which the author defended the DRCSA, arguing that Apartheid was a 'practical, fair and just solution in our multi-racial country' and suggested that de Blank was perhaps demonstrating racial prejudice himself: 'Does the Archbishop not know that the foundations of this policy were laid down by the British regime?'.¹⁹ As Tothill notes, labelling critiques of Nationalist Party policy as 'Boerehaat' (hatred of Boers) was common until the 1990s.²⁰

Letters and editorials over the following months tended to agree with this line of thought. Most saw Apartheid as compatible with Christianity but that the principle was being abused. For instance, one letter argued that 'surely none will deny that as put into practice [Apartheid] is quite un-Christian, and that membership in the Commonwealth of a country that does such things, whatever the theory behind it may be, is an embarrassment to other members of the Commonwealth'.²¹ An editorial in the same issue decried the use of racist arguments by some South African papers in support of the policy but stopped short of equating the theory of separation with racism.²²

At the same time, evangelicals were decidedly anxious about the prospect of the relaxation of migration policy in Australia as it posed a threat to the Christian character of the nation. In the late 1950s, the UK and other commonwealth countries were exerting pressure on the Australian government. Many ACR correspondents noted the anger that the White Australia policy generated among Australia's Asian neighbours but there were concerns that should the policy be abandoned, Australia would be inundated with 'coloured people' who 'know not Christ', as one letter put it.²³

In 1958 the ACR reported that the bishops at the Lambeth Conference proposed a 'modified White Australia policy' which would allow controlled entry from any race or nation.²⁴ The proposal was decidedly conservative, arguing for a small intake of non-white migrants on the basis that Australia was 'without racial conflicts' and so there was no justification in completely restricting immigration to whites. The article then quoted Bishops Kerle and Hilliard (of Sydney) expressing similar sentiments. Yet both bishops felt compelled to agree with

¹⁶ Australian Church Record, August 16, 1962, 4.

¹⁷ Australian Church Record, September 14, 1961, 4.

¹⁸ Australian Church Record, February 20, 1958, 3.

¹⁹ Australian Church Record, May 15, 1958, 8.

²⁰ David Tothill, 'Trying to Sell Apartheid to 1950s Australia', *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 17/1 (2006): 145.

²¹ Australian Church Record, March 30, 1961, 4.

²² Australian Church Record, March 30, 1961, 4.

²³ Australian Church Record, September 15, 1960, 5.

²⁴ Australian Church Record, September 4, 1958, 3.

government policy ‘with reservations’ and the article’s title suggested the Lambeth proposal had ‘caused a stir’.

Some at the paper recognised that racism was behind the popular support for the policy in the broader Australian community. An anonymous editorial appearing in October 1959 argued that the government was simply ‘pandering to community prejudice’.²⁵ The author noted that any suggestion that Asians did not care about Australia’s policy were debunked by the public statements of Asian leaders and called for Christian protest against the policy to become more ‘practical’, noting that until a concrete alternative policy was put forward, the government would simply ignore the churches.

Nevertheless, six months later another editorial attempted to shore up support for the status quo by presenting the choice for reform as all or nothing. The anonymous author cited Bishop Lesslie Newbigin’s address to the National Conference of Australian Churches in which he argued that the government has a responsibility for the composition of the nation’s population and that the world population explosion was also a factor for consideration. The article continued, ‘If God has entrusted us with this land, we must consider whether its resources would be developed and its people made wealthier or happier if unrestricted immigration of Asian peasants were allowed to take place’.²⁶

In June of the same year, another contributor tried a different approach, arguing that continued British immigration was essential for the sake of the Australian economy and for the health of the Church of England.²⁷ The contributor lamented that it was becoming increasingly difficult to attract British migrants and this was partially due to a lack of practical aid for new migrants. As slightly more than half of all migrants leaving the UK were members of the Church of England, Anglicans had a responsibility to assist these new migrants and an opportunity to entice more to Australian shores. This article was followed two months later by another promoting assistance to British migrants.²⁸

While bishops felt compelled to publicly support the White Australia policy, even when they had serious reservations, and editors and regular contributors to the ACR were promoting British migration, one editorial put it bluntly, ‘No Australians really want Asians living here in substantial numbers but few Australians look down on them as inferior. If our ready acceptance of temporary Asian residents such as students will not convince them of this, what will? Not restricted immigration!’²⁹ The first point was certainly supported by one reader soon after who believed that those in favour of immigration reform hoped to obtain ‘an Asiatic majority here’. Again, this was problematic primarily because of the threat this Asian pre-eminence posed to Christianity in Australia.³⁰

The winds of change: 1963–1966

In 1960 British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan described the awakening of nationalist black consciousness in Africa as the ‘winds of change’.³¹ By the middle of that decade, black consciousness had well and truly reached Australia. Between 1963–1966, attitudes to race were shifting as independence movements in Africa and Asia, and the civil rights movement in the USA, gained the attention of evangelicals. The ACR regularly reported and commented on international affairs throughout this period and articles and letters reveal a deepening awareness of Australia’s own racial tensions and at the same time, a sense of unease about what the winds of change might blow in.

On the one hand, the language of assimilation shifted to a greater focus on reparations and the need to communicate racial equality. The paper reported in 1963 the call for a national fund which would ‘could be a national sign to the aborigines that Australia recognised wrong done to

²⁵ Australian Church Record, October 28, 1959, 4.

²⁶ Australian Church Record, March 3, 1960, 4.

²⁷ Australian Church Record, June 23, 1960.

²⁸ Australian Church Record, August 4, 1960, 7.

²⁹ Australian Church Record, August 18, 1960, 4.

³⁰ Australian Church Record, September 15, 1960, 5.

³¹ Clark, *Aborigines & Activism*, 3.

them in dispossessing them of the land'.³² On the other hand, many remained cautious about changes to migration policy. Post-colonial developments in Asia were cause for concern. In September 1963, an anonymous editorial lamented the supposed anti-European prejudice of Indonesians demonstrated by the fact that they had previously argued against all forms of colonialism but were happy to engage in it themselves in West Papua.³³ Others were still coming to terms with European migration. O.A.M. Piggott of Vaucluse expressed alarm at what he considered the lowering of moral standards in Australia (for instance, Sunday sport and women drinking in bars) and traced this directly to the increasing influence of the Catholic Church, achieved through migration of southern Europeans.³⁴

Other readers felt the tension in Australia's racial policy. A letter printed in July of 1964 made the connection between migration, Apartheid and assimilation explicit and the author noted the potential for hypocrisy when Australians criticised the South African government policy. Yet the author believed Australians were learning from their past; 'our past record is bad, but our present policy is assimilation—the exact opposite of apartheid,' and 'no immigration policy... involves injustice and oppression as apartheid does'.³⁵ When responding to letters critical of Apartheid, D. Gordon Mills, Registrar of CESA, asked whether ACR correspondents had 'similarly attacked Australia for her all-White policy?'.³⁶

The ACR's editors appear to have heeded Mills' caution but opposition to Apartheid was growing among readers. In April, Donald Robinson wrote a review of 'South Africa: Yesterday and Tomorrow' by Bishop Ambrose Reeves in which he critiqued the Bishop for 'going beyond his episcopal duties' in criticising the government. This specifically involved opposition to the 'church clause' which forbade members of one parish attending another. Robinson's review sparked a series of letters to the editor from evangelicals expressing dismay at his apparent lack of awareness of the way in which the South African government was using such laws to discriminate against non-Whites.³⁷

A few weeks later Robinson clarified that he was not endorsing South African government policy but refused to make a categorical statement of support or condemnation for Apartheid generally. Rather, he was specifically criticising Reeves' invocation of civil disobedience and noted that the New Testament does not self-evidently allow civil disobedience in service of racial equality.³⁸

Over the next year, the debate became more intense and demonstrated on the one side, the deep fear of communism held by many in the wake of the decolonisation of much of Africa and on the other, the growing belief that racial segregation was fundamentally at odds with Christianity. In April of 1964, D. Gordon Mills wrote in unambiguous defence of Apartheid and colonialism in Africa. Mills argued that an end to white minority rule would result in 'the reversion of the African people to fighting, raiding, ravaging, murder and destruction' and implied that missionaries would no longer be safe.³⁹ In the same issue, the paper printed editorial expressing similar sentiments and a defence of the DRCSA.⁴⁰

The replies were mixed. Some, including a number of Sydney Anglican clergy, gave a comprehensive critique of Mills and the DRCSA. For instance, the missionary M. T. Corbett wrote from Tanzania in May 1964 that Mills' view was a 'childish over-simplification' of European influence in Africa, and that decolonisation was a boon to missionaries as they no longer had to explain that the Christian Gospel was not to be equated with European Governments'. Moreover, he argued, the best defence against Communism was the end of Apartheid. Corbett also repudiated the ACR editorial, arguing that Apartheid divided the body of Christ and thus contravened Galatians 3:28.⁴¹ Others such as Robert Browne of Adelaide praised the paper's courage and argued that South Africa had not gone far enough in

³² Australian Church Record, August 2, 1963, 3.

³³ Australian Church Record, September 13, 1963, 4.

³⁴ Australian Church Record, June 18, 1964, 7.

³⁵ Australian Church Record, July 2, 1964, 4.

³⁶ Australian Church Record, November 19, 1964, 5.

³⁷ Australian Church Record May 24, 1963, 6,8; Australian Church Record, June 7, 1963, 6.

³⁸ Australian Church Record, June 21, 1963, 6.

³⁹ Australian Church Record, April 9, 1964, 5.

⁴⁰ Australian Church Record, April 9, 1964, 5.

⁴¹ Australian Church Record, May 7, 1964, 7.

implementing Apartheid. The only defence against communism was 'complete separate development'.⁴²

Fears of racial tension and communism also coloured perceptions of the 1965 Australian Freedom Ride. As Clarke notes, the ride was part of 'a growing response to the internationalisation of the new racial paradigms that marked the 60s'.⁴³ Evangelicals were largely unhappy with this response. The ACR's reporting was critical and received praise from J.C. Ball who wrote 'the freedom rides are playing with the fire of race relationship'.⁴⁴ Ball also argued that those who supported the ride did not understand they were serving the communist cause, 'they are simply following Lenin's directive of fostering and exploiting the differences between classes and races'. While Ball's assessment proved partially true in that some participants were also members of the Communist Eureka Youth League, it is likely that many drew inspiration from Martin Luther King Jr's 1963 letter from Birmingham Jail which also spoke of the need to 'create a crisis' and 'foster tension'.⁴⁵

The Rev. P.J. Dowe of Walgett had witnessed the ride first hand and was also critical of the movement, though he was more concerned to defend the reputation of the town and show the students' efforts as part of the problem facing Aboriginal people. Dowe claimed that besides a few 'troublemakers', 'dark people have been very well accepted in Walgett'.⁴⁶ Alcohol, not racism, was the biggest problem facing Aboriginal people and yet the students had 'encouraged drinking by the dark people by their own example and were trying to push them into the RSL club'. Even as he defended the white population of Walgett, Dowe recognised that most Australians no longer supported racially discriminatory laws. Nevertheless, he was so convinced that alcohol was the problem that he suggested if Australia was not prepared to discriminate regarding drinking then the whole community should accept restrictions.

The ACR's editors, however, continued to defend racial discrimination. In December, the paper published another article by Mills on the situation in Rhodesia, and followed it with an apology for South Africa from Major Allister Smith under the headline, 'A Christian looks at South Africa'.

Smith's portrait of the nation was glowing. South Africa had the 'most Christian' government in Africa and was one of the few left in the world. The government had 'no moral scandals, no homosexuals or drunkards', was apparently free from bribery and corruption. It banned immoral books, Sunday theatre, lotteries and gambling. Wages were high and strikes were unknown. Universal medical care was generously paid for by whites and many chiefs supported the government. Anyone criticising the government had been 'blinded by propaganda' (a possible allusion to Boerehaat) and while 'colour problems' were present, they would not be solved until the return of Christ.⁴⁷

This prompted a flurry of criticism. The fact that the ACR had given such prominent and extended space to Smith and Mills caused some readers to question whether the paper was simply a partisan instrument for the South African government. As before, another Australian missionary working in Tanzania, Rev. David Hewetson, challenged the ACR to clarify its position, suggesting that official support of Mills' and Smith's views would jeopardise mission in other parts of Africa as they antagonised Africans.⁴⁸

While Hewetson's letter gained an immediate reply from the ACR's editors, there was to be no distancing from Mills and Smith. The paper was indeed sympathetic to their views, primarily because Mills and Smith were evangelicals. The editorial noted that 'so much is heard attacking the whites of these countries and so little of genuinely Christian opinion from these same whites' and concluded, 'we are more inclined to listen to brothers in CESA and the DRCSA than in apostate Rome or the neo-apostate CPSA'.⁴⁹ Many readers (evangelical and otherwise)

⁴² Australian Church Record, May 21, 1964, 5.

⁴³ Clark, *Aborigines & Activism*, 151.

⁴⁴ Australian Church Record, April 8, 1965, 5.

⁴⁵ Clark, *Aborigines & Activism*, 150.

⁴⁶ Australian Church Record, March 23, 1965, 5.

⁴⁷ Australian Church Record, December 16, 1965, 7.

⁴⁸ Australian Church Record, January 13, 1966, 5.

⁴⁹ Australian Church Record, January 13, 1966, 5.

critiqued this bias as insular at best and dangerous and unintelligent at worst, but the ACR would not back down.⁵⁰

The debate that followed illustrated the divergence among evangelicals that continued to deepen until the end of the decade. For the remainder of 1966, those in support of Apartheid put forward various theological, pragmatic and political arguments but almost all suggested that critique of the practice was part of a communist conspiracy. More than one wanted to limit the notion of equality to one aspect. For instance, 'no longer confused' of Blacktown limited equality to the love of God, arguing that only Communism teaches all men are equal.⁵¹ Chaplain N. Lawless of Darwin went further, arguing that 'Christianity teaches equality man in one respect: sin'. He concluded that Africans were 'children in the context of 20th-century living' and thus needed white guardians'.⁵²

Those opposed to Apartheid such as Canon Barry Butler of Darwin urged evangelicals to resist the urge to label all anti-Apartheid voices as communist. Evangelical voices did not have a monopoly on the truth, as he observed, 'while evangelicals had worked to end slavery in England, many also saw nothing wrong with the practice'.⁵³ Likewise, Rev. David Hewetson of Sydney also appealed to the work of the nineteenth century evangelical abolitionists; 'William Wilberforce and the Earl of Shaftesbury who rebuked the powers that be for the sake of the oppressed masses... sang the Magnificat; they did not sing the Internationale'.⁵⁴

Fatigue, soul searching, and realignment: 1966–1970

By the last years of the decade, some were becoming weary of racial politics in general. Between late 1966 and 1970, mentions of Apartheid, assimilation and immigration became rarer as the debate over the ecumenical movement intensified. Some, such as David Hughes of Northcote, argued that the ACR had become too political and it was impossible to determine the 'right' or 'Christian view' on complex issues such as Apartheid. Speaking on social issues would offend some part of the population and hamper efforts at evangelism.⁵⁵ For a moment, it seemed the ACR's editors agreed. The assassination of South African Prime Minister Verwoerd in October 1966 prompted an editorial which appeared to explain, but not excuse, the violence in South Africa as a consequence of white minority rule and Apartheid; 'minority rule of a police state' necessarily leads to 'forces which no man can control' which 'must find release in acts of desperation'. In observing that the Nationalist party intended to continue the policy of Apartheid it stated, 'what disasters it may hold for the people of South Africa, black and white, none can foretell'.⁵⁶ On the same day, it also commented on the difficulties facing Rhodesia, with severe shortages of clergy and generally bleak prospects for the church. It questioned the comments of the Bishop Alderson of Salisbury, Rhodesia who had asserted the problems 'can be laid at no racist door, and certainly not a white one'.⁵⁷

This was a remarkable change in tone for the paper and caused many to question whether it had lost its nerve.⁵⁸ But after criticism from readers, it began publishing pro-government articles once more. A few wrote defending the Rhodesian government, arguing that Africans had been treated better than elsewhere. They also argued that the South African and Rhodesian governments were moving towards franchise and self-government when Africans were ready for it. Yet the tide seemed to be turning. While the mood in Britain since 1960 was to decolonise as quickly as possible, the Australian government and many evangelicals had not shared this enthusiasm.⁵⁹ While many continued to argue against rapid decolonisation into the late 1960s, they did so with the increasing recognition that the colonial project was problematic. As such, concern for the wellbeing of Africans became more prominent in arguments, taking

⁵⁰ Australian Church Record, January 13, 1966, 5.

⁵¹ Australian Church Record, February 24, 1966, 5–6.

⁵² Australian Church Record, February 24, 1966, 5.

⁵³ Australian Church Record, March 10, 1966, 5.

⁵⁴ Australian Church Record, February 24, 1966, 5.

⁵⁵ Australian Church Record, September 22, 1966, 5.

⁵⁶ Australian Church Record, October 6, 1966, 4.

⁵⁷ Australian Church Record, October 6, 1966, 4.

⁵⁸ Australian Church Record, November 3, 1966, 5.

⁵⁹ Haebich, *Spinning the Dream*, 50.

the place of concern for white minorities in earlier discussions. There was considerable fear that self-government and decolonisation were happening too soon and leading to communist and authoritarian states, much violence and a reversion to 'primitive barbarism'.⁶⁰

The ACR's notional support for Apartheid continued into the 1970s but Verwoerd's assassination and the increasingly hostile reaction the policy was receiving in Australia resulted in a greater caution. Broad public opinion had been against the policy for almost two decades but in the last few years of the 1960s, the increasing public outcry was loud enough to be heard in Canberra. In 1960, Prime Minister Menzies' only critique of Apartheid had been that it wouldn't work.⁶¹ With his departure from office in 1966, and the growing sense that Apartheid was an international problem, the government began to fall in line with public opinion. Thus, in its reporting on the World Council of Churches' move to finance supposed 'anti-racist' groups in 1970, it cited the opposition of anti-Apartheid groups such as CPSA when stating its own opposition.⁶²

The final years of the 1960s also saw an increasing awareness of Aboriginal agency. As Taffe argues, the 1960s saw great change in the way Australian society viewed Aboriginal people, with a shift from Aboriginal invisibility to empowerment, though their own efforts, to redress the injustices they bore.⁶³ In February 1967 it reported on the Aborigines welfare conference hosted by Bishop Kerle, which was designed to 'promote mutual responsibility'.⁶⁴ Later that year Margaret Forrest of Hornsby wrote of her confidence that Indigenous and non-Indigenous would be able to 'grow as a harmoniously integrated Australia'.⁶⁵ Aboriginal people could follow the examples of Greeks and Italians who 'maintain racial pride while being integrated at the same time'. The paper also promoted evangelism to Aboriginal people by Aboriginal people. In January 1970, it noted the increasing role of the government in providing social support to Aboriginal people but noted the neglect for 'spiritual health'. As such, the paper began advertising for Aboriginal pastors and new Aboriginal pastorates.⁶⁶

As the decade ended many ACR contributors listened to the demands for greater rights made by Aboriginal people themselves, but remained hesitant about self-determination, instead preferring the language of integration because they saw in Africa multiple examples of self-determination gone wrong.

Conclusion

The ACR's commitments played out differently in the three cases. With regard to South Africa, fears of communism and loyalty to the DRCSA and CESA meant it was reluctant to present evangelical anti-racist arguments as critiques to Apartheid. Some, like Mills and Smith, did not always acknowledge white injustice and some feared communism to the level of paranoia, which led to a willingness to equate capitalist democracy with Christianity. However, foremost in the minds of editors and correspondents of the ACR alike was a genuine concern for the plight of African people; social, material and spiritual. Would efforts to evangelise, educate and partner with Africans that were already in development be helped or hindered by independence or the end of Apartheid? How one answered this question determined whether or not a person supported or opposed racial segregation.

In Australia, likewise, the association of Asian migration with communism also caused evangelical writers to waver in their views on racial questions. The health of the nation depended on maintenance of a Christian, and preferably Protestant, majority. Yet the humanitarian crises of the decade eventually led to increased support for Asian migration.

In the Aboriginal case, however, rejection of communism led naturally to support for assimilation policy, which was seen to be consistent with evangelical beliefs in common humanity. The physical and spiritual health of Australia's indigenous people was frequently

⁶⁰ Australian Church Record, October 5, 1967, 6.

⁶¹ Tohill, 146.

⁶² Australian Church Record, October 1, 1970, 2.

⁶³ Taffe, 'Aboriginal Rights and Justice Campaigns: A People's History', 217.

⁶⁴ Australian Church Record, February 9, 1967, 3.

⁶⁵ Australian Church Record, December 14, 1967, 7.

⁶⁶ Australian Church Record, January 8, 1970, 8; *Australian Church Record*, February 19, 1970, 4.

mentioned and many of the paper's contributors feared that a rapid move to self-government would result in dysfunction, corruption and poverty as it had done in Africa.

These conflicting loyalties meant that evangelicals were limited in their ability to speak with a coherent voice on race throughout the period. The ACR does indeed show that evangelical Anglican opinions vacillated to a significant degree on this subject.

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